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## PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in  
Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought

WILHELM SCHMIDT-BIGGEMANN

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ARCHIVES INTERNATIONALES D'HISTOIRE DES IDÉES

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*By*

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# Philosophia perennis

Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient,  
Medieval and Early Modern Thought

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Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann  
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*For Tony Grafton*

## **Acknowledgments**

This book is the English version of a study published under the same title in German in 1998 by Suhrkamp. The English edition is more of a re-working than a mere translation of the German publication. Some sections were left out, others were shortened, and it is my hope that the book has become more understandable as a result. Errors that were brought to my attention in the German version have been corrected. Some new secondary literature has been included in this edition, although I did not attempt a complete treatment of research in the field.

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## Preface

### *Extent of the concept of Philosophia perennis*

The term ‘philosophia perennis’ stems from the Vatican librarian Agostino Steucho, who in 1540 first published a book with the title “De perenni Philosophia”. Its subject was the Christian philosophy, which he thought to be basically identical and common to all mankind from its Edenic beginning up to his time, the Renaissance period. The concept of one ancient philosophy and theology going back to paradise did not originate with Steucho; it has its roots in late antiquity, especially with the Christian church fathers, and was newly adopted by the Florentine philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who called it ‘philosophia prisca’. Pico’s ideas on the offspring and the continuity of philosophy were close to Steucho’s. Their theory consisted basically in the idea that Jewish-Christian theology and pious philosophy derived from participation in the same divine ideas, and that they revealed the same essential truths.<sup>1</sup> During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the terms ‘ancient philosophy’ and ‘prisca theologia’, increasingly were used to characterise theories that confronted Asian religious concepts with Jewish tradition and Christian dogma. So the terms ‘ancient theology’ as well as ‘prisca philosophia’ received an anti-Jewish and anti-Christian character. This is why I did not choose the title ‘prisca philosophia’ for the present study, and preferred ‘philosophia perennis’ instead.

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<sup>1</sup> This is why books like Aldous Huxley’s “Perennial Philosophy” (first 1945), a collection of more or less unreflected quotations from Western and Eastern thought, is not considered.

Furthermore, ‘*philosophia perennis*’ emphasises the aspect of continuity and tradition, which corresponds precisely with the concept of ‘*theo-philosophy*’ in Christian antiquity as well as in the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Since the focus of the present book is Renaissance philosophy, it addresses neither Neoscholastic nor Neothomistic philosophy. With the Neoscholastic concept of ‘*perennial philosophy*’, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Neothomistic movement tried to establish a precise liaison between Aristotelianism and Scholasticism in the sense of St. Thomas Aquinas. This philosophical movement was however not interested in the patristic and Renaissance origin of the concept.<sup>2</sup>

Although the idea of *philosophia perennis* is most widespread in Renaissance philosophy, it extends far beyond that period. The concept has its roots in the theological and philosophical traditions of the Greek and Latin Church fathers, who combined Judeo-Christian revelation with philosophical patterns deriving from Platonism. Platonic ideas were used for the apologetic purpose of supporting the concepts of revelation with philosophical ideas. Especially the philosophical theology of Philo of Alexandria laid the groundwork for this tradition. The framework of *philosophia perennis* was biblical; the whole concept depended on Philo’s interpretation of the Adamite language. Philo considered Adamite language to be an insight into the essence of things God offered Adam in paradise. This concept was interpreted as the deeper meaning of the Platonic doctrine of ideas. Judeo-Christian spirituality thus dominated every attempt at establishing a philosophy independent of revelation. In this sense, Platonic, and especially christianised Neoplatonic, themes played an important role in the development of *philosophia perennis* insofar as they could be incorporated into the Judeo-Christian framework. This book concentrates on this combination of Jewish, Christian and Platonic thought. Since it is not a complete history of philosophy, it only cites and deals with the sources concerning the concept of *philosophia perennis* in its specifically Renaissance sense.<sup>3</sup>

Seen from the modern perspective of philological historicism, *philosophia perennis* was, of course, a syncretistic movement, for it adopted and assimilated all available philosophical topics into its theologico-philosophical system. This was, however, precisely the working idea of *perennial philosophy*: Since all possible wisdom stemmed from God’s

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<sup>2</sup> The *Festschrift* for the historian of medieval philosophy, Bernhard Geyer, which was edited in 1930 in Regensburg by Fritz Joachim von Rintelen, was titled “*Philosophia perennis*”, and is a good example of this kind of philosophical labelling.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore it was neither necessary nor possible to mention all the available secondary sources, in addition to the obvious fact that the author is not familiar with them all. The main idea of the present book is to concentrate on primary sources.

original Edenic revelation, no human philosophy could be conceived independent of this origin. This concept of the divine origin of all knowledge was the main idea behind the essential unity of theology and philosophy, and was the foundation on which a Platonising Christian philosophy was built. Since Philo was considered by the early Christian scholars to be the first church father, his ideas were widely used, e.g. by Clement of Alexandria and Origen. From these sources the ideas of the original Edenic wisdom spread all over the Christian world. The Latin Church fathers came to know of them, especially via Ambrosius (who translated Philo's works verbatim into Latin) and St. Augustine's commentaries on the book of Genesis. Of course it was only within this Judeo-Christian framework that the pagan Neoplatonism of Plotinus and especially of Proclus was assimilated. Here Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and John Scotus Eriugena were the most important transmitters of Christian Neoplatonism into the Middle Ages. The central doctrine that there could be no difference between theology and philosophy, since both had their sources in God's original wisdom, hereby always remained stable. This is why the ancient and medieval Aristotelian traditions, including medieval scholasticism, had no important impact on the concept of *philosophia perennis*.

In Renaissance philosophy, this patristic idea of the unity of theology and philosophy was renewed as '*philosophia perennis*'. The first to describe it comprehensively was the Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. More or less independently from him, Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico tried to re-establish a new *philosophia pia*. In their footsteps the Vatican librarian Agostino Steuco wrote his "*De perenni philosophia*" (1540), which provided a name for the whole theologico-philosophical movement. From its beginnings with Nicholas of Cusa, but especially since Giovanni Pico, Johannes Reuchlin, and Paulus Ricius, the tradition of Jewish cabala was incorporated into the framework of this theo-philosophy, and thereby came to play an important role in the Christian philosophical tradition.

### *Structure and choice of sources*

The structure of this study follows the central topics of the Renaissance concept of *philosophia perennis*. This doctrine is concerned with theological ideas that cannot be separated from philosophical speculation. The book therefore addresses the concepts of God's self-revelation in speculation, in natural theology, in the theology of space, and in the concepts of world-history. The central chapters are divided into two main parts: 'Glory' (chapters 3-6) examines the concept of God's self-revelation and 'Theology of Time' (chapters 7-9) analyses the Judeo-Christian concept of world-history.

These two principle parts are framed by two introductory chapters and a reminiscence of the echoing of perennial philosophy in German Romanticism. The first chapter introduces the reader into the mood of perennial philosophy, describes the book's concept of spirituality, presents a short history of fantasy, and sketches an outline of emblematic theology based on the concept of pious fantasy and philosophy. The second introductory chapter gives a short systematic summary of perennial philosophy's leading concepts based especially on Nicholas of Cusa's work. Here the six main topoi of perennial philosophy are briefly laid out: divine names, the divine logos, the primordial ideal world, the realisation of the world in space, the concepts of time and world history, and finally the idea of the tradition of Adamite wisdom through the centuries. These leading ideas make up the core of perennial philosophy. The book concludes with an analysis of the philosophy of the late Schelling as a revival of perennial philosophy.

The book's first main part, 'Glory', contains four chapters. Chapter 3 is entitled 'Divine names' and treats the idea of God's self-revelation in speculative theology. The theory of divine names includes the central themes of theologico-philosophical speculation: the beginning, the absolute and the source of all being, which are the quintessential theologico-philosophical subjects. This chapter treats the theory of divine names beginning with Proclus' *Theologia Platonica*, and shows how it was brought into a Christian context by Dionysius the Areopagite, especially in his "De Divinis Nominibus". Independently developed but corresponding theories of divine names were put forth by Isidor of Seville and Raimundus Lullus. These different theories were all taken up during the Renaissance and combined with the concept of Christian cabala by Giovanni Pico, Johannes Reuchlin and Paulus Ricius. The chapter on 'Divine names' concludes with a sketch of the theory of God's qualities as conceived by the perhaps most important Christian cabalist, Jakob Böhme.

Chapter 4, 'Cosmic Anthropology', describes three central elements of Western spirituality: a) theology of the logos as God's mirror, b) the concept of man being God's image, and c) the idea of man as a microcosm, representing the macrocosmic world. The spiritual anthropology presented here includes the theology of the prologue of St. John's gospel as well as the Platonic myth of the androgynous man, which were absorbed into Philo's interpretation of the biblical Adam. All these ideas come together in the famous "Oratio de opificio hominis", which is usually attributed to Gregory of Nyssa. The patristic cosmic anthropology was transformed and introduced to the medieval Latin world by John Scotus Eriugena, Hildegard of Bingen and Alain de Lille. Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola renewed the Philonian and patristic ideas of cosmic anthropology, and their

ideas were also enriched by cabalistic speculation: Paulus Ricius, Paracelsus, Jakob Böhme as well as Abraham Herrera contributed substantially to the concept of speculative anthropology. These ideas also played an important role in the early pietistic movement in Germany, as is shown in Gottfried Arnold's book on the divine Sophia.

Chapter 5 on 'Archetypes' outlines a train of thought that became central to the concept of the world's ideal harmonic order, which was important until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After the chapters on divine names and cosmic anthropology, this chapter features the speculative concepts of a theology of creation. It is again closely related to Philonian cosmology. Philo imagined a primordial divine plan before the creation of the real, extended world. This idea was developed in the cabalist book *Yetzira*, was varied by Plotinus, appeared in St. Augustine's book on the Holy Trinity, and was especially important for Dionysius' concept of the divine hierarchy. It was again John Scotus Eriugena, the erudite monk at the court of Charles the Bald, who brought the idea of a primordial world into the Christian middle ages. In Ficino's theory of cosmic medicine, the original Philonian ideas were revived for the Renaissance period, and Giordano Bruno employed these ideas in his philosophical concept of an eternally emerging cosmos.

Chapter 6 on spiritual spaces concludes the treatment of the speculations on the process of creation. It investigates the theories on how God's ideas of the world became 'real' in the emergence of an extended world. This chapter addresses the theories of the emergence of space and the ideas of the extended world's beginning. Dionysius the Areopagite adopted Plotinus' idea of the darkness of the origin. The connection in the book of Genesis between the creation of light and the creation of space stimulated Christian as well as Jewish and Muslim speculation concerning the nature of light. The process of the world's becoming a harmonic unity is central for Albert the Great and his school. Renaissance philosophers inherited these speculations on space and harmony: Nicholas of Cusa's book on conjectures, Giorgio Veneto's "*De Harmonia mundi*", Agrippa von Nettesheim's "*De Occulta Philosophia*" and Giordano Bruno's speculations on infinite space both use and go beyond the patristic concept of spiritual space and harmony.

The chapter on spiritual spaces concludes 'Glory', the first section of the book. This first main part shows the stages of God's self-revelation into his creation as well as laying out the concept of the unity between philosophy and theology. For the representatives of *philosophia perennis*, this philosophy is revealed, insofar as it is part of God's creation.

The second main section of the book, 'Theology of Time', has as its subject the diverse concepts of world history within the tradition of perennial philosophy. This concept of world-time is, of course, apocalyptic. It relies completely on the Judeo-Christian concept of messianism and the Last



Judgement, but is also connected with the Platonic idea of a cyclic structure of world-time. Chapter 7, on 'The Return of Time', deals with the two antagonistic concepts of apocalypse and eternal recurrence, in relation to St. John's revelation and Origen's Apokatastasis, along with its reception by selected authors, especially John Scotus Eriugena, Giovanni Pico, Guillaume Postel and Johann Wilhelm Petersen.

Chapter 8, 'Epochs and Eras', examines the diverse concepts of the epochs in world history. It begins with the theology of history in St. Paul's letter to the Romans and then turns to the most important Christian theories of the epochs in medieval and Renaissance thought: the Venerable Bede's concept of the six epochs of the world, Joachim of Fiore's concept of the third reign, and, finally, Melanchthon's theology of history, which interpreted the German Reformation by connecting the biblical book Daniel and its four apocalyptical epochs to the fate of the Holy Roman Empire.

The entire concept of *philosophia perennis* depends on the idea of Adamite wisdom. The ninth chapter, 'Translatio Sapientiae', delineates the speculations on this tradition through the centuries. According to the principles of *philosophia perennis*, knowledge of the truth is only possible through participation in divine ideas. In Adam's original revelation, i.e. in the *lingua Adamica*, this knowledge was completed. Since no philosophy of mere human origin could generate the truths of Adamite wisdom, it was essential that this wisdom be transmitted through history. Furthermore, if it could be identified in the most ancient sources, this Edenic wisdom could contribute to the process of making the world more perfect. For this reason, *philosophia perennis*, which was based on biblical revelation, required a continuous tradition as much as revealed religion itself. This is why the continuity of biblical wisdom had to be guaranteed by the historiography of the church fathers and the historians of perennial philosophy. Thus St. Augustine attempted to show the continuity of Edenic wisdom, as did Roger Bacon when he renewed the encyclopaedic knowledge of the church fathers. In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the problem became so urgent that the Vatican librarian Annio of Viterbo faked some documents to show that there was a continuous tradition from Adam via Noah to the pagan kings, and his follower Steuco tried to combine all ancient theological traditions into one *philosophia perennis*. This concept of ideal Edenic wisdom continued to play an important role in the baroque encyclopaedic movement. Johann Heinrich Alsted, the most important encyclopaedist of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and the teacher of Comenius, was still trying to regain the Adamite language as a key to universal wisdom.

With the concepts of universal history and wisdom, the reconstruction of the concept of *philosophia perennis* is complete. There are of course many other authors who participate in this concept, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,

e.g. Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kircher, Johann Amos Comenius and others. The aim of this book on philosophia perennis however is to provide a first perspective on this hitherto neglected pattern of early modern thought.

## A. INTRODUCTION



## **FANTASY AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF IMAGINATION**

### **1. PIOUS IMAGINATION AS A CONDITION FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL LITERATURE**

The question of accessibility presents the first difficulty. Why should spirituality be an interesting subject for analysis? Spirituality is not the topic of 'real' philosophy, insofar as philosophy is concerned with human emancipation. On the contrary, the literature that deals with spirituality is not enlightened, in the sense of the Age of Enlightenment, and has little in common with the project of human and philosophical autonomy. The subject of spiritual literature is human dependency on worlds defined as being beyond and exceeding the earthly one. The worlds of spirituality are fantastical, deriving from revelations that cannot be critically investigated. Yet they must nonetheless be taken for real because of their impact on human behaviour, even if there is no other proof of their existence than the belief in their revelation. Their existence can only be proven in a logical circle: They are held to be real since they are believed to have effects. This belief may be the particular effect they have, and this is indeed precisely what believers attribute to the spiritual world. Thus there is no possible critical or emancipatory access to the world of spirituality.

What does the spiritual world consist of? It consists of what is recounted about it, of myths, revelations, experiences. Its psychological status lies between pure fiction and banal, tangible reality. Spiritual literature cannot be considered truly fictional literature, for those who have the experience of spirituality are not like poets who produce their work imaginatively. The world of spirituality is revealed, not produced. Yet with the help of the imagination it can be perceived, in the same way literary and aesthetic worlds can be perceived. The world of spiritual literature must be accepted as reality by the imagination. One difference remains between the spiritual and the fictional world: The spiritual world based on revelation does not depend, from the believer's point of view, on human imagination, but on

revelation that has been accepted by a public audience. Theology is thus not the hermeneutics of a fantastical world, but it relies on fantasy to imagine and analyse revealed theological worlds.

If, then, the spiritual world is to be interpreted in terms of its own credibility, its semi-existence between tangible reality and poetic fiction has to be accepted and taken seriously. This is, incidentally, the principal prerequisite for understanding any religious phenomenon. If religion is not taken seriously, it cannot be understood, it can only be denounced. It is the same with spirituality. Anyone who is interested in more than merely dismissing as nonsense the vast literature on spirituality in the Western tradition must accept this particular form of virtual reality. Such an acceptance does not imply that this reality is necessarily believed to be 'true' in any defined way, but that it is to be understood as a fantastical condition of human behaviour.

Spirituality is part of Western intellectual history. Ideas themselves can be said to have their place in the spiritual realm. They do not reside in external reality; they are real in the human mind, and motivate human behaviour, habits and acts. Without ideas, political movements and politics in general are inconceivable. It is this effectivity of ideas, the impact of these spiritual entities, that extends far beyond the limits of social reality. All human desire is dependent on a world that does not yet exist, for what is desired has not yet attained reality, and can only become real in an imagined future. The existence of that which is wished for resides only in the imagination.

It is precisely this kind of imagination that is needed to determine what spirituality is. Imagination is required to conceive of a world that, in a certain way, is a counter-world to the 'real' one. Only if such a counter-world exists, does the 'real' one receive a temporal dimension. The world to come - the future of the present world - is, of course, only imagined. The same is true for the historical worlds that were real in the past. In the present they do not exist, except in the imagination. Spiritual reality is thus not far removed from present reality; it rather constitutes the frame of present reality, which is interlaced with fantasies, desires, wishes and memories.

The spiritual world is, however, more than just the fantastical and historical framework of the present. It has the magic and the power of myth. Those who live in this world depend on its images; mythical events make up the background to their daily present. Their future is measured by images deriving from past events and stories. To understand the power of these worlds, it is not sufficient for the interpreter to reconstruct their fantastical imagery. In order to grasp the power of the images, the interpreter must in some way participate in the beliefs of those who are frightened and fascinated by them. This is a commonplace in the study of the history of

religion, and remains true for the study of Western spirituality as well. To understand another's devotion, one must be capable of devotion oneself, and one has to know what it means to be frightened if one is to understand the fright caused by revelation. At the same time, the interpreter must maintain a certain distance from the phenomenon that he describes. He is not a preacher and is not proclaiming a new gospel. What he requires is a pious imagination as well as some inner distance from his subject. Only then is it possible for him to understand.

How can this pious fantasy be understood? The imagination can be said to have an inner eye. Something can be schematically visible to it without being real. According to Aristotle, this is also the case with memory. In the act of remembering, something is represented without thereby becoming real, and to imagine is precisely to construct inner images from the fragments of memory. The images concocted by the imagination make up a whole inner world – the world of memory as well as fantasy.

The question 'How can one imagine something that does not really exist in the external world?' presupposes such a virtual reality. It is only by virtue of the imagination that the absent may become the present. Images of fantasy are composed from the patterns of experience. The virtual reality of the imagination thus needs fragments of experienced reality in order to refigure them into a new, fantastical world. The fragments of experience composed in this inner kaleidoscope are arranged into a new whole. The worlds of memory and imagination are of course spiritual ones. The fantastical world can only be constructed because it has a spiritual existence. It has its sole reality in the process of being remembered and, at the same time, imagined.

The spiritual world, however, cannot be reduced to the world of memory. The former contains a specific religious intensity, and is made up of specific topoi. The topoi of the fantastical world of spirituality are fragments of experienced revelations. Revelation is the prerequisite of spirituality, and thus the experience of revelation provides the themes and motifs of the spiritual world. The experience of revelation differs from everyday experience; it has a specific character. It is entwined with personal fear and with the terror of those who had to suffer because of the revelation. The weight and sorrow of the experience of revelation, the pain suffered as a result of it, makes it absolutely necessary give a name to the nameless horror it evokes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Usener, Hermann: *Götternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung*. Bonn<sup>2</sup> 1929. Blumenberg, Hans: *Arbeit am Mythos*. Frankfurt 1979. W. Schmidt-Biggemann: *Diesseits namenlosen Entsetzens*. In: *Neue deutsche Hefte* 171 (1981) pp. 570-579. (Engl.: Blumenberg, Hans: *Work on Myth*. Trans. by Robert M. Wallace. Cambridge, Mass. 1985. W. Schmidt-Biggemann: *This Side of Nameless Terror*. *Religion* (1986), 16, pp. 375-381.)

Accounting and naming are the first steps in the process of bringing experiences of revelation into a structure. Only in the specific organization of memory can the suffering arising from revelation be borne, tolerated and finally - this is the task of theology - supervised. In this process of supervised memory, religious experience is transformed from its original character, and suffering re-emerges as regularly celebrated ritual feasts. This intellectual management of religiously ordered experience is the specific task of theology, which is doubtlessly the oldest method of organizing and arranging religious memories.

The particular force of religious experience is reputed, both by those who suffer and those who manage it, to derive from the power that caused it; the experience is conditioned by whatever caused the sufferer fear and trembling. The reason for the suffering is absolutely new for the sufferer at the moment of the experience. In a second step, the believer remembers the absolute novelty of his experience, and in this act of memory the intensity of the first experience is weakened. This process of weakening persists in acts of commemoration. In this way, through ritual memorizing, the original experiences become worship and theology. This is the characteristic way of managing experiences that would otherwise be unbearable, and it is through these ritualised memories that a fantastical world emerges, making up the imagery of spirituality. Spirituality itself participates in the management of the ritual commemoration of powerful religious experiences, both in the memories of mourning as well as in celebrations.

Religious memory manages religious experience by bringing it into a spatial and temporal order. It arranges the experiences according to the holy places where the events first took place. These localities, and their attendant experiences, are named, and it thereby becomes possible to identify the holy localities and their specific powers. The newly named gods can then be related to each other by a telling of their stories. The various stories can be brought together in an overarching account, structured according to a linear time frame, laying the groundwork for the genealogies of gods and the heroes.

The temporal structure of these genealogies implies the possibility of placing the gods in an order according to their respective powers. This follows from the fact that it was the power of the gods that was first felt in the experience of revelation. As a result, a hierarchical order is derived from the genealogical lists of both gods and heroes. Having made explicit the order of divine rule, the power of the gods can be worshipped in an appropriate way.

This ordering according to the names and powers of the various gods plays a special role in the crucial leap from polytheistic to monotheistic theology. This move is not in itself surprising: A polytheistic order



according to the various powers of the gods always includes the predominance of one god, and it is this predominant god who must be worshipped first (e.g. Zeus in Greek mythology). The dynamics of professional theology, whose main task it is to ensure that the gods are appropriately worshipped, makes it likely that the most important god is also the most venerated one. But a crisis nonetheless has to take place before one god is recognised as the only true one. This crisis manifests itself in a battle of the gods, which did not occur in Greek mythology, though it did in the Jewish religion, in the battle between Yahweh and Baal fought by Elijah (Kings 1:18), and in the time of the prophet Isaiah and the Babylonian exile of the people of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Here the theological ordering of the experience of the gods was transformed in a revolutionary way. The god of the Israelites was declared to be the only real – albeit still concealed – almighty God. This absolute God was held to be the creator of the world and the Lord of all gods and kingdoms, mighty in heaven and on earth. This discovery of the one cosmic God who was also Lord of the entirety of history – the past, the present and the future – occurred as early as the 6th century B.C. It consisted of a theological structuring that provided the foundation for a fantastical world. This world was experienced as real as a result of its political and religious power, which was suffered by those who were in possession of the true revelation.

This ordering of religious experience required both theological and philosophical imagination. The experiences of political and religious power could only be borne and managed by a pious imagination. It is this very imagination that also makes historiography possible, insofar as it is the fantastical representation of past events. The imagination must manage the internal experiences of power, and arrange them into an order with an internal plausibility. In a word, theological and historical accounts of power require a plausible imagination.

What does a plausible imagination mean? In one way or another, the events recounted are products of memory. Remembering is always a process of rearranging, and if memories are recounted in the form of stories, they have to be arranged in a specific way. They must follow the order of a ritual or literary genre. The genre defines the rules of plausibility by arranging the *topoi* that are recounted and accepted. Plausibility derives its internal structure from the literary and ritual rules of memory.

Ritual and literary plausibility constitutes an arrangement in which the imagination can reproduce the images of memory. Plausibility has a dual meaning. First, it is the internal arrangement of fantastical *topoi*, which follow a certain logic. The internal logic of fantastical arrangements is quite simple: The arrangement must offer a feasible, non-contradictory world. It

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<sup>2</sup> See ch. 8, 4a.

may be filled with miracles or hitherto unheard of stories, but it has to in some way be linked to the real world. It has to mirror its logic – the logic of compossibility. This requires that things and persons must fit together, making up a complex scenario of patterns and actions, which is identifiable in terms of some kind of explanatory apparatus. This is the internal side of the imagination.

The external side is the reception of the fantastical stories by their audience. This communication participates in the genre of both religious and political historiography. Naturally a political and religious audience has an epistemological framework into which accounts of fantastical experiences have to fit. This framework can be enlarged gradually, but it cannot be rearranged abruptly. An abrupt disruption of expectations confuses and disorients the audience. They will judge the accounts of pious imagination to be implausible, reject the prophet and his prophecy, or at best label them as incomprehensible. In case of such a conflict, the prophets are considered to be eccentric and foolish.

If, on the other hand, the epistemological framework is gradually enlarged and an acceptable model is worked out, thereby transforming the old model, this process is accepted as an explanation for how certain topoi, arguments, and images come together. In that case, the pious storyteller is celebrated as a gifted interpreter. Such an estimation includes the judgement that his interpretation is plausible, which in this context means nothing other than being acceptable to its audience.

One of the most successful topoi of philosophical explanations of the world is the account that one God - the main discovery and invention of theologians and philosophers - created the world. According to this explanation, the creation followed a plan, and thus is considered to have come about in two steps. The first was the *plan* as conceived of by the monotheistic God. This first level of the creation of the world could be interpreted as being the *perfect world of God's ideas*, which was then realised in the second step, the *creation of the material world*.

This interpretation, actually a combination of the Jewish theology of creation combined with Platonic ideas, was first put forth by the Jewish-Hellenistic philosopher Philo of Alexandria in the first century A.D., and was highly successful. The twofold world of Judeo-Christian pious metaphysics was the first to construct the world of ideas as a peculiar sphere between God and his world. This sphere was identified as the world of spirituality. The ideas of this world were not material; they had rather a particular kind of existence, which was neither strictly divine nor strictly mundane. They were spiritual, and it is this existence of the spirit that constitutes the idealism of the Jewish-Christian tradition.

Imagination is required to make this idealistic world appear. The ideas making up this story, which is essentially the account of how spirit became extended reality, can only be recognised in the story of the creation of the world. Just as for any other past event, this crucial account of the world's beginning and significance is only possible with the help of the imagination. It is therefore important to examine what role the imagination played in the theological and philosophical perceptive apparatus as it offered an explanation of the world. It must be made clear how imagination and memory were considered to be connected and were constitutive elements of pious theological thinking. This is all the more important, as it is still the unique achievement of edifying literature to combine imagination and piety.

## 2. A SHORT HISTORY OF IMAGINATION

The Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus pointed out that “in perception, there is an element of judging; in thinking there is something fantastical, since there is an impulse and an appetite to follow fantasy and reason”.<sup>3</sup> In Plotinus' psychology, fantasy ranks below reason, but it is nevertheless clear that all sensual knowledge is specifically related to fantasy. Plotinus distinguishes between *noema*, *logos* and *phantastikon*. *Noema* is a notion beyond language and *logos* mediates between *noema* and *phantastikon*. It is the *logos* that turns the inner *noema* outward and produces the perception of the *phantastikon* in memory. Plotinus conceives of two different faculties: The higher and nobler one is the *nous*, the faculty of notions, the lower one consists of the senses, of memory, and of fantasy. Plotinus describes two different orientations in the lower faculty of sensory knowledge. In the process of perceiving, an image outside of reality is given a name. This denoting name is transmitted to the *nous*, the faculty of notions. Here it becomes a *noema*, a notion of the original thing. In the process of representation, the direction is reversed – this is the act of memory. The *noema* is either given its old name or a new one, and the memory represents this name with an image. This process can only occur with the help of fantasy, for in memory the *noema* must be reimagined. Thus fantasy is indispensable for every process of memory. Plotinus asserts a correspondence between the process of perceiving, where the lower faculty of knowledge provides sensory information, and the act of remembering, where this lower faculty provides a fantastical representation of the past. Consequently, the difference between *noema* and *phantastikon* consists in

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<sup>3</sup> Plotinus: Enneade IV, 3, 23. See G. Camassa in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* s.v. Phantasie.

temporality: As a notion, a *noema* is always present in thinking; the *phantastikon* is only perceivable when it is reproduced in memory.<sup>4</sup>

It was St. Augustine who recognised the importance of imagination and memory for every cognition, and it was he who emphasised its specific religious importance. Among the competing religious domains, where various fantasies, *topoi*, and notions constituted different fantastical spiritual worlds, Augustine claimed that the imagination of his Christian faith was the only true one. For him, the truth of memory, and thus of the imagination, depends on its accordance with ‘reality’. This accordance is simple if it proceeds from a simple, unequivocal concept of nature. As a Christian, Augustine must assert just such an unequivocal concept of nature, which has been created according to God’s will and knowledge. In this case ‘reality’ has a defined meaning, because it is fixed in God’s plan. Thus fantastical imagery can only be true if it is in accordance with the theological presuppositions about reality. If this accordance is not achieved, the fantastical worlds that do not share the concept of creation – the Greek or Roman religions for example – must be wrong. Originating from the will of man, they are held to be lies. “Who, for instance, has ever seen a black swan? Therefore, nobody remembers it. But who cannot imagine one? For it is easy to stain that figure, which we have come to know by seeing, with a black colour, which we have seen none the less in other bodies. And because we have seen both, we remember both. I do not remember a four-footed bird because I have never seen one, but it is very easy for me to contemplate such a fantasy. I simply add to some flying thing that I have seen, two other feet such as I have likewise seen. Therefore, while we conceive as bound together that which we remember to have perceived singly, we do not seem to conceive that which we remember; yet we actually do this under the direction of memory from which we draw everything, and then arrange it in many different ways and shapes according to our will.”<sup>5</sup>

St. Augustine here discovers a decisive difference between imagination and memory. Even if imagination is necessary for the reproduction of images in the memory, there is a potential in the imagination that allows man to produce a world that is not the one he remembers. This potential of memory and imagination can confuse ‘real’ and fantastical worlds. For Augustine, it is the task of the will to discern between fantastical and real worlds. For the real world, being God’s creation, possesses an unshakable stability that is the true measure of every fantastical, untrue world. St. Augustine therefore forbids fantasies that are not rooted in the reality of

<sup>4</sup> Plotinus: *Enneade* IV, III, 30: “The logos, the revealer, and the transmitter from nous to fantasy shows the *noema* as in a mirror, and so the apprehension of it shows the notion and its memory.”

<sup>5</sup> Augustinus: *De Trinitate* XI, 10, tr. Stephen McKenna. Washington 1963.

creation. Writing as he did in late antiquity, his targets are the stories of classical mythology, which do not correspond to his monopolistic Christian interpretation of the world.

The Christian claim to a monopolistic interpretation of the world also depended on the imagination. The Christian view of creation considered the world's past as well as its future, the coming judgement. Both the past and the future of the world constitute its meaning, which can only come about through fantastical knowledge. The meaning of the past and the hope of the future cannot be perceived in the external world. A perception of the world restricted to its present state alone cannot find meaning in it; it is only the knowledge of the history of the world that gives it meaning.

For St. Augustine, the meaning of world history lies in faith. The world's temporality is on the one hand a mystery of memory, but for the believer the future already has a shape. In the 11<sup>th</sup> book of his *Confessions*, Augustine describes this relationship of time, memory, and imagination: "Yet, when past things are recounted as true, they are brought forth from memory, not as the actual things which went on in the past, but as words formed from images of these things; and these things have left their traces, as it were, in the mind while passing through sense perception. Whether the same explanation also may be given for the prediction of things so that presently existing images of things which do not yet exist are perceived beforehand, I confess, O my God, that I do not know. This I know clearly: we often think ahead about our future actions and this premeditation is present, while the action which we think over beforehand is not yet in existence, for it is in the future."<sup>6</sup>

The imagination, however, remains a dangerous faculty for Augustine, for it is too closely related to heathen mythology. The imagination therefore needs the directive force of faith. Theologically, the imagination runs a great risk, for it does not submit to an internal measurement of truth. Augustine's goal is not a beautiful and impressive imagination, but the certainty of faith and eternal bliss.

It took a long time, more than half a millennium, to transform the theological devaluation of imagination into an appreciation. Two things have to be made clear in order to understand the career of fanciful imagination as it came to be positively esteemed. First, how the world of *fantasmata* was constituted, and second, how the revaluation of imagination from theologically dangerous faculty into faith-supporting virtue took place.

The distinctive feature of fantastical knowledge was that its world, although it was not 'real,' nevertheless had an important impact on the judgement of the real world. It was connected with the real world while at the same time being an anti-world. Its truth was difficult to define, but its

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<sup>6</sup> Augustine: *Confessions* XI, 18, trans. Vernon J. Bourke. New York 1953.

images and themes had a disturbing presence in reality. In this respect, the fantastical world and the dream world were alike. Dreaming and imagining seem to have much in common. Both use images, topics, and semantics from perceived reality as it is conserved in memory, and reconstruct them in a counter-world that claims to be connected to the real one.

It follows therefore that the interpretation of dreams also served to explain the real world, and that dreams were held to be divine. For as long as human thought has existed, the interpretation of dreams was one of the tasks of divinity, for the dreams' images bore a divine message, whose semantics, although encrypted, were created by the imagination. The miraculous divine images of dreams were *hieroglyphs*, holy letters in the book of the world, and were perceived like fantasy images. They contained elements of mundane experience, but transcended external reality. They were signs of divine will and of divine meaning and therefore had special validity. Whoever could recognise them, perceived the divine intention in those signs, and this intention could also be interpreted as the meaning of the images. Thus fantastical knowledge and divine inspiration were analogous. Even if it was not always clear how the concealed signs of fantastical prescience were connected to reality, the awareness that they bore a secret created the irreducible aura of the imagination.

This is why the treatise of the Hellenistic Neoplatonic bishop Synesius of Cyrene,<sup>7</sup> which Marsilio Ficino translated into Latin in 1489, is so important.<sup>8</sup> In distinction to Plotinus, for Synesius the imagination is the specific capacity of knowledge to be able to perceive miraculous divine messages. Thus imagination becomes the organ of the numinous.

What then for Synesius is the specific role of imagination? It is the third part in the threefold faculty of cognition, along with the intellect and the soul. The intellect contains the ideas (Ficino translates 'species'), and the soul contains the seeds of all that can become real. The cosmic soul is thus the receptacle of the as yet undeveloped divine ideas of things. The imagination is the faculty that makes these ideas of the soul visible. In this process, the soul's faculty of imagination seizes the undeveloped divine idea

<sup>7</sup> *Peri enigmaton*; Synesius Cyrenensis *Opuscula* II, ed. Nicolaus Terzaghi, Rome 1944, pp. 143-189. Lang, Wolfram: *Das Traumbuch des Synesius von Kyrene. Übersetzung und Analyse der philosophischen Grundlagen*. Tübingen 1926 (= *Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte* 10). Gardener, Alice: *Synesius of Cyrene, Philosopher and Bishop*. London 1886. Grützmacher, Georg: *Synesios von Kyrene. Ein Charakterbild aus dem Untergang des Hellenismus*. Leipzig 1913. Theiler, Willy: *Die chaldäischen Orakel und die Hymnen des Synesius*. Halle 1942. Lacombrade, Christian: *Christian Synesios de Cyrène, hellène et chrétien*. Paris 1951. Druon, Henri: *Études sur la vie et les oeuvres des Synesius*. Paris 1859.

<sup>8</sup> Ficino, op. 1969; it was Denis Pétau who published the first critical edition of Synesius; "*Synesii Cyrenes opera omnia graece et latine*". Paris 1612. This edition was reprinted in MPG vol. 66.

of a thing and unfolds it in an image. This image of a thing is perceived and acknowledged by the sensual-fantastic part of the soul.<sup>9</sup>

It is in the imagination that the insensate, noetic idea germinates to visibility. The imagination turns the unextended, spiritual notions outwards and makes them visible to the fantastical inner eye. The imagination is the faculty that unfolds the notions of things into their images. Ficino, and later Dénys Pétau, described this process as mirroring, as a *speculation* of the unfolded notion into its visible counterpart. In this perspective, the mirror represents the doubling of an idea in a proportional extension.

Human beings thus do not perceive things by means of the intellect, rather they acknowledge the notions of things with their rational souls, and conceive them in the process of their unfolding in the imagination. The images of things, however, refer to their notions, and the notions of things refer to their creator. For Synesius, this psychology of imagination also explains the act of dreaming. The images in dreams are like the images of the unfolded ideas in the imagination. Therefore the dream images must have a certain meaning analogous to the notions of things, which are signs of God's creation. The dream images have meanings similar to the inspirations of poets, and must therefore be piously regarded as the unfoldings of divine ideas, which have not yet become externally real. Dream images indicate the divine spiritual life, which can, but not necessarily will, become real. Dreams reveal God's potential plans for the world as they are contained in the world's soul. Imagination is that soul's sensual capacity, in which the creator's plans of things first become visible. Synesius therefore argues in favour of fantasy: "If the vision of God is the highest good, then the imagination of happiness is a peculiarly distinct one. Here the sense of sensibility becomes obvious; it is the spirit of fantasy, encompassing all the senses, the first body of the soul."<sup>10</sup>

Thus fantasy is the ensemble of all the senses. It encompasses all five of them and is their *sensus communis*, their common sense.<sup>11</sup> Fantasy is therefore more transparent and more lucid than the external bodily senses. The external senses break down the unity of the sensual apparition into diverse sensual perceptions: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. Fantasy unites the different senses, and it is in the fantasy's common sense that every extended being is spiritually made into a whole image. This unity

<sup>9</sup> Text of Pétau PG 66, 1287B: "So be it demonstrated what the soul contains of the becoming ideas. They are all in it, so to speak, but those which emerge are imagined by the soul." Both Ficino and Pétau use the metaphor of the mirror in their translations; Ficino: Phantasiam illuminat, quasi speculi more, Op. 1970; Pétau: Et phantasiae velut speculum quoddam objicit (MPG 66, 1282 C). In this speculative objection they are perceived by the imagination.

<sup>10</sup> PG 66, 1289 B, C.

<sup>11</sup> Ficino: "Phantasticus ille spiritus sensorium et communissimum" (Op. 1970).

reminds us of the divine notion of things, and so the unity of every fantastic idea reminds us of the creator.

It was the Arabic philosopher Avicenna who identified the urge of fantasy to partake in reason, in Plotinus' terms as the psychic faculty of common sense, the *sensus communis*. Avicenna relied on Aristotle, who, in his treatise "On memory", had located the *sensus communis* between the senses and reason. The common sense unites the different impressions of the senses into an image of the entire object. It is not merely one impression which makes up the image and hence notion of a thing, but rather the impressions of all senses - optical, acoustical, olfactory, haptical, and, as far as possible, impressions of taste - which are united into one image. It is the specific ability of the common sense to produce this image. The common sense's productive potency works analogously to the faculty of fantasy. Both produce a schematic image of a whole thing, so that even if there is only one sensual impression, the whole could be imagined, e.g. a bird from its singing or a dog from the sound of its barking. These patterns are preserved in memory and are available for the production of memories, as well as, in the case of fantasy, the production of a virtual reality.

Avicenna explained this working of common sense, memory, and fantasy with the theory of the brain's three ventricles.<sup>12</sup> This theory was widespread in antique, medieval, and early modern psychology. The front ventricle was said to contain common sense and fantasy, the central ventricle reason, and the back ventricle memory. Thus a slight tap on the back of the head activates the memory and brings its images forward to the common sense.

Concerning this common sense, Avicenna distinguishes between external and internal perception and between the perception of forms and intentions. External perception perceives external things by means of the senses. Internal perception realises consciously what it receives and passes it on to the memory. Both are perceptions of forms. Intention, however, goes in the opposite direction; it is the spontaneous quest of the soul in search of something. Thus the soul focuses its attention on something that is still absent. In order to recognise the object of intention, the imagination

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<sup>12</sup> On the history of the three chambers of the brain see Schipperges, Heinrich: *Die Welt des Auges. Zur Theorie des Sehens und Kunst des Schauens*. Basle, Vienna 1978, esp. pp. 11-13. Medieval sources: Augustine, *De spiritu et anima*, PL 40, 728ff.: "Tres namque sunt ventriculi cerebri: Unus anterior, a quo omnis sensus, alter posterius, a quo omnis motus. Tertius inter utrumque medius: id est rationalis." Ibid. 795: "In prima parte cerebri vis animalis vocatur phantastica, id est imaginativa [...] In media parte cerebri vis animalis vocatur rationalis [...] in ultima parte vocatur memorialis." See also William of Conches, PL 172, 95a/b. Janet Coleman has presented a very solid study on "Ancient and Medieval Memories," Cambridge 1992, where she traces the philosophical theories on memory from Plato to Ockam; Mary Carruthers "The book of Memory" (1990) deals with the functioning of memory in medieval society and has a more sociological than philosophical emphasis. Neither connects memory to fantasy.



produces a schematic image composed of memory fragments. Avicenna: “The difference between the perception of a form and the perception of an intention is the following: A form is something which is perceived from the inward as well as the outward sense; the outward sense perceives it first and passes it to the inward one. Intention is what the soul acknowledges from the sensual things, although the exterior sense did not perceive it just before.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus the active living power of intention needs fantasy. It is the same faculty that is required in the uniting of all sensual impressions into one schematic image. Perception takes the path from external experience to internal memory, while intention runs the opposite way from internal memory to a preconception of external reality. Here fantasy must reproduce the schematic image so that the soul can recognise what it is intending. This faculty, which produces schematic images through common sense and reproduces them through fantasy, is located in the front ventricle of the brain.

The schematic images of things are prepared and preserved in the memory. Memory is the faculty of reproducing absent things. What is preserved in memory becomes the semantics of fantasy, and it depends on the intention of the soul what semantic elements become activated. It is possible to recompose these elements according to their original associations and thereby reproduce reality in the memory, but this is not always the case. Fantasy can produce an image that has no counterpart in perceived reality. This is why a faculty is required which can discern between fantastical and real images – the faculty of judgement.<sup>14</sup>

Albert of Orlamünde, in his “*Philosophia pauperum*”, a compendium of philosophy based on Albert the Great’s as well as on Avicenna’s psychology, concisely describes the process of memory. Imagination for him is part of cognition, and so he distinguishes between true and false imagination. True imagination is part of the intellect, while false imagination, which divides the images and composes them *ad libitum*, is part of the animal soul. “This faculty creates camps in Spain or fakes chimeras

<sup>13</sup> Avicenna latinus. Liber de anima I, 5, ed. De Riet Louvain, Leiden 1972, p. 86: “Differentia inter apprehendere formam et apprehendere intentionem est haec, quod forma est illa, quam apprehendit sensus interior et exterior simul, sed sensus exterior primo apprehendit eam et postea reddit eam sensui interiori; [...] intentio autem est is, quod apprehendit anima de sensibili, quamvis non prius apprehendat illud sensus exterior.”

<sup>14</sup> Avicenna: De anima I, V Ibid. pp. 87f.: “Virium autem apprehendentium occultarum vitiarum prima est phantasia quae est sensus communis; quae est vis ordinata in prima concavitate cerebri, recipiens per se ipsam omnes formas que imprimuntur quinque sensibus et redduntur ei. Post hanc est imaginatio vel formans, quae est etiam vis ordinata in extremo anterioris concavitas cerebri, retinens quod recipit sensu communi a quinque sensibus et remanet in ea post remotionem illorum sensibilium.”

and goat-deer (hircocervus).”<sup>15</sup> According to Albert, the faculty of imagination works as follows: “What the five senses transmit, the common sense passes or gives to the virtue of forming, which is the imagination. Imagination lays it down and retains it, and since it has the faculty of multiplying sensible forms; the acknowledging imagination or forming faculty turns to the forms which are in the realm of imagination, in order to repose them or to resolve them, since they are subjected to it. But often it makes mistakes in its composition or resolution, in dreams as well as while awake, since it mixes real experiences and [falsely] attributed sensations.”<sup>16</sup>

Since imagination is a faculty that cannot easily be controlled, a specific judgement is required to distinguish between ‘real’ and ‘false’ memories. This faculty of judgement, which also belongs to reason, is located in the central ventricle of the brain. According to Avicenna, the image is judged in two ways. The first judgement is theoretical and follows the laws of reason and compossibility. The second is a practical judgement according to the affects of love and fear, such as in the pronouncement: “The wolf must be feared in memory of the lamb.”<sup>17</sup> The rational faculties have their own laws regulating the compossibility of memory compositions, so that associated memories can serve as reconstructions of past experiences. The judgement of affects is completely dependent on past experience and therefore on memory, as affects always bring to memory past events and transform them into future expectations. Thus memory, formal and affective judgement, common sense, and fantasy, constitute the processes of memory and imagination. They open up the realm of remembered experience as well as the counter-world of fantasy.

The world of fantasy has its own claim to truth that is not dependent on the ‘real’ world. The presence of an external object is not required for the world of fantasy, which, despite being composed by the semantic elements of memory, is not judged by the laws of remembered ‘real’ associations. Thus fantasy constructs a virtual world composed of differently associated memories. This world is always affect-laden, as precisely those events are remembered and recomposed fantastically which were first experienced with

<sup>15</sup> Albertus de Orlamünde: *Philosophia pauperum seu isagoge in libris Aristotelicis physicorum, de coelo et mundo, de generatione et corruptione, meteorum et de anima*. In: *Albertus Magnus Opera omnia V*, ed. A. Borgnet. Paris 1890, p. 518b.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 518bf.: “Nam sensus communis reddit sive dat virtuti formabili quae est imaginatio, quasi ad reponendum, quidquid ei tradunt sensus exteriores: imaginatio vero reponit et retinet, habet enim virtutem multiplicandi formas sensibiles: virtus vero cogitativa, sive imaginativa, sive formativa convertitur ad formas quae sunt in imaginatione ad ponendum eas et resolvendum, quoniam ei subjectae sunt. Errat autem in sua compositone vel resolutione saepe in somnio sive in vigilia, componendo sensatum per se ad sensatum per accidens.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 89f.

fear or joy, and the fantastical world becomes associated with these distinctive experiences.

Fantastical worlds thus affectively charged can impact and superimpose themselves onto the judgements about merely remembered reality. Every experience becomes more complex since it is not only the object of a simple process of knowledge and memory. Thanks to the fantastical counter-world, the elements of nearly every experience are understood as signs and symbols of other worlds, and every experience has several different meanings. Precisely this phenomenon allows for the possibility of coming up with a new perspective on the affective judgement of experience. If the judgement of experience depends upon a consistent imaginative world of affective strength, experiences in turn are also perceived as signs of the world of imagination. How then can this world be distinguished from a different one claiming to be more realistic?

It is for this reason that the judgements of experience also ‘depend on a point of view.’ Because of its powerful religious experiences, the distinctly pious point of view constituted a particular perspective on the world. The internal religious world provided the entire framework for judging the external one. Thus external experience was defined by the meaning of internal experience. The pious experience encountered nature, judged it according to revelation, and imagined things according to their meanings in the theology of creation and redemption.

Bonaventure’s “*Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*” (“Guidebook of the Soul on its Way to God”) is important for the study of the fantastical reinterpretation of experience. In this exemplary book of medieval edifying literature, the great Franciscan interpreted the five senses as gates of revelation. It is through the five senses that man, the microcosm, receives elementary creation<sup>18</sup>. Bonaventure’s theory of cognition proceeds from the sensual forms of things as they are received and judged by the mind. The point of his edifying psychology is that the sensual perception of elementary creation makes the soul joyous. Bonaventure analyses the sensual cognition of internal judgement. In the process of perception, it is judged whether something is white or black – this is the task of the external senses. The inner sense does not only judge affectively according to joy or fear, but also has to answer the question of why the soul is joyful. Bonaventure’s analysis of the nature of joy as connected with sensual perception represents, in the Christian tradition, an outstanding document of the revaluation of sensual

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<sup>18</sup> Bonaventure: *Itinerarium* II, 3: “Homo igitur, qui dicitur minor mundus, habet quinque sensus quasi quinque portas, per quas intrat cognitio omnium, quae sunt in mundo sensibili, in animam ipsius. Nam per visum intrant corpora sublimia et luminosa et cetera colorata, per tactum vero corpora solida et terrestria. Per tres vero sensus intermedios intrant intermedia, ut per gustum aquea, per auditum aera, per odorium vaporabilia, aliquid de aera, aliquid de ignea seu calida, sicut patet in fumo ex aromatibus resoluto.”

joy. The reason for joy, according to him, is proportion. Correct proportion is the reason for harmony, beauty and sanity.<sup>19</sup>

The joy caused by the commodious and salutary display of things arises because the soul is able to perceive them according to the proportions of their harmonious essences. Bonaventure emphasises that this perception is not due to fantasy, but derives from the true virtue of things.<sup>20</sup>

For Bonaventure, proportion is a relationship of numbers, and is perceived in reality by the faculty of reason. “Therefore, those laws by which we judge with certainty about all sense objects that come to our knowledge, since they are laws that are infallible and indubitable to the intellect of him who apprehends, since they cannot be eradicated from the memory of him who recalls, for they are always present, since they do not admit of refutation or judgement by the intellect of him who judges, because, as St. Augustine says, ‘No one judges of them but by them,’ these laws must be changeless and incorruptible, since they are necessary.”<sup>21</sup> The apprehension of sensual nature and its judgement according to its numerical proportion<sup>22</sup> are the first two steps “by which we are led to behold God in vestiges, like the two wings drooping about the feet of the Seraph, we can gather that all creatures in this visible world lead the spirit of the contemplative and wise man to the eternal God. For creatures are shadows, echoes, and pictures of that first, most powerful, most wise, and most perfect Principle, of that first eternal Source, Light, Fullness, and most sufficient, exemplary, and ordering Art. They are the vestiges, images, and displays presented to us for the continuation of God, and the divinely given signs wherein we can see God. These creatures are exemplars, or rather illustrations offered to souls as yet untrained, and immersed in the senses, so that through these sensible things they see they may be transported to the intelligible which they do not see, as through the signs to what is signified”.<sup>23</sup>

The meaning of the present world resides in its function as a sign of creation. It is not the apprehended thing as such which is of interest. The joy

<sup>19</sup> Ibid II, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. II, 9

<sup>21</sup> Bonaventure: *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, II, 9 *The Journey of the Mind to God*. Trans. Philotheus Boehner O.F.M. Indianapolis / Cambridge 1993, pp. 14f. Quotation comes from St. Augustine: *De lib. arb.* II, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Bonaventure, of course, appreciates the importance of the number seven. On the connection of numeric proportion and harmony, especially concerning the number seven, the scale of tones, the spheres and the numbers of the week, see Chailley, Jacques: *Histoire musicale du moyen âge*. Paris 1950, esp. pp. 19-24. Walker, Daniel Pickering.: *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*. London 1958. *Studies of the Warburg Institute*. Vol. 22, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Bonaventure: *Itinerarium II*, 11. Tr. Boehner p. 16. The allusion is to the wings of seraphim (Isaiah 6:2).

in perceiving outside nature arises because the traces and vestiges of God become visible, and along with them proportion and beauty. Sensual apperception as such is blind and meaningless. Only the wings of the soul can show the transcendent origin of the sensual phenomena and remind us of their origin in the divine archetypes. Pious fantasy remembering the theological history of created things does not produce empty images but meaningful imaginations. They are not vain because they are signs indicating their origin and their anticipated future. Nevertheless, the images of pious perception remain fantastical, for they perceive what is not perceivable physically: the past and future of present things. "For creatures signify the invisible things of God: partly, because God is the Origin, Exemplar, and End of every creature, and every way a sign of the end to which it leads; partly by their own power of representation; partly because of their prophetic prefiguring; partly because of angelic operation; partly also by virtue of supernatural institution."<sup>24</sup>

This is a remarkable dialectic: The more highly the things of the world are esteemed, the more they become signs of their own theological history. The world of the five senses is no longer interpreted in its sensual presence alone, but as an indicator of another world. This world of sensual indicators reveals the world as the sign of its creator. Thus the sensual world shows the signs of a world that must be constructed by pious fantasy in order to determine its real meaning.

Nicholas of Cusa analysed to what extent pious fantasy constructs the world of perception from the signs delivered through the five senses. The cardinal imagines a cosmographer who constructs his own inner world by arranging various pieces of sensual information into a picture and model of the world. This allegory of the imagination works as follows: "The cosmographer is a perfect living being with senses and intellect, and his inner city has five gates, namely the senses. The messengers of the whole world enter these gates, and they bring messages of the world's disposition in the following order: Those who bring news from light and colour enter the gate of seeing, those who report from tone and sound through the gate of hearing, the ones of odour through the port of smell, those of savours through the port of taste, those of heat, cold and other tangibles through the port of touch. The cosmographer sits there and takes notes from all that is reported to him so that he possesses the descriptions of the sensible world collected in his city. If one gate of the city is closed permanently, for example the one of seeing, there will be a defect in the world's description, since there is no entrance for the messengers of the visible. Then the description will not mention the sun, the stars, light, the colours of men, animals, trees, towns, and larger parts of the world's beauties. If the gate of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. II, 12; trans. Boehner p. 16.

hearing is closed, the description will not contain speech, songs, melodies, etc. The same will be the case with the other senses. Therefore the cosmographer makes every effort to have the gates open, to receive the information of new messengers, and to make his description more and more true.”<sup>25</sup>

This image corresponds only in part to Bonaventure’s perception of the world’s harmony. Nicholas is no longer perceiving the world as it is. For him, the world is only accessible through signs and reports of the senses, which do not depict things as they are, but only indicate their nature. The cosmographer creates his own image from the sense data. It is in this respect that he serves as an allegory of the common sense.

In Cusa, the mind judging the data of the senses constructs an inner world, which constitutes the meaning of the outward one. When the cosmographer “has finished his description of the sensual world, he draws a map, which is ordered well and proportionally arranged so that he will not forget the messages. Then he turns to the map, releases the messenger, and closes the gates. Now he turns his mind to the world’s creator, who does not partake of the world that the cosmographer acknowledged and wrote down following the information of his messengers. This creator is the cause and maker of all things. The cosmographer acknowledges that the creator has the same relation to the world as he, the cosmographer, has to his map.”<sup>26</sup>

What does the cosmographer see with his inner eye? A sensual world in all its glory, but existing only internally, as a sign of its maker. In his inner world, everything becomes a sign and derives its meaning from its signifying nature. It is only by the light of pious judgement that the truth of perception becomes visible. “And therefore he finds the first and the closest sign of the maker in himself, where it shines more than in any other known being.”<sup>27</sup>

It is by virtue of pious fantasy that truth becomes accessible. Cusa shows how, in the imagination, the signs and their arrangement indicate the truth. The truth of things thus does not rely on their sensual simplicity, but on their meaning as divine creations. As signs, the created beings show the meaning of the world as a temporal process of beginning and fulfilment. Creation has given them their character as signs. This truth is remembered and acknowledged. It is remembered as the outward signs show the becoming and decaying of life, and it is acknowledged as contemplation shows that human beings are contingent and that only the creator God is necessary. This knowledge is only possible internally, and emerges when the intellect seizes

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<sup>25</sup> Nicholas of Cusa: *Compendium VIII*, 22 (*Opera omnia XI*, 3, ed. Decker / Bormann), Hamburg 1964, pp. 17f.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* VIII, 23, pp. 18f.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* VIII, 23, p. 19.

the image and judges it. Pious judgement opens up a perspective onto the beauty of the cosmographer's map, and it is only in its light that man is able to see the beauty of the external world.

The world as a world of signs has a specific aesthetic dimension. Since they are perceived as signs, things become exemplary. It is not the singularity of the thing that is perceived, rather every individual thing beams with the splendour of its divine origin. It has its inward splendour as the creation of the highest glory. Whoever is gifted with pious fantasy can perceive creation's aureole.

Marsilio Ficino used Platonic philosophy to explain pious aesthetic insight into the essence of things. For him, fantasy is more than common sense unifying sense data. Fantasy is the ability to perceive the whole image and judge it according to notions and values. Ficino also follows Augustine's theory of perception, but departs from it when he describes the images of fantasy as real, beautiful archetypes. Here he adopts Synesius' and Bonaventure's ideas concerning the beauty of things as conceived in the mind of God. The primordial archetypes constitute the meaning and thus the truth of external things. The truth of outward perception does not consist in the conformity between acknowledged archetypes and external things, but rather lies entirely in the knowledge of the archetype, the perfect species showing God's traces in the things present.

Ficino explains this by considering the archetype of Plato. Even more than an indication of Ficino's love of his ideal teacher, this indicates the assimilation of Platonic philosophy by Christian teaching, as Bonaventure had emphasised it. It also underscores Ficino's claim that in his perennial philosophy, Platonic wisdom and Christian revelation teach the same truth.

In the process of cognition the soul ascends to its maker. Ficino describes this *ascensus* using Avicenna's psychology: "For [the rational soul] ascends by way of sensation, imagination, phantasy, and understanding. Socrates sees Plato through sensation, when he acquires through the eyes an incorporeal image of Plato without Plato's matter, with this proviso however, that the eye does not see Plato except when Plato's body is itself present. Next, even when Plato is absent, Socrates thinks about him through his inner imagination: the color and shape which he had seen, the gentle voice he had heard, and everything else he had perceived through the five senses. This imagination rises above matter higher than sensation does, both because in order to think about bodies it does not need their presence, and also because as one faculty it can do whatever all the five senses do. But it is not entirely pure because it can only know what sensation perceives or conceives. Sensation is concerned with bodies, imagination with the images of bodies perceived or conceived through the senses.

Shortly thereafter Socrates begins via his phantasy to make the following judgement about the general likeness of Plato that the imagination had assembled via the five senses: ‘Who is this man with such a noble body, ample brow, broad shoulders, fair complexion, sparkling eyes, raised eyebrows, aquiline nose, small mouth, and gentle voice? This is Plato, a fine-looking, good man, and a most cherished disciple.’ You see how much Socrates’ phantasy excels his imagination. The imagination assembled the image of Plato, but it did not know to whom or to what kind of man the image applied. The phantasy now discerns that it is the image of this man called Plato, a handsome image of a good man and a friend.’<sup>28</sup>

Only fantasy can construct Plato’s beautiful image and characterise his outward appearance with moral attributes. “Namely beauty, goodness, friendship, and discipline are incorporeal and therefore not accessible for sense and imagination. They are concepts of the fantasy; they are uncorporeal and therefore they are intentional.”<sup>29</sup>

### 3. JOHANN ARNDT’S (1555-1621) THEOLOGY OF EMBLEMS

Perennial philosophy holds an intentionally benevolent view in that it acknowledges things as signs and perceives their comforting and healing meaning. There is nothing that merely shows itself; rather every thing reveals the history of its origin as well as its purpose. This view is characteristic of perennial philosophy, as is this intention for the entire era. It constructs an emblematic perspective of the world and perceives in every thing an edifying sign of a spiritual reality.

When Johann Arndt, the father of natural theology and of Lutheran pietism, explicated the theological importance of images, he delivered, *en passant*, a theory of emblems. He based this theory on the doctrine of imagination as it was developed in Neoplatonic philosophy. The background of his “Iconographia. A Thorough and Christian Account of Pictures, Their Origin, Their Right Usage, and Their Misuse in the Old and New Testaments” was a quarrel about religious pictures that arose in the theological debate between the Lutheran Jacob Andreae and Calvin’s successor Theodor Bèze. Bèze favoured the iconoclastic Calvinist position and was opposed by the Lutheran Johann Arndt, then pastor in Quedlinburg.

<sup>28</sup> Ficino: Platonic Theology. VIII, 1. Trans. Michael J.B. Allen. Vol. 2, pp. 263-265. On Ficino’s theory of fantasy cf. Bettina Dietrich. Darstellung von Einfachheit. Die Idee des Schönen in Marsilio Ficinos Grundlegung einer Metaphysik des Geistes. Munich 2000, pp 164-180.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



Arndt defended images with arguments held to be valid in the Christian tradition since Synesius and Bonaventure.

For Arndt, images are divine gifts in dreams and prophecy, and they reveal the first hieroglyphs of wisdom God hid in nature. These hieroglyphs are the signature of God's preconceptions of creation, and can be understood by all pious and wise people, Christians as well as heathens.

Arndt's treatise begins with a chapter on the origin of images. It is typical for perennial philosophy that Abrahamic and Chaldean wisdom are paralleled: "Although it is obvious from the book of Joshua chapter 24 that Abraham's father Thare served other gods, and although one could conclude from this that the Chaldeans were the first inventors of the images, which may be, since Chaldea was the seat of the primeval philosophy and of the highest natural wisdom called *Magia* which revealed its arcana through pictures and figures...it is also certain that not all pictures have their origin in idolatry and ambition, since many of them stem from God, many from nature, many from remarkable histories."<sup>30</sup>

The claim that images are of divine origin legitimises the images for use in liturgy. Arndt stands in the same tradition as Bonaventure, who described the world as a sign of God's glory and wisdom. He adds the doctrine of perennial philosophy, in which original revelation has the highest dignity of all wisdom, and therefore states the biblical age of the images. Thus his images are legitimated through ancientness and their divine origin. He divides them into three groups: "The images which stem from God are typical and mystical; those from nature are predictions and warnings; those from histories are memorials and remembrances."<sup>31</sup>

According to this small theological tract, the theological legitimation of images is the most important issue. "Scripture witnesses that pictures and the art of painting have their origin in God, namely from the visions and the divine revelations of the holy patriarchs and prophets. God revealed to them images and miraculous figures in dreams or in waking visions. So we find in God's word four kinds of prophetic and divine revelations.

First the highest mode which was only appropriate to the great prophet Moses, who could speak to God face to face because of the mystery of the Messiah<sup>32</sup>, and there was never such a prophet again.

The second mode was when God spoke through his Spirit in the hearts and the minds of the prophets. It was in that mode that the holy David was particularly famous, as can be seen in his Psalms in some places; and it was

<sup>30</sup> Arndt, Johann: *Iconographia. gründlicher und christlicher Bericht von Bildern, ihrem Ursprung, rechtem Gebrauch und Mißbrauch im Alten und Neuen Testament*, Halberstadt s.a. [1597]. pp. 12v, 13r.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 13 r/v.

<sup>32</sup> Arndt is of the opinion that God revealed to Moses all the hidden significations of the Messiah found in the Old Testament.

especially when he played the harp that he heard God speaking to him. The prophet Elijah witnessed, too, that he heard spiritual string music.

The third mode is when the prophets see visions while awake. Because of this they are called seers, since they see in their visions past, present, and future events like in a mirror. This can be learned from the prophet Zechariah; and the prophet Samuel saw how Saul's ass had been found; and the prophet Elijah saw the theft of his servant Giezi.

The fourth mode is when the prophets saw images and figures which God revealed to them in dreams and in sleep; an example is the holy Arch-Father Jacob who saw the ladder to heaven and God's angels ascending and descending."<sup>33</sup>

Arndt uses the Bible to legitimise images and also makes use of the Neoplatonic interpretation of dreams. Dreams and prophecies are considered to be enciphered divine messages: "And this is the origin of images from God which are called typical and which are made through the hands of artists after the command of God and the instructions of Moses, as they are preformed by God and visibly indicated to the prophets."<sup>34</sup>

Arndt's theory of images is basically that they are God's revealed archetypal ideas. The divine message, which is revealed through created nature, also appears in enciphered images, which must be interpreted. Besides the images legitimised in the Old and New Testaments,<sup>35</sup> and the images of church history, Arndt devotes a chapter to the images of nature. He adopts Bonaventure's idea of nature signifying its creator, and he intensifies it: Nature itself becomes an image. Thus the pious fantasy of the inventor of spiritual emblems (as Arndt was) receives its theory: "The images which have their origin in nature are of specific and admirable benefit in spiritual and pagan quarrels. So behold, nature imitates its creator. Just as God the Lord revealed his secrets through images in the New and the Old Testaments, so God implanted his prophecies through images into nature. For the whole of nature and all elements, animals, vegetables, minerals are full of miraculous figures, signs, and images which reveal themselves. They reveal all their secrets through images, and from that all natural wisdom can be learned."<sup>36</sup> Arndt's idea is that natural images are signs in the book of nature. These signs are conceived as hieroglyphs, as

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 13 v/ 14.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Arndt defends the image of the suffering Christ, the *Andachtsbild*, against Beza, who had stated "that he had in his heart an abhorrence against the crucifix, since it was an example of the cruelty of the Jews against Christ." (p. 25r) Arndt also defends the historical images of martyrs.

<sup>36</sup> He continues: "This is also found in a wonderful and magnificent book named *Amphitheatrum sapientiae divinae* which was written by an excellent philosopher and natural sage" (p. 52 v). The book "*Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae*" appeared in Hamburg 1595; its author is Johann Kunrath.

holy inscriptions. His text provides evidence for the connection between hieroglyphs and emblems.<sup>37</sup> Nature itself delivers the hermeneutics of its secrets to those who are able to read with pious imagination. The signatures of created things can be deciphered by a believing imagination: "And therefore the images of nature are God's letters, with which he explained thoroughly to those who are able to read this miraculous divine scripture, and in these letters, within one hour, more wisdom can be drawn than many extensive and unfounded heathen books contain. See the herbs in the fields, the animals, and birds, the stars in heaven, the metals, all that dwells on earth and in the earth, does it not have its own form, image, shape, proportion, figure, and signature? This is the right philosophy whose alphabet and first elements are the signatures. Whoever knows this alphabet well can soon learn to read and to understand the arcana of nature. Many boast today of their wisdom, but did not learn the alphabet of nature and of true philosophy and physics. Those things were well known to the old Egyptian and Persian philosophers and medical men. Vestiges of this knowledge can be found in Plato's *Timaeus*, in his *Cratylus* and elsewhere, as he learned it from the Egyptian philosophers. This wisdom is now mostly expired, since, different from the old philosophers, the new ones do not want to investigate nature as God's living book which he wrote with his own almighty finger."<sup>38</sup>

With this theory of images as an aspect of perennial philosophy, the historical and theological arguments for the dignity of images are brought together. The book of nature lies open to a believing imagination; its emblems are the signatures to be read by a pious science. In his emblematic "*Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*" ("Four Books of True Christianity") and in the "*Paradies des Göttlichen*" ("Garden of Paradise"), which together represent the most successful devotional books of Lutheranism, Arndt shows his illuminating insight into the revealed signatures of nature.

<sup>37</sup> See: *The Hieroglyphs of Horapollo*, trans. by. George Boas with a new foreword by Anthony Grafton. Princeton NJ, 1993. Masen, Jacob: *Speculum imaginum veritatis occultae*. 3. ed., Cologne 1681. Cf. Bauer, Barbara: *Jesuitische Ars rhetorica im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe*. (Mikrokosmos, Bd. 18), Munich 1986.

<sup>38</sup> He continues: "which I mention in my booklet *de antiqua philosophia*" and in the treatise "*De magis ex oriente*" (p. 53 r). A manuscript of the book "*De antiqua philosophia*" still exists. Cod. Guelf 912 Nov. 4. fol. 1-27. See the catalogue: Gilly, Carlos: *Cimelia Rhodostauratica. Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drucke*, Amsterdam 1995, p.15. On the relationship between Kunrath, Arndt and the Paracelsian movement, see Neumann, Hans Peter: *Natura sagax – Die geistige Natur. Zum Zusammenhang von Naturphilosophie und Mystik in der Frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel Johann Arndts*. Diss. phil. Berlin (Freie Universität) 2002.

## OUTLINES OF PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

### 1. ELEMENTS OF PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

Perennial philosophy holds a benevolent view of the creation as a world of divine signs. This view includes a devotional and fantastical approach to creation, and it is this approach that defines the particular process of acknowledgement characterizing perennial philosophy. This perspective derives from the monotheism of revealed religions and is founded upon Judeo-Christian and Muslim theology. This pious and edifying theory accepts as its condition the theological interpretation of the created world as a system of divine signs. Since creation presupposes a creator, the theory indicates a certain knowledge of (1) the creator, (2) the plan for the world, (3) the act of creation, its aim and its end.

If this knowledge considers itself scholarly, it must explain how this could be possible. The wisdom of perennial philosophy is based on the concept that there is only one truth, so theological and philosophical knowledge are considered to share the same foundation. Perennial philosophy can accordingly be considered philosophy within the framework of theological presuppositions. It deliberately sets out to support theology. It explicates the basic philosophical foundations of theology and hence does not engage in a confrontation between philosophy and theology. Since its point of view derives from the serenity of faith, there is no need for a critical approach. Leibniz will later, in his “Theodicée”, characterise this approach as ‘optimistic’.

Even in the Renaissance period, this issue was labelled several different ways. As ‘prisca theologia’ it is treated by Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola;<sup>1</sup> in the quarrel over adopting Greek philosophy into a

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<sup>1</sup> See Allen, M.J.B.: *Synoptic Art: Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation*. Florence 1998, ch. 1-2. Walker, Daniel P.: *The Ancient Theology. Studies in Christian Platonism from the fifteenth to the eighteenth Century*. London 1972; id.: *Prisca Theologia in France*. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Inst.* XVII, 1954, pp. 204-251. Schmitt, Charles B.: *Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steucho to Leibniz*, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966), pp. 505-532; id.: *Prisca Theologia*, in: Olski (ed.) II

Christian context, the problem has been discussed since Clement of Alexandria and Origen.<sup>2</sup> According to the definition of Christianity as 'wisdom,' and in order to establish the monopolizing Christian interpretation of the entire world, it was necessary to bring philosophy and revelation into harmony and mutual consistency.<sup>3</sup>

The essence of perennial philosophy consists in the concordance of monotheistic theology and philosophy. Western monotheism is a spiritual theology; so perennial philosophy is a philosophy of spirituality. The concept of perennial philosophy extends from late antiquity<sup>4</sup> up to the 19th century. It thus contains no claims concerning the authenticity of mythical narration predating the theological attempt to *explain* this mythical material.<sup>5</sup>

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pensiero italiano de Rinascimento, Florence 1970, pp. 211-236; Kristeller, Paul Oskar: Die Philosophie des Marsilio Ficino. Frankfurt a. M. 1972 (English New York 1943). Wind, Edgar: Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, London 1958. Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm: Philosophia Perennis im Spätmittelalter. Eine Skizze. In: Haug, Walter; Wachinger, Burghard: Innovation und Originalität. Tübingen 1993. The concept of perennial philosophy presented in this book relies on the idea of philosophical history, which was conceived and completed in the Renaissance period. It should not be confused with the Neoscholastic movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. On this concept cf. Willmann, Otto: Geschichte des Idealismus. Braunschweig 1894-97. Aus der Werkstatt der Philosophia perennis. Freiburg 1912.

<sup>2</sup> This battle has been fought since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The most important authors: Scultetus, Abraham: Medulla Theologiae Patrum, qui a temporibus Apostolorum ad concilium usque Nicenum floruerunt. Methodo analytica expressa. Studio A. Sculteti, cum praefatione D. Paraei. 3 pts. Amberg 1605, 06, 09. Id. Medulla Theologiae Patrum Syntagma, in quo theologia priscorum primitivae Ecclesiae doctorum, methodo analytica et synthetica expressa atque Bellarmini, C. Baronii, G. de Valencia, aliorum Pontificorum corruptelis ita vindicatur ut appareat Deus solus reformatas ecclesias esse. Frankfurt 1634. Daillé, Jean (1594-1670): De usu patrum ad ea definienda religionis capita, quae sunt hodie controversia, libri duo. First Geneva 1655. Fr. Ed.: Traité de l'employ des Saints Pères pour iugement des différences, qui sont aujourdhui en la religion. Souverain, Matthieu: Le Platonisme dévoilé. Cologne 1700. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Heinrich Ritter treated these subjects in his "Geschichte der Philosophie", 5. und 6. Theil (= Geschichte der christlichen Philosophie 1. und 2. Theil); in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the debate was continued in Harnack's "Dogmengeschichte". On the ancient sources: Droge, Arthur J.: Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture. Tübingen 1989. (Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 20.)

<sup>3</sup> One example is the Catholic philosopher Otto Willmann (1839-1920), Aus der Werkstatt der Philosophia perennis. (Collected essays 1912) Geschichte des Idealismus (1894-1897). The *Festschrift* for Bernhard Geyer has the title Philosophia perennis (Regensburg 1930). Under this title it encompasses Neothomistic, but neither Renaissance nor Neoplatonic philosophy. Further: Berti, Enrico: Il concetto Rinascimento di Philosophia Perennis e le origini della storiografia filosofica tedesca. In: Verifiche 6, 1977. di Napoli, Giovanni: Il concetto di Philosophia perennis di Agostino Steucho nel quadro della tematica rinascimentale. In: Atti del convegno di studi umbrici. Gubbio 22-26 Maggio 1966, pp. 459-490. Wiedemann, Franz: Das Problem der christlichen Philosophie nach Augustinus Steucho. Ibid. pp. 491-499.

<sup>4</sup> See Lamberton, Robert: Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist allegorical reading and the growth of the epic tradition. Berkeley, California 1986.

<sup>5</sup> See Blumenberg, Hans: Arbeit am Mythos. Frankfurt 1979, trans. Work on Myth. Cambridge, Mass. 1988.

Perennial philosophy existed before Giambattista Vico's concept of a heroic primitive prehistory (*Scienza Nuova* 1725/1730), well before Johann Georg Hamann's discovery of the historical specificity of myth in its radical self-reliance within epic narration (*Aesthetica in nuce* 1762), and before the discovery of the temporal priority of polytheism over monotheism by David Hume (*Natural History of Religion* 1779) – all three of whom, in their own way, initiated a radical historicist revolution.<sup>6</sup> Perennial philosophy held the ontology of the spirit and of monotheism to be historically primeval. The spirit was characterised as containing eternal ideas. These truths of the spirit were logical and metaphysical – the ideas had always been true and did not suffer historical change.

This stability of truth was taken as proof of the eternity and immutability of the spirit. The ontological priority of the spirit was based on its immutability; this immutability of the spirit was a divine attribute. Participation in the eternal spirituality of truth was the condition of personal and individual spirituality. And yet participation in spirituality was considered to surpass the truths of abstract knowledge. Spirituality was the participation in the ideas of God. If the human notion of God is eternal and necessary, then the necessity of God himself had to partake in the *notion* of necessity.

This spirit of perennial philosophy does not depend on autonomous human thinking. Spirituality is always considered to be a participation in divine ideas. Because of man's contingency as a created being, the spirituality of the individual derives from his divinely granted existence and is hence due to God's grace. Perennial philosophy and spirituality are 'philosophia adepta', donated philosophy, taking part in God's grace and truth.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of spirituality is the philosophical mirror of monotheistic theology. Spirituality is indispensable for a philosophical conception of monotheism. Therefore it is evident that every philosophy claiming the concordance of philosophical and monotheistic theology is a spiritual one. God is conceived as a spiritual being, and as the absolute first, necessary

<sup>6</sup> See Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm: *Geschichte als absoluter Begriff. Der Lauf der neueren deutschen Philosophie*. Frankfurt 1991. Id.: "Nachwort" to Giambattista Vico: *Die neue Wissenschaft über die gemeinsame Natur der Völker*. Trans. by Erich Auerbach. Berlin<sup>2</sup> 2000 pp. 445-477.

<sup>7</sup> In his introduction to the series "World Spirituality. An Encyclopedic history of the Religious Quest," Ewert Cousin describes the concept of spirituality this way: The series focuses on that inner dimension of the person certain traditions call "The Spirit." "This inner spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality." In: *Christian Spirituality. Origins to the twelfth century*. Eds. Bernhard McGinn and John Meyendorff. (= *World Spirituality* vol. 16) New York 1985, p. xiii.

being, He has eternal existence. Human beings, having a contingent existence, are dependent on God's necessary being. If they think about God, about necessity and eternity, they participate as contingent beings in God's eternal existence. Since human beings are contingent and nonetheless able to partake in God's eternal ideas, they recognise that all contingent beings are created. So it is by necessity that the human notion of God implies the concept of the created world, in which human beings partake. This participation of mankind in divine spirituality unfolds the meaning of every created being, and it is this concept of participation that founds perennial philosophy.

There were various ways to explicate what perennial philosophy meant. From late antiquity forward, (Neo-)Platonic philosophy seemed to be able to harmonise Christian, Jewish, and, later on, Muslim philosophy and theology. Judeo-Christian Platonism did not jeopardise the theological framework, which was based on the existence of one God, the created world, and the Last Judgement. But with the integration of Aristotelian metaphysics and logic into the scholastic education of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, new questions arose that made it possible to bring theology and philosophy into confrontation. The crucial question was whether an independent philosophy - such as Aristotelianism - was able to respond to the dogmatic challenges of monotheistic theology. In 13<sup>th</sup> century theology, the ideas were developed that later were to become the theological essentials of the Renaissance concept of perennial philosophy - namely the temporal and spatial finitude of the world and the individuality of the soul.

Aristotelian philosophy denies that the temporal finitude of the world can be proven merely by philosophical arguments. This denial was however unacceptable to the theologians, for it called the theology of creation into doubt. The second crucial philosophical question was whether reason was individual or transcended the limits of individuality. If reason was an independent sphere beyond individuality, the dogmatic claim that human reason was individual, responsible, and hence free, was called into doubt. This was unacceptable to Christian, Jewish and Muslim dogma, for it jeopardised the significance of the Last Judgement.

This quarrel about the application of Aristotelian philosophy to Christian dogma was referred to as 'Averroism'.<sup>8</sup> The problem had already troubled the Arabic philosophers, especially Al Rhazali (Lat. Alghazel).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance. Eds. Fr. Niewöhner and Loris Sturlese. Zurich 1994. Ficino treats the question of Averroism in detail in his "Theologia Platonica" Book XV. The question of the critical relationship between Christianity and Aristotelianism was debated in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. On the theology of creation see Zeller, Eduard: Über die Lehre des Aristoteles von der Anfangslosigkeit der Welt. Abhandlungen der königl. Akademie der Wiss. Berlin 1887. Worms, Moses: Die Lehre von der Anfangslosigkeit der Welt bei den mittelalterlichen arabischen Philosophen des

Pious perennial philosophy tended towards Neoplatonic monotheism; it interpreted philosophy as theologically permeated knowledge, supported by fantasy.<sup>10</sup> Since Neoplatonic universal science did not distinguish between philosophy and theology, the science of the 'one' (Henologia) absorbed all dissenting traditions, including Aristotelian philosophy. Thus Aristotelianism was interpreted as part of perennial knowledge, and essentially Neoplatonic subjects were treated under the pseudepigraphical label of Aristotle, as in the "Theologia Aristotelis",<sup>11</sup> the "Liber de Causis",<sup>12</sup> and the "Secreta secretorum".<sup>13</sup> These pseudepigraphical texts could be coordinated with the theistic interpretation of the 'prime mover' in

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Orients und ihre Bekämpfung durch die arabischen Theologen (Mutakallimun). Münster 1900. BGPM 3. Fakhry, Majid: A History of Islamic Philosophy. New York, London 1970, pp. 302ff. On Averroistic psychology see van Steenbergen Fernand: Die Philosophie im 13. Jahrhundert. Munich, Paderborn, Vienna 1977; ch. 8. McIverny, Ralph M.: Aquinas against the Averroists: On there being one Intellect. West Lafayette, Ind. 1993. On the Pomponazzi affair see Kessler, Eckhard: Psychology, The intellectual soul. The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. Cambridge 1988, pp. 500-507. Pomponazzi, Pietro: On the Immortality of the Soul. Translated by William Henry Hay II, revised by John Herman Randall, Jr. and annotated by Paul Oskar Kristeller. In: The Renaissance Philosophy of Man, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr. Chicago 1948. On the editions of Averroes and the Averroists as well as the Anti-Averroists of the 13-15<sup>th</sup> centuries see "Repertorium edierter Texte des Mittelalters" ed. by Rolf Schönberger and Brigitte Kible. Berlin 1994. s.v. Index commentariorum Aristotelis de anima und degeneratione et corruptione. A comprehensive history of Averroism in the Renaissance is a desideratum.

<sup>9</sup> See Fakhry, Majid: A History of Islamic Philosophy. New York, London 1970.

<sup>10</sup> On the medieval tradition of Platonism see Kobusch, Theo: Platon in der abendländischen Geistesgeschichte. Darmstadt 1997. Beierwaltes, Werner (ed.): Platonismus im Mittelalter. Darmstadt 1968. Hoffmann, Ernst: Platonismus und Mittelalter. Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1923/24. Leipzig 1926, pp. 17-82. Bäumker, Clemens: Der Platonismus im Mittelalter. In: Studien und Charakteristiken zur Geschichte der Philosophie, besonders des Mittelalters. BGPhM 25, 1/2; pp. 139-193. Klibansky, Raymond: The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages. Outlines of a Corpus Platonium Medii Aevi. London 1939. Koch, Josef: Platonismus im Mittelalter. Krefeld 1951 Kölner Universitätsreden 4.

<sup>11</sup> Theologia Aristotelis, Mystica Aegyptorum et Caldaeorum a Platone voce tradita. Ab Aristotele Excerpta et conscripta philosophia. Ed. Franciscus Patritius, Ferrara 1591. Friedrich Dieterici: Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles. Aus dem Arabischen übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Friedrich Dieterici, Leipzig 1883, repr. Hildesheim 1969. Plotini Opera. Tomus II. Eds. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer. Plotiniana Arabica. Ad codicem fidem Anglice vertit Geoffrey Lewis. Paris, Brussels 1959.

<sup>12</sup> Bardenhewer, Otto, (ed.): Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift "Über das reine Gute", bekannt unter dem Namen Liber de Causis. Freiburg i. Br. 1882. Reprint Frankfurt 1959. On the bibliography of the Latin texts attributed to Aristotle see: Charles Schmitt and Dilwyn Knox: Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus. A Guide to Latin Works Falsely Attributed to Aristotle. London 1985. (= Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts vol. XII).

<sup>13</sup> Ps. Aristoteles: Secreta secretorum mit der mittelhochdeutschen Übersetzung von Hiltgard von Hürnheim, ed. R. Möller, Berlin 1963.



Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and thereby strengthened the Neoplatonic adoption of Aristotle.<sup>14</sup>

Within the framework of perennial philosophy, participation in God's wisdom cannot be distinguished from divine grace. This concept of God's wisdom is based on the theology of created reason. It delegitimatises *a limine* the claims of 'Averroism,' for it sees itself dependent on the concept of creation. With this concept of God's wisdom, creation from nothing occurs in two steps. First, the primordial causes, the ideas of things, were conceived in God's mind. In a second step, these preconceived notions emerged into extra-mental reality. This theory derives from Stoic and Middle-Platonic philosophy and was adopted by Philo of Alexandria and later on by the Christian church fathers.<sup>15</sup> Seminal causes are the concepts of things preconceived in God's mind. They contain the 'signature' of things, and it is in creation that this signature can be rediscovered. In this way, things indicate their creator, their beauty reflects divine beauty, the medicinal power of herbs and plants shows God's will for universal redemption, the putrefaction of every thing is a sign of the end of the world, and the natural instinct of every thing to pursue its own perfection indicates the attraction of the idea of the good.

Through its signs nature teaches theological truths. This natural theology of creation is also accessible to pagans. In this sense, theology and philosophy are twins, as Marsilio Ficino taught: "There is no other duty for a true philosopher except to realise and teach the different causes and reasons of the single things and the whole. Then the philosopher should name the causes and the reasons in order to ascend himself to the ultimate reason and cause. Afterwards he should lead the others to the Highest according to their faculties. When he shows thus how much the world is governed by wisdom, he can demonstrate that the welfare of mankind is led by certain reasons of providence. So we all acknowledge that the whole world exclaims what the interpreter of the word, the true philosopher, carefully demonstrates and remembers: We are obliged to love God. If we are not confused by our senses, we must clearly acknowledge that nothing happens just at random in the order of the universe, and that those men are foolish who think that such artificial a work was done at random. When the wise philosopher leads us to

<sup>14</sup> The most important author of this platonic adoption was the cardinal Bessarion with his treatise "In calumniatorem Platonis" (1469). V. Bessarionis In Calumniatorem Platonis Libri IV. Ed. L. Mohler. Paderborn 1927. Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann. Ed. L. Mohler vol. 2. The connection of Aristotle and Plato has Neoplatonic roots; it was Johann Jacob Brucker who emphasised this first in his "Historia philosophica doctrinae de ideis qua tum veterum imprimis Graecorum tum recentiorum philosophorum placita enarrantur". Augsburg 1723. Cf. esp. his "Historia critica philosophiae", Leipzig, vol. IV, 2, pp. 1742-44, s. v. Secta Eclectica.

<sup>15</sup> Meyer, Hans: Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften von der Stoa bis zum Ausgang der Patristik dargestellt. Bonn 1914.

the contemplation of God, when he inflames our love for God's goodness, he can be called pious and religious. This is why all the gentile philosophy is nothing else but erudite religion."<sup>16</sup>

According to Ficino, Plato provides the paradigm for this philosophy describing a world of symbols and signs. This world indicates its creator and purifies the individual's soul by means of his pious knowledge and insight into the meaning of things. Ficino cites the parable of the cave in Plato's "Republic": "Plato was introduced into the holy mysteries by Mercurius Trismegistos. In his 'Republic' and elsewhere he often argues that men who do not acknowledge God's goodness and do not see his light are completely unable to acknowledge truth and thus cannot act well. Only the light of God's sun grants the light of a serene soul. That is why Plato, according to Socrates, purified his soul and taught the others to do so as well."<sup>17</sup>

Philosophy is thus characterised as pious insight leading to salvation. Its knowledge is salutary, for it is part of a holy science engaged with the holiness of the highest. Philosophy receives religious tendencies that transcend it and move towards a practice of piety (*praxis pietatis*). This philosophy considers itself to be a performance of piety by means of sacred knowledge. Marsilio Ficino saw his perennial philosophy, which included gentile wisdom, as a semi-religious science. He situated philosophy in the tradition of Moses' sacred knowledge, classifying it as a species of theology. "In the subjects belonging to theology the six great theologians join together: the first is Zoroaster, chief of Magi, the second Mercurius Trismegistos, the prince of Egyptian priests. Orpheus was successor to Mercurius; Aglaophamus was introduced into the sanctuaries by Orpheus. Pythagoras followed Aglaophamus in theology; Aglaophamus' successor was Plato, who, in his works, summarised, improved and illustrated the wisdom of these men. They all veiled divine mysteries with poetical shadows, so that they should not be communicated to the profane people. But it happened that their successors communicated the mysteries and everybody interpreted them in his own way."<sup>18</sup>

Ficino's philosophical efforts evidently focus on the unity of philosophy and theology. He insists that ancient philosophy was nothing but learned

<sup>16</sup> Ficino: Letters, Opp. pp. 853 sq. Letter to Ziliolo Sophrono in Venice. The foolish philosophers might be Lucretius and the Epicurean school. V. Grafton, Anthony: "The Accessibility of Classical Texts." in The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. Ed. Schmitt, Charles B. Cambridge 1988, pp. 767-792.

<sup>17</sup> Ficino: Opp. p. 854.

<sup>18</sup> Ficino: Opp. p. 386. (= Theologia Platonica 17,1). Aglaophamos is transmitted as having been the Orphic teacher of Pythagoras; he was initiated into the sanctuaries by Aglaophamus. S. Iamblichus: Vita Pythagorae, and Proclus: In Timaeon, 289. On the Mysteries of Eleusa, see Lobeck, Christian August: Aglaophamus sive de Theologiae Mysticae Graecorum libri tres. Königsberg i. Pr. 1829.

religion, 'docta religio'. He saw himself in the tradition of Eusebius' "preparation for the Gospel"<sup>19</sup> and close to Clement of Alexandria.<sup>20</sup> Both church fathers were convinced that the historical priority of the Mosaic revelation was also the crucial criterion of truth for Platonic philosophy, which they considered to derive from original Mosaic wisdom. In this theologico-philosophical framework, it was the precondition of every truth that it derive from divine revelation. This idea was essential to the Judeo-Greek theology the church fathers had inherited.<sup>21</sup> In his letter "Concordia Mosis et Platonis", Ficino adopts this theory and claims all Presocratic philosophy to be part of the Mosaic theology of creation.<sup>22</sup> He founds his claim on the philosophical and theological interpretation of the prologue to St. John's gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." For Ficino, this prologue provides the framework for a coherent reading of the Bible, Plato, Philo, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus.

Tradition was the decisive criterion of philosophical truth for the Neoplatonic philosophy of the Renaissance as well as for the church fathers. Philosophy shared this criterion with religion. Revealed religions are always dependent on tradition, as revelations are temporal events that are preserved by tradition; hence tradition and history guarantee both the presence and representation of religious revelation. Ficino adopted the criteria of religion, (i.e. revelation, history and tradition) into his concept of philosophy. As a

<sup>19</sup> See Eusebius: *praep. Ev. esp.* book 3, ch. 1 where he treats natural theology (*physicae theologia*). In ch. 3 he writes on the allegorical theology of the Egyptians, in ch. 9 on allegorical interpretation in Greek and Egyptian theology. Unlike Clement, Eusebius does not try to combine Christian, Greek, and Egyptian theologies. The closest affinity between Platonic philosophy and Jewish theology can be found in *Prep. Ev. Book 11*.

<sup>20</sup> *Stromateis I* 22, col. 893f: "Aristobulus, in volume one of his *To Philometor* (= Ptolemaios VI. Philometor), wrote: 'Plato too was a follower of our system of law, and it is obvious that he spent a lot of time on each of its precepts. There had been a translation by others before Demetrius, before the domination of Alexander and the Persians, recording the events concerning the exodus from Egypt of our fellow citizens, the Jews, and about all that happened to them, the conquest of their own land, and the exposition of the whole system of law. It is clear enough that the philosopher I mentioned, a man of wide learning, took a great deal from it, much as Pythagoras borrowed a great deal from us to form his own philosophical system'. The Pythagorean philosopher Numenius wrote directly: 'What is Plato but Moses speaking Greek?' This Moses was a theologian and prophet and, in the eyes of some, an interpreter of sacred laws." (Trans. John Ferguson, Clement of Alexandria. *Stromateis Books one to three*. Washington, D.C. 1991, p 135). The quotes from Aristobolus and Numenius can also be found in Eusebius' "Praeparatio Evangelii" book 9, 6, 7. Eusebius quotes different texts by Numenius, esp. book 13, 12.

<sup>21</sup> For a new interpretation of the mythic accounts of theology given by Middle- and Neoplatonic authors, which is still characteristic for Philo and the church fathers, see Lamberton, Robert: *Homer the Theologian*. Berkeley 1986.

<sup>22</sup> Ficino: *Opera* p. 867, *Concordia Mosis et Platonis*. See also Allen, M.J.B.: *Synoptic Art: Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation*. Florence 1998, pp. 64-5.

result, philosophy became indiscernible from theology. Both constituted a universal theologico-philosophical system of knowledge. According to Ficino's concept of universal science, philosophy receives the attributes of revelation. This unification of religion and philosophy paralleled the way that the *Corpus Hermeticum* was treated as both philosophy and theology. In this way too, the realm of philosophy was considerably enlarged. Now it also included the history of revelation. Going far beyond the formulations of the church fathers, Ficino identified philosophy with the 'original wisdom of Moses'. He considered the continuity of wisdom to be the history of one revelation, which had philosophy and religion as its two branches. In this universal field of knowledge, divine revelation and 'ancient philosophy' received the same status. As these two sciences were seen to be the closest to God's wisdom, they were to present the truth insofar as it was accessible to mankind. This ultimate philosophical knowledge was the 'language of Adam', the philosophical language of wisdom, and partook in the divine primordial conception of the world.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola adopted Ficino's concept of philosophy as participation in divine wisdom. He wrote his commentary on the book of Genesis as an account of the tradition of original Adamic wisdom. Like Ficino, he identified the Adamic language with God's primordial wisdom, and emphasised the tradition of this original philosophy in both sacred and pagan history. Pico began his list of traditions by mentioning the "works of the six days, in which there is great reason for us to believe the secrets of all natures to be contained. Not to pass over the fact that our Prophet (i.e. Moses) learned all these things through the inspiration of God and the dictation of the Holy Spirit, the master of all truth; has not the tradition of our own times, of his own race and of the gentiles, reported him to us as the most learned in human wisdom in any field of science and letters? Among the Hebrews, under the name of the wise Solomon, there is a book called *Wisdom*, not the one we now have, the work of Philo, but another, written in that secret language called *Hierosolyma*, in which the author, an interpreter, it is thought, of the nature of things, confesses that he got all his learning of that sort from the inner meaning of the Mosaic law. We have the weighty authority, moreover, of both Luke and Philo that Moses was deeply learned in all the lore of the Egyptians. All the Greeks who have been considered the most excellent took the Egyptians as teachers: Pythagoras, Plato, Empedocles and Democritus. The saying of the philosopher Numenius that Plato was nothing but an Attic Moses is well known. The Pythagorean Hermippus attests that Pythagoras copied many things from the Mosaic law into his own philosophy. Therefore if in his books Moses seems an unpolished populariser rather than a philosopher or theologian or master of great wisdom, let us call to mind that it was a well-known practice of the sages of

old either simply not to write, or to write on religious subjects, or to write of them under some other guise. For this reason these subjects are called mysteries (and things which are not secret are not mysteries); this has been observed by the Indians, by the Ethiopians, who took their name from nudity, and by the Egyptians; and the sphinxes in front of the temples hinted at this".<sup>23</sup>

The Vatican librarian Agostino Steuco clearly explained the purpose of his philosophy in his "De philosophia perenni", the ultimate formulation of perennial philosophy. In his dedication to Pope Paul III he wrote: "To me the sentence of philosophy always seemed true, that both wisdom and piety derive from the same source, strive after the same purpose, and use the same arguments, even if they bear certain differences. Philosophy itself proves this fact: As its highest fruit, as its reward for labouring, it promises wisdom. Plato and Aristotle, the princes of philosophy, both present us with one philosophical commitment: the knowledge and the worship of God. In their language it is '*theorein, kai therapeuein tou theou*'. This is the summit of all; it marks the desire of all the speculations, studies, and grief of all philosophers."<sup>24</sup>

In his erudite study, Steuco placed the philosophy of Christian Neoplatonism, as it was articulated by Ficino and Pico, into a broad historical framework. He emphasised the historical aspect of perennial philosophy, and it was he who distinctively presented philosophy as the one wisdom to remain the same throughout the course of world history.<sup>25</sup> Steuco shaped the historical and ideal form of spiritual philosophy in the Renaissance, and was the first to refer to it as *philosophia perennis*.

## 2. PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY IN NICHOLAS OF CUSA (1401-1464)

The theory that the world consists of signs is significant for perennial philosophy. This perspective includes the pious acknowledgement of the creator, the intellectual participation in the plan of creation, the account of the process of creation, and the recognition of its goal. In his rearticulation of the entire medieval Neoplatonic material, the cardinal Nicholas of Cusa

<sup>23</sup> Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni: Opera, vol. I. Basle 1557, repr. Hildesheim 1669, pp. 1f. Pico della Mirandola, on the Dignity of Man, On Being and One, Heptaplus trans. by. Charles Glenn Wallis, Paul J. W. Miller and D. Carmichael. Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City 1965, pp. 67f.

<sup>24</sup> Steuco, Agostino: De perenni philosophia. Lyons 1540. Dedication \*2.

<sup>25</sup> See Santinello, Giovanni (ed.): Storia delle storie generali della filosofia vol. I, Brescia 1981, see ch. 9, 5 The third revelation.

established a complete program of perennial philosophy. His doctrine of “Learned Ignorance”, or “Docta ignorantia”, defined philosophy as the pious human reception of God’s signs in his creation.<sup>26</sup>

The terminology of “Docta ignorantia” comes from different sources. Learned Ignorance includes erudite modesty, while avoiding the topos of affective modesty.<sup>27</sup> Its erudition is understood to derive from its subject, which is held to be the highest as such, “*quo maius cogitari nequit*”. Going beyond philosophical modesty, Nicholas understood Petrarch’s “On his own and others’ ignorance” as criticizing philosophical efforts as such: Despite being opposed to scholastic Aristotelianism, in matters of belief Petrarch did not trust even the intellectual heroes of the scholastics’ opponents, Plato and Cicero.<sup>28</sup>

The philosophical underpinnings of erudite modesty and faith characterised Nicholas’ concept of learned ignorance. Erudite modesty meant that philosophy and theology were divinely adopted sciences, and their particular object was *the absolute*. Even when confronted with the absolute, Nicholas conceived of wisdom as *proportio* - but this wisdom could only be negative. *Proportio*, the dispensing of proportion, was the purpose of Pythagorean numerical speculation. So number, the necessary condition of all comparative relation, is present not only in quantity, but in all things that in any way can be said to agree or differ with each other, substantially or accidentally. This was perhaps what Pythagoras meant when he deemed all things to be constituted and understood through the power of numbers.

“But the precise combinations in corporeal things and the congruent relating of known to unknown surpass human reason - to such an extent that Socrates seemed to himself to know nothing except that he did not know. And the very wise Solomon maintained that all things are difficult and unexplainable in words. And a certain other man of divine spirit says that

<sup>26</sup> See Offermann, Ulrich: Christus, Wahrheit des Denkens. Eine Untersuchung zur Schrift “De docta ignorantia” des Nikolaus von Kues. Münster 1991. BGPM Neue Folge vol. 33. On the history see Dáncona Costa, Cristina: Il tema della docta ignorantia nel neoplatonismo arabo. Un contributo all’analisi delle fonti di Teologia di Aristotele. In: Concordia Discors. Studi su Niccolò Cusano e l’umanesimo europeo offerti a Giovanni Santinello. Ed. Gregorio Piaia. Padua 1993, pp. 3-22.

<sup>27</sup> See Curtius, Ernst Robert: European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. Translated from the German by Willard R. Task. New York 1953. pp. 83, 85.

<sup>28</sup> Petrarca: De sui ipsius et aliorum ignorantia. Nicholas made notes into his copy of this book and read it as a proof of his own Learned Ignorance. S. Santinello, Giovanni: Nikolaus von Kues und Petrarca. Forschungen und Mitteilungen der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 4, 1964, pp. 174-198, esp. 186f. and 198f.

wisdom and the seat of understanding are hidden from the eyes of all living.”<sup>29</sup>

This statement is characterised by Socratic irony – speaking about that which it is impossible to speak about. Nicholas quotes the “preacher Solomon” who declares that God’s wisdom is beyond all language, and he refers to Job’s contempt for all earthly treasures when faced with the inexhaustibility of divine wisdom.<sup>30</sup> All these ideas are brought together in the “Negative Theology” of (the pseudonymous) Dionysius the Areopagite, who formulated the dialectical theory of God’s ungraspability for Christian thought.<sup>31</sup> For him – as for Nicholas – the attraction of the absolute defines the summit and the aim of life. There is no proportion, no measurement adequate to this absolute aim; any positive description is destroyed by the “quo maius cogitari nequit.” “Therefore, if the foregoing points be true, since the desire in us is not in vain, assuredly we desire to know that we do not know. If we can fully attain unto this knowledge of our ignorance, we will attain unto learned ignorance. For a man – even one very well versed in learning – will attain unto nothing more perfect than to be found to be the most learned in ignorance which is distinctively his. The more he knows that he is unknowing, the more learned he will be.”<sup>32</sup>

If “precise truth cannot be comprehended”<sup>33</sup> all knowledge is conjecture. Therefore all science is merely conjectural knowledge, as it is defined by participation in, but inadequacy to, God’s wisdom. Consequently human

<sup>29</sup> *Docta ignorantia* I,1, Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance*. Trans. by Jasper Hopkins. Minneapolis 1981, p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> Eccl.1:8f:  
All things are full of weariness  
a man cannot utter it  
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,  
nor the ear filled with hearing.  
What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is what  
will be done;  
and there is nothing new under the sun.”  
Job 28:19-21:  
“The topaz of Ethiopia cannot  
compare with it,  
nor can it be valued in pure gold.  
‘Whence then comes wisdom?  
And where is the place of  
understanding?  
It is hid from the eyes of all living,  
and concealed from the birds of  
the air’.”

<sup>31</sup> See *Docta Ignorantia* I, 26: “Negative Theology.”

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas of Cusa: *On Learned Ignorance*, I,1, l.c. pp. 50f.

<sup>33</sup> *Docta ignorantia* I,3.

knowledge about the divine is caught in restless movement, weaving to and fro in a dynamic dialectic. Opposites coincide ironically with each other.

To what extent can Nicholas' theory of Learned Ignorance be considered part of perennial philosophy? Perennial philosophy tries to explain the theological triad consisting of God's existence, the creation of the world, and the Last Judgement, by means of philosophical speculation. This is precisely what characterises the philosophy of the Neoplatonic cardinal of Cusa, whose work is therefore a splendid example of perennial philosophy. Nicholas' philosophy examines all the significant elements of Western philosophical spirituality.

### 1. God's existence and essence

Perennial philosophy addresses the question of God and his essence, including an inquiry into the divine attributes. For Nicholas, God's existence is the condition for every philosophico-theological truth. Any theoretical investigation into God can only acknowledge his existence and describe his attributes according to human Learned Ignorance. This "maximum, which the faiths of all nations indubitably believe in that there is one God"<sup>34</sup> lies at the core of every rational theology. Nicholas treats this subject in the first book of his "Learned Ignorance" and in his dialogue "De deo abscondito".

### 2. The divine Logos

The inquiry into the life of God, the creation of the world, and his presence in the world, are the subjects of Cusa's theology of the logos, the core of his Christology. He argues in the spirit of St. John's gospel and uses Neoplatonic ideas to explain the world from a Christian perspective. This is his version of cosmic anthropology. Since creation was performed through the word, "which was in the beginning with God", the logos of the creation includes the archetypal structure of things. Throughout the philosophical tradition, this topic has been examined with the terminology of *microcosm* and *macrocosm*. Nicholas' entire philosophy is characterised by this speculative Christological figure, which he addresses extensively in the third chapter of his "Learned Ignorance".

### 3. The primordial world of 'Wisdom'

In the Christian tradition, the divinely preconceived internal concepts of creation are explained with the hypostatical figure of wisdom. For Nicholas, wisdom is not the entire and thoroughly unified structure of creation - this is the divine logos. Wisdom is rather the primordial diversification of the logos in various essences existing together in harmony and proportion. Wisdom is

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<sup>34</sup> On Learned Ignorance I,1, l.c. p. 51.



thus related to the logos and represents the unity of diversity. In the philosophical tradition, wisdom is interpreted as the primordial ideal world, which, as an archetype, prefigures the external world of matter. Nicholas describes this concept in his booklet “*Idiota de sapientia*”.

#### 4. The creation of the real world

If there is a primordial world, its relationship to the real world must be explained. How does the created extra-mental world compare with the world of archetypes? The difference between them lies in the emergence of space and time. This process contains several steps. The notions of divine wisdom are unextended, although existing in spiritual variety. As unextended points, they contain all the attributes of future external things, and have the potential to unfold. They are the living, seminal reasons (*rationes seminales*) for all things. They can be conceived as analogous to the Euclidean point “that has no parts.” Besides being without parts, they are also elements of space and time. As points they mark the origin of the three dimensions and are the most elementary aspect of extension. Thus a point signifies the transition from spirit to dimension.

This process of creation is the inverse of the process of knowledge. Knowledge begins with the experience of an external object, which is then reduced to its form by abstracting it from time and space. The thing becomes the object of pure inner apperception and consequently is, in this stage of knowledge, without matter. As an inner, pure form it is named, and thus becomes a notion consisting of name and form, which is then conceived as having a spiritual existence. This process of spiritualising by abstraction is the inverse of the process of creation, which moves from the preconceived, spiritual concepts of wisdom to an extra-mental, extended world. This process is described in “*De conjecturis*”.

#### 5. Natural and historical time

The time appearing in the process of unfolding the seminal reasons of the world is the time of nature. Natural time differs from historical time. Natural time is defined by the becoming and the decaying of things in an eternal cycle. Historical time is characterised by its goal, towards which all things tend, and in which becoming and decay are resolved into everlasting perfection. Nicholas addresses natural time in his “*Dialogus de Genesi*”; the time of historical perfection is discussed in the third part of “*Learned Ignorance*” and in his “*Conjectures of the Last Days*”, where it is treated according to a Christological typology.

## 6. Prisca theologia

The conjectural perspective on the world conceives of human knowledge *sub specie fidei*. This concept considers the knowledge of the pagans (i.e. prisca theologia and perennial philosophy) to be enlightenment from God. This allows for the perception of the unity of truth in the teachings of natural theology. Nicholas also discovers these truths in pagan mythology and in the Koran. He is not the historian of eternal truth, as Agostino Steuco will be approximately a century later, tracing the *translatio sapientiae* from the Adamic language through to the present. For Nicholas, God's wisdom is eternally present in his logos. Thus God's wisdom, present to Christians by Christological mediation, is also present to pagans. This is all the more true for those who acknowledge God's existence, his life, his creation, and his offer of salvation.

## a) God's Existence and Essence

In his short dialogue "De Deo abscondito", Cusa describes the existence of the one God, the original monotheistic doctrine accessible to all mankind. He employs the classic Neoplatonic argument of the science of the one, which is that truth can only be conceived as unity. Unity is the condition of every plurality and of the reunification of plurality. If truth is the concordance of diversity, unity is the condition of every truth. Truth is conceived as the compossibility of all thoughts, the variety of which must be joined in harmony. Cusa does not discuss the structure of variety, but concerning truth he declares: "It is only one, for it is nothing but unity, and the truth coincides with unity. There is one truth, because there is one unity. Such as in numbers no unity is to be found but one, so there is only one truth for many."<sup>35</sup>

This statement necessarily presupposes that truth is objective, and thus human intellect only participates in it. God's truth, and the truth of the essences of things, cannot be completely comprehended by man; the human intellect knows only negatively that it does not grasp the abundance of truth. As a result only Learned Ignorance can conceive the incompetence of the human intellect, and this acknowledgement coincides with the desire to be part of the complete and holy truth. For Nicholas, God and truth are inseparable. This is why, according to Cicero's "De natura Deorum", that striving for God and truth is the natural desire of all men. The human desire for truth corresponds with the human desire to partake of divine unity and harmony. Socratic irony, as it conjectures about the unfathomable One, longs for the unprovable Oneness of God and his truth. Belief in God's love

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<sup>35</sup> De Deo abscondito, Op. ed Gabriel/Dupré, vol. 1, p. 302.

and grace allows this human conjectural knowledge to describe God as “*veritas ineffabilis*”.<sup>36</sup>

According to the Neoplatonic “*Liber de causis*”,<sup>37</sup> this metaphysical notion of the truth is the condition for any participation in it. God cannot be recognised in his abundance by mankind, which only partakes of his truth. This truth is considered not only to be the condition of the theoretical knowledge of all things, but also as the ontological foundation of their existence. All participating truths and all extra-mental beings are dependent on the One. They are contingent because their non-existence can be imagined. Every contingent being has become real because God commanded it into extra-mental reality. God’s almighty power makes the transition from nothing to existence possible.

The theory of creation and the theory of God’s attributes thus coincide. “God is beyond nothing and beyond something; the nothing obeys him because something emerges. And it is His omnipotence, from which everything emerges - whether it exists or not. For that reason he is also obeyed by all that is not like that which exists.”<sup>38</sup> God’s ability to encompass both non-being and being belongs to the sole attributes to exceed being: potentiality and power.

This hidden, omnipotent God, whose attributes are beyond every predication, is nevertheless the origin of all creatures. This is shown by the unity of truth, which is both the reason for the cognition, as well as the existence, of all real things. The consequence of this negative theology is piety: “*Sit igitur Deus, ab oculis omnium sapientum mundi absconditus, benedictus.*”<sup>39</sup>

#### b) The Divine Logos and Christology

According to Johannine theology, Christ has a threefold function. He is the intra-Trinitarian offspring of God the Father, he is the logos of the world’s creation, and he is the one who entered time.

Cusa follows John in his conception of the Father’s begetting of the Son as part of the Trinitarian union of love. Christ the Son is divine living love. “What occurs to me as threefold, as the loving, the beloved, and their connection, is the simple absolute essence.”<sup>40</sup> Cusa considers the unity of the divine process of love to be the core of theology. He understands references

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 305.

<sup>37</sup> See Flasch, Kurt: *Die Metaphysik des Einen bei Nikolaus von Kues*. Leiden 1973, esp. ch. 3, pp. 105-152.

<sup>38</sup> Vol. 1, p. 304: “*Deus est supra nihil et aliquid, quia ipsi oboedit nihil, ut fiat aliquid. Et haec est omnipotentia eius, qua quidem potentia omne id, quod est aut non est, excedit, ut ita sibi oboediat id, quod non est sicut id, quod est.*”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 308.

<sup>40</sup> *De visione Dei* III, p. 170.

to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit to be metaphorical expressions. In “De non Aliud” he sees the Trinity as unity, equality, and nexus in God, and he explains the intra-Trinitarian life as follows: “The secret of the trinity, which is only received through faith as God’s gift, cannot be expressed more precisely than aforementioned, even if it surmounts and precedes every meaning. Those who call the trinity the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit do not approach as close, but use the suitable names according to the Scripture.”<sup>41</sup>

This dynamic Pythagorean interpretation of God is characteristic of Christian Neoplatonism.<sup>42</sup> The dynamism of God, conceivable as God’s begetting of his logos, is seen as the condition for self-knowledge. God thinks himself through his logos, and it is the logos in its function as ‘wisdom’ through which God created the world. This concept of wisdom is twofold: On the one hand, Cusa conceives this logos of the creation as wisdom, on the other hand as the Christological type of world history. The Christological, creative logos is the *fiat* through which all things are created.

Nicholas sees the creation of nature as prefigured in the Father’s separation from the Son in the dynamic Trinitarian process. Every act (including creation as acting through the word) separates itself from its object, which remains connected with its origin. Cusa observes, in accordance with St. Augustine, that the type of the Trinity can be experienced in the process of creation, “that the heavens or whatever emerged into reality through the name analogously with the heavens, were commanded and will be executed immediately,”<sup>43</sup> for it is the word of a master and ruler, whose reason is will and whose will is reason. Whatever he spoke was done; he commanded, and creation emerged without delay. After he called the heavens into being, he breathed his power into them. Hence the external form of everything, which is called from nothing, contains and conceals the heavens as well. And the innermost essence of things is their conversion to God, for creation is the externalisation of God. “That is why the divine power is reflected by the power of all created things, for they are inspired.”<sup>44</sup>

In the third function of Christology, the logos becomes flesh as human being. In this respect, Christology is the apotheosis of the species of

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<sup>41</sup> De non aliud. Opp. II, pp. 462f.

<sup>42</sup> See esp. Benz, Ernst: Marius Victorinus und die Entwicklung der abendländischen Willensmetaphysik. Stuttgart 1932. (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte Bd.1), Wolfgang Marcus: Der Subordinatianismus als historiologisches Phänomen. Munich 1963.

<sup>43</sup> See the same argument in Gregory of Nyssa “Oratio de dignitate hominis”; ch. 4, Kosmos Anthropos.

<sup>44</sup> Opp. II. p. 430. Dialogus de Genesi.

mankind. Christ represents divine glory in the form of man.<sup>45</sup> In him, human existence is envisioned as a sign of God's glory, pointing to the creator and his redeeming love. Thus human existence can be understood as finitude functioning as a sign of infinity. The origin, the finitude, and the future of every human being is indicated in Christ's becoming flesh. Christ is the sign of history's progress towards salvation. His humanity heals Adam's sins. "Christ's humanity includes the perfect abundance of man's likeness to God. Through his likeness with man, Christ, by his perfect humanity, redeems everyone to his likeness with God, which had been lost with the Fall of man."<sup>46</sup>

This theory of man in God's likeness lies at the core of Nicholas' Christology. The structure of the argument is circular: In a first step, God communicates himself to mankind through Jesus Christ. In a second step, mankind is led back to God by Jesus Christ. Christ is both the type of man's assimilation to God, and of divine life acting in the world. Through Christ's mediation, the immortality and individuality of mankind becomes comprehensible,<sup>47</sup> for it is in Christ that God and man are reconciled. Immortality is God's promise to mankind, and his love and wisdom grant everyone an individual dignity, which is founded typologically in Jesus Christ. Christ is the mediation of the divine. His character as redeemer is interpreted as mediation and communication, and God's plan of creation is fulfilled through Christ. He is always the first, for he is the archetype of God's communication. As such he is also the first to ascend into heaven.<sup>48</sup>

Even after his return to heaven he remains the first and the unique word of God. Being the hypostasis of God's word, Christ is the apocalyptic judge of the living and the dead. "Who is a judge more just than He who is Justice itself? For Christ, the head and the source of every rational creature, is Maximal Reason, from which all reason derives. But reason judges discriminatively. Hence, Christ - who (while remaining God, who is the rewarder of all) assumed rational human nature along with all rational creatures - is rightfully the judge of the living and the dead."<sup>49</sup> This interpretation of the logos as judge corresponds to the original division of the one God into Father (*unitas*), Son (*discretio*) and the self-perception of the unique and

<sup>45</sup> See the contributions to the conference "Das Menschenbild des Nikolaus von Kues", Trier Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 1977. In: Mitteilungen und Forschungen der Cusanus-Gesellschaft, 13, 1978, esp. v. Bredow, Gerda: Der Geist als lebendiges Bild Gottes (mens viva Dei imago), pp. 58-67; Dupré, Wilhelm: Der Mensch als Mikrokosmos im Denken des Nikolaus von Kues, pp. 68-88, Meinhardt, Helmut: Der christliche Impuls im Menschenbild des Nikolaus von Kues. Erwägungen eines Philosophen über den christlichen Humanismus im dritten Buch von De docta ignorantia, pp. 105-107.

<sup>46</sup> Docta ignorantia l.c. vol. I, p. 462.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. vol. I, p. 470.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Docta ignorantia ch. III.

<sup>49</sup> Nicholas of Cusa: On Learned Ignorance. III, 9. l.c. p. 145.

discrete God in the Holy Spirit. This division is the archetype of every process of self-perception. Mankind partakes in God's critical self-perception of his own divinity. God's self-perception is the type of human consciousness. At the same time, this consciousness understands itself as God's image. The innermost core of every human being consists of this divine imagery. Through this pious self-perception as God's image, consciously represented and obeyed, men are purified of every sin.

The function of the logos as judge, criticizing human reasoning, and at the same time being the world's redeemer and restitutor, corresponds to the alchemical purifying fire (which can possibly be interpreted as purgatory). This purifying fire marks the point of return in the conversion of men to God. The return to God presupposes the ability of the individual soul to immediately perceive God's vision.<sup>50</sup> This ability is achieved through purification and redemption. In this process, men are cleansed of all impure residue in order to regain their true, particular essence. Christ's judgement comprehends the purification of the entire creation, and its reestablishment to its preconceived perfection. It is an alchemical process that effects the perfection of every being, by an assimilation to divine light and fire. "All rational spirits are judged in Christ, as what is heated by fire is judged in fire. Of these heated things, the one, if it remains in the fire for a long time, is transformed into the likeness of fire (e.g., most excellent and most perfect gold is so gold and so intensively fire-hot that it appears to be no more gold than fire). But some other things do not participate in the intensity of the fire to such a degree (e.g., purified silver, bronze, or iron); nevertheless, they all seem to be transformed into fire, although each is transformed in its own degree."<sup>51</sup>

The quality of the purifying fire is typologically prefigured in the brilliance of Christ's transfiguration on Mount Tabor. The brilliance of his transfiguration is the purifying fire, which brings human beings into eternal glory.<sup>52</sup>

### c) Primordial World and 'Wisdom'

Philosophia perennis, considered as natural history, is the history of the unfolding of the original ideas, which constitute the spiritual seminal reasons of all things.<sup>53</sup> The original ideas of creation become visible in the process of

<sup>50</sup> See Beierwaltes, Werner: "Visio facialis" - Sehen ins Angesicht. Zur Coincidenz des endlichen und unendlichen Blicks bei Cusanus. *Mitteilungen und Forschungen der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 18, 1989, pp. 91-124.

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas of Cusa: *On Learned Ignorance*, III, 9, l.c. p. 145.

<sup>52</sup> See *Docta ignorantia* III, ch. XI, Opp. I, pp. 494f.

<sup>53</sup> See Meyer, Hans: *Die Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften von der Stoa bis zum Ausgang der Patristik dargestellt*. Bonn 1914.

unfolding. Human beings can perceive these ideas, and the specific inner reasons of things can be experienced at every stage of their external development. Thus accessibility to the nature of things is not dependent on religious revelation. This is why, for the Neoplatonic cardinal, all living nature leads to the cognition of the Trinity. “In the nature of reason lies the fertility which spontaneously generates the word, i.e. the rational notion. For this notion precedes the desire and the will. When the spirit generates the word or the notion, the desire and the will emerge at once; similarly, what is not known, is not loved. Hence it is only possible that the desire and the will are originated by the spirit. Science is a desirable good, and the good is what is desired. Everything strives for the good. Thus it is evident how we can, from this example, proceed to the divine Trinity. Namely, God cannot be called unconscious of himself. In recognizing himself he generates his own word. The generator is not identical with the generated being, and the conceiving being is not the same as the conceived. But there is nevertheless no difference in the divine substance, for God generates a notion of himself, which cannot be conceived more perfectly. Hence the generated will be equal to God’s substance.”<sup>54</sup> Trinitarian theology, therefore, is the natural theology of generation and the type of natural life. For Cusa, traces of the Trinity can be found in living nature, and nature’s developing power reflects the almighty power of the Trinitarian process.

The species of creation derive from their preconception in God’s wisdom. Human knowledge takes part in this divine knowledge and thus can approximate the spiritual core of the things themselves. Cusa, in his “*Compendium theologiae*”, employed this idea in his theory of language. The language God used to create was the same in which Adam participated before the fall broke his close connection to God. So the ‘Adamic language’ is the ultimate and original access of mankind to the seminal reasons of creation. Both the creation and the perception of the essences of things have their origin in divine wisdom, in which the ideas of things are preconceived. Through divine wisdom, in which rational understanding participates, things are created. The Adamic language is the language of divine wisdom, which contained the ideas of things until it was confused by the Babylonian proliferation of language into a variety of languages. Divine wisdom communicates the language of preconceived ideas, and the word of the Trinitarian dynamic is the magic, working word. Adam took part in God’s working language - the language of wisdom - when he named the creatures in paradise.

In the Adamic language, all created things are only signs of the creating word. “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established. (Ps. 32/33, 6) Therefore, all created things are signs of the Word of God. Every corporeal

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<sup>54</sup> *Docta ignorantia* III. ch. XI. Opp. I. p. 496.

utterance is a sign of a mental word. The cause of every corruptible mental word is the uncorruptible word, which is the reason.”<sup>55</sup> Adam took part in this reason when he gave names to the things and the animals, as recorded in the book of Genesis (2:20). This reason cannot be separated from God’s creating word.

Because of this naturally revealed divine knowledge, the reason of creation is, in principle, accessible to mankind. The notions constituting human knowledge are the signs of things as well as signs of the divine ideas of things. Both God’s spiritual preconceptions as well as the seminal reasons of the things are included in this double conception, and both are conceived as the essence of external things. Cusa concludes: “Our first parents, perfectly created by God, must have received not only their perfect nature but also their knowledge of signs. Hence they can communicate their conceptions and transmit their knowledge to their sons and daughters.”<sup>56</sup>

The knowledge of Edenic wisdom is the sum and archetype of all human knowledge. This wisdom, which was distorted in the original fall and was nearly lost in the Babylonian confusion of languages, is the divine origin and the goal of every philosophy. Therefore the Adamic language is the most competent measure of perennial philosophy, even if it is only accessible through pious fantasy.

This wisdom that contains the germinal concepts of things is recognised by the ‘idiot’, the layman, as the essence and the meaning of all things. This wisdom shows the structure of the cosmos to be “arranged by measure and number and weight” (Wis. 11:20). At the same time, it represents the anthropological form of the cosmos. “Wisdom, which is itself equal to being, is the word or the reason of the things. It is like the infinite form of the intellect, because it is the form that provides formal being to the things. The infinite form is the acting form of all forms and hence the most precise equality of them all. Such as the infinite circle, if one exists, would form the true exemplar of all forms to be formed and the equality of all figures to become real (it would become the figure of a triangle, a hexagon, a decagon and so forth, and the most adequate figure would be this most simple figure), so infinite wisdom is the simplicity that includes all forms and measures all things. It is the most perfect idea of the almighty artist. It is the simplest form that implies every art of forming. Hence, if you look at the human form, you will find in it the most precise exemplar of the divine art, as if nothing else existed except the exemplar of the human form. If you look at

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<sup>55</sup> *Docta ignorantia* III, 11, Trans. Jasper Hopkins, lc, p. 151 (with alterations, W.S.-B.).

<sup>56</sup> *Compendium* III, Opp. II, p. 688.



the form of the heavens and conceive the pure form, you can perceive that God's art is nothing else but the exemplar of the heavens."<sup>57</sup>

This form of all forms is God's communication to the world. In his hypostatic 'wisdom,' God's trinity expresses itself in 'wisdom' and thereby conceives the plan of the world's creation. This work becomes material reality in the process of the contraction of the possible into the real.

#### d) Creation of the Real World

The step from possibility to reality marks the connection between God's primordial creation by his wisdom and the real, extra-mental world. The reality of a thing depends on God's conception of all things as being logically possible. Following this conception, he creates them as extra-mental realities. Extra-mental existence comes about as the separation of divine eternal wisdom from contingent reality. Space and time are necessary attributes of contingency. Nicholas describes the process of the becoming-real of the world as '*explicatio*' - the unfolding of unity into variety. The concept of variety is included in the notion of spiritual seminal reasons. In the process of unfolding, the specific unity of the spiritual seeds comes to vary in space and time. "The procession of indivisibility into divisibility marks nothing else but the descent of unity into alterity; hence from integrity to corruption, from immortality to mortality and the like. For the same reason, the form is communicated to the formable, and so the form, as a unity, becomes discrete. The discrete is connected to the indiscrete or continuous, the order to confusion, light to darkness, the subtle to the crude, the spirit to the body, etc."<sup>58</sup> In "De Coniecturis", Cusa describes the process of *explicatio* as a transition from multiform potency to formed matter, and as a transition from the unextended to the extended world. In "On Learned Ignorance", the same process is characterised by the concept of a point as the beginning of all variety: "Just as oneness precedes otherness, so also the point, which is a perfection, precedes magnitude. For what is perfect precedes whatever is imperfect. Thus, rest precedes motion, identity precedes difference, equality precedes inequality, and so on regarding the other perfections. These are convertible with Oneness, which is Eternity

<sup>57</sup> Idiota de Sapientia, Opp. 3, 444. On the context of the Philonic speculations of creation, see chapter 4, Kosmos Anthropos. Nicholas possessed a copy of Philo's commentary on the book of Genesis and on the pseudo-Philonic "Liber antiquitatum biblicarum". Cod. Cus. 16. See: Wilpert, Paul: Philon bei Nikolaus von Kues. In ibid. (ed.): Antike und Orient im Mittelalter, Vorträge der Kölner Mediävistentagungen 1956-1959. Miscellanea Medievalia. Berlin 1962, pp. 69-79.

<sup>58</sup> De coniecturis XII, Opp. Gabriel/Dupré II, 46. Cf. de Gandillac, Maurice: Explicatio-complicatio chez Nicolas de Cues. In: Concordia Discors. Studi su Niccolò Cusano e l'umanesimo Europeo offerti a Giovanni Santinello. Ed. Gregorio Piaia. Padua 1993, pp. 77-106.

itself (for there cannot be a plurality of eternal things). Therefore, God is the unfolding of all things in that He is in all things.”<sup>59</sup>

This unfolding of the one can be perceived in continuity, characterised by unity and discreteness, and containing the elements of numeric and spatial quantity and order. A point is the element of unity in every extension and all dimensions can be reduced to a point. “With respect to quantity, which is the unfolding of the oneness, oneness is said to be a point. For in quantity only a point is present. Just as everywhere in a line (no matter where you divide it) there is a point, so also for a surface and a material object. And yet there is no more than one point. This one point is nothing other than infinite oneness: for infinite oneness is a point which is the end, the perfection, and the totality of line and quantity, which it enfolds.”<sup>60</sup> The unfolding of the qualities inherent in the seminal reasons of things is interpreted as the transition of the spiritually unextended seed in the point into extra-mental, extended reality. For Nicholas, the point contains the potential to become variety. The point is the type of beginning, and the primary element of every dimension. Thus every dimension is formally defined by the germinal power of the point. A point is oneness, showing the dimensions in their continuous unity, and as such, eternity and contingency become visible in it.

#### e) Natural and Historical Time

The beginning of the world lies in the power of the ‘*fiat*’, its end in the mighty sentence of the Last Judgement. For Cusa, the ‘*fiat*’ marks the separation of contingent beings in their external existence. With this institution of contingency time emerges. How is it possible to compare time and eternity? This question implicates the problem of the finitude of the world, and as such it was part of the ‘Averroistic’ battle between critical Aristotelians and pious Platonists. The concept of the unity of science - both philosophical and theological - depended on the answer to this question. The crucial point was how the concept of ‘beginning’ was conceivable.<sup>61</sup>

If the world was created, the monotheistic God of the theologians and the God of the philosophers could be the same. This attempt to bring together the God of the philosophers and the God of the theologians included the problem of combining God’s eternity with his world’s temporality.

The problem could be summarised in three questions:

1. How is it possible to think God’s necessity?
2. Confronted with God’s necessity, what does the contingency of the world mean?
3. What does *arché* (beginning) mean? Is it the beginning of the inner

<sup>59</sup> Docta ignorantia II, 3. Trans. Jasper Hopkins. l.c. p. 94.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 93. Cf. ch. VI. 2, p. 239 [check].

<sup>61</sup> See Cusa, de Principio. Opp. Gabriel/Dupré II, 212, ibid. 234.

Trinitarian eternal process, or is it the beginning of a contingent history?

These questions were of both philosophical and theological interest. Philosophically they dealt with the eternal principle, which was the first element of the concept of being, the Greek *'arché'*. In Plato's "Timaeus", the question arose as to whether the cosmos was itself eternal or whether it was created by a spiritual power. This topos was traditionally related to the doctrine of the unmoved mover in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.<sup>62</sup>

In the biblical tradition there is a double concept of beginning. The book of Genesis describes the temporal beginning as follows: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The prologue of St. John's gospel addressed the eternal beginning. St. John quotes the beginning of the book of Genesis and extends it in a speculative manner: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." This beginning cannot be understood temporally but rather as being eternal, beyond time.

Nicholas of Cusa dedicates his treatise "De Principio" to this problem of the beginning. Situating himself in the speculative interpretation of the Johannine prologue, he quotes a discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees from the Vulgate translation of John's Gospel (8:25): "Tu qui es? Respondit eis Jesus: Principium qui et loquor vobis". "Who are You? Jesus answered them: I am the beginning and I am speaking to you." In this translation, Jesus is understood to be the one who was the word in the beginning. This beginning, which is identified with the unmoved mover of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the logos of the prologue of St. John's gospel, is conceived as the Christological foundation of being. This fundamental unity cannot be divided and hence is the condition of every division. For Cusa, this is the "unum necessarium" of St. Luke's Gospel (10:41),<sup>63</sup> which accords with Proclus' Neoplatonic concept of oneness. "Proclus explains this argument with the following reason: If there were several principles, all principles would be similar in one point: that they were principles. For they all participate in this one principle."<sup>64</sup>

Cusa is struck by Proclus' argument that the highest principle can only be one. This argument corresponds to the biblical truth revealed to the Jewish people: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our Lord is one Lord."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Thomas Aquinas' proposal of the *Quinque Viae*, which is his proof of God's existence, as well as his additional proof of God's existence in the "Summa contra gentiles". In the early Renaissance period the concordance of Aristotle and Plato was disrupted by Georgios' Gemistius Pletho's treatise: "De Platonicae et Aristotelicae philosophiae differentia" (PG 160, col. 1889-1934).

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Opp. Gabriel/Dupré II, p. 214.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Deut. 6:4.

Confronted with this first eternal principle, how can the temporal beginning be understood? Cusa treats this question by interpreting John's speculative logos as the primordial concept of creation. The emergence of creation is the realisation of that which is possible. This interpretation of the theology of the logos is called the Christology of creation. God's inner-Trinitarian word is revealed in the phrases "before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:25), "the glory I had with thee before the world was made" (John 17:5). According to Nicholas, it was the same word through which the world was created. It is the Trinitarian as well as the primordial and eternal core of creation. "What appears to be subsisting eternally in itself is undoubtedly eternal."<sup>66</sup> It is from this spiritual sphere that the eternal word comes forth into visual temporality. "Whatever spiritually lies in the spiritual word and is invisible in all others, becomes real and visible in time."<sup>67</sup> Hence the temporal emerges from the eternal, and, as such, time is the denial of the eternal word. "Omnia temporalia sunt ab intemporalis aeterno."<sup>68</sup>

For Cusa, time is a concept without metaphysical or hypostatic essence. Time emerges when things are realised by creation. Time becomes visible in the process of the unfolding of things. Therefore time can only be described as the variation of visible forms. In the course of time, the entire development of things - their rise and decline - becomes apparent. "Thus everything that was made was named before in order to emerge. Before their realization things lay in the word, from which they would emerge, just as 'fiat lux et facta est lux'".<sup>69</sup>

The time of nature and the time of history do not exist absolutely. For Nicholas, time only becomes visible with the unfolding of things. In the development of things, the process of contingent life can be perceived.<sup>70</sup> This process has its archetype in inner-Trinitarian life, in the separation of the Son from the Father, and in the procedural unity of both through the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup> In this typology, every development is performed by the Trinitarian spirit. Time is therefore not only the denial of eternity, but also the image of the Trinitarian process. Time is characterised by life as it represents the

<sup>66</sup> De Principio. II, 234: "Quod videtur aeternaliter apud se subsistens est utique aeternum."

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Opp. II, 236. Gen. 1:3: "Omne igitur quod factum est, fieri potuit et ante nominatum est. Fuit igitur ante in verbo, quam fieret, ubi ibi fiat lux et facta est lux".

<sup>70</sup> See Lib. XXIV Philosophorum, which Nicholas ascribes to Hermes Trismegistos: "Quis igitur copulando simul in creatura necessitatem absolutam, a qua est, et contingentia, sine qua non est, potest intellegere eius? Nam videtur, quod ipsa creatura, que nec est Deus, nec nihil, sit quasi post Deum et ante nihil, intra Deum et nihil ut ait unus sapientium: Deus est oppositio nihil meditatione entis (I, 324, doct. ignorantia II, 2 quotes Lib. XXIV Philosophorum prop. 14.).

<sup>71</sup> See Docta ignorantia I, 10; Opp. I, p. 224.

Trinity, and becomes visible in the process of the unfolding of the contingent world. Throughout its history, the world develops to its fullest scope and perfection. In this perfecting process, the world ultimately develops back into its primordial idea.

The logos, the inner-Trinitarian Christ, is the perfection of history. Christ, the logos, is the mediator of God the Father's communication into the world. As the logos of creation, he is the seminal power of the unfolding world. As the type of mankind he represents the history of the world, the history of redemption and salvation. As judge and purifying fire he is also the way to transfiguration and eternity. Cusa conceives Christ as the path to transfiguration when he defines him as the type of the Church. The Church calls herself "*Corpus Christi mysticum*"<sup>72</sup> as analogy to Christ's becoming flesh. For the Neoplatonic cardinal, it is in the Church that the "*desiderium intellectuale vivere*" - the desire to see God face to face - has its true place. This place is characterised by the tension between temporality and eternity. The thrust of historical time exhibits energy as it emerges into the world with Christ's descent. After the historical time of world history, the human soul "acknowledges this truth in eternity and in Jesus Christ,"<sup>73</sup> i.e. in the tranquillity of God's visual perception. In the eternity of the '*ecclesia triumphans*', spiritual humanity is perfected. "Here the true man Jesus Christ is united in supreme union with the Son of God - in so great a union that his humanity exists only in the divinity. It is present in the divinity by means of an ineffable hypostatic union - present in such a way that it cannot be more highly and more simply united if the truth of the nature of humanity is to remain."<sup>74</sup> The oneness of the hypostatic union of Christ is the archetype of the '*ecclesia triumphans*'. In the triumphant Church, it is God's eternal life that is fulfilled through the eternal process of divine glory.

Just as Christ's celestial hypostatic union with the Father and the Holy Spirit is the type of the triumphant Church, so his earthly life, his existence in the flesh, is the type of the terrestrial church, the *ecclesia pugnans*, or the militant church. As the type of this Church, Christ performs the history of salvation. In 1452, Nicholas laid out his thoughts concerning the correspondence between historical time and the life of Jesus in a short but highly influential text entitled "*Coniectura de novissimis diebus*",<sup>75</sup> "*Conjectures on the Last Days*".

<sup>72</sup> This topos is always related to the interpretation of the Song of Songs; esp. in Origen and St. Bernhard.

<sup>73</sup> *Docta ignorantia* III, 12, tr. by Jasper Hopkins. l.c. p. 156.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Coniectura de ultimis diebus*. Lat. and French. Amsterdam 1700. *Coniecturae oder Vermutungen des Herrn Nicolai Cusanus, Kardinalen, von dem Zustand der Kirche Christi in den letzten Jahren geführt von dem 1452. jahr bis auf das künftige 1700 und 1734 nach der Geburt Christi*. Görlitz 1583 /84. Another French translation appeared in Paris in 1562, another German one in Nuremberg in 1684. For further editions, see the critical edition by

The decisive arguments of this booklet rest on two typological identifications: In the first, the primordial logos is identified with Christ who was made flesh, and in the second, the earthly peregrination of Christ is identified with the Church as *corpus Christi mysticum*. Thus Christ's finite life journey is understood as the type of the church's journey through world history.

As a support for his conjectures, Cusa interprets St. Paul's account of his conversion (2 Cor. 12: 2): "When St. Paul was elevated into the third heaven, he determined, sitting between the sages, that he did not know anything but Christ, who was crucified. And he said about him: 'In him everything that is possible to be known is included, like in a treasury of wisdom'. Hence if we want to foresee the times and the events concerning Christians, we must properly look at Christ's life."<sup>76</sup> This divine wisdom, which is totally performed through the type of Christ, is historically individuated in the person of Jesus Christ. The historical Christ is considered to be the archetype of the Church: "He himself teaches us how all believers are his members, for he says that everything that has been done to the humblest of his brethren has been done to him. Thus the church is his mystical body. The church's head, Christ, in his peregrination has already reached heaven, and the body will follow upwards. Christ preceded as the type; the church follows as his image."<sup>77</sup>

The outline of world history is hereby typologically shaped. But how can it be filled temporally? In Nicholas' conjectures, the measuring of historical time is possible through the interpretation of the Sabbath as it relates to the typology of Christ. "Christ tells us that he was the son of men and of the Sabbath, and that he fulfils what Isaiah prophesied about the Year of God, which is the Year of Jubilee or freedom."<sup>78</sup>

Cusa calculates his historical dates using this typology of the Sabbath. The biblical year of the Sabbath is the year of jubilee, following every 7 x 7 years, thus it takes place every 50th year. Every year of Christ's life represents a year of jubilee. If Jesus' life is considered to have lasted 34 years until his ascension into heaven, the world should last 1700 years from that point onwards. According to this calculation, the thirty-four years of

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Paul Wilpert, Hamburg 1959. Nicolai de Cusa opera omnia IV, opuscula I p XLIX; on the historical context see Meier-Oeser, Stephan: Die Präsenz des Vergessenen. Zur Rezeption des Nicolaus Cusanus vom 15.-18. Jahrhundert. Münster 1989.

<sup>76</sup> Nicolaus de Cusa: Opera omnia IV, 1 p. 92, see Acta 22,11.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. The idea of the typological meaning of Christ's life can be found in the "Scala paradisi" of Johannes Klimakos († 649), who provided Kierkegaard's pseudonym. The „Scala Paradisi“, which Cusanus possessed, lays out thirty steps to eternity, according to the years in Christ's earthly life.

<sup>78</sup> Op. omn. IV, p. 93. Js. 53:8.

Christ's life have to be added to the 1700 years of the world history and the Church will reach its status of *ecclesia triumphans* in the year 1734.

Cusa sees his own time characterised typologically by the public activities of St. John the Baptist, who began preaching in the year 29. Cusa anticipates that the persecution of the Church will occur according to the persecution of St. John. But the number of believers will steadily increase due to the light of the gospel, up to the beginning of the 34<sup>th</sup> year of jubilee (i.e. 1734 - 50 = 1684<sup>79</sup>).

Following this blossoming of the Church, Cusa expects a renewed persecution, analogous to the sufferings of Christ: "In that time the signs and prodigies of Christ's life, as transmitted in the gospels, will be fulfilled. There will be no haven in the world: this accords to the contrition of Christ and his faith. Afterwards, the devil, the spirit of the antichrist, will increase his persecutions of Christ's body, which is the church. There will be tribulations that will have never been raised to a higher degree. This is the explication of the passion of Christ. The church seems to be extinguished, for the holy apostles, the sewers of God's words, desert and flee."<sup>80</sup>

Just as the resurrection transformed the death of Christ from defeat into victory, so the Church will "gloriously resurrect from the antichrist's persecutions and will resist all doubts." Then will commence the time of eternal peace. The Church will strive for unity with the eternal Christ, who is beyond the sensual world, although this attempt will still not achieve the final eternity. Christ, the apocalyptic lamb, wants the Church, his bride, to join him without any defects. "Then he will come to judge by fire the living, the dead and the whole earth. And he will receive his bride in glory and will rule jointly with her eternally."<sup>81</sup>

#### f) Prisca Theologia

The typology of Christ characterises Cusa's theology and philosophy, particularly as it regards nature and history. In Christ, God's communication with, and accommodation of, created nature becomes visible. Christ purifies the world by his fiery judgement. At the same time, the theology of the Trinity, as made visible by Christ, is represented as being analogous to man's conjecturing rationality. In nature traces of the Trinity can be seen through the mediation of Christ, the reason for creation. The pagans, who do not yet participate in God's biblical revelation to the Jews and the Christians, nonetheless can perceive God's traces in nature and history and thus partake in the most important truths of natural theology. According to the cardinal's

<sup>79</sup> Alsted, J.H., his "Diatribes de mille annis" counted 1694 to be the beginning of the 1000 years' reign, which is close to Cusanus predictions. S. ch. 9, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Op. Omn. IV, p. 95.

<sup>81</sup> Op. omn. IV, p. 96.

philosophy, those truths underlie the divine signs of the created world, recognizable through common human knowledge. Hence the pagans could partake in natural theology, the essential truths of which were 1. the existence of one God, 2. his Trinitarian structure, and 3. the rationality of the created beings of his universe.<sup>82</sup>

For the Neoplatonic cardinal, God's seclusion is apparent. Since his natural truth is not fully comprehensible, the pagans tried to acknowledge God in his natural manifestations. They named God from their various perspectives, and here Nicholas offers his allegorical interpretation of the gods and goddesses of the ancient world: "The pagans named God from his relationships to created things. They named him Jupiter because of his marvellous kindness (for Julius Firmicus says that Jupiter is a star so auspicious that had he reigned alone in the heavens, men would be immortal). Similarly, they named him Saturn because of the profundity of his thoughts and his inventions regarding the necessities of life; Mars because of his military victories; Mercury because of his good judgement in counselling; Venus because of her love which conserves nature; Sun because of his force of natural movements; Moon because of her conservation of the fluids upon which life depends; Cupid because of the unity of the two sexes, for which reason they also call him Nature, since through the two sexes he conserves the species of things."<sup>83</sup>

This allegory of ancient mythology derives from the Neoplatonic science of the one. For Cusa, the allegories of pagan mythology aim at an immutable, metaphysical truth, which, to various degrees, is accessible to all people. As such, this truth is also present in pagan religion and mythology. Here, too, the unfathomable becomes manifest in names of the divine. This incomprehensible oneness is the infinite condition of rational, temporal, and spatial finitude. Thus henotheism is the condition of both *philosophia perennis* and *theologia prisca*.

The wisdom of the pagans, who knew the truth even without biblical revelation but were incapable of conceiving it in its abundance, extended beyond knowledge of the first principle. According to Cusa, the Trinity left

<sup>82</sup> Here Nicholas agrees on many points with the natural theology Raimundus Lullus proposed 300 years earlier. Cf. Colomer, Eusebio: Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Llull. Berlin 1961, esp. pp. 72-113.

<sup>83</sup> On Learned Ignorance I, 25. Trans. Jasper Hopkins. l.c. p. 82. The quote is from Julius Firmicus Maternus: *Matheseos* II, 13,6. On the Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation of the Homeric gods see Lamberton, Robert: *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley, Cal. 1986. For the history of the gods in the Middle ages: von Bezold, Friedrich: *Das Fortleben der antiken Götter im mittelalterlichen Humanismus*. Bonn and Leipzig 1922. See also Baum, Wilhelm: *Nikolaus von Kues in Tirol. Das Wirken des Philosophen und Reformers als Fürstbischof von Brixen*. Bozen 1983, pp. 281-285.



its traces in the structures of human thinking. He discovers Trinitarian structures particularly in the human conception of numbers. Nicholas attributes a knowledge of the Trinity to the Pythagoreans. He sees Pythagoras as the first to observe that every process contains the conceptual moments of unity, equality and connection. “But since oneness is eternal, equality is eternal, and union is also eternal: oneness, equality and union are one. And this is that trine Oneness which Pythagoras, the first philosopher of all and the glory of Italy and Greece, affirmed to be worthy of worship.”<sup>84</sup>

According to Nicholas, truth reveals itself, for God wanted to reveal himself through Christ. His wisdom and power are visible in creation, in the redemption of mankind, and in the coming salvation. God’s truth is powerful in philosophy as well as in theology. Accordingly, Nicholas’ conception of perennial philosophy is that the one divine truth contains the seminal power of all things in order to perfect nature and history through the grace of God.

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<sup>84</sup> On Learned Ignorance. I, VII. Trans. Jasper Hopkins. l.c., pp. 57ff.

B. GLORY

## DIVINE NAMES

### Prooemium

Im Namen dessen, der sich selbst  
erschuf,  
Von Ewigkeit den schaffenden  
Beruf,  
In seinem Namen, der den  
Glauben schafft,  
Vertrauen, Liebe, Tätigkeit und  
Kraft,  
In jenem Namen, er so oft  
genannt,  
Von Ewigkeiten her blieb  
unbekannt;  
Soweit das Ohr, soweit das Auge  
reicht,  
Du findest kein Bekanntes, das  
ihm gleicht.  
Und deines Geistes höchster  
Feuerflug  
Hat schon am Gleichnis, schon  
am Bild genug.  
Es zieht dich an, es reißt dich  
heiter fort,  
Und wo du wandelst, schmückt  
sich Weg und Ort.  
Du zählst nicht mehr, berechnest  
keine Zeit,  
Und jeder Schritt ist  
Unermeßlichkeit.

Goethe<sup>1</sup>

In His great name - sole self-  
created One!  
Who from eternity hath wrought  
alone;  
In His great name, who gives us  
Faith for sight,  
Who gives us Trust, and Love,  
and Will's strong might;  
His name, whom feeble men so  
often call,  
Yet whose true Essence is  
unknown to all;  
Far as the ear can hear, or eye can  
see,  
He only in *the known* appears to  
thee,  
And for thy spirit's highest fire-  
winged flight  
Emblems enough all round thee  
shed their light.  
It charms thee on: all things  
forbid thy stay:  
Where'er thou roamest, beauty  
lights the way.  
Thou count'st no more; no time  
thou thinkest never;  
Each step a world, each moment a  
Forever.

<sup>1</sup> Trans. Dwight, John S. in: Selected Minor Poems of Goethe and Schiller. With Notes by Dwight, John S. Boston 1839, p. 145.

To call someone by name is to touch his innermost essence. Naming entails the power of awakening an individual from his selfishness. Names, like personalities, are dialectical. They are individual and incommunicable, and can only be expressed in an ‘as if’ way.<sup>2</sup> Since a name defines an unique individuality, the specificity of the one named, it can only be used ironically. The incommunicable name, towards which all names strive, is itself the foundation of all individuality. It precedes the communicable and hence is not itself communicable. The Neoplatonic philosophy of participation is constituted by this figure of thought. A name can grasp an individual while at the same time being unable to penetrate his real identity. This dialectic is particularly evident when a soul tries to approach the unique divinity. It is by means of divine names that the devout, praying, dependent soul approaches its Lord, who is the foundation of the soul’s own existence. In its use of the divine names, the soul comes to recognise itself in its contingency, for it conceives that the thoughts by which it partakes in the One are expressed in the eternal and immutable names of the One, and are illuminated by divinity.<sup>3</sup>

Divine names are revealed. Whatever the philosophical description of this revelation may be - whether it is regarded as the prophetic revelation of the divine Plato, as in Proclus, or considered to be a revelation of a biblical seer, as in the Jewish tradition – to call a divine name is always an attempt to grasp the incomprehensible. This is true for the Jewish tradition, whose doctrine of divine names St. Jerome transmitted to the Christian Church (Eph. 25, ad Marcellam), and which through Isidore’s “*Etymologiae*” (VII, 1) became the domain of medieval and early modern philosophy and theology. The concept of divine names is particularly important for the key church father of dialectical theology, the pseudonymous Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>4</sup>

Names are in themselves contradictory, deeply ironic significations, in that they name the ineffable, the founding metaphysical and typological basis of every individuality. In the act of naming, one reaches the individual without knowing how such a thing could be possible. Calling God’s names is an intensification of the dialectical approach, bordering on the magical. To call on God’s names is to depend on the revelation of these names. Divine names cannot come from anything outside of God, for who could name the

<sup>2</sup> This is the form of the existence of an independent moral world, according to Kant.

<sup>3</sup> On splendour as metaphor of the One cf. Beierwaltes, Werner: *Proklos, Grundzüge seines Denkens*. Frankfurt<sup>2</sup> 1979, pp. 367-382. Gersh, Stephen: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*. Leiden 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Artide, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Entry: “*Namen Gottes*”; and Idel, Moshe: *Defining Kabbalah. The Kabbalah of the Divine Names*. In: *Mystics of the Book. Themes, Topics and Typologies*. Ed. Herrera, Robert A. Frankfurt, New York 1993, pp. 97-122.

ineffable? Only as expressions of the absolute can they claim to touch the unfathomable. Whoever uses the revealed names has to be worthy to do so. Since revelation occurs in fear and trembling, the caller of God's names, the pious venerator, must hope that the mighty unknown being will not annihilate, but rather lend him his ear.

It was the church father of dialectical theology, Dionysius the Areopagite, who formulated this theologico-ironical dialectic of divine names for the Christian tradition. His famous treatises "On Divine Names", "On the Celestial Hierarchy", and on "Mystical Theology" are the most important sources of Neoplatonic dialectics in the Middle Ages. Of course, in medieval and early modern times, Dionysius was generally presumed to be St. Paul's student, consequently his work was considered to be an independent and authentic paradigm of Christian Theology. The fact that it derived from Proclus' ideas, and that the author used a pseudonym, was not discovered until a new philology unintentionally began to destroy its own theological foundations.<sup>5</sup>

## **1. PROCLUS' (410-485) DOCTRINE OF PLATO'S "DIVINE NAMES"**

The mysterious, pseudonymous Dionysius could have based his work on Proclus' "Theologia Platonica",<sup>6</sup> the introductory book of which lays out the author's theory of divine names. Proclus considered this book, along with his "Elementatio Theologica", to form the prologue of his entire theological doctrine.<sup>7</sup> Naturally the great systematic Neoplatonic philosopher based his

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Fabricius, Johann Albert: *Bibliotheca Graeca*, Lib. V, cap. 1 (Ed. Herles, vol. VII, 1801, pp. 7-18) contains the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century secondary sources. Stiglmayr, Joseph: *Das Aufkommen der pseudo-dionysischen Schriften und ihr Eindringen in die christliche Literatur*. Bonn 1895. Grafton, Anthony: *Defenders of the Text*. Cambridge, Mass. 1991, p. 162.

<sup>6</sup> Areopagita's usage of Proclus' commentary on the 'Parmenides' dialogue has been established; I am not aware of any evidence regarding Areopagita's knowledge of Proclus' "Theologia Platonica". Cf. Gersh, Stephen: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*. Leiden 1978, pp. 153-156.

<sup>7</sup> "Le livre I de la Théologie platonicienne peut être considéré comme des prolégomènes de toute la théologie". Cf. Saffrey, H.-D.: *La Théologie platonicienne de Proclus et l'histoire du néoplatonisme*. In: *Proklos et son influence. Actes du colloque de Neuchâtel Juin 1985*, pp. 29-44, quot. p. 30. Cf. Id.: *La Théologie platonicienne de Proclus, fruit de L'exégèse du Parménide*. In: *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, 116 (1994), pp. 1-12. On this subject, cf. also: Gersh, Stephen: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*. Leiden 1978. pp. 153-156: *The Revolution in the Parmenides Exegesis*.

On the medieval history of Proclus see: *Proclus et son Influence. Acta du Colloque de Neuchâtel. Juin 1985*, Edités par G. Boss, et G. Seel. Zurich 1987. It was Nicholas of Cusa who in 1438 brought a manuscript of Proclus' "Theologia Platonica" into the West; he

work on the ‘divine Plato’. For Proclus, Plato was the first to explain, in his ‘divinely inspired philosophy’, that the intellect (*nous*) was the father of the soul (*psyche*) and its beginning. According to Proclus, Plato,<sup>8</sup> proceeding from the intellect, arrived at a first principle, which was ineffable and absolutely unfathomable to the intellect. Everything, all the way down to material being, was dependent on this first, ineffable principle.<sup>9</sup>

In this train of thought the dialectic of divine names became clear: The ineffable, the last, the super-essential *One* had to be named. For Proclus, this *One* can only be sought after, but it can never be reached.<sup>10</sup> The *One* marks the limits of the intellect (*nous*). In the other direction, the intellect is defined by the soul (*psyche*), and the soul by the body. The last ineffable unity binds the soul’s form to the body. The soul is bound to the intellect, in which body and soul are united. Finally this intellectual unity is converted into the unity of ineffable oneness.<sup>11</sup>

This oneness is the condition for participation (*methexis*), not its expression. How then can it be named? Only negatively, in a ‘kataphantic’ formulation. The truth of the gods, who, for Proclus, are personifications of the divine predicates, lies below the inaccessible summit of the truth. The gods are attached (*synaphes*) to this truth they receive from the *One*. Thus the intellect can grasp the forms and genera of the gods. For Proclus, however, it is only a secondary theory that treats the knowledge of the gods. A science dealing with the intellect’s forms, which are the divine ideas, can therefore be grasped by the intuition of the soul.<sup>12</sup>

And so it becomes clear that divine predicates are only hypostases of the *One*, are merely related to the *One*, and thus can only provide secondary knowledge. These secondary ideals of the intellect are acknowledged a priori and by intuition.<sup>13</sup>

The divine predicates can be understood as primordial causes (*protourgai aitia*<sup>14</sup>); they are the origins of the world. This is because the unfathomable

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wanted to have it translated by Petrus Balbi. The translation was completed in 1462 and remained unprinted. Cusa’s manuscript is in the Staatsbibliothek Munich (Monac gr 547). Cusa could not use it; he died in 1460. The “Theologia Platonica” was first edited by Emilius Portus, Hamburg 1618. On the reception of Proclus in the Renaissance see the introduction to the Budé edition of the Theologia Platonica. Cf. Grafton, Anthony: The Availability of Ancient Works. In: Schmitt, Charles: The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. Cambridge 1988. On Nicholas of Cusa and Proclus: Santinello, Giovanni: Saggi sull’ ‘umanesimo’ di Proclo. Bologna 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Theologia Platonis I,3. Ed. Saffrey/Westerink. Paris 1968.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Beierwaltes, Proklos. Frankfurt<sup>2</sup> 1979, pp. 165-239; Kreis, Gersh, Stephen: From Iamblichus to Eriugena. Leiden 1979, pp. 137-190.

<sup>11</sup> Theologia Platonis I, 3, P.I, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> On the dialectics of the *One* see Beierwaltes: Proklos, pp. 240-283.

<sup>14</sup> Theologia Platonis I,4, p. 17.

One is ontologically the condition of all the world's attributes. Proclus describes these primordial causes as the highest class of ideas, which are connatural with and primordial to the One. They are simple and mysterious.<sup>15</sup> This idea (*eidos*) is the first predicate of the gods.

It is clear that the divine predicates cannot be produced by autonomous philosophical reason, but rather have to be revealed. Since all truth is revealed, the perception of truth is itself dependent on revelation. Thus Proclus does not autonomously construct his list of divine predicates, but excerpts it from the writings of the 'divine' Plato, which for him bear the character of revelation. Plato is God's chosen prophet and his writings contain God's revealed predicates. For this reason, Proclus examines the *Corpus Platonikum*.

a) From the "Nomoi" he derives the following predicates: 1. the existence of the gods, 2. their prescience, 3. the supremacy and inescapability of justice. Proclus cites these predicates without comment.

b) From Plato's "Republic" he deduces three terms: 1. goodness, 2. immutability and simplicity, 3. the truth of the gods.

Proclus' argument for the goodness of the gods relies primarily on their participation in the one good, which is itself dependent on the origin of all goodness. Goodness has the evidence of a first, irreducible predicate.<sup>16</sup>

Proclus' philosophical argument for the immutability of the gods stems from Plato's "Timaeus". His interpretation of the ideas as gods follows from their dependency on the single, unfathomable One. The eternal ideas - Proclus' gods - are moved by the creator; this *demiurgos* creates the cosmos as the moving image of the unmoved. The ideas are divine, absolute, and self-sufficient predicates. Their self-sufficiency derives from the ineffable One.<sup>17</sup> The intellect partakes of this self-sufficiency, the soul partakes of the

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. I,7, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> For Proclus, evil, as the opposite of the good, has only a pseudo-existence. It does not originate from the inconceivable reason of every good. It is only visible as that which is incapable of receiving God's light. Evil is the tendency to become separated. (*Theologia Platonica* I, 18, p. 85) From the perspective of the First, the origin of all goodness, everything is only relatively good or evil. Evil does not exist absolutely. There is no evil in the universal essences; neither do the gods cause evil, just as they are not actually the causes of the good. The origin of evil is the pseudo-existence of beings unable to receive the good. They are particularised and situated below the intellectual universals. On the theory of evil in ancient Neoplatonism, cf. Hager, Peter Fritz: *Die Materie und das Böse im antiken Neuplatonismus*. In: Zintzen, Clemens: *Die Philosophie des Neuplatonismus*. Darmstadt 1977, pp. 427-474.

<sup>17</sup> *Theol. Plat.* p. 90.

intellect, and the circular movement of the cosmic bodies is the reflection of divine, self-sufficient immutability.<sup>18</sup>

The simplicity of the gods results from their immutability. It is a hallmark of every divinity that it remains in the form specific to it. Here Proclus distinguishes between simplicity and oneness. Simplicity is the oneness of the separate ideas, in the same way as the gods are one. Oneness, however, is the ineffable first. Proclus therefore calls simplicity *hen-polla*, the one-many, and he describes it as follows: “The simple (*hen-polla*) is only a subordinate being; it only reflects the oneness of the first (*haplotes*).”<sup>19</sup> This simple existence is the existence of the divine ideas. This ideal existence is the one-multiplicity of the gods, whose simple ideas reflect the uniqueness of the ineffable One in secondary unities. This process shows how the One intimately combines multiplicity and unity, and it is as such that multiplicity derives from oneness.

Simplicity is understood as the oneness in multiplicity. This indicates how Proclus’ concept of participation works in both ontology and gnoseology. The notion of partaking marks the limits of rational logic. Participation can only be understood dialectically, where the concept of simplicity as the unification of oneness and diversity is necessary to go beyond the limits of the law of contradiction. Radical, unfathomable, eternal oneness marks the limits of all thinking. Oneness cannot be grasped logically, since the oneness of the whole is the condition for every rational distinction and is therefore beyond anything that can be conceived. It remains inexplicable how the simplicity of the notions can merge with the simplicity of truth. But there can only exist one truth; several competing truths would mean no truth at all.

The truth (*aletheia*) of the divine ideas, which lies in their oneness as well as in their simplicity, is beyond human intellectual capacity. The discourse of the one truth is composed of a multitude of ideas. Thus truth is deeply connected with its opposite, untruth. The interweaving of truth and untruth is the fate of human participation in truth. The gods participate more intensely in the ineffable One, and their truth is therefore superior to the truths of the merely participating human soul. All truths of divine and human participation include separation. The one truth, however, is not wholly present in separate ideas, but in their partaking of the One.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 1,20, p. 95,17. On the terminology: Corsini, Eugenio: Il trattato “De divinis nominibus” dello Pseudo-Dionig e i commenti Neoplatonici al Parmenide. Turin 1963. Corsini emphasises the dualistic order of the terms in Proclus. This thesis is adopted by Stephen Gersh: From Iamblichus to Eriugena, pp. 56-66. Beierwaltes for his part points out the triadic constellations in Proclus’ ideas. See his Proklos, pp. 50-158. In the first book of Proclus’ “Theologia platonica” neither dyadic nor triadic orders play an important role.



The ineffable One approaches the ideas 'from above' and communicates the truth to them; the soul comes, so to speak, 'from below', but cannot be entirely unified with the ideas. The truth of the soul participating in the One can only approach the ideas, and as such is both true and untrue. It is true by virtue of the '*dynamis tautotetos*,' the power of identity; it is untrue because of '*heterotes*' - diversity.<sup>20</sup> The unity of truth, however, only exists in the participation in the ineffable One. Due to this ineffable oneness, the knowledge of the gods surpasses all human knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

According to this conception of truth, Proclus distinguishes between God's unity and God's intellect. Divine oneness is the unseparated first.<sup>22</sup> The intellect is its first creation; it is where the gods dwell. In this sense, the intellect is the universal cause of the gods.<sup>23</sup>

Proclus' theory of truth, which makes up the gnoseological part of his doctrine of emanation, is one of a dynamic analogy. The more divine power a soul receives, the closer it is to the truth of its ideas, which participate in the One. Proclus' theory of truth is not a theory of the logical compatibility of several coexisting truths but on the contrary a radical theory of assimilation to the transrational. It is the precondition of understanding that there is a concealed, incomprehensible truth behind visible and audible things - a truth pointing to the One. This concept of truth is the condition for every prophecy, for divination, hieroglyphics and astrology.

c) From Plato's "Phaedrus" (246, b 8-e1), Proclus quotes only the sentence describing the divinities as beautiful, wise, and good (*kalon, sophon, agathon*). This list of predicates completes the series in the "Republic", namely 'goodness', 'immutability and simplicity', and 'truth of the gods'. In the series of predicates deriving from the "Phaedrus", Proclus also uses the method of 'via eminentiae', the optimising predication that ascribes the highest attributes to its objects. This method 'quo maius cogitari nequit' optimises affirmative notions and tries to find the perfect object of every thought.

#### Goodness

Among beings, Proclus argues, there are none more perfect than the good and the gods. The final purpose, the *optimum*, is therefore that the good and the gods coincide. The good and the gods strive for the same goal of the desirable, the wholesome, and the perfect (*to epheton, to hikanon, to*

<sup>20</sup> Theol. Platonis I, 21. p. 97: 23, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 98.

<sup>22</sup> This idea adopts Plotinus' doctrine of the non-thinking first. cf. 1, 21; 98, 21.

<sup>23</sup> 1,21 p. 98:24. This specific Neoplatonic form of causality is the subject of Stephen Gersh's book: From Iamblichus to Eriugena. Leiden 1979

*teleion*). The ability to perceive and desire the whole and the perfect reaches all the way to the humblest forms of being. It is this ability that causes the ideas of the intellect (*noera*) to beget what is similar to them, and that introduces the desire of imitation in souls. It is the love of becoming,<sup>24</sup> and the desire for the perfect, the good, and the beautiful. This love, happy in its misery, is the golden bond binding the world to the ideas.

#### Wisdom, Sophia.

Wisdom is the intellect of the gods and the basis of divine thinking. This thinking of the gods is without words (*gnosis arretos*) and is nothing but the immediate union of the soul with its object.<sup>25</sup> For Proclus, wisdom shows itself to be an entwinement of truth and being. It thus forms a triadic connection, where wisdom connects being and intellectual truth and experiences itself as being attracted by the true and the good.<sup>26</sup>

#### Beauty

The beauty of the gods partakes of the character of the good (*kallos agathoeides*). It is intelligible and at the same time beyond intelligibility, for it is itself beautiful (*autokallomene*) and therefore it is the source of all beauty. The realm of intelligibility and harmony is permeated with divine beauty and receives its light from its transcendent oneness. It illuminates the primordial reasons and, as a result, the moving, visible beings.<sup>27</sup> Since the gods are characterised as the good and as speechless wisdom (*Sophia*), they also encompass beauty. Being beautiful, the divine is the desire for love (*eros peri to kalon*). Love strives for beauty, and, at the same time, love corresponds to grace, since grace is the communication of love. This is expressed in the apparition of beauty as luminary, bright, and evident (*lampron, stilpon, ekphanes*<sup>28</sup>).

d) From Plato's "Phaedo" (80a, 10B, 6), Proclus derives the predicates divine, immortal, intelligible, simple, insoluble, self-similar, and without becoming (*ageneton*). These predicates repeat what has already been said: The divine is related to the one; the immortal is immutable. The intelligible defines itself as the existence of the divine; the simple (*monoeides*) is the highest conceivable notion before the inconceivable. The last divine predicate is the eternity without becoming of the gods (*ageneton ton theon*<sup>29</sup>).

<sup>24</sup> I, 22, p. 103. This is Goethe's "Glück ohne Ruh" in his poem "Rastlose Liebe".

<sup>25</sup> In Dionysius the Areopagite this will be the language of the angels.

<sup>26</sup> I, 24, p. 106, 24ff.

<sup>27</sup> I, 24, p. 106, 15ff.

<sup>28</sup> P. 108, 20.

<sup>29</sup> P. 120, 2.

Since the divine surpasses all becoming, it is not itself subject to becoming or vanishing. It is timeless as well as in time and is above every division as well as in every division. Proclus describes lyrically how “the gods are without becoming, but there is an order among them of first, middle, and last proceedings. And there are reasons stemming from the simple ideal reasons and others, which derive from the multiplicity of ideas. Life grows in the forms of becoming.”<sup>30</sup>

For Proclus, divine predicates are not the predicates of the One, but only secondary predicates, which, nonetheless, constitute the summit of every conceptual thought. These notions are irreducible, evident, and communicable. They form a table of categories in the divine sphere. This table is of insurmountable notions, the highest list of the absolutely original reasons of the essential beings and of the forms of the world:

Existence, prescience, justice, goodness, immutability, truth, wisdom, beauty, love, and being without becoming.

Whatever the ontological or gnoseological status of these notions may be - hypostases, norms, or constitutive notions of every thought -, the idea of divine predicates determines the entire monotheistic tradition, and these categories are key notions in Western theology and philosophy.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE'S DIALECTIC OF DIVINE NAMES<sup>32</sup>

To a Christian reader, Proclus' list of divine predicates was acceptable only if the idea of the gods being predicates of the One meant that they were

<sup>30</sup> I, 28, p. 122, 24ff.

<sup>31</sup> This is of course a theory of the reality of mental universals. On the logical difficulties see Aristotle, *Met.* 4, 1078 b, 30ff. Cf. Gersh, Stephen: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, p. 89.

<sup>32</sup> Literature on “*De divinis nominibus*”: von Ivanka, Endre: *Der Aufbau der Schrift De divinis nominibus des Ps. Dionysius*. In: *Scholastik* 15 (1940), pp. 386-99. Roques, R.: *L'univers dionysien. Structure hierarchique du monde selon Pseudo-Denys*. Paris 1954. Corsini, Eugenio: *Il Trattato De divinis Nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i Commenti Neoplatonici al Parmenide*. Turin 1962. Von Ivanka, Endre: *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter*. Einsiedeln 1964. Bader, Günter: *Gott nennen. Von Götternamen zu göttlichen Namen; Zur Vorgeschichte der Lehre von den göttlichen Eigenschaften*. *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 86 (1989), pp. 306-54. Von Balthasar, Hans Urs: *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*. Einsiedeln 1962, vol. 2, pp. 147-219. Duclow, Donald F.: *Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa: An Approach to the Hermeneutics of the Divine Names*. In: *International Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1972), pp. 260-278. Beate Regine Suchla (trans.): *Die Namen Gottes*. Bibliothek der Gr. Literatur vol. 27. Stuttgart 1988, pp. 1-20. John D. Jones, engl. translation of *De divinis nominibus* and introd. Milwaukee 1980. Ruh, Kurt: *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, vol. 1. Munich 1990, pp. 31-82. Rorem, Paul: *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary to the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence*. Oxford 1993, pp. 133-182.

predicates of the one God, who, moreover, had to be defined as a trinitarian God. It was necessary to reconcile the One of Proclus' theology with the Christian concept of Trinity, so that the ideas would become attributes of the Christian God. On the other hand, Christian theology would be acceptable to a Neoplatonic speculative philosopher only if Proclus' doctrine of God's unpredictability remained untouched. It was Dionysius the Areopagite who tried to indicate the narrow path between both options, and he clearly was successful historically. His pseudepigraphic identity as St. Paul's student (Acts 17:34) was believed to be authentic. As Dionysius was considered an original Christian philosopher, Proclus was held to be his later pagan counterpart. Such was his reputation when he was rediscovered by Guillaume of Moerbeke and Nicholas of Cusa. Particularly in his book "On divine names", Dionysius the Areopagite was eager to dress the Neoplatonic allusions in biblical costume. This made sense since biblical revelation claimed a monopoly of meaning, and the mystical, pseudonymous writer naturally intended to stabilise this monopoly.

Dionysius finds the whole doctrine of the unpredictable and super-essential One in the Bible. That which exists symbolically and typically in human thought can be found in Scripture. "These mysteries we learn from the Divine Scriptures, and thou wilt find in well - nigh all the utterances of the Sacred Writers the Divine Names refer in a Symbolical Revelation to Its beneficent Emanations. Wherefore, in almost all consideration of divine things we see the Supreme Godhead celebrated with holy praises as One and Unity, through the simplicity and unity of Its supernatural indivisibility, from whence (as from an unifying power) we attain to unity, and through the supernal conjunction of our diverse and separate qualities are knit together each into a Godlike oneness, and all together into a mutual Godly union. And It is called Trinity because Its supernatural fecundity is revealed in a Threefold Personality, wherefrom all Fatherhood in heaven and on earth exists and draws Its name. And It is called the universal Cause since all things came into being through Its bounty, whence all being springs."<sup>33</sup>

Consequently Dionysius only quotes the Bible, at least explicitly. He thereby engages the possibility of reinterpreting Proclus' theology in biblical terms and of transforming it into Christian theology. To legitimise such a transformation, it is necessary to ground trinitarian theology in the divine predicates. For Dionysius, God's trinitarian core is of course incomprehensible, but God's revelation enables man to predicate him by means of analogy. This can be done using three predicates conforming to Proclus' table of divine predicates: "All has been called into being through His

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<sup>33</sup> De divinis nominibus I, 4; Dionysius the Areopagite On divine Names and Mystical Theology. Trans. by C. E. Rolt. New York 1920, pp. 56f.

essential goodness, wisdom and beauty.”<sup>34</sup> Goodness, wisdom, and beauty are general predicates of the creator and of creation. They are the archetypes of the divine names; through them nature and mankind communicate closely with God. God “is called Wise and Fair because all things which keep their own nature uncorrupted are full of all Divine Harmony and Holy Beauty; and especially It is called Benevolent because of one of Its Persons.”<sup>35</sup> This is Dionysius’ theology of mediation: “It verily and wholly shared in our human lot, calling into Itself and uplifting the lower estate of man, wherefrom, in an ineffable manner, the simple Being of Jesus assumed a compound state, and the Eternal hath taken a temporal existence, and He who supernaturally transcends all the order of the natural world was born in our Human Nature without any change or confusion of His ultimate properties.”<sup>36</sup>

#### a) Trinity

Dionysius uses the Christological mark of man to describe his unique ability to acknowledge the divine revelation by conforming to the super-essential, super-celestial divine Oneness. Dionysius adapts Proclian theology to Christian theology by means of his speculative Christology. Dionysius distinguishes human negative knowledge of God from the knowledge of the angels: Neither sensation, fantasy, opinion, name, reason, nor science are appropriate for the recognition of divine names. Any real knowledge of revealed names is unattainable for the human species. Speaking of ‘threefold’, ‘simple’, ‘super-essential’ ‘more-than-good’ ‘ineffable’ is only appropriate for angels. They praise Him with these predicates, as it is reported in the Bible. As they sing his praise, the angels perform their divinely formed (*theoeides*) knowledge. “And godlike Minds, angelically entering (according to their owners) unto such states of union and being deified and united, through the ceasing of their natural activities, unto the Light which surpassed Deity, can find no more fitting method to celebrate its praises than to deny It every manner of Attribute.”<sup>37</sup>

This heavenly hymn of praise interprets the threefold “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the book of Isaiah (Is. 6:3), from which the ‘Sanctus’ in the mass is taken. It is both knowledge and praise. Here, at the divine throne and surrounded by the seraphim, in a vision of heavenly glory, divine predicates are revealed.<sup>38</sup> These predicates are only negatively conceivable, and are approached only by abstracting from all positive predicates. Dionysius states that God’s being

<sup>34</sup> PG III, 592 A5.

<sup>35</sup> De divinis nominibus I, 4. Trans. Rolt. p. 57.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. (Cf. Phil. 22:7, Hebr. 2:17)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. I, 5, p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Celestial Hierarchy VII, 4.

is ‘presubstantial’ and absolutely unattainable for man. Thus an ironic situation presents itself, in which the worshipper must praise without being able to do so, must shout without knowing what to shout, and must speak without a voice. In this text, the pious dilemma does not end in mystical silence but in the acknowledgement that every act of naming is ambiguous. God’s names are pronounced and praised because man participates in them. For it is here that God shows himself as the beginning of all things; at the same time he is the cause beyond all things and reveals his name to the human race. It is proper for things to have names; they are the expressions of God’s universal lordship. He is, as the Scripture says, “everything to everyone” (1 Cor. 15:28), thus he is praised as the one who causes, produces, and completes all, as a shelter and a home, and as the one who brings every thing to its perfection. He is therefore correctly called ‘prescience’ and ‘goodness’, surpassing every name.<sup>39</sup>

These considerations come together in a new, positive theology. It can be thought because the immemorial first cause revealed itself in the absolute first notions. Since the unpronounceable is more than our concept of the good, more than substance, more than alive, it becomes evident by this ‘more’, that the unpronounceable is concealed but at the same time reveals his names to human understanding.

Dionysius emphasises that divine names distinguish themselves from the Trinity.<sup>40</sup> God’s names are only the revealed exterior of the secret mysterious life of the Holy Trinity. This innermost life proceeds from the Father, recognises itself in the Son, and remains One in the Holy Spirit. This dynamic interpretation of trinitarian theology always runs the risk of a certain subordination of the Son with respect to the Father.<sup>41</sup> Along similar lines, this concept of trinitarian theology shows the revealed image of the Holy Trinity’s mystery.

Trinitarian life appears as the condition of all becoming and being. Becoming can be articulated as the proceeding from the one to the other, while the differentiation between the one and the other occurs in a continuous unity. And so the Trinity lives in an eternal movement, which is the condition of all harmony.

This appreciation of the coincidence of movement and rest in the Trinity fundamentally distinguishes Dionysius from Proclus. Proclus’ theology of

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<sup>39</sup> De divinis nom. I, 8.

<sup>40</sup> De divinis nom. II, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Marcus, Wolfgang: Der Subordinatianismus als historiologisches Phänomen. Munich 1963. On the theological consequences of this subordinatism, which goes as far as monoteletism, and against which Maximus the Confessor argues, cf. von Balthasar, Hans Urs: Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus’ des Bekenner. Einsiedeln 1961, 2pp. 203-273.

the One is closer to the antique appreciation of the calm of unmoving ideas, while Dionysius makes his notion of God dynamic.

Only against the background of this original trinitarian movement is it possible to conceive of the harmonic multiplicity of divine predicates, for it is only divine life that keeps inner-divine difference from becoming evil. In light of the divine Trinity, differences are beautiful harmonies.

Since inner-trinitarian separation constitutes the emergence of harmony, every real life is only possible because God's living power was communicated to it. Christ is the archetype of this eternal inner-trinitarian separation and conjunction, thus every process derives from the original Christological movement in the Trinity. "The Universal Cause which filleth all things is the Deity of Jesus, whereof the parts are in such wise tempered to be the whole that It is neither whole nor part, and yet is at the same time whole and also part, containing in Its all-embracing unity both part and whole, and being transcendent and antecedent to both."<sup>42</sup>

This Christology is the condition of all discrete predication. It founds the triad of 'being', 'living', and 'thinking', which Dionysius adopts from Proclus.<sup>43</sup> It is in these notions that the mystery of the Holy Trinity's eternal becoming is reflected. The soul's participation in this process is itself a turn towards the divine sphere. In its conversion to God, the soul perceives the power of divine life in its origin, separation, and unification.

Divine predicates partake of divine life. In Dionysius' metaphor, divine life unites the predicates like a radius unifies the points in a circle.<sup>44</sup> In the process of creation, divine names receive the character of archetypes, which in turn imprint the ectypes. "As the center of a circle is shared by all the radii which surround it in a circle, and as there are many impressions of a seal all sharing in the seal which is their archetype while yet this is entire, nor is it only a part thereof that belongeth unto any of them."<sup>45</sup>

The metaphor of seal and imprint can be interpreted in many ways. Here it indicates the participation of every imprint, which, itself an ectype, mirrors its perfect archetype. This metaphor corresponds to the one of the mirror, which, regardless of its size, is capable of representing the image of the whole. Furthermore, a type is the perfect form of a predicate. As such, the divine predicates are also the imprinting forms of the universe as it was created by God. In this respect, the created things indicate a harmony in diversity, found archetypically in the divine predicates, particularly in the triad of being, life, and wisdom. "And if the term 'Differentiation' be also applied to the bounteous act of Emanation whereby the Divine Unity,

<sup>42</sup> De divinis nominibus II, 10. Trans. C.E. Rolt.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Beierwaltes, Proklos <sup>2</sup>1979, pp. 93-118. *Ousia, Zoe, Nous*.

<sup>44</sup> On the history of the circle metaphors see Beierwaltes, Proklos <sup>2</sup>1979, pp. 165-239.

<sup>45</sup> De divinis Nominibus II, 5. Trans. C. E. Rolt, p. 72.

brimming Itself with goodness in the excess of its Undifferentiated Unity thus enters into Multiplicity, yet an undifferentiated unity worketh even in those differentiated acts whereby, in ceaseless communications, It bestows Being, Life, and Wisdom, and those other gifts of the all-creative Goodness in respect of which (as we behold the communications and the participations thereof) we celebrate those things wherein the creatures supernaturally participate.”<sup>46</sup>

Divine predicates can be described in their difference because they are unified in divine life. An order of the predicates based on Dionysius’ summary in his treatise “On Divine Names”, would fall into two categories:

The first category has the notions of 1. being<sup>47</sup> and 2. the One. This would be followed by a homogeneous series of seven, the circle of divine names: 3. goodness,<sup>48</sup> 4. light/knowledge,<sup>49</sup> 5. beauty,<sup>50</sup> 6. love,<sup>51</sup> 7. life,<sup>52</sup> 8. wisdom,<sup>53</sup> 9. power/justice.<sup>54</sup>

A further, subordinate group, which is included in the other predicates, would be composed of holiness, kingdom, dominion, God of Gods,<sup>55</sup> and perfection,<sup>56</sup> along with the One.<sup>57</sup>

#### b) Being and the One

As a theological name, ‘being’ is “truly applied by his Divine Science to him that truly is”.<sup>58</sup> Here Dionysius adopts Proclus’ first predicate of God. ‘Being’ is a predicate beyond all other divine names, even if it does not reach God, whose name “extends both to the things which are, and to those which are not, and is beyond both categories.”<sup>59</sup> ‘Being’ is the highest in the series of predicates, and its gradation follows the logical ranking of emanation. As God is praised as being prior to his gift of being, so this priority, or ‘being earlier’, is held to be more excellent than ‘being’. ‘Being’ marks the summit of the intellectual insight into divine names.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. I, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. IV, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. IV, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. IV, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. IV, 14.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. VI, 1-3.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. VII.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. VIII, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. XII.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. XIII.

<sup>57</sup> Evil, being the negation and privation of being, is treated as a pseudo-category by Dionysius in chapter VI.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. V, 1. Trans. Rolt.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. V, 1.



Dionysius treats the 'One' with remarkable brevity.<sup>60</sup> As the 'One', God is the mystery of multiplicity, the mystery preceding the multiplicity of variation and number. In the One all differences are united, and through the One all predicates coincide in God. This position differs significantly from Proclus' hymnical science of the One. Dionysius probably wants to avoid aligning himself too closely with Neoplatonism, particularly since Proclus' doctrine of the one offends the Christian dogma of the Trinity. So Dionysius contents himself with some rather cautious remarks on the One and numbers.

### c) The Circle of Divine Names

As opposed to 'being' and the 'One', which are closer to God, the subsequent divine predicates (numbers three through nine) are equidistant from God's core. They can be understood as the circle of predicates surrounding him.

God's third predicate, as seen from a limited human perspective, is God's goodness.<sup>61</sup> All super-celestial orders depend on God's goodness, their connections between each other, and the procession from the superior to the inferior - basically all that was described in the "Celestial Hierarchy".

God's fourth predicate is light (IV,5). It is the good as it is acknowledged externally, *phos noeton*, the intelligible light.

The fifth predicate is beauty (IV,7). Beauty contains the source of love, and all divine names are beautiful because they are real entities. All subordinate things only become beautiful by virtue of their participation in the beauty of the divine names.

God's sixth predicate is love (IV,14). The notion of love is dynamic in itself; it is bliss without rest. Love shows the dynamic results of the originally unrecognisable. It differs from beauty, goodness, and intelligible light. Love is never at rest and as such contradicts the divine calm. Love belongs to the circle of divine predicates since God is loved both because he is beautiful and good and because he loves himself. Earthly love is the copy of this divine self-connection. Love is an eternal circulation, "because of the good from the good to the good."<sup>62</sup> At the same time - and this makes apparent Dionysius' Christological method - love is considered a dynamic force visible in the yearning of creatures for their God. The creatures feel their separation from the One and strive after their original good.

The seventh predicate is eternal life, (VI,1-3) from which life itself, and the life of all beings, derives. It is the source of eternal as well as of mortal life; it is itself vivifying and makes all life possible. From this life the heavens receive their movement, and from it spirits, men, and bodies receive

<sup>60</sup> End of chap. XIII, nearly at the treatise's end, along with the perfect.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. IV, 1 and V, 1.

<sup>62</sup> PG 3, 712d.

life. These lives signify the almighty power of divine life. Animals and plants derive their essence from it as well, and it is the life that permeates the cosmos.

The eighth predicate is God's wisdom, the creating wisdom, *autosophia*, a hypostatic wisdom absolutely superior to all things. In comparison, all human wisdom appears foolish. Divine wisdom is the wisdom of antinomies, a wisdom which is the condition of all other wisdom as well as of its opposite. It is from this first wisdom that the angels derive their simple and blissful intelligence. They do not receive knowledge from the observation of singularities, nor from sensible or diffuse reason, nor from deduction. Their knowledge is an immaterial insight, a spiritual power reflecting the immaculate chastity of the *autosophia*. Their wisdom is, as far as possible, formed by the divine wisdom itself.<sup>63</sup>

Here Dionysius takes up the Neoplatonic argument of the pure, speechless insight of intellects. This tradition also holds that the souls below receive their power of logical deduction, *to logikon*, from the sphere of intelligence. The highest level of knowledge, however, is reserved for the intuitive insight of the angels. The power of deduction, which the soul wields as its logical capacity, makes it possible to access wisdom. This access is however only obtained in a roundabout way, proceeding forward in a spiral motion.<sup>64</sup> Dionysius regards even the senses as being permeated by God's wisdom, and the demonic soul loves because it partakes in the divine *Sophia*.

The ninth predicate is God's power and justice. It is due to the logic of divine names that power and justice coincide. How could God's justice be distinguishable from his power? Dionysius explicates only God's power and designates it as *apeirodynamis*, unlimited power, on which all other powers depend - the power of the angels as well as the power of any movement. It is God's power that guarantees the order of the heavens, the circular movement, the power of the fire and the elements, and the power of divine order, for it is God's justice that sets everything in order.<sup>65</sup>

With 'power' and 'justice', the series of divine predicates, narrowly defined, is complete. For Dionysius, the question of rationality does not come to bear on divine names. Logic and deduction are subordinate faculties of the soul. The series of other biblical names is also only touched upon

<sup>63</sup> VII, 2, PL III, 868b 12.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. IV, 8: "And the Heavenly Minds are spoken of as moving (1) in a circular manner when they are united to the beginningless and endless illuminations of the Beautiful and Good; (2) straight forward, when they advance to the providential guidance of those beneath them and unerringly accomplish their designs; and (3) with spiritual motion, because, even while providentially guiding their inferiors, they remain immutably in their self identity, turning unceasingly around the Beautiful and Good whence all identity is sprung." (Trans. Rolt)

<sup>65</sup> VIII, 1, MPG 890c.

briefly (XII). And the question of God's perfection answers itself: The totality of all good and the source of all being must be perfect.

Dionysius did not construct his treatise of divine names systematically. A systematic structure would not have befit the genre of a text that was both hymnological and philosophical.<sup>66</sup> In comparison with Proclus' table of divine predicates, Dionysius enlarged the series of divine names and presented them in a Christian way. In this transformation he made the notion of God dynamic. In questions concerning the science of the One he remained very cautious. He postponed the speculative question of Oneness since he did not want to endanger trinitarian doctrine. Dionysius came up with his notion of being by both following and altering Proclus' concept of *ousia*. He reinterpreted Proclus' definition of divine providence and justice as power and justice. He maintained the Neoplatonic concepts of divine names as good, beauty, wisdom, and love, but transformed the Proclian concept of divine immutability into the life of the Christian trinitarian God. Thus he could place the Proclian triad of being, life, and intelligence<sup>67</sup> into a new Christian context. In accordance with his Christian theology, Dionysius emphasised the concept of love. It was in this Dionysian composition that Christian Neoplatonism thrived in the Western world. It left its imprint on medieval and early modern thinking more than any other philosophy.

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Beierwaltes, Proklos <sup>2</sup>1979, Exkurs III, pp. 391-394: Zur Problemgeschichte des philosophischen Gebets.

This is why Dionysius' treatment of evil (which explicitly cites Proclus) is not presented systematically. This passage follows immediately after the discussion on love; it is not in the chapter on the good or on being. For Dionysius, love seems to be the counterpart of evil. He describes evil by proceeding from the claim that some demons do not obey the divine order and the yearning of love. His response to this disobedience does not essentially differ from that of Proclus. For Dionysius, evil is not an essence but solely a privation. It does not create any essence or becoming but only annihilates the essential. Therefore evil is only *parhypostasis*, a pseudo-being. Evil subsists in the good, and the deprivation of the good defines the relative evil. The good has the power of generation, of divine imprint and of love, which evil does not have. As far as the created essences are distant from God, this distance is considered to be evil. Dionysius' theory, however, does not attend to the crucial problem of evil's active resistance to God's good will.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Beierwaltes, Proklos <sup>2</sup>1979, pp. 93-118, I, 3, e: *Ousia, Zoe, Nous*.

### 3. ST. JEROME'S (340/50 – 419/20) AND ISIDORE OF SEVILLE'S († 636) POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY OF DIVINE NAMES

There were good arguments for a biblical reclaiming of God's names. The idea of divine names was based on a concept of revelation. The biblical names also derived from above, from God's revelation. Moreover, Syrian monks, whose tradition Dionysius shared, had collected a list of divine names, which was known to St. Jerome. Jerome summarises them as follows:

"God's first name is *El*, which the Septuagint translates as power (*ischyros*), expressing the etymology of the Hebrew *el*, eagle. Then *Eloim* and *Eloe*, as God himself is called. The fourth name is *Sabaoth*, which the Septuagint translates as power, eagle and forces. The fifth is *Elion*, which we call *excelsus*, the highest. Sixth *Esoie*, which in the book of Exodus means 'who sends me'. Seventh *Adonai*, which we generally call *dominus*, 'Lord'. Eighth, *Ja*, which can only be found in God and which sounds in the last syllable of Hallelujah. Ninth, the tetragram which they consider to be unpronounceable and which is written with the letters Yod, He, Vav, He. Those who do not know it used to resolve it because of the similarity of the Greek letters in  $\pi\pi\pi$ . Tenth, *Saddai*, this is presented as untranslatable in Ezekiel."<sup>68</sup> Due to these conditions, and especially due to the unpronounceability of the tetragram, it seemed meaningful to combine Proclus' concept of divine names, and the attendant negative theology of the One, with the findings of the Jewish theology of predications, which had already been adopted by Christian theologians. This corresponded to Philo's concept of God's transcendent existence and his immutability. Philo, too, had emphasised that God "is not apprehensible even by the mind, save in the fact that He is."<sup>69</sup>

The Spanish bishop Isidore of Seville, one of the greatest excerpt collectors of all times,<sup>70</sup> transmitted the ten names of God St. Jerome had

<sup>68</sup> Sancti Eusebii Epistulae I. Ed. Isidore Hilsberg. Vienna, Leipzig 1910. CSEL vol. LIV. Nr. XXV, pp. 218-220. Ad Marcellam de decem nominibus, quibus apud Hebraeos Deus vocatur. Cf. PL 23, 1272 with the annotations. Concerning the parallels to the Syriac monks and especially to Evagrius, see Hieronymus Opp. PL 23, 1275-1280; a Greek version of God's names *ibid.* 1271ff.

<sup>69</sup> Quod Deus immutabilis est XIII, 62. In: Philo, Opera II. Greek-Engl. Ed. Colson-Whithacker. London, New York 1930.

<sup>70</sup> von Bezold, Friedrich: Das Fortleben der antiken Götter im mittelalterlichen Humanismus. Bonn 1922, p. 6. On the diffusion of Isidore's works in the Middle Ages see Fernandez Caton, Jose Maria: Las Etimologías en la tradición manuscrita medieval. León 1966. Bischoff, Bernhard: Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors. In: Diaz y Diaz, Manuel C. (ed.): Isidoriana. León 1961. For Isidore's relation to ancient philosophy see

listed in his gigantic work "Etymologiae". The series of divine names opens book VII of the "Etymologies" and initiates the description of the celestial and earthly hierarchy of the Church. The divine names are the summit of this hierarchy, since they define God even before he unfolds himself into the trinitarian persons. After the divine names, Isidore addresses the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Trinity; the angels; the first men whom God taught to utter etymological names, such as Adam, Cain, and Abel; then the Patriarchs and the prophets, the Apostles and the remaining holy persons of the Gospel, such as Mary, Elizabeth, the sisters Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus, but also Caiphas and Pontius Pilate; and finally, the martyrs, clerics, monks, and other great believers. The entire structure and history of the divine economy and the typology of church history containing the whole history of salvation, as described by Isidore in his chronology,<sup>71</sup> is founded typologically on the divine names. Isidore is quite conscious of the significance of the divine names and their function in the divine economy. He comments on St. Jerome: "The position of the names clearly shows what he wanted to be known. It is namely for good reasons that they are called 'Names'."<sup>72</sup> The good reason is that the divine names stand at the absolute beginning. Thus Isidore places them at the beginning of his book on celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

In fact, Isidore's treatise on divine names is much more than just a reprint of Jerome's famous letter 25 to Marcella. Isidore's comments explicate Jerome's rather dry piece in a philosophical light not always in accordance with the spirit of Jerome. Whereas Jerome gave only a philological report, Isidore presents a philosophical theory on the exegetical material. God's ten names were thus transmitted to the Middle Ages cloaked in Isidore's philosophy. Along with Dionysius' speculative treatise on divine names, this second branch of transmission emerged, conforming with the Jewish and Christian exegesis of the Bible.

"According to the Hebrews, God's first name is 'El'; which is translated as 'God', and by some who interpret the etymology of this name, as *ischyros*, i.e. force, which means that no weakness will be suppressed, but that He is strong and able to permeate everything.

The second name is Eloī. The third name is Eloē, which both mean 'Deus' in Latin. But as God is called '*deos*' in Greek, and '*phobos*', which means fear, it is from there that they took the word of 'God', since those who worship him also fear him. The suitable name is 'Trinity' and is related to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To this Trinity the names are

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Fontaine, Jacques: Isidore de Seville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne Wisigothique. Paris 1959, pp. 595-732.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. chapter 7, 2: De sex aetatibus mundi.

<sup>72</sup> Isidore, Etymologiae VII, 1, 2. Ed. Lindsay. Oxford 1911.

related, which will be explained in the following.”<sup>73</sup> This philosophical explication establishes the notion of power, among the divine predicates, as going far beyond the spirit of Jerome’s letter. Power, with its consequence of fear, is established as an inner-trinitarian predicate. It is the inner-trinitarian life deriving from the Father that causes fear. This fear is based in the Trinity and is part of divine revelation.

“The fourth name is Sabaoth, which in Latin means force or host, about which the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm says concerning the angels: ‘Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.’ There are, in fact, many forces in the order of the Word: angels, archangels, the powers and forces, and the other orders of the heavenly host, of which He is of course the Lord. All stand below him and are submitted to his rule.

The fifth name is Elion, which is translated in Latin as ‘highest’ (*excelsus*), for He is above the heavens, as it is written of him (Psalm 113,4): ‘The Lord is in the highest, and His glory above the heavens’. ‘Excelsus’ namely means ‘very high.’”<sup>74</sup>

“The sixth predicate is Eie, i.e. ‘who is’. For God is eternal, and that means He alone has the name ‘essence’, for He is eternal. This name was transmitted to the holy Moses by an angel. When Moses asked the angel who had sent him to order Moses to set his people free from Egypt, the angel answered: ‘I am who I am and say this to the people of Israel: “I am” has sent me to you.’” (Ex. 3,14) From this “I am who I am”, Isidore deduces God’s eternal presence, immutability, and life. “God lives for he lives the essence of life which does not know any death.”<sup>75</sup>

It becomes clear in comparison with Jerome’s letter how Isidore emphasises the philosophical dimension of the divine names. He lists the remaining four divine names from Jerome’s letter before treating those not mentioned there: “the seventh name is Adonai which mainly is translated as ‘Lord’, for he is the Lord of the entire creation. The eighth name is Ia, which is only counted as a divine name because it occurs in the last syllable of ‘Halleluiah’. The ninth name is the Tetragram; those are the four letters, which, according to the Jews, stand for God, namely Yod, He, Yod, He i.e. with two ia [Yod]<sup>76</sup>, by which they express in a twofold way that God’s name is unpronounceable. It is, however, not unpronounceable because it could not be pronounced, but because it can never be defined by human mind or reason. Since there is no correct naming it is called ‘unpronounceable’. The tenth name is ‘saddaij’ i.e. almighty. He is called

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 3-7.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 11-13.

<sup>76</sup> On the misinterpretation of the tetragram, already occurring in the Greek tradition, where *Yod* and *Vav* are confused, see the letter of St. Jerome cited above, p. 77.

'almighty', for He is able to do all He wants and does not suffer from that which He does not want."<sup>77</sup>

Up to this point Isidore has been referencing St. Jerome, whom he explicates with philosophical and exegetical evidence. He also introduces a series of other predicates of a merely philosophical nature, even if they are supported by biblical references. For Isidore, God is also "immortal, incorruptible, incommunicable, and eternal."<sup>78</sup>

God's immortality is proved by his immutability: "All changeability is appropriately called mortality; that is why the soul is called mortal, not because it was changed into the body or into another substance, but because it is or it was changed in its substance in a certain manner. A thing which now is no longer entirely what it was suffers from mortality. Therefore God is called immortal, for He alone is unchangeable." God's indestructibility is understood in a similar way, for he "is indivisible and therefore does not know perishability."<sup>79</sup>

For that reason God is also "incommunicabilis, quia semper manet et mutari nescit";<sup>80</sup> his immutability makes the predicate 'eternal' plausible, which, for Isidore, is identical with 'sempiternus'.

For Isidore, the philosophical negation of any earthly existence unfolds a host of additional divine predicates: God is invisible, does not suffer, and consequently does not know affects; he is tranquillity and, consequently, simplicity. The predicate of simplicity is not without philosophical risk, on the one hand because of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, on the other because of the Neoplatonic teaching that absolute oneness has no self-consciousness. Isidore is however ignorant of such subtleties and writes: "The simple is no thing which God could have or not have; to the contrary, it is in Him for He is nothing else but Himself, and there is no difference which is distinguished from what is in Him. With man it is different; he can be and can ignore something at the same time. God, however, has one essence and, consequently, wisdom, too; and what He has is He Himself."<sup>81</sup>

As this One, God is "summe bonus";<sup>82</sup> and his creatures partake of his goodness. He is incorporeal and, consequently, without measure and perfect in his essence: "Perfectus igitur dicitur quia nihil ei possit addici."<sup>83</sup>

With this composition, Isidore founded a theology of divine names far surpassing St. Jerome's philological tradition. It is independent from the dialectical Neoplatonic model that Dionysius the Areopagite had formulated.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 14-18.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 21.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 21.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 21.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 27.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, 28.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. VII, 31.

Isidore considered his nondialectical, positive philosophy of divine names to be the primordial order of all orders in creation, supported by philosophy as well as by revelation.

ALPHABETUM ARTIS GENERALIS										
	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	
A Prae- dicata T	Absoluta	Bonitas	Magnitudo	Aeternitas seu Duratio	Potestas	Sapientia	Voluntas	Virtus	Veritas	Gloria
		Differentia	Concordantia	Contrarietas	Principium	Medium	Finis	Maiores	Aequalitas	Minoritas
	Quaestiones	Vtrum?	Quid?	Quare?	Quantum?	Quale?	Quando?	Vbi?		Quomodo? Cum Quo?
		Deus	Angelus	Homo	Imaginativa	Sensitiva	Vegetativa	Elementativa		Instrumen- tiva
Subjecta	Justitia	Prudentia	Fortitudo	Temperantia	Fides	Spes	Caritas	Patentia		Pietas
Virtutes	Avaritia	Gula	Luxuria	Superbia	Acedia	Invidia	Ira	Mendacium		Inconstantia

Table 1. Lull’s great table



#### 4. RAYMOND LULL'S (1235-1316) THEOLOGY OF CONCEPTS

##### a) Lull's Great Alphabet (*Table 1*)

In 1263 the Catalan philosopher Raimond Lull had his great conversion. A key invention was connected to this event, and he interpreted both as divine grace: It was the revelation of a series of central conceptions, which later were summarised in the "alphabet of human knowledge". He experienced it as revealed to him,<sup>84</sup> both religiously and scientifically, and it became the starting point for his extensive missionary activities, which were based on his newly invented universal science.<sup>85</sup> With the help of this revealed and irrefutable science, the Saracenes could be converted to the Christian religion.

Lull's alphabet appeared, as it were, in light of Isidore and Dionysius. But he adopted neither the Neoplatonic negative theology, nor the philological tradition of St. Jerome's list. The spirit of his philosophy is closer to the positive philosophy of Isidore's "Etymologiae".

This positive predication of divine attributes becomes clear in the first series of the alphabet, that of divine absolute predicates. They are listed as "bonitas, magnitudo, eternitas sive duratio, potestas, sapientia, voluntas, virtus, veritas et gloria."

Lull treats this series of predicates extensively in his writing "De refugio intellectualis",<sup>86</sup> in which he also discusses God's existence. "De refugio intellectualis" is similar to his "Ars magna", in that it deals with "hunting for God through the rules of the General Art."<sup>87</sup> Following Lull's method of invention, it discusses the question of God's essence by combining the

<sup>84</sup> Platzeck, Erhard Wolfram: Raimund Lull. Sein Leben, seine Werke. Die Grundlagen seines Denkens. 2 vols. Düsseldorf 1962, 1964. Colomer, Eusebio: De la Edad Media al Renacimiento. Ramon Llull, Nicolas de Cusa, Juan Pico della Mirandola. Barcelona 1973. Rubio I Balaguer, Jordi: Ramon Llull i el Llullisme. Montserrat 1985. Johnston, Mark D.: The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Lull. Oxford 1987. Hillgarth, J. N.: Ramon Lull and Lullism in 14<sup>th</sup> Century France. Oxford 1971. Anthony Bonner (ed): Doctor illuminatus. A Ramon Lull Reader. Ed. and trans. by A. B. Princeton 1993. On the reception see the Pseudo-Lullistic Rhetoric in Lull's Opera, ed. Zetzner. Strasbourg 1617, p. 187. "Dionysius de divinis Nominibus: Deus est omnis vitae essentiaeque principium, atque causa ob propriam bonitatem, omnia ut essent, producentem et conservantem."

<sup>85</sup> See Platzeck, Erhard Wolfram: Raimund Lull. On the history of Lullism see Leinkauf, Thomas: Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts. Band 4, Basle 2001, pp. 235-286.

<sup>86</sup> Opus 139, 37.

<sup>87</sup> CC 37, 236: "De venatione Dei per regulas Artis Generalis".

‘questions’ of his alphabet with its ‘absolute predicates’. Moreover, the substances are defined by means of questions and answers.

The series of Lull’s “Praedicata relata” is grammatical in origin. Both the ‘praedicata relata’ and the ‘quaestiones’ are of grammatical provenance and of a syncategorematic nature.

The group of ‘subiecta’ is of specific interest for Neoplatonic questions because it represents the hierarchy of spiritual psychology: Deus / Angelus / Coelum / Homo / Imaginatio / Sensitiva / Vegetativa / Instrumentativa.

The series of ‘virtues’ is composed of the four pivotal Stoic virtues: *iustitia*, *prudentia*, *fortitudo*, and *temperantia*. *Fides*, *spes*, and *caritas* correspond to St. Paul’s spiritual virtues; *sapientia* and *pietas* complete the scheme of the nine conceptions required by Lull.

It seems evident that the seven ‘vices’ correspond to the seven virtues. Lull’s nine vices probably derive from the catalogue of vices in Gregory the Great, which reappear in Peter Lombard:<sup>88</sup> *Avaritia*, *gula*, *luxuria*, *superbia*, *accidia*, *invidia*, *ira*, *mendacium*, and *inconstantia*.

A review of this whole set of concepts leaves the impression that Lull remains close to the Neoplatonic tradition, especially with his absolute predicates and the spiritual hierarchy of the world. These two categories are indeed the constitutive elements of his fantastic Neoplatonic art of combination. The concepts unfold their combinatory variety against a background similar to Isidore’s philosophy of divine names, but Lull’s philosophical achievement far surpasses Isidore’s.

It is remarkable which concepts do not appear in Lull’s alphabet. Life and beauty, central notions of the Dionysian tradition, are missing. Also, crucial notions of the logical tradition are lacking: Neither order, whole, nor part have a place in his great alphabet. This indicates that the connection with both Isidore’s and Dionysius’ concepts of divine names is not very close. Nevertheless, Lull’s theory of absolute predicates presupposes the Neoplatonic doctrine of ‘realistic universals’. Lull probably based himself on Al Ghazel’s (Al Rhazali’s) logic<sup>89</sup> and metaphysics, which, for its part, presupposed the Neoplatonic psychology of the world that was also transmitted in the “Liber de causis”.

Lull’s absolute notions are divine predicates only in a very limited sense. But their function corresponds to that of divine attributes. Being ‘realistic’ universals, they exist absolutely, constitute the semantics of the world, and include the semantic and logical possibilities of all beings. They are the first

<sup>88</sup> Gregory: PL 76, 620f. Expositio in Iob XXXI, 43, 87. Cf. Hugo of St. Victor: Summa Sententiarum 3, 16, PL 176, 113.

<sup>89</sup> Lit: Ed. of the Logic by Lohr, Charles: Logica Algazelis. Introduction and Critical Text. In: Tradition 21 (1965), pp. 223-290. Johnston, Mark D.: The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Lull. Oxford 1987, pp. 32-45. Rubio J Balaguer: Ramon Llull i el Llullisme. Montserrat 1985, pp. 111-166. The Catalan text of Lull’s “Logica Del Gatzel” ibid. 144-164.

and irreducible notions of every existence. The circle of this knowledge and the combination of its notions contain everything that human knowledge can achieve concerning God and his creation.

The claim of Lull's "Ars magna" is not presented in the celestial context of the angels' eternal praise as it is in Dionysius. Lull's philosophy appears as a positive, pious science. Lull isolates the intellect's ascent from the granting of divine grace. He does not teach a doctrine of emanation from the unfathomable One, but constructs a universal, intellectual science, which neglects the question of whether the human soul can really understand its origin. Lull's aim is to achieve a universal science by means of his alphabet, his catalogue of first notions. He was convinced that he had found a positive universal science that was guaranteed to be complete, because its alphabet of revealed categories contained the core of all possible knowledge.

"The human intellect is constituted rather in opinions than in science", he writes. "Since every science has its own principles and since there are different principles in different sciences, the intellect requires and desires that there be one general science for all sciences. They coincide with general principles in which the principles of all the different sciences are included like the part in the whole. And the reason is that because other principles are subordinated to and regulated by the intellect's principles, the intellect rests in the sciences, for it acknowledges the truth and is removed from errors. Through this science, the other sciences can be acquired very easily."<sup>90</sup>

Since the universals are real, the notions prove themselves as seminal reasons of the world and as archetypes of knowledge. They appear as semantic units, which shed light on other units and so fill up the entire realm of knowledge.

#### b) Absolute Notions

Lull continually reinterpreted his alphabet.<sup>91</sup> Defending a 'realistic' doctrine of universal notions, he generally argued that the first notions were simple, true, and necessary, but especially that they really existed. In his "Liber correlationum innatarum" he introduces his different universal notions:

"1 Goodness is simple, true, and necessary. All that is good comes from the nature of the good, and without the good, everything would be bad. Consequently, the good is simple, true, and necessary.

<sup>90</sup> *Ars magna et ultima*, Lull, *Opera* Ed. Zetzner 1651, p. 228 (miscounted as 218).

<sup>91</sup> E.g. *Opera latina* 156-167; Ed. Riedlinger CC XXXIII, 156: *Metaphysica nova et compendiosa*. 157, *Liber novus physicorum et compendiosus*, 158: *De ente infiniti*, 159: *Liber de correlatione innatarum*. 161: *Liber de natura intelligendi*.

2. Magnitude is. Magnitude, considered in itself, is simple, true, and necessary, for all that is large is only large through it, and if it did not exist, everything would be small; its absence would be a real misfortune.

3. Eternity is. If it were not simple, true, and necessary, everything would be new and emerge at random, and it would be reducible to non-being. Highest misfortune and privation would emerge from this, which is impossible.

4. Power is. Through power all being can exist and act. And this power is absolute, and consequently simple, true, and necessary. If it did not exist, nothing would be or act from itself, which is impossible.

5. Wisdom or intellect is. Through it everything can be recognised. And this intellect is absolute and consequently simple, true, and necessary. Without it, everything would be inconceivable and unknown, which is impossible.

6. Will is. Through it everything is worthy of being desired, so far as it is good and virtuous; it is loathsome, so far as it is bad and vicious. And this will is simple, true, and necessary. If it is not, nothing is worthy of love and hate; but such a being is impossible.

7. Virtue is. From it, all is virtuous that is virtuous. Consequently it is simple, true, and necessary. And if it were not, everything that is simple, true, and necessary would be wicked, which is impossible.

8. Truth is. Because of it everything is true that is true. From this follows that truth itself is a true and necessary principle. If it were not, everything simple, true, and necessary would be faulty, which is impossible.

9. Honour is. Through it everything good and great becomes joyful; and this honour is simple, true, and necessary. If it were not, everything would be punishment and misery, which is impossible.

We proved that these nine principles are all simple, true, and necessary, and that there is nothing without them. And because they exist, beings are separate from non-being. These principles are substantial ones. Otherwise they would not be simple, true, and necessary, but would be accidental and contained in other principles, which by themselves would not be good, great, and lasting, which is impossible.<sup>92</sup>

In its manner of reckoning in a uniform way, this explication impressively shows that Lull, under every condition, wants to guarantee the axiomatic and realistic character of his principles. Only if this character is proved can Lull count on the combinatory capabilities of these principles.

### c) The Psychological Hierarchy of Substances

The different categories of Lull's alphabet have different axiomatic values. The 'absolute predicates', the 'questions', and the 'virtues' are

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<sup>92</sup> CC vol. 33, p. 130f.

absolute and coordinated with each other. The 'relative predicates' and the 'vices' are only conceivable as related and dependent. However, the 'subjecta', or the hierarchy of beings from God down to 'instrumental beings', are subordinated, rather than coordinated like the absolute predicates.

Lull treated the 'subjecta' of his alphabet in a "Tractatus de conversione subiecti et praedicati per medium".<sup>93</sup> This treatise has the same scheme as his "Ars ultima" and the other combinatorial works, and it also describes how Lull imagines the connection between the various concepts of his alphabet. This connection is conceived as a hypostatic bond between the real existing concepts. It is "the medium of measuring, the medium of conjunction, and the medium between the extremes." This function of mediation, as for instance in the connection of the absolute predicates of *bonitas* and *magnitudo* or the conclusion of the judgements of a syllogism, is the achievement of the intellect. This intellect works by "hunting the medium between subject and predicate"<sup>94</sup> in search of the right conclusion. If the conclusion does not follow the intellect's nature it is only a 'syllogismus opinatus', a supposed syllogism. A demonstrative syllogism, however, requires "real, necessary, and true principles which are needed for the conversion of the subject and the predicates, and for the mediation between them. The other syllogisms, in which the terms are not convertible, are called pretended syllogisms".<sup>95</sup> This logic tries to combine real concepts with each other. It is conceived as a genuine connecting achievement of the intellect, which is itself very similar to the connecting soul. Like a shuttle, the intellect connects the similar and the different. A logic of this kind is required in the Neoplatonic world of analogy and participation so that the different levels of the world can be connected. This work of combination is performed, according to Lull, by the intellect.

The connecting work of the intellect assumes a scale of substances, which the intellect combines by running upwards and downwards along it and recognizing the similarities it finds. This scale is made up of the series of the ten *subjecta*, defined as follows:

1. God is the starting point of all mediating functions of the intellect, for God is "actus purus",<sup>96</sup> from which derive *bonitas intelligissima*, *voluntas volentissima*, *virtus virtuosissima*, *veritas verissima*, *gloria gloriosissima*, *perfectio perfectissima*, *simplicitas simplicissima*, and *infinitas infinitissima*. This is the group of divine names, through which creation and cognition emerge. For nothing comes about without God's action.

<sup>93</sup> Regarding the authenticity of the work, see Anthony Bonner's introduction into Raimundus Lullus: Opera, Strasbourg 1651, Reprint Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1996 (Clavis pansophiae 2, 1), p. 41\*.

<sup>94</sup> Lull. Opp. Zetzner ibid. p. 167.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 168.

2. Angels are created as independent spirits. Because of their spiritual nature they are connected to God; as created beings they are different from him. They are species, and every species is an angel. As species they are different from God; as good beings they are connected to him.

3. Heaven is the body that moves all movable things; it is neither corruptible nor incorruptible.

4. A man is a rational and sensitive substance. Lull continuously uses this definition.

5. Imaginables are “intrinsically imagined rational substances”.<sup>97</sup> Imaginations emerge from the connection between rationality and sensibility; human imaginations are the images of things, coinciding with their image in divine wisdom.

6. Sensible things have active and passive potency; they are substances that are measurable by quantity, quality, and relation.

7. Vegetative substances are transmutative. They have a digestive potency as well as the ability to keep something or to secrete it, which is their nutritive potency.

8. Elements have the ability of mixture. They are formed matter in which nature allows for points, lines, figures, and movement. They are the material of synthetic mechanics.

9. The artefact, the last of the substances, is created by the human soul in the free arts and in mechanics.

#### d) Virtues and Vices

In Lull’s universal science, the status of virtues is different from all others. For him, virtues are divine predicates that share their claim of perfection with the human soul. Vices are the deficiency of the virtues. In one of his late sermons, Lull defines his list of vices and virtues. In his axioms he considers virtues to be species. Virtues are the specific instances of the good, and they are received by the soul. If the soul rejects them, it produces vices as counterparts to the virtues.<sup>98</sup> Lull conceives the virtues quite conventionally, according to his theologically conservative motivation. The definitions are circular because the singular concepts are absolutely self-evident. The definition of justice can serve as an example: “Since God is just, justice must be obeyed. The definition of justice is the following: Justice is a habit by which a just man commits just works. Through this definition it can be known what justice is; and in it, the definition and the defined are one and the same. Justice has two species, and it is itself the

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Lull conceives ten ways of the soul: five senses: 1. *Potentia visiva*, 2. *auditiva*, 3. *odorativa*, 4. *gustativa*, 5. *tactativa*; and five inner potencies: 6. *affectiva*, 7. *imaginativa*, 8. *intellectiva*, 9. *volativa*, 10. *memorativa*. *De virtutibus et peccatis*, Op. 205. C.C. LXXVI, 1987. Lull, *Opera* vol. XV.

genus. The first is of appropriate measurement; the second of proportional measurement.<sup>99</sup> Internal evidence is required for all virtues. Lull claims: "Since God sent prudence to you, you should have it."<sup>100</sup> *Prudentia* is defined as the human providence of future good and evil. Fortitude is the habit by which the human will is able to love virtue and destroy vice. Temperance means that God loves a man whose eating and drinking habits are moderate. These are the four pivotal Stoic virtues.

The three spiritual virtues - *fides*, *spes*, and *caritas* - are connected to God in different ways. Belief (*fides*) is the divinely required human virtue of believing beyond the intellect's capacities and perceiving God's works and truth.<sup>101</sup> Hope (*spes*) is the divinely favoured attitude of man to seek God's help and protection.<sup>102</sup> Charity (*caritas*) is the human attitude of loving God more than men and of loving one's neighbour as oneself.<sup>103</sup> Wisdom (*sapientia*), neither a Stoic nor a spiritual virtue, is a divine predicate and consequently a human obligation directed at earthly and heavenly goods.

Different from the absolute concepts, which are simple, true, and necessary, the virtues have the ambiguity of being first God's appropriate predicates and secondly God's desired human attitude. This ambiguity is typical for a concept of ethics as partaking in God's attributes.

Both, virtues and vices, are directly dependent on God's predicates. The virtues are loved, the vices rejected. Only here, on the question of vice, does Lull's conception of evil become apparent. There is no other reason for the vices' evil nature than God's rejecting will: *Quia Deus abhorret, quia Deus non diligit*. This is true 1. for avarice, in which man is covetous of earthly goods,<sup>104</sup> and which is followed by anxiety and grief; 2. for gluttony (*gula*), which is the softening of man through excessive eating and drinking;<sup>105</sup> 3. for luxuriousness (*luxuria*), which emerges from the lust of the five senses and from the imagination;<sup>106</sup> 4. for arrogance (*superbia*), which overestimates the inequality among men and is directed against God, other men, and self; 5. for melancholy (*pigritas*), "by which a melancholic man is not content in doing good to himself and his next. He is content if something evil happens to his neighbour, and he has pains if something good happens to himself";<sup>107</sup> 6. for envy (*invidia*), by which the possessions of one's neighbour are desired unreasonably; 7. for wrath (*ira*), which is a "habit of resistance and passion against doing and deliberating good and avoiding evil"; 8. for lying

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 106.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 123.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 136.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 144.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

(*mendacium*), “by which all human faculties are slain that derive from sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, speaking, imagining, intellection, love, and veneration”.<sup>108</sup>

e) The Intellect

It was Lull’s desire to come up with coherent fields of semantics by means of his combinatory method. This method proceeded in two steps. First he combined the concepts of the same group of predicates, then he combined one predicate from one group with others from different groups. The emerging combinations could, in turn, be combined again with others. By this method a domain was created that was ruled by the semantics of the combined concepts. These semantics were held to be real, whether someone actually conceived of any of the concepts or not. The realm of the combining arts partook of the realm of universal semantics, and the potentiality of the semantic universe could be actualised by the combination of single concepts. There was only one criterion required for this actualisation: The combination had to be plausible. The combining intellect had to recognise that the combination was suitable, so that it could come to rest in the combination.

The intellect was a divine creation. It perceived the divine predicates in their evidence and combined them; it had a super-personal, cosmic character. This Platonism was close to the concept of a universal soul. Lull, however, did not see his Platonising cosmic intellect as aligning itself with the intellect of Latin Averroism. On the contrary, he identified Averroism with nominalism, which he considered to be hostile to theology. Opposing the nominalist Averroists, Lull insisted on the ideal reality of the concepts. In his refutation of the Averroists, Lull presented the allegory of philosophy itself as well as twelve divinely created allegorical principles.

They complain before God’s throne, and it is the intellect itself that accuses the Averroists: “I am nearly completely confused by how they discussed me in Paris, following their opinions; and therefore what can I say? My light should be clear and true, but now is concealed and dimmed because of the philosophers’ errors. They suppressed me so hard that I am nearly deprived of my splendour and virtue. I do not see any remedy except the quick help of the king of France, for the errors grow and the truths are suppressed.”<sup>109</sup> After being freed from the torments of the Averroists, the intellect speaks again, and is now visible as a splendid apparition. It is by no means a fiction of some human thought or imagination, as in nominalism, but is its own sphere. “I am a created, connected substance, which it is appropriate to understand and to create accidentally.”<sup>110</sup> This intellect is the

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 159.

<sup>109</sup> Opp, Zetzner 1651, p. 113. Probably Nr.170; C.C. XXXII.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Zetzner p. 138.



unifying sphere in which the combination of predicates becomes apparent. It is the substance in which the absolute predicates, coinciding with the divine names, appear. "The intellect said that goodness is associated and connected to me by divine goodness, magnitude by divine magnitude, duration by divine eternity, power by divine power, will by divine will, virtue by divine virtue, truth by divine truth, joy because of divine glory, and so forth. From God's goodness I am good, by his magnitude I am great, by his eternity I am durable, by his power I am powerful, etc. And because I am associated with him, I am able to conceive the universals, the united genus, and the abstract species, and consequently the one and the great, etc. I am composed of all these, as good, great, etc., and I am the first and only of the One; by him and with him I achieved my profound science of goodness, greatness, etc."<sup>111</sup>

The intellect recognises the concepts it unites, and it also has creative power. The created things are formed through the concepts of the intellect. These concepts are the absolute predicates, which receive their essence from God. Thus Christian Platonism is clearly the basis of Lull's universal science. Cognition is only true because its ideas are divine creations, which are ideas as well as the primordial reasons of creation. They are the imprinting powers of nature; they have light, life, and being. Their spiritual existence is more real than the nothing of corporeality.

Lull's alphabet of first concepts thus has a concrete rather than an abstract existence. The first concepts constitute the meaning of things as well as the meaning of knowledge itself. In this twofold ideal existence lies their claim to truth, and in this respect it becomes clear that the combination of primordial semantics reaches the core of all possible things.

#### f) A Spectacle of Divine Predicates

If there is a primordial spiritual existence that illuminates the corporeal one, allegories do have a real existence. Lull presented this existence in 1306 when he wrote a Christmas play for the French king.<sup>112</sup> Here, as in the allegorical theatre against the Averroists, the concepts appear as speaking characters.

Philosophy again complains about the Averroists and addresses herself to the king.<sup>113</sup> Also, the six ladies Laus, Oratio, Caritas, Contritio, Confessio, and Satisfactio lament over the Averroists' impiety. As it is a Christmas play, they praise the newborn child as the Son of God in the same breath. After this demonstration of piety, representing the principal submission of all disciplines under revelation, the "divine goodness and other eternal reasons

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> CC XXX, pp. 29-73.

<sup>113</sup> The chief opponent is probably John of Jandun.

of God want to introduce themselves to the above named six ladies”.<sup>114</sup> And so ten virtues introduce themselves to the six allegorical mistresses.

1. “Goodness: I am an absolute and singular essence.”<sup>115</sup>

2. “Divine Greatness: I am an essence so great that I am immeasurable, without beginning and without end, and there is no being possible above me.”<sup>116</sup>

3 “Eternity: I am eternal duration from eternity to eternity, and such a pure, subtle essence that it is impossible to have access to me in order to hinder my actions, except for pure action, which holds the supreme place in the universe.”<sup>117</sup>

4. “Divine Power: I am who I am, from myself, from nothing else.”<sup>118</sup>

5. “Divine Intellect or wisdom: I am absolute, and I have the absolute as my object of contemplation. If I could conceive the absolute without conceiving myself, the conceived and the conceivable would not be possible at all.”<sup>119</sup>

6. “Divine Will. I am the absolute and singular will. There is no contract, and I am what I am in me and because of me.”<sup>120</sup>

7. “Divine Virtue: I am an infinite, simple essence, mighty for myself and because of myself. There is nothing that could hinder my actions.”<sup>121</sup>

8. “Divine Truth: I am the first. I am simple and necessary from me and through me, and I am infinitely distant from easiness.”<sup>122</sup>

9. “Divine Glory speaks: I am the greater glory, for I am from me, because of me, not from others or for others.”<sup>123</sup>

10. “Divine Perfection: I am perfection simply because of me, in me, from me. This is natural, for it follows that nothing can hinder me from being or acting perfectly.”<sup>124</sup>

11. “Divine Justice: I am justice, for I equalise everything; and therefore I am named iustitia, equalizing between the acting one, the object of the act, and the action; and this I do excellently, namely between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid pp. 46f.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 52. This is a Proclian triad of *Noeton*, *Noteon/Noeron*, and *Noeron*. Cf. Beierwaltes, Proklos pp. 89-93.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p. 55.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. p. 61.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. p. 63. This is a speculative rather Proclian definition of justice.

12. "Divine Pity: I am absolute goodness, greatness, power, eternity, etc.. And therefore I am the absolute rejoicing of the just as well as the unjust, as far as they are not evil."<sup>126</sup>

At the conclusion, Pity praises the mediation of Mary and the angels for the forgiveness of sins.

The result of the introduction of the twelve 'Imperatrices' is a high degree of admiration, and the utter convincing of the six 'dominae': 'Praise', 'Sermon', 'Charity', 'Contrition', 'Confession', and 'Satisfaction'. This persuasive power derives solely from the twelve *imperatrices*' self-presentation. And so the six dominae praise the twelve *imperatrices* with quotations from the Song of Songs and the Marian Litany: "Salve regina, mater pia, dulcis vita, spes ferens Dei filium." "Ave maris stella, Dei mater alma."<sup>127</sup>

Here Lull produces a remarkable situation: God's absolute predicates are praised with the formula of a Marian prayer. Mary is seen as God's mother, the bearer of the Kosmokrator and the apocalyptic Madonna (Rev. 12:1-3). The mother of God appears in the function of the divine Sophia, who is pregnant with the fertile seminal grounds, and is herself the fertility that gave birth to Christ.

Lull's allegorical presentation of the twelve divine *imperatrices* ends with the six ladies ('Praise', 'Sermon', 'Charity', 'Compassion', 'Confession', and 'Satisfaction') requesting of God's mother that she should move the French king Philip the Fair to fight the Averroists. Mary answers that she is sure to speak in her Son's name, and that Christ would urge the king to help and defend the faith in this situation. The ladies should themselves tell their sorrows to the king, or they should send Raimundus Lullus.<sup>128</sup>

In this wonderfully intricate piece, what is most significant is not that a conservative Platonising theologian, in his struggle against the Aristotelian and nominalist newcomers, calls for the state's political power. What is really substantial is that the reality of the universals, forming the basis of every doctrine of divine predicates and the subsequent primordial and seminal reasons, is claimed to be absolutely evident. This evidence is affirmed as being theologically primary and irrefutable.

Five years after this piece, in 1311, Lull wrote another allegorical stage-spectacle, the "Liber lamentationis philosophiae".<sup>129</sup> This play also presents

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 68.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 71.

<sup>129</sup> "Duodecim principia philosophiae, magister Raimundi Lulii, quae et lamentatio seu expositio philosophiae contra Averroistas, et physica eiusdem dici possunt." In: Lull, ed. Zetzner 1618, p. 113. It was printed in Zetzner's edition and was published in several editions in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Lull's doctrine of the universal soul's predicates. It begins with Philosophy's renewed complaint against the Averroists. "Woe unto me, where are the pious, the real literati and the other men who could help me!"<sup>130</sup> The allegorical figure of Philosophy meets Lull, who is joined by the ladies 'Contrition' and 'Satisfaction', and asks him for help with the king. Lull and his allegorical ladies first want to be introduced to the principles of Philosophy. Philosophy is pleased, and lets her 'formae' come forward and introduce themselves: Form, Matter, Generation, Corruption, Elements, Vegetatives, Sensitives, Imaginations, Motion, Intellect, Will, and Memory.

Convinced by Philosophy's display of the leading concepts of the world's psychology, Lull promises that he will intercede before the king with all his authority in order to preserve the honour of Theology and her handmaid Philosophy. Philosophy thanks him. The two Ladies, Contrition and Satisfaction, along with Lull, go to the king. The king "was moved to misericordia by what he heard, and he decided to do great and good things. He sets the two ladies, as well as Raymond, in good hope".<sup>131</sup>

What is the author's message? Anti-Averroism. And how else could the theological principles of philosophy appear than by announcing themselves? The contrary position would have been the Averroistic one, in which the concepts had only the status of human signs, with the presupposition of nature as meaningless, unformed, and unimprinted. Thus at the very beginning of his play, Lull shows his Philosophy lamenting the Averroists' distortion of the intellect. Following their doctrine, the Averroists "could not understand that a virgin could bear a son, nor that something emerged from nothing; and thus not the articles of the faith. They rather follow their own senses and fantasy instead of the twelve imperatrices who acted in the book of divine nativity. They stem from the principles of theology".<sup>132</sup>

The principles are created as God's words; they act spontaneously. In announcing their nature they perform God's will; they are his masks and actors. How could the human imagination resist the power of God's words? The status of divine predicates is nearest to God. He shines forth through his predicates, and the human mind is necessarily convinced. The absolute concepts enabling men to become adept philosophers are spiritual realities independent of human thought. The absolute concepts of adept philosophy radiate in God's glory.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. p. 113.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 112.

## 5. CHRISTIAN CABALA I: GIOVANNI PICO (1463-1494), JOHANNES REUCHLIN (1455-1522), AND PAULUS RICIUS († 1541)

a) Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin: The Cabala of the Name of Jesus

Divine names are not always available to human perception. They exert a dynamic force that can bring them into visibility, making them sparkle and shine in the moment of their appearance, and then disappear. They appear like a glowing hypostasis, inflated by the spirit from nothing into a glowing and sparkling existence, then disappearing only to be seen again in a different form.<sup>133</sup> Divine brilliance sheds light on this process of the appearing divine life as an expression of the unpronounceable, of the pulsating starting point behind all definitions and names. In the doctrine of the One, this starting point is unpronounceable; in the Jewish tradition of God's name, it is the tetragram, in which the law is included.<sup>134</sup>

God's apparition is grounded in his self-conceiving and self-conscious life. For Christians, this is a trinitarian figure, since God recognises himself as a unity. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin found evidence for this trinitarian interpretation even in Jewish texts.<sup>135</sup> For them, this trinitarian train of thought persisted in the process of the revelation of divine names in the cabala. The decisive argument was found in Pico's famous "900 Conclusiones" (1486), in which he set out to unite the world's wise men through one universal science. His starting point was the triadic

<sup>133</sup> Albertus Magnus and his school call this process "ebullitio", a bubbling out or forth, from Lat. *ebullire*. Lit: Pagoni-Sturlese, Maria Rita: *Natura ed intelletto in Teodorico e Bertoldo*. In: Flasch, Kurt: *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhard*. Hamburg 1984, pp. 115-127. Esp. chap. 5: *L'aliud esse della natura rispetto alle anime celesti*. On the Neoplatonic Greek origin of this metaphor: Gersh, Stephen: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*. Leiden 1978, p. 19, *blyzein*, to bubble.

<sup>134</sup> On the definitions of the cabala: Idel, Moshe: "Defining Kabbala. The Kabbala of the Divine Names". In: *Mystics of the Book. Themes, Topics & Typologies*. Ed. Robert A. Herrera. Frankfurt, New York 1993, pp. 97-122.

<sup>135</sup> See Blau, J. L.: *The Christian Interpretation of the Kabbala in the Renaissance*. New York 1944. Wirszubski, Chaim: *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism*. Cambridge and London 1989, esp. Appendix 7, p. 218: *Nomen Jesu*. Scholem, Gershom: *Zur Geschichte der Anfänge der christlichen Kabbala*. Essays presented to Leo Baeck. London 1954, pp. 158-194. Benz, Ernst: *Die christliche Kabbala, ein Stiefkind der Theologie*. Zurich 1958. Secret, François: *Les cabbalistes chrétiens de la renaissance*. Paris 1964, pp. 67-82. Roulier, Fernand: *Jean Pic de la Mirandole (1464-1494), humaniste, philosophe et théologien*. Genève 1989, pp. 575-585. Klein, Wolf P.: *Im Anfang war das Wort*. Berlin 1992. Schmidt-Biggeman, Wilhelm: *Johannes Reuchlin und die Anfänge der christlichen Kabbala*. In: Id. (ed.): *Christliche Kabbala*. Ostfildern 2003. pp. 9-48.

Neoplatonic science, which described the self-production of the Holy Trinity. For Pico, the Christian Trinity was represented in the tetragram of God's name, which contained three different letters. Through the permutation of the letters emerged the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

"11>6. Whoever is profound in the science of the Cabala can understand that the three great four-letter names of God, which exist in the secrets of the Cabalists, through miraculous appropriation should be attributed to the three Persons of the Trinity like this: so that the name <יהי Ehyeh> is that of the Father, the name <יהי YHVH> of the Son, the name <אדנאי Adonai> of the Holy Spirit.

11>7. No Hebrew Cabalist can deny that the name Jesus, if we interpret it following the method and principles of the Cabala, signifies precisely all this and nothing else, that is: *God the Son of God and the Wisdom of the Father, united to human nature in the unity of assumption through the third Person of God, who is the most ardent fire of love.*

11>8. From the preceding conclusion we can know why Paul says that Jesus was given the *name that is over every name*, and why it is said that *all in heaven, earth, and hell kneel in the name of Jesus*, which is also highly Cabalistic. And anyone who is profound in the Cabala can understand this by himself."<sup>136</sup>

This was Pico's first step in his attempt at Christian cabala. He underscored the cabalistic appreciation of the divine names with a quotation from Paul's letter to the Philippians: "above all names" (Phil. 2:9). The Christological moment in this Christian cabala was confirmed in this particular interpretation: "11>14. By the letter <ש>, that is, *shin*, which mediates in the name Jesus, it is indicated to us Cabalistically that the world then rested perfectly, as though in its perfection, when *Yod* was conjoined with *Vav* – which happened in Christ, who was the true Son of God, and man."<sup>137</sup>

In Jesus' name the *Shin* mediates between *Yod*, which is the symbol of God, and *Vav*, which is the symbol of the world. Pico situates this cabalistic interpretation in the theology of the Word as he finds it in St. John's prologue to his Gospel. That "all things were made" through the Word (John 1:3) was brought back into the inner-trinitarian process, and thus it was Christ, the inner-trinitarian logos, who created the world. This creating Word was also the Word of divine wisdom, represented by the angelic power of Metatron, and which could be seen as the biblical "Wisdom of Solomon". This polyvalent prototype of the world contained the ideas from which the

<sup>136</sup> Syncretism in the West. Pico's 900 Theses (1486) with Text, Translation and Commentary by Stephen Allan Farmer. Tempe, Arizona 1998 p. 523.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 527.

world emerged. It was not an extraordinary move for Pico to identify the angelic power with the world-soul in the philosophical and theological traditions. “11>10. That which among the Cabalists is called < מטטרון *Metatron*> is without doubt that which is called Pallas by Orpheus, the paternal mind by Zoroaster, the son of God by Mercury, wisdom by Pythagoras, the intelligible sphere by Parmenides.”<sup>138</sup>

The power of the divine logos is intertwined with the world's angelic soul. The cabalistic theologians presumed that Moses had a clear knowledge of the reasons of creation, which nowadays can only be reached by cabalistic speculation. This knowledge is held to be hidden in Scripture. Cabalistic interpretation starts from the principle that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are closer to God's language than the spoken words of mankind. Thus the letters of revelation represent elements of divine knowledge, becoming audible words only in human language. Divine power expresses itself first in the letters of God's revelation as they are written in the holy books. The letters are the basis of the world, which was created by the divine word and is explained in biblical revelation. The letters are immediate signs of divine semantics. They have a meaning that can be expressed and pronounced in other ways, for the unequivocal connection of letters/signs and divine language that characterised the Adamic language, has disappeared since the fall. With the biblical revelation, Moses received a new key to divine wisdom, and so the biblical letters must be understood and interpreted as holy signs, in hopes that divine grace will make their concealed meaning understandable to mankind.

To the devout Christian cabalist, this connection becomes apparent in the cabalistic interpretation of the name of Jesus. His name, the Hebrew writing of which contains two letters of the unpronounceable tetragram, namely *Yod* [י] and *Vav* [ו], indicates his special relationship with the unpronounceable. “By the name *Yod He Vav He*, which is the ineffable name that the Cabalists say will be the name of the Messiah, it is clearly known that he will be God the Son of God made man through the Holy Spirit, and that after him the Paraclete will descend over men for the perfection of mankind.”<sup>139</sup>

This argument was persuasive for Christian cabala; in fact this text can be considered its birthplace. In his struggle with Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469-1521) and Jacob Hochstraten (1460-1521), which provoked the “*Epistolae virorum obscurorum*”, Johannes Reuchlin defended the dignity of Jewish literature. In the context of this crucial debate on the acceptance of Jewish literature in early modern Europe, Reuchlin, in 1510, wrote an

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 525.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p. 527.

opinion for the Emperor Maximilian I.<sup>140</sup> In this letter concerning Jewish literature, “Ratschlag, ob man den Jüden alle ir Bücher nemmen, abthun und verbrennen soll”, Reuchlin pleaded for a Christian study of the cabala and referred “to the late Esquire and highly learned Lord Pico, Count of Mirandola”. In Pico’s “Conclusiones”, Reuchlin argued, there could be found several arguments in favour of the cabala, “among different theses and conclusions this one, too, that there is no art which makes us more sure of Christ’s divinity than Magia and Cabala”.<sup>141</sup> The body of cabalistic texts was extraordinarily valuable. Learned people who could read them could see “that these books, which are about 70, did not only indicate the spirituality of the holy Moses, but also our Christian belief’s reason and truth, and that Pope Sixtus IV had therefore ordered the translation and interpretation of the Cabalistic books into the Latin language for the sake of our faith...”.<sup>142</sup>

In his first major work concerning the cabala, “De verbo mirifico” (Basle 1494), Reuchlin situated the suggestions he received from Giovanni Pico in the framework of Christian perennial philosophy. He also took into consideration the philological tradition of divine names as it was found in Jerome and Isidore. He was particularly well acquainted with the negative theology of Dionysius the Areopagite and with the Pythagoreanism of Nicholas of Cusa. Thus Reuchlin transformed Pico’s trinitarian interpretations in the spirit of negative theology and Pythagoreanism.

God’s first name is “Ehieh, who is. This is God, who withdraws into the most remote corner of his divinity, into the immeasurable depth of his darkness and who, giving up his concealment, reveals himself to Moses: I am who I am - Ehieh.”<sup>143</sup>

The second name is Hu, ‘the one’. Reuchlin identifies it with Dionysius’ ‘*t’auton*’.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Geiger, Ludwig: Johann Reuchlin, Sein Leben und seine Werke. Leipzig 1871. Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel. Gesammelt und herausgegeben von Ludwig Geiger. Stuttgart 1875, reprint Hildesheim 1962. Secret, François: Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la renaissance. Paris 1964. Herzig, Arno and Schoeps, Julius H. (eds.): Reuchlin und die Juden. Sigmaringen 1993. Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm: Johannes Reuchlin und die Anfänge der christlichen Kabbala. In: Id. (ed.): Christliche Kabbala. Ostfildern 2003, pp. 9-48. Trusen, Winfried: Die Prozesse gegen Reuchlins Augenspiegel. In: Reuchlin und die politischen Kräfte seiner Zeit. Ed. Stefan Rhein. Sigmaringen 1998. Pforzheimer Reuchlinschriften vol. 5, p. 87-131.

<sup>141</sup> Johannes Reuchlin: Gutachten über das jüdische Schrifttum, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Antoniel Leinz von Dessauer. Konstanz, Stuttgart 1965, p. 75.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p. 77 “daz dieselben bücher, dero bey 70 mögen sein, nit allein des hailigen Moises gaistlichkait, sunder auch unseres christlichen Glaubens grund und warhait anzaigen, und daz papst Sixtus der viert hat befohlen, dieselben cabbalistische bücher in latainische Sprach zu transferieren und zu tolmetzen, unseren Glauben zu sundern nutz”.

<sup>143</sup> Johannes Reuchlin: De verbo mirifico, Sämtliche Werke I, 1. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1996, p. 212. *Ehieh* is the sixth divine predicate in Isidore’s list. See above p. 78.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.



The third name is Esth, fire, which is interpreted as the beginning of the world, the Holy Spirit, who is a “fury of fire which will consume the adversaries” (Hebr. 10:27 vulg.), and the fire of baptism. (Luke 3:16).<sup>145</sup>

Reuchlin interprets these names as a trinitarian formula: “*Hu, Ehieh, Esth* mean the unpronounceable Holy Trinity and threefold unity - ‘being equal to yourself you are fire’ - just as the essences of all visible things are indicated as ‘substance, power, and acting’, connected indivisibly with the one.”<sup>146</sup> This constitutes a trinitarian interpretation of the deity, who is equal to himself and who remains equal, alone, and related to himself. “We conceive the divine essence only through these three names - *Hu, Ehieh, Esth* - which would signify the divine names even if there were no world either as a model or as reality.”<sup>147</sup>

Only after this solid grounding of the trinitarian God are the other divine names introduced. Here Reuchlin follows the Jewish cabalistic tradition, which understands the Sephiroth as God’s predicates. Kether, the crown and the first of the Sephiroth of “God’s ten garments”, is the “abyss of divinity, the sea of sublimity, and the unlimited power of all that is, and of all that is not. No negation can be said of it, no implicit contradiction can hinder it, no dialectical syllogism can impact it - neither sophisticated complications nor logical fantasies”.<sup>148</sup> The second name is Hochma, God’s brightly radiating wisdom.<sup>149</sup> Bina, prescient wisdom, is “*intelligentia sive providentia*”<sup>150</sup> and fills up the heavens. God’s fourth name is Neza, victor, by means of which God smites his people of Israel. For he is “not a man, that he should repent” (I Sam. 15:29).<sup>151</sup> Hod, which Reuchlin refers to as “*laus vel confessio*”,<sup>152</sup> the fifth name, celebrates the glory of the victor. Tipheret, which is “like the heart of an animal placed in the middle”, is the sixth name and is not translated.<sup>153</sup> The remaining four names are expressions of God’s power: Gebura (force) and Malchuth (reign) constitute a pair, and Haesed (Sceptre),

<sup>145</sup> This emphasis on fire corresponds to the liber XXIV philosophorum, Prop. 1: “Deus est monas monadem gignens, in se reflectens ardorem”.

<sup>146</sup> De verbo mirifico p. 220.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. 222.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p. 226.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 224.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 226.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 228.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. In the first book of “De arte cabbalistica” Reuchlin translates Tipheret as “microcosm”. “Hinc recte acceptum apparet, quod Cabbalistae in arbore decem numerationum Tipheret, *mikrokosmon* in medio Sephiroth ponendum censuerunt, magnum illum Adam, quasi lignum uitae in medio Idealis Paradisi, ut quasi lineam rectam, ut aiunt, mediam.” (De arte cabbalistica, Hagenau 1517, repr. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1964, fol II,v [p. 116]).

which also means Pahad (Justice and Sword). The “fear of the Lord”, which is the beginning of wisdom, completes the series of the ten divine names.<sup>154</sup>

In his early work, “De verbo mirifico” (1494), Reuchlin described the cabala as a special revelation to Moses and the Jews, the shadow of which the gentiles can partake typologically. Nonetheless, his framework remained one of Christian dogma, trinitarian theology, and the fundamental equality of theological and philosophical truth. He even introduced a new cabala of the name of Jesus, surpassing Pico’s interpretation. Pico saw the name of Jesus as concealed in the tetragram, because two of the letters of the tetragram (*Yod* and *Vav*) also occurred in the name Jeshu, and the *Shin* mediated between the *Yod* and the *Vav*. The three letters of Jesus’ name [ישו], for Pico, of course, also indicated the Holy Trinity.<sup>155</sup>

In “De arte Cabalistia”, published in Hagenau in 1517, Reuchlin reports from the Book of Raziel<sup>156</sup> that the fallen Adam, having lost his cosmic existence, was sad and depressed. The angel Raziel was sent to him and consoled him: “Don’t be boundlessly sad and sorrowful that it was you who led mankind into its deepest decay. Your original sin will be forgiven. For from your posterity there will emerge a just and peaceful man, a hero, the name of whom will be compassion and will comprise the four letters i.h.u.h. He graciously extends his hand to his real believers. He will take from the tree of life, and the fruits of this tree will be the salvation of all who hope.”<sup>157</sup> From Adam this message was transmitted to his grandson Seth. Abraham, however, remembering the message of the angel Raziel, declared “that the coming saviour would be born as a man. Therefore he is called Henos, i.e. man. Whence they believed and hoped that he should be called according to the angel’s Kabbala with the name of four letters, which is I.H.U.H, or, even more cabalistically, with the compassion by which the shin will appear in the midst of the four letters I.H.U.H.”<sup>158</sup> Reuchlin saw the S(hin) from the name of Jesus as being composed into the tetragram, which thus became the pentagram written I H S U H (*Yod He Shin Vav He*).<sup>159</sup> Jesus was thereby revealed

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 230.

<sup>155</sup> See above.

<sup>156</sup> On the Book of Raziel see Secret, François, ed: Johann Reuchlin. La Kabbale (De arte cabalistica). Paris 1973, p. 54, Fn. 74. Reuchlin, Johannes: L’Arte Cabbalistica a cura di Giulio Busi e Saverio Campanini, Florence 1995, pp. 28-35.

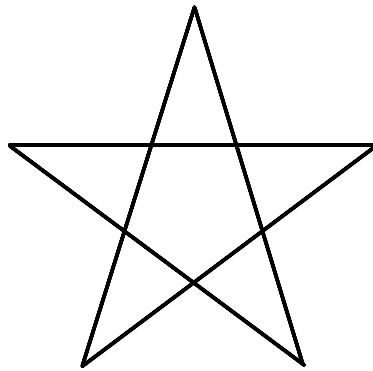
<sup>157</sup> Reuchlin: De arte cabalistica. Hagenau 1517, repr. 1964, fol IX r [p. 129].

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. IX v. sq. [p. 130].

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. fols X r and LXXXVIII v. [p. 131] and [p. 268] of the reprint. Cf. Wirszubski, Chaim: Pico’s Encounter with Jewish Mysticism. Cambridge, London 1989, p. 218. Cf. Idel, Moshe: New Introduction to the Bison-Book-Edition of Johann Reuchlin. On the art of Kabbala / De arte Cabalistica. Trans. by Martin and Sarah Goodman. Introduction by Jones, G. Lloyd. Lincoln and London 1993. Perhaps Postel was referring to this cabbala of the name of Jesus when he came up with his “Jesuisism”, which involved the interpretation of the five spheres. (Cf. chapter 7, 3 d.)

as the heart of the Holy Divinity; he was the central revelation, opening like a key the secrets of divine glory.

For the Pythagorean Reuchlin the secret of the holy Trinity in the Five was also visible in the pentagonal star composed of three triangles (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1. Reuchlin's wonder-working pentagram*

This sign brought victory to Antonius Soter [† 261 B.C.] in his battle against the Celts, like the PX brought victory to the emperor Constantine.<sup>160</sup> For Reuchlin, Christ's victory had already been visible in the pentagram, and it was perfected through the cross. Therefore, the power of the painted and written pentagram corresponds to the symbolic power of the cross. "What the Cabalists, as we showed, can express in the unpronounceable name through signs and characters, the believing Christians can name even better through the pronounceable name of Jesus and the sign of the cross. They believe that the Tetragram appears more correctly in the true Messiah's name IHSUH." <sup>161</sup>

#### b) God's Self-Creation

In or around the year of 1505, a Jewish scholar was baptised and acquired the name Paulus Ricius. Father of this conversion was a Portuguese Franciscan by the name of Gometus, whom Ricius, in his main work "De coelesti agricultura", characterised as a sharp minded and convincing theologian. Ricius must have been a remarkable person. Erasmus described

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. LXXIIX v [p. 268]

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. see also Secret, François: Pentagramme et pentalpha à la renaissance. *Revue de l'histoire des religions*. (1972), pp. 113-126.

him as an enchanting conversationalist<sup>162</sup> and claimed him to be the equal of Mithridates, Pico's teacher.<sup>163</sup> In 1514 Ricius lived in Augsburg at the court of Maximilian I<sup>164</sup> and translated parts of the Talmud at the emperor's order. He was a friend of Reuchlin and well known to Dürer and Pirkheimer.<sup>165</sup> In 1530 he became a nobleman and his name was changed to Baron von Sprintzenstein. He was a physician at the court of the emperor Ferdinand, who recommended him to Pope Clement IV as a coadjutor to the Bishop of Trieste. He died in 1541, highly esteemed, leaving behind two sons, Franz and Hieronymus.<sup>166</sup>

Ricius' fame was widespread. Along with Reuchlin he was the Christian authority in Hebrew; he was also a philosopher, theologian, cabalist, and doctor. As a scholar of Hebrew, he played an important role in the "Epistolae virorum obscurorum" debate. He defended Reuchlin against the Cologne Dominican Jacob Hochstraten.<sup>167</sup> Most significantly, he achieved importance as the translator of Joseph Gicatilla's *Porta Lucis*: "Rabbi Josephi Castiliensis *Porta Lucis*" (Augsburg 1516). This was the first time that a lengthier cabalistic text had been translated, printed, and thereby made accessible to the Christian public. The "*Porta Lucis*", a systematic treatise on the Sephiroth of the Sohar and on the divine tetragram, gave a greater precision to Reuchlin's somewhat abstract and philosophical cabalistic explanations in "*De verbo mirifico*" (1494). "*Porta Lucis*" appeared one year before Reuchlin's "*De arte Cabalistica*". In 1520 Erasmus wrote to Ricius

<sup>162</sup> "Paulus Ricius sic me proximo colloquio rapuit, ut mira quaedam me sitis habeat cum homine saepius ac familiarius conserendi sermonem. Praeter Hebraeae linguae peritiam quantum ille tenet philosophiae, quantum theologiae! tum quae animi puritas, qui discendi ardor, qui docendi candor, quae disputandi modestia! Mihi sane vir ille primo statim gustu placuit olim Papae, cum illic philosophiam profiteretur: nunc proprius intuito magis etiam placet. Is demum vere mihi videtur Israhelitam agere suoque cognomini pulchre respondere: cuius omnis voluptas, omnis cura, omne ocium ac negotium in divinis est literis. Dignus nimirum animus cui ocium contingat quam maxime honorificum." Letter to Richard Borhusius. March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1515/16. Allen Op. Epp. Oxford 1910, pp. 501f. On the biography see the annotation of Allen p. 500 bd. Cf. Bietenholz, Peter G: *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, 3 vols. Buffalo, London 1985-1987. Secret, François: *Les Kabbalistes Chrétiens de la Renaissance*, pp. 87ff.

<sup>163</sup> "Rex ex Italia Iustinianum Episcopum ex Dominicali sodalitis accersendum curavit, et alium Hebraice doctum, nomine, ut arbitror, Ritiu[m], iamque habet unum Mithridatis aemulum, qui omnes pene linguas novit, ut aiunt qui hominem viderunt." (Ibid. vol. IV, p. 279.)

<sup>164</sup> On this court see Müller, Jan Dirk. *Gedechtnus. Literatur und Hofgesellschaft um Maximilian I.* Munich 1982. Ricius does not occur in Müller's book.

<sup>165</sup> In 1525 he must have lived for a while in Nürnberg. See Erasmus' letters no. 1560 and 1568 from 1525.

<sup>166</sup> His descendants still live in Austria.

<sup>167</sup> Hochstraten, Jacob: *Distructio Cabalae seu cabalisticae perfidiae ab I Reuchlin Capnione iampridem in lucem edite.* Cologne 1519. Cf. Geiger, Ludwig: *Johannes Reuchlin.* Leipzig 1871. Ricius, Paulus: *Apologeticus Pauli Ricii adversus obrectatorem cabalae sermo.* In: *Ars Cabalistica*, ed. Johannes Pistorius. Basle 1567. Reprint Frankfurt 1970, pp. 114-137.

that his manner of interpretation mitigated his own aversion to the cabala as an exaggeratedly subtle philosophy.<sup>168</sup>

Paulus Ricius regarded the trinitarian interpretation of the cabala as so convincing that he declared the doctrine of the Trinity to be the reason for his own conversion.<sup>169</sup> He described this conversion in the first dialogue of his “*Agricultura coelestis*”, where Gomarus, his former teacher, presents the essential arguments. This book, entitled “*In apostolorum symbolum iuxta peripatheticorum dogmata dialogus. Interlocutores Gometius, theologiae doctor et tres Israelitae fratres*”, was published in 1514 in Augsburg and is one of the most thoughtful tracts on Christian cabala.

For Ricius, the Neoplatonic legitimation of the cabala is the prerequisite for a philosophical interpretation of the Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,  
whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

<sup>168</sup> “*Libellus tuus, eruditissime Riti, me paulo aequiorem reddidit negotio Caballistico; quanquam antehac non eram admodum infensus, siquidem ignoscendum arbitror ut humanum vicium, si quisque faveat iis studiis in quibus et plurimum insumpsit temporis et se praecipue valere confidit. Coeterum istos quis ferat, qui quicquid non intelligunt tam acerbis tamque pertinacibus odiis persequuntur? Neque vero uno nomine mihi placuit opus. Eruditio quae tibi perpetua est, hic mihi non potuit esse nova. Sed in primis arrisit candor ille et perspicuitas, quae rem ita ponit ob oculos ut caeco quoque possit esse conspicua. Arrisit animus iste Gratiis et amicitiae natus, qui tanto studio tuetur hominis eruditissimi innocentiam adversus impudentissimum sycophantas. Arrisit denique te, hoc est absoluto veroque philosopho, digna moderatio: qua sic fortiter patrocinaris amico, ut a conviciis in adversarium temperes, magis reputans quid te quam quid illo dignum esset. Nam brevitati non perinde faveo, cum mihi licet occupatissimo perlectum opus famem sui reliquerit.*” Letter 1160. Erasmus is not referring here to the translation of the “*Porta Lucis*”, but to the defence of the cabala against Hochstraten.

<sup>169</sup> On the trinitarian interpretation of the cabala see Blau, J. L.: *The Christian Interpretation of the Kabbala in the Renaissance*. New York 1944.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,  
 the communion of saints,  
 the forgiveness of sins,  
 the resurrection of the body,  
 and life everlasting.

Amen.

It is this ecclesiastical confession of faith that Ricius not only wants to save, but also wants to legitimise philosophically with his Neoplatonic cabala. He is well aware that he is introducing new kinds of apologetic philosophy. Both faith and cabala depend on the partaking of God's wisdom; the credibility of faith and the credibility of philosophical interpretation rely on the will of God to reveal his message through signs. The pious philosopher hopes to take part in this process so that he can finally understand it. Only in light of belief is divine truth perceptible. Its knowledge is not firm, clear and distinct, but rather topical, like the knowledge of belief. With the presupposition that all knowledge is participatory, belief is natural to the soul: "Nobody is such an ignorant and insensible man that he does not want the seed of life to grow in him and to follow eternal salvation; and so he will partake of the blessed life without studying a discipline of science."<sup>170</sup> Hence Philaletes, a Jewish sage, is taught the dogma of the Christian faith, with a concentration on the creation from nothing and on trinitarian Christology.

Creation from nothing is represented by the category 'Pater', to whom 'infinita vigor', infinite force, is attributed. This is a description of God the Father in the dogmatic tradition of trinitarian dynamism, corresponding to the philosophy of the "Liber de Causis". The first cause of all being is the 'father' function of the trinitarian God: "The power of creation utters an infinite force. (Creandi potestas vigorem exigat infinitum.)"<sup>171</sup> This is the dynamic basis from which Ricius' doctrine of the Trinity can be explained. His Christology is rooted in the permeation of creation with the Christological logos, which can also be interpreted as divine wisdom. Ricius also finds this wisdom in Aristotle.<sup>172</sup>

Gometus, the Franciscan whom Ricius makes responsible for his conversion to Christianity, formulates the decisive arguments, deriving them completely from a Neoplatonic theory of knowledge. He converses with

<sup>170</sup> Paulus Ricius. In *Apostolorum Symbolum Dialogus*. In: Pistorius, Johann (ed): *Ars Cabalistica*. Basle 1587. Repr. Frankfurt 1970, p. 16.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>172</sup> Ricius refers to the pseudepigraphic "Theologia Aristotelis".

Philaletes: “Is God an intelligent being? Philal: No doubt. Gom: Only that being is intelligent which produces something in itself and receives an image from the intelligible thing. Phil: Aristotle in his book on memory calls an image a concept that the soul has of a conceivable thing. Gomet: The thing which God acknowledges and of which he produces an image in himself, isn’t it itself of divine essence? Philal: It is proved that he perceives himself first, and from the knowledge of himself (as is proved in the twelfth book of Averroes’ ‘On divine wisdom’) he recognises every form of being. Gom: Is it God himself who perceives and is he himself the object of knowledge? Philalet: Of course. Gom: Since the recognised being produces in itself an image of the recognised being, don’t you admit that God produces an image of himself? Phil: That is what I must accept, too. Gom: Now say, and answer again, don’t you believe that one thing is an image and another that produces an image? Phil: Don’t you ask by this whether the essence of an image is something else than the one who produces the image? Gom: That is exactly my question. Philal: It is profane and not at all appropriate to the divine essence to admit such a difference. If there is a difference in essence, it is a real composition, and an absolute simplicity is excluded.”<sup>173</sup>

Here divine self-representation is explained as the core of the doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that different persons persist in one essence. The process of God’s self-knowledge leads Gomez/Ricius to the dynamics of God’s essence. God’s productive force effects the first creative separation; the result is God facing himself with his own image. This image differs from its origin, and yet it is of the origin’s essence. This unity between image and origin is conceived as the Holy Spirit. Only through his Trinity does God comprehend himself. His self-knowledge is trinitarian, an eternal process of creative separation of Father and Son and their reunification in the Holy Spirit. Thus God lives as a self-conscious Trinity. “Hence, is the divine essence producing its image the same as the produced image? Phil: That’s my opinion. Gom.: Does this essence produce itself? Phil: That cannot be said, for in this case it would be prior to itself. Gom.: So you assent either that God is not intelligent or that we must acknowledge a distinction which neither multiplies his essence nor admits only one hypostasis, and that, moreover, the relationship between producing and produced can be applied to the divine nature? Phil: No question that this distinction must be made, which insinuates a unity here and a plurality there.”<sup>174</sup>

God can conceive of himself in the process of his Trinity. This process prefigures the formal processes of human thinking. The divine self-production is God’s trinitarian being. As the power of absolute origin, it can be seen as self-recognizing, and as the unity of the origin and self-

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

recognition. God produces himself through his essence. His being is the living power of production.

Ricius elaborates on the result of this dynamic self-production with a fine description of the process that centuries later, in German idealism, will be called ‘*spekulativer Satz*’. Ricius’ example is Socrates, who can be conceived as both subject and object. “The distinction you think is applicable and by which a contradiction can be avoided in the divine relations, isn’t that the very distinction in reason by which, if we wanted to prove that Socrates was not Socrates, we would distinguish between Socrates as a subject and Socrates as a predicate? So God, who produces his own image, is distinguished from himself as the produced image; hence there is no real distinction in God (but only one which reason can conceive).”<sup>175</sup> This train of thought results in the distinction between divine unity and personal Trinity. “As we taught, in the divine being hypostasis and person are the same as divine essence; so it is always one Deity but not the same personality.”<sup>176</sup> Trinity can be described as an eternal spontaneous production, as a speculative sentence, and as an image. Moreover, trinitarian life is essentially divine love. “Gom: God the Father reflects himself in love, for he recognises himself as the best and the most beautiful. For the same reason, the image that is produced by the Father possesses the highest splendour and the love of the Father. From the united contemplation of the Father and the Son proceeds the highest intellection and love, which is produced in such a manner that it is distinct from the producer. Father and Son produce the love; therefore love is distinguished from both. And since love is nothing else but breathing (*spiratio*), or a spiritual proceeding from the loving to the beloved, this has been rightly called the Holy Spirit.” The union of loving and beloved is the expression of the Trinity. “God is hence threefold as hypostasis or person; but he is also, as we judge from firm belief and knowledge, called one God in essence. We call him the personal Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>177</sup>

This Trinity is the prefiguration of both the world’s becoming and its life. The world’s triadic structure is a result of God’s Trinity. “We say that the prolific seed of the spiritualising process consists of the spirit which is the life in the seed. It has the power and potential corporeality to become organs and limbs as they proceed from the seed and its spirit. Since the spirit has a first corporeality in itself which is directed to other corporeal beings, it also has an intellective essence directed to other intellective beings.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 33. Here, too, a reminiscence of the “*Liber XXIV philosophorum*”.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p. 34.



This tendency of the spirit to become intellectual and corporeal is essentially its power stretching and striving beyond itself. The spirit's essential unrest is evidenced particularly by the ability of God's wisdom to act on matter from the realm of the stars. Privation, matter, and form are the three principles that constitute nature and cannot be separated from it. This triad is the trace of Trinity in extended nature. "The first corporeal nature and matter are a unity constituted by three principles, which are really different from another, namely privation, matter, and form; they are nonetheless united in one nature and not divided by a real distinction. Likewise, the divine nature, which is the mover of the first body and its efficient reason, contains this distinction in an eminent and inconceivable manner together with the real unity. Hence the exemplar contains in much higher subtlety what is also represented in the singular things, which only possess a shadow of the image."<sup>179</sup>

c) Josef Gicatilla's Cabala of the Tetragram

Two years after his apologetic treatise on the Trinity (*In apostolorum symbolum*, 1514), Ricius published his translation of Joseph Gicatilla's (Josephus de Castiliis) "Porta Lucis" (Augsburg 1516). It was newly edited as the fourth book of Ricius' "Agricultura Coelestis" in 1540 and was printed a third time in 1582 in the highly influential collection "Ars Cabbalistica" by Johannes Pistorius.<sup>180</sup> In its association with Ricius' trinitarian apologetics, the Jewish cabalistic text achieved a very particular significance. The "Porta lucis" gave the entire Latin-reading world access to a source deriving directly from the circles around the *Sohar*. Joseph Gicatilla (1247-1304) was a student of Abraham Abulafia (1224-1292) and systematised the doctrine of the ten Sephiroth.<sup>181</sup> Thanks to Ricius' translation, this doctrine became situated in a Christian context.

As for Reuchlin, for Gicatilla and Ricius divine names are revelations of the divine dynamic. The tetragram is the most appropriate expression of this miraculous, unspeakable power. As a Jew, Joseph Gicatilla naturally does not interpret the tetragram in a trinitarian way. For him, the tetragram represents the source of the Sephiroth, which flow from the law.

His book is essentially a treatise on divine names. Gicatilla refers to ten names, which scintillate in a remarkable way between the traditions of the Book of Yezirah, the Book of Bahir, the Zohar, and the tradition of biblical

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 34. This passage is reminiscent of St. Augustine's "De Trinitate". On the metaphor of shadows see Chapter 5, 10: On the Shadows of Ideas. Giordano Bruno's *Seminal Combinatorics*.

<sup>180</sup> Basle 1582. Repr. Frankfurt 1970 quoted here. The newly published English translation by Ari Weinstein, New York 1996, is rather different from Ricius' text.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Scholem, Gershom: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York 1954, esp. pp. 194-196. Idel, Moshe: *Kabbala. New Perspectives*. New Haven and London 1988, passim.

names. Gicatilla's list is not identical to St. Jerome's, but since they used the same sources many names are similar.<sup>182</sup>

Before naming becomes possible at all, the revelation of the names in the tetragram must be described. Anyone who is to announce God's names must first be confronted with them in fear and trembling. And "who utters the name or writes the Tetragram in appropriate letters shall not partake of the world to come."<sup>183</sup> Gicatilla emphasises that the tetragram is unpronounceable and should not be written, a rule that Ricius interprets as the devout gesture of the cabalist: "Here he speaks about the name of the Tetragram, which only belongs to the Creator and which cannot be communicated to a creature. It can be compared to a son who is seen to be contemptuous and audacious when he calls his parents by their name. In the same way it is an insolent presumption to the heavenly parent and incomprehensible king of the ages, to call Him by His proper name; such contempt and insolence against God excludes one from salvation in the coming ages."<sup>184</sup>

The reason for this devotion is philosophical as well as theological. It becomes apparent that the unpronounceability of God's name is the prerequisite for recognizing him as the absolutely primary originator. Along with this negative theology, a positive theology develops. In the tetragram the entire law is united. All names of God, which constitute the law, are united in the tetragram, and as such the tetragram is the core of the law: "The whole law is found spread over the names. The names above are the holy names; all holy names depend on the Tetragram. Therefore the law itself is called the law of the divine Tetragram."<sup>185</sup> The tetragram is the unpronounceable source of all revelation; it is the invisible origin that provides being and essence to the visible and nameable. In the tetragram divine names begin to unfold. It is this process that makes it possible to treat the divine names systematically. There are ten names situated around the unpronounceable tetragram, which is in the middle, fifth position:

1. *Edonai*: Lord<sup>186</sup>, 2. *El-Hai*: true God<sup>187</sup>, 3. and 4. *Eloim Zeuaos*: Lord of the Forces and *Edonai Zeuaos*: God of the Forces<sup>188</sup>, 5. The tetragram<sup>189</sup>, 6. *Eloim*: God the Judge<sup>190</sup>, 7. *El*: God of grace and piety<sup>191</sup>, 8. *Eloim*: the

<sup>182</sup> See p. 76f.

<sup>183</sup> *Ars Cabalistica* p. 138: "Statuunt enim maiores nostri, quod quicumque ipsum nomen uidelicet Tetragrammaton propriis literis protulerit, partem nullam futuri saeculi habeat."

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 143ff.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 160ff.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 171ff.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 175ff.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.* p. 183: "...quod (ut praehabita commemorant) praefectus iudicij sibi sinistro latere sedem statuit, a quo sive funestum sive laetum iudicium super filios irruit saeculi."

force of creation through which the holy and the profane are lead; this name is written like the tetragram with alephs, and is therefore closely linked to it<sup>192</sup>, 9. *Yoh*: Wisdom<sup>193</sup>, 10. *Ehei*: crown<sup>194</sup>.

All the names of God are related to the unpronounceable tetragram, in which their Hebrew letters are concealed. The respective position in which God's other names are situated in relation to the unfathomable tetragram defines their power and their semantic peculiarity. Thus it is possible that the name *Eloim* occurs several times, representing different meanings of *Eloim*, Lord.

The tree of Sephiroth is permeated with divine names (*Figure 2*). Some of the biblical names are situated near their appropriate Sephiroth, but the divine names and the Sephiroth are not considered to be the same. The biblical divine names are just flashes against the Sephiroth's background. To identify the Sephiroth with the divine names would not be devout. The divine name of the tetragram, however, opens up the meaning of the Sephiroth too.

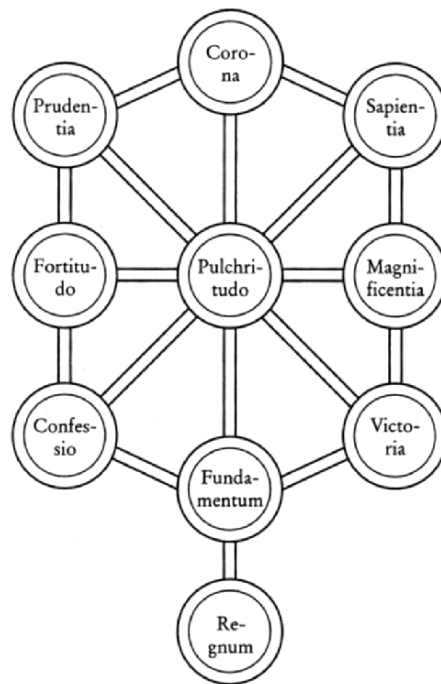


Figure 2. The tree of Sephiroth

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. p. 185.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. pp. 185ff.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. p. 188.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. pp. 190ff.

In the tetragram all names of God are one. The unpronounceable tetragram is an example of how God's glory appears in the law. Joseph Gikatilla explains the tetragram as follows: "The first letter of this word is a Yod [י], a mental point into which no creature can have insight. No man can receive knowledge from this tininess. The Yod is preached so that man stands firmly in his faith. Even if its essence cannot find a border, the Iod denotes the concealment of the wisdom, as it is said: And my wisdom is found from ain, i.e. from nothing [Job 28]. Here the whole plan of the world is set up. Moreover, the same Iod means infinite, will, and knowledge. It should not escape you that the mystical Iod in the name of the Tetragram refers to the second sphere, the name of which is wisdom. The infinite diadem [the crown] is, as you know, not of the Yod's character but must be called its summit and peak.

The second letter of the name, the He [ה], shows the measurement of prudence. From here the secrets of the inferior spheres are emitted, the explications of which you can expect in the following chapters. The third letter of the name is Vav [ו], which is also the symbol of 6. It shows six spheres beside itself, and it unlocks the different spheres. Three extend upwards from the middle, three extend downwards from the middle. Upwards extend magnitude, magnificence, and beauty, downwards victory, confession, and fundament can be admired. And so you hear in it the characters of the Tetragram which delight your heart." Here the *Vav* is shown to interpret the positions of the Sephiroth. The *Vav* is located between the second and the third triad of the Sephiroth [at the place of the *Pulchritudo*].

"The fourth letter of the Tetragram is again written as a He [ה], and it denotes the reign in the chorus of the spheres. By this the unity of the Highest is closed, because from here downwards the discrimination of things emerges. So the name of the Tetragram includes the ten Spheres, all divine names depend on it."<sup>195</sup>

In the tetragram all divine names are united. The question remains as to how mankind could have received this knowledge of God's glory. Joseph Gikatilla illustrates the revelation of divine glory by interpreting the tree of Paradise. He proceeds from the letter *Vav* [ו], which opens the six remaining Sephiroth, and explains the meaning of the law. This interpretation is analogous to the meaning of the *Yod*, which begins from nothing and becomes the symbol of faith. The letter *Vav* [ו] has the form of a tree and is situated in the middle of the tetragram. It can be interpreted as the tree of life and the tree of Paradise. The tree of Paradise is the tree of wisdom and therefore of the law. This law's knowledge was lost along with Adam's knowledge. Now the wisdom of the law is only visible in the sign of *Vav*.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p. 177.

“The Vav [ו] is called the tree of life, the tree in which wisdom connected prudence and life. In the middle of the garden, the law is sown, from which the written law is said to be constructed. Only Moses has seen the Tetragram in a serene mirror. Therefore the creator has named his house the believing one, which did not outlast the first Adam. Only the sages can explain the universal law in the name of the Tetragram.”<sup>196</sup>

d) Reuchlin's and Ricius' Cabalistic Hermeneutics<sup>197</sup>

Revelation is more than just the natural mediation of the One into the multiplicity of receiving souls. Crucially, revelation is a matter of Scripture. Scriptural revelation completes and corrects the natural truths. It is therefore the task of theology, which is above every philosophy, to proclaim the truth of divine revelation. If the revealed truth is compared with the philosophical truth, they agree that God's original revelation is the core of every truth. For a theologian, God's first expressions are his names, and they can therefore be attributed to his ineffable oneness. These divine names are also the core of knowledge for every adept philosopher. The investigation of divine names is therefore of both philosophical and theological interest.

Ricius combines Jewish and Christian tradition in his theory of God's names. He adopts Joseph Gikatilla's table of divine names and interprets them as primordial causes, following Dionysius the Areopagite's tradition of divine hierarchy. Divine names are therefore the imprinting forms and the sources of power for the spiritual and angelic, as well as for the extended cosmos.

How is such a knowledge of divine names constituted and how do the analogies work? What is the divine word that expresses God's likeness? It must precede every human word. It marks precisely the original separation of the world from God in the process of creation. It is God's word, which was first spoken at the beginning of creation, before any other sound could be heard. The first expression of the divine word is God's name, which derives immediately from his unity and expresses itself in the *Yod*. This divine word 'speaks' with the angels, who are created as God's names, as extra-divine hypostases. The world's harmony emerges from them.

In his “De verbo mirifico”, Reuchlin had pointed out that God did not speak in the language of angels alone. Not all words were expressions of divine might, “but only those which the world's and the angels' highest God spoke, or which angels composed on his command and because of his foresight. Those are the words that echo the eternal harmony, that breathe God's immutability and the intertwining of grace and forgiveness. They are

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. p. 180.

<sup>197</sup> On this subject cf. Idel, Moshe: *Kabbala. New Perspectives*. New Haven and London 1988. pp. 200-250.

somehow the sensible hallmarks of the insensible deification. They are based on the immutable stability and the eternal firmity of the language's parts. They admit at the same time an imperturbable alternation in modulation and a vivid pronunciation which is not artificial and affected but simple, native, and venerable."<sup>198</sup>

This word is God's word in the form of letters. The multiplicity of this form derives from the *Yod*.<sup>199</sup> The original power of the unity of words portrayed by the letters resounds in the union of the syllables and the words. The unity of God's power is the source of the power of language. "Simple, but pure, incorrupt, holy, short, and firm is the Hebrew language, in which God has spoken to man and man to the angels: as a person face to face and not through an interpreter."<sup>200</sup> This is the holy language, which is above all a convention of signs and poetry. It is the pure language of the angels that still shows the power of God's miraculous word, with its original participation in the human soul, and which now has been born into reality.<sup>201</sup>

This is the word that is made visible by the cabalistic interpretation of revelation. This cabalistic interpretation also has to be situated in the doctrines of interpretation. Ricius defined cabalistic interpretation as the discovery of a special meaning of Scripture beyond the literal and tropological sense.<sup>202</sup> "It is established that beside the literal sense of the law, there is a different allegorical or cabalistic one, which is like the image of the literal sense. The literal sense implies the conditions of space and time; but the allegorical and cabalistic sense is eternal and without the conditions of space and time. To the literal and allegoric sense there comes a third form of contemplation, which is more a practical than a theoretical action. It is by practical contemplation that fantasy, reason, and mind adhere to the highest spheres that are appropriate to them. Through this adherence, the endowment of prophecy, the care of languages, and the spirit of interpretation, knowledge, and wisdom are infused in various distributions."<sup>203</sup>

Ricius distinguishes between three meanings of Scripture – the literary, the allegorical or cabalistic, and the edifying, mystical sense, which unites the pious interpreter to the unfathomable One. In the spatial and extended

<sup>198</sup> Reuchlin: *De verbo mirifico*. Repr. p. [42].

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Postel, Guillaume: *Omnium linguarum quibus ad hanc usque diem mundus est usu origo*. Basle [ca. 1552]. Cf. Klein, Wolf Peter: *Am Anfang war das Wort*. Berlin 1992, pp. 263-280.

<sup>200</sup> Reuchlin: *De verbo mirifico*. Repr. p. [42].

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p. [42]: "concipitur, et verbo patitur". Cf. the prologue of St. John's Gospel.

<sup>202</sup> *Apologeticus Pauli Ricii adversus obrectatorem cabalae sermo*. In: Pistorius, ed. *Ars cabalistica*. Basle 1587. Repr. Frankfurt 1970, pp. 115-137. This is Ricius' answer to Hochstraten's pamphlet against Jewish literature, and is the piece Erasmus appreciated. See above Ch. III, 5b, p. 92, footnote 167.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. p. 116.

world, the literary sense is the only representation of the eternal allegorical and cabalistic sense, which describes the archetypes of the world.

Ricius' universal hermeneutics combines all the faculties of the human mind: reason, intellect and mystical contemplation. A range of competence from grammatical to prophetic is required of the interpreter in his discovery of meanings in the text.

Ricius describes the cabalistic method as an approach to the meaning of the letters, where the gifted interpreter discovers the concealed sense of a text. This meaning can be reached by methodical combination, which requires the interpreter's entire linguistic and technical repertoire. "The cabalists and those who are called sons of the prophets proceed from the connection of the human mind with the higher and purer One. They take the symbols and elements that are connected with the higher spirit as far as they can use them for their purposes. They meditate on the holy letters by contemplating their numerical value, their form, position, permutation, and combination, by thinking of their genus and referring and bringing them to the holiness of higher and eternal truths. No cabalist believes that he has completely exhausted or will completely understand the holy communications of the prophets. He only intends one thing, that he convert his soul from earthly matter through the concentrated and repeated exercise of fantasy, reason, and mind, and that he be carried to the upper forces in order to join with them."<sup>204</sup>

By means of free, divinely blessed combining, the cabalistic interpreter discovers the secret power of divine words. These words are revealed as divine names and show the archetypes of the world. Cabalistic philosophy is an adept philosophy, a received speculation by the power of divine grace. The wisdom of the cabalists partakes in the word's power of becoming (*vehementia essendi*), which called everything into being, essence, and life. Cabala is participation in the *verbum mirificum*. There is no other evidence for the truth of cabalistic knowledge than the evidence of divine grace. This power of grace grants insight into divine wisdom.

#### e) Reuchlin's Concept of Language in "De verbo mirifico"

What does Reuchlin consider to be the wonder-working word? The tetragram.<sup>205</sup> Reuchlin sees the tetragram as the archetype of quaternities, and

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Reuchlin was not the first Christian to interpret the tetragram as the wonder-working word. Arnaldo de Villanova (1238-1311) had already written on this subject. Cf. Carreras y Artao, Joaquín: "La 'Allocutio super Tetragrammaton' de Arnaldo de Villanova." *Sefarad* vol. 9 (1949), pp. 75-105. Millos-Vallerosa, Joso M.: *Nota Bibliografica acerca de las relaciones entre Arnaldo de Vilanova y la cultura Judaica*. *Sefarad* vol. 12 (1956), pp. 149-153. Idel, Moshe: *Introd. to the Bison edition of Reuchlin's De arte cabalistica*, pp. V-VII.

the analogy of symbolic numbers plays an important role.<sup>206</sup> The world knows the four pivotal virtues of the Stoics: temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. There are four elements: fire, water, air, and earth, and four dimensions of a body: point, line, area, volume. The sum of 1, 2, 3, and 4 is 10. There are four seasons and four gods of the upper world: the Muses, Dionysius, Apollo, and Venus.<sup>207</sup>

That is the pagan and Pythagorean demarcation of the garland and aura of the tetragram. Reuchlin supplements the picture with biblical quaternities: There are four streams in Paradise, four animals of Ezekiel (which later become the Evangelists' symbols), four wheels of Ezekiel's chariot, and four Cherubim. This series of quaternities is at the same time marked by an ascent, and for a philosopher of original revelation, as Reuchlin is, the tetragram is the symbol of this original revelation. "The mystery of the Tetragram was not unknown to the oldest sages of every kind in their private spheres, even if they didn't deal with it publicly. These sages, who only transmitted the lore of the most noble fields of knowledge, had hired very skilled artists for this task. They should chisel the universality of all things in a true imagery and form it to one image so that there would be no need to pronounce the highest name again, since they were afraid that too frequent usage would lead to its contempt. Of course they called this image holy, and the sculptors were named as hieroglyphers."<sup>208</sup> In the picture you could see first an eye, secondly a staff, thirdly a shield, and fourthly a snake."<sup>209</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Nikolaus of Cusa: *De coniecturis*.

<sup>207</sup> Reuchlin: *De verbo mirifico*, *Sämtliche Werke* I, 1, p. 264.

<sup>208</sup> *Hiero-glyptein*, holy chiseling; Cf. Flavius Josephus' account of the two pillars inscribed by Adamic wisdom that Seth left in hopes they would survive the flood. See ch. 9, 2.

<sup>209</sup> *De verbo mirifico*. Repr. p. [68]. Cf. the hieroglyph (*Figure 3*) in Kircher, Athanasius: *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*. Rome 1653. II, 1, ch. VII. p. 282.

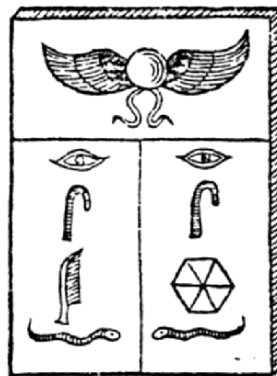


Figure 3



Proceeding along the ascending path, the wisdom of hieroglyphs is found on the next level. Hieroglyphs are signs of forms, signs of the primordial imprinting forms of the creator. In their quaternity, they symbolise the holy tetragram; their fourfold forms are the models for matter. The ascent into tetralogy offers even more insight. The Pythagorean theory of numbers arranges its elements according to their quality. The number four is close to the number three, as such it follows immediately after the divine Trinity. It is the number of wisdom. As eye, staff, shield, and snake, they are the seminal forms. They have their irreducible formal quality in the character of the images, the *signatura rerum* of the hieroglyphs. The inner-trinitarian life, the life of the beginning, is only perceptible as such by means of the Trinity's expression of itself as the four of wisdom. Prior to this, trinitarian life stays connected in itself, self-sufficient, and self-contentedly at play with its own love.

At the moment of revelation, inner-trinitarian life turns outward, receives spatial potency, and turns into a 'four' beyond the inner, self-sufficient life of the Holy Trinity. In the four, the number of the divine *Sophia*, the divine plan of creation becomes distinct. This fourth divine dimension, God's wisdom, contains the images, the spiritual imprinting forms, the primordial seeds that are to become extra-mental, extended reality. These images of the divine *Sophia* are represented in the hieroglyphs, and yet they are only a secondary expression of the unpronounceable divine word's power. The original imprinting forms and wisdoms are the semantics of all possible human knowledge, viz. the Adamic language.

The core of the Adamic language is again the tetragram, which is represented by the 'four' of wisdom. For Reuchlin, the beginning from one point, the dawn of the *Yod*, indicates the process of becoming as such, and hence God's revelation in the tetragram. It is God's apparition in the wonder-working word. For the Christian Reuchlin, this divine apparition is deeply connected with the prologue of St. John's gospel, where it is written, "In the beginning was the Word". This acting word of the divine beginning is also the 'Fiat' of the book of Genesis.

Reuchlin adopts the theory that the beginning of the tetragram, the *Yod*, is the dawn of every number, and he connects this thought with Neoplatonic and Pythagorean speculations on the One: "Here you have the tetragram's first letter which represents the figure of a point. It is called Iod, beginning, and it signifies also the ten, the border of numbers, and it permeates every number with its simplicity." The *Yod* denotes the point at which every dimension begins, and itself has no extension or space.<sup>210</sup> Reuchlin combines

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.: "Tenetis modo primam Tetragrammati litteram, quae et figuram puncti referat, et Iod, id est principium, nominetur, et denarium, id est finem numeri designet, et omne numerum simplicissime penetret, quoniam notam prae se ferat unitatis. Unitas autem

the speculation on the *Yod's* oneness with Dionysius' thoughts from "De divinis nominibus" 5,6: "In the monad namely every number persists uniformly; the unity contains in itself uniquely every number, and every number is connected to the monad."<sup>211</sup>

From this unity emerge movement and progression. The movement of the unity creates "the otherness and the two".<sup>212</sup> This thought adopts a central moment from the Book of XXIX Philosophers: "Monas, monadem gignens, in se unum reflectens ardorem."<sup>213</sup> A monad, begetting a monad, reflects itself in its ardour. From the self-begetting of the monad, as it doubles itself, movement emerges, and from the movement, heat, glowing fire, and light. This light, shining from divine self-movement and infinitely bright, constitutes a process in which the light and life of the divine become clear, and communicates itself on the first day of creation.

Reuchlin sees the movement of the one that creates the two as residing in the dichotomy of form and matter. The relationship of one and two is represented in the second letter of the tetragram, *He* [ה]. The productive oneness creates the existence of things; the separating two creates the things in their definition and thereby makes their essence conceivable. "Since God does not admit any multiplicity in himself, and since all different things, as simple as they may be, nevertheless are an accumulation and are composed by actuality and potentiality,"<sup>214</sup> God's first emanation must not be connected with any trace of odd numbers, but only with the composed substance of even and odd numbers; even - so far as it became something; odd - so far as it became at all: the first is that which emanated [essence], the second, that it emanated at all [existence]."<sup>215</sup>

Analogous to the dynamic doctrine of the Trinity, this interpretation of numbers explains the moment of 1 as purely dynamic, the moment of 2 as logos, as definition and essence, the moment of 3 as the unity of 1 and 2 in spirit and in breath. The second letter of the tetragram, the *He* [ה], also has the numeric value of 5. Reuchlin interprets the *He* in two ways, as original inner-trinitarian Christological separation, and as the separation of extended creation through the breath of God's creating word. "The number 5 consists of the prime number 2 and the prime number 3. The number 5 represents the ray sent by the highest light of the intelligible world through one sacred sign,

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omnium numerorum mensura communis est. Et ea, ut scribent arithmetici, vicem obtinet puncti, quae cum sit principium intervallis longitudinis, ipsa nec intervalli nec longitudinisque capax est."

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. Cf. Dionysius Areopagita: De div. nom. PG 3, 820D-821A.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. "Diximus de immanentia, dicamus de processu. Et sicut motus puncti facit lineam, et motus lineae facit planiciem, ita motus unitatis creat alteritas et alteritas binarium".

<sup>213</sup> "Deus est monos, monadem gignens, in se unum reflectens ardorem". Le livre de XXIV philosophes. Ed. Françoise Hudry, Grenoble 1989, p. 89.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Above Ch. II, Nicolas of Cusa.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. p. [69].

namely the letter He. It designates a prime, uncomposed number, according to the doctrine of the mathematicians. Following the doctrine of the Hebrew grammarians, it signifies an aspirate and a person in the form of the article itself.”<sup>216</sup> This breath is the divine breath, constituting the realm of the word, its defining power in creation, and in the communication of God’s life to the human race.

The characteristic of 3 is connection. In the number 3, origin, difference, and becoming are united. This is the function of the Holy Spirit, and the interpretation of the *Vav* [ו]. Outside the Holy Trinity the *Vav* has two combining tasks. As conjunction, it combines form and matter, i.e. heaven and earth, and thus is the giver of corporeal reality. With corporeality, space and time emerge. “I want to explain briefly the third letter of this unpronounceable and wonder-working name which is revealed to be the *Vav*. It is a copulative conjunction; it changes the tenses of the verbs in speech and signifies in mathematics the number 6. Very appropriately, it becomes the sign of heaven and earth, i.e. of all that is combined by matter and form. The *Vav* namely connects the parts of speech and therefore is called a conjunction. Moreover it changes the tenses of the verbs as nature does to things. ‘What is it that has happened?’ asks the preacher. ‘The same as what will be. What is it that was done? The same as what will be done.’ Therefore every corporeal being is submitted to the vicissitude of time in heaven and on earth, and it [the *Vav*] is in the middle.”<sup>217</sup>

Reuchlin interprets the tetragram as representing the steps of emanating movement. The ‘one’ emerges from the unpronounceable, in the ‘two’ the differentiation between existence and essence becomes visible. The Trinity represents the oneness of the whole emanative process. The trinitarian archetype of every movement can be rediscovered in the movements of the mental and extended world. The imprinting force of this first name defines every existence and essence, and is the form of every meaning.

The essence of all things is evidently not God himself, but something that is different from him. On the other hand, everything is created by God, and this means that he conceived the primary essence of things. This divine preconception takes place in God’s primordial wisdom. The contents and essences of wisdom are designated by the hieroglyphs; they are the contents of the Adamic language, which Reuchlin sees prefigured in the fourth letter of the tetragram, again a *He* [ה]. When this letter first occurred, it represented the begetting of the Son, and thus the inner-trinitarian separation between Father and Son. So the *He* expresses separation. Creative separation is again the function of the *He*, as it represents the outward transformation of divine power into divine wisdom. In this wisdom the primordial causes become

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. The quotation is from Eccl. 1:9.

recognizable. Besides God's first externalisation into his wisdom, the *He* also represents creation, which surpasses this wisdom and becomes extra-mental reality. Adam gives this creation names, which are taken from the essences of things.

"As a last point we shall have to discuss briefly the third step of the things' becoming, i.e. the fourth letter. The substances that undoubtedly lack matter are succeeded by the substances which are forms of the bodies of matter but which can be separated from - while remaining the same as - bodies and matter. The rational soul belongs to this genus, which is, as Virgil says, 'of fiery energy and of divine origin, so far as it is not hindered by injuring bodies, and earthly joints and mortal limbs do not make it obtuse'. Although this soul, because of its rather excellent essence, joins on the same level with the angels' nature, it has a lower status. On the other hand, since it communicates with the beings below, it is infused into vanishing beings and connected to things that partake of a body. In Plato's *Timaeus* the following doctrine can be found: God created first the fire and then the earth. Since they were opposed, these two could not appropriately be connected to each other. Therefore a connecting link was necessary which partly participated in the higher, partly in the lower one. After the archetypes - being certain fiery lights - had first been created, and then the corporeal matter, it was reasonable to create a certain substance which neither depended on matter nor could be without matter. Being a power of acting, it was situated in a body; being the power of the essences, however, it was placed with the angels. Because of its twofold ability, it partook of both worlds. This most appropriate connecting link is the human spirit, which, even if it is neither the one nor the other, partakes of both."<sup>218</sup>

For Reuchlin, this explication unfolds the mystical meaning of the tetragram. The praise of Shemhamphorash, God's 72 names that are the steps of Jacob's ladder, and on which the soul ascends in its path of mystical insight, is the biblical reference to the theological and philosophical speculations preceding creation.<sup>219</sup> In the tetragram, the secret of becoming reveals itself; God's power, his *vigor essendi*, is visible in the *Yod*. The secret of God's eternal, trinitarian life is made apparent in the trinitarian structures of the tetragram. The Secret of God's creation is revealed in the second *He*, which symbolises its primordial structure. There is but one wonder-working word, in which all power and wisdom are united.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. p. 70. References to Virgil, *Aen.* VI, 730-731, and Plato, *Timaios* 31BC.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 64-66.

## 6. CHRISTIAN CABALA II: JAKOB BÖHME'S DOCTRINE OF QUALITIES

It was Jakob Böhme who profoundly elaborated cabalistic motives of the spiritualist tradition.<sup>220</sup> This is clear in his theogony, and is also true of his doctrine of divine qualities. In Böhme it becomes evident that cabalistic doctrines can be appropriately integrated into Christian spirituality because of its traditions of negative theology, speculative Christology, and mystical practice.<sup>221</sup> The spiritualist interpretation of the world's becoming, fall, and redemption appears as a structure common to all monotheistic religions.

Böhme's doctrine of God's predicates is, above all, trinitarian. Following Dionysius the Areopagite, Böhme's theology includes the necessary negation of God's predicates in human thought. God's predicates can appear only if they are revealed. They are revealed in the process of theogony, the secret in which God becomes conceivable to himself in his trinitarian life by means of the self-cognition of the *Ungrund* ('unground').

Böhme repeatedly investigated questions concerning the revelation of God's glory and human knowledge. The longer he worked on this subject the clearer his insight became. In his treatise "On Election by Grace" (*Von der Gnadenwahl*) he concentrated on theology.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Since the literature on Böhme is difficult to overlook and is a mix of works by disciples, polemical debates, and scholarly discussion, I name only authors who wrote on Böhme's doctrine of quality. Von Baader, Franz: *Sämtliche Werke* vol. 13, Leipzig 1855, Repr. Aalen 1963. Vetterling, Hermann: *The Illuminate of Görlitz or Jakob Böhmes (1575-1624) Life and Philosophy*. Leipzig 1923, repr. Hildesheim 1978, pp. 224-240. He treats seven powers "Will given, Desire with (1) Attraction, (2) Expansion (3) Vibration (4) Fire, (5) Light, (6) Sound, and (7) Substance with infinite forms" (p. 224). Peuckert, Will Erich: *Das Leben Jakob Böhmes*. Jena 1924. 2<sup>nd</sup> corrected ed. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1961. Schäublin, Peter: *Zur Sprache Jakob Böhmes*. Winterthur 1963, pp. 76-96. Grunsky, Hans: *Jakob Böhme*. Stuttgart 1956, pp. 109-194. Lemper, Ernst Heinz: *Jakob Böhme. Leben und Werk*. Berlin 1976. Bonheim, Günther: *Zeichendeutung und Natursprache. Ein Versuch über Jakob Böhme*. Würzburg 1992, pp. 62-118. Weeks, Andrew: *Böhme. An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth Century Philosopher and Mystic*. New York 1991, pp. 93-126. Koyré, Alexandre: *La Philosophie de Jakob Böhme*. Paris 1929, pp. 354-415.

<sup>221</sup> On Böhme's relationship to cabala: Schulitz, John: *Jakob Böhme und die Kabbala*. Frankfurt 1993. The book is a rather superficial description of external parallels between Böhme's theosophy and cabala.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. esp. von Baader, Franz: *Sämtliche Werke* vol.13, Leipzig 1885, Repr. Aalen 1963. Baader's lectures on Böhme address "Von der Gnadenwahl" and "Mysterium magnum," and still make up one of the best introductions to Böhme. Cf. Hamberger, Julius: *Die Lehren des deutschen Philosophen Jakob Böhme*. Munich 1844. Repr. Hildesheim 1975, which is a very useful compilation.

Böhme begins with the apparent ‘contrarium’ that God is one and yet also has predicates. “I the Lord thy God am one God only; thou shalt honour no other gods beside me” (Ex. 20:2-3). This God reveals himself as a unity without predicates. Böhme counters this predicateless, one God with Moses’ report that God is “an angry, jealous God and a consuming fire” (Deut.4:24). He resolves this contradiction in the manner of negative theology, without denying God’s predicate of ‘existence’. “For it cannot be said that he is this or that, evil or good, or that he has distinctions in himself.”<sup>223</sup> This mutual cancelling out of contradicting predicates is reminiscent of Nicholas of Cusa’s *coincidentia oppositorum*. In the tradition of negative theology, God’s predicates are denied: “For he is in himself natureless, passionless, and creatureless. He has no tendency to anything, for there is nothing before him to which he could tend, neither evil nor good.” This is the topos of the self-sufficient One, who is still unseparated. It is a Neoplatonic argument, also implying the possibility of evil in the eternal beginning, for evil begins when God begins. “He is the unground.”

Böhme characterises his God as a pure will. “He is in himself the unground, without any will towards nature and creature, as it were an eternal nothing. There is no pain or quality [*Qual*, meaning the becoming of attributes out of potentialities, a movement which occurs softly in the light, painfully in the darkness]<sup>224</sup> in him, nor anything that could incline either to him or from him. He is the one sole existence, and there is nothing before him or after him, by or in him, which he might draw or grasp a will for himself; neither has he anything that generates or produces him. He is the nothing and the all and is a single will.” The germ of creation is attributed to this primary will, which has not yet found itself in the Trinity. It is the divine will “in which the world and the whole creation lies. In him is all alike eternal, without beginning, equal in weight, measure, and number. He is neither light nor darkness, neither love nor wrath, but the eternal one. Therefore Moses says: The Lord is one God only.”<sup>225</sup>

<sup>223</sup> Jakob Böhme. Urschriften. Ed. Werner Buddecke. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1966, p. 13. Von der Gnadenwahl I, 3. Trans.: De electione Gratiae and Quaestiones Theosophicae by Jakob Böhme. Trans. by John Rolleston Earle. London 1930, p. 7.

<sup>224</sup> Hamberger, Böhme, p. 342.

<sup>225</sup> De electione gratiae trans. Earle, pp. 7f. Gnadenwahl I, 2f. “Dieses alles scheint ein Contrarium zu sein/ in dehme Er sich einen zornigen Gott/ und ein verzehrent feuer Nennet/ und den auch eine flamme der liebe/ welcher nichts als alleine gut sein kan/ Sonst wehre Er nicht Gott/ as das Einige gutte/ Den man kan nicht von gott sagen/ das Er dis oder das sey/ Böse oder gutt/ das Er in sich selber untterscheide habe/ den Er ist in sich selber / Natur loß/ So wohl Affect und Creatur Loß/ Er hat keine Neiglichkeit zu edwas/ den es ist nichts für ihme/ dar zu Er sich köntte Neigen/ weder Böses noch guttes/ Er ist in sich der ungrunt/ ohne einichen willen/ gegen Natur und Creatur/ als ein ewig nichts/ es ist keine qual in ihme/ noch edwas das sich zu ihme/ oder von ihme köntte Neigen/ Er ist das einige wesen/ und ist nichts vor ihme/ oder nach ihme/ daran / oder darinne Er ihme köntte einichen willen schepffen oder fassen/ Er hat auch nichts das ihn gebühret oder gibt. Er is

The most important ideas from this rich piece are the following:

1. God's eternal beginning coincides with the absolute One. Key word: *Ungrund, en sof*.

2. God is, and he is also nothing. He is absolute and therefore without predicates. This lack of predicates, identical with God's incomprehensibility, contradicts his subsequent qualifications. In his plenitude he includes the coincidence of opposites.<sup>226</sup> Negative theology's prohibition of predication is applied to the divine predicates.

3. The decisive character of the *Ungrund* is the beginning of the will. This will, however, is not qualified; it is the point of apparition, the dawn in which the eternal will is conceived as beginning. In terms of the Neoplatonic theory of cognition, the absolute beginning is the border that emerges through negation. Starting from this border, the next step is divine self-contemplation and definition of the Father and the Son. In a third step, the spirit as unity of both becomes apparent. The emergence of the world is the fourth step, proceeding beyond the divine sphere.

4. Potentiality, not yet specified, is the hallmark of God's beginning. In his timeless eternity everything coincides in one point,<sup>227</sup> from which all emerges. The primordial causes are situated in this timeless existence, once God has unfolded himself in his inner-trinitarian life.

From the point of view of epistemology, this account of the process is inadequate. It describes a timeless, eternal, punctual process in discursive, temporally extended terms. This inadequacy marks human language as a merely inappropriate attempt to capture God's inconceivable self-reliance, imagined as an eternal process of self-begetting.

It is difficult to establish whether such self-contemplation is necessarily a trinitarian process. If it is not, then a theologically negative concept of self-contemplation must be developed. The Christian cabala, however, interprets God's self-contemplation in trinitarian terms, and so does Böhme. He describes God's first three hypostases as the Trinity.<sup>228</sup>

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das Nichts/ und das alles/ und ist ein Einiger Wille/ in dehme die Welt und die gantze Creation ligt/ in ihme its alles gleiche ewig/ ohn anfang/ in gleichem gewichte/ masse und ziel/ Er ist weder Licht noch fünsternis/ weder liebe noch zorn/ sondern das ewige Eine/ darumb sagt Moses/ der Herr its ein Einiger Gott" Jakob Böhme: Urschriften; Ed. Werner Buddecke. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1966, vol. II, p. 13.

<sup>226</sup> On the history of Nicholas of Cusa's reception cf. Meier-Oeser, Stephan: Die Päsens des Vergessenen. Zur Rezeption des Nicolaus Cusanus vom 15.-18. Jahrhundert. Münster 1989.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Boethius: *Consolatio philosophiae* 6: Aeternitas est "interminabilis vitae totae simul et perfecta possessio".

<sup>228</sup> On Böhme's concept of the Trinity and his doctrine of the seven Sephiroth: Hamberger, Böhme, pp. 30-49, sect. 3: Von den sieben Naturgesetzen und von den drei Personen der Gottheit.

Böhme proceeds from his main, spiritualist invention, the will. In his Pythagorean interpretation of the tetragram, Reuchlin had described the *He* as a 'two', as the movement and separation of Father and Son. In all theories of the 'one', the emergence of the 'two' is the decisive step from the concealment to the appearance of the unfathomable One. The two is the mystery of God's self-revelation and his revelation to the outside. In the same way, for Böhme too, God's begetting and separation from his Son is the decisive movement that emerges from the will of the *Ungrund*. Every process has its beginning in the inconceivable potentiality of the One, which becomes conceivable only in its separation. Thus every beginning can only be accounted for after the fact. The beginning is only ever explained as such after its effects have unfolded. This is the secret of the *Ungrund* procreating that which is different from itself, which later is called the Son. "That is to say, the first unoriginated single will, which is neither evil nor good, generates within itself the one eternal good as an apprehensible will, which is the Son of the unfathomable will, and yet co-eternal with the unoriginated will. This second will is the first will's eternal feeling and finding, for the nothing finds itself in itself as a something. And the unfathomable will, i.e. the indiscoverable One, by its eternal discovery goes forth, and brings itself into an eternal intuition of itself.

Thus the unfathomable will is called eternal Father. And the will that is found, grasped and brought forth by the unground is called his begotten or only begotten Son."<sup>229</sup> This is, as it were, the positive side, where Oneness finds itself. The pain of this process of separation, the suffering from duality, is at the same time the separation from God and the origin of evil.

The twoness becomes oneness again, the oneness of eternal self-contemplation before the creation of the world. This self-contemplation is reflection, self-reliance, and is the task of the Spirit: "Thus the unfathomable will is called eternal Father. And the will that is found, grasped, and brought forth by the unground is called his begotten or only begotten Son; for it is the Ens of the unground [Ens = the potency's striving after becoming real], whereby the unground apprehends itself in a ground. And the outgoing of the unfathomable will through the apprehended Son or Ens is called Spirit, for he leads the apprehended Ens out of itself into a movement of life of the will, as a life of the Father and the Son. And what has gone forth is joy, viz. the discovery of the eternal nothing, in which Father, Son, and Spirit behold and find themselves; and this is called God's wisdom or intuition."<sup>230</sup>

Here the mystery of becoming appears, explained by Böhme with his notion of the will. The will first signifies a potency, then it begins to act, in a transformation from potency to reality. God's act of making himself possible

<sup>229</sup> Gnadenwahl, I, 5, 6; Trans. Earle, p. 8. Urschriften II, p. 13.

<sup>230</sup> Gnadenwahl I, 6. Trans. Earle, pp. 8f. Urschriften II, p. 13.



always ends in inner-trinitarian self-contemplation. Böhme addresses the question of the absolute beginning: "The first and the greatest mystery is the Abyss where the nothing is induced in the will whose name is Father or the beginning of something."<sup>231</sup> Here the eternal process of the divine beginning becomes apparent. God's being without beginning is at the same time the eternal begetting of divine life. This life is the source of every subsequent beginning, the archetype of all processes, and is life itself.

Böhme understands this process as the unfolding of the divine will. All becoming has its origin in God. Becoming is a fight between divine predicates, which originated in the will and then become graspable and perceivable. This process of the unfolding of the divine will is the absolute beginning. It establishes the archetypes of all thought and is the dynamic prototype of both the primordial and the real world.

Böhme explains this process in his doctrine of divine qualities. The qualities are the dynamics of primordial nature, which is typologically founded in God's power. They have a threefold, ontological significance: They are God's predicates; they are attributes of the primordial world, and they are moments in real life. Primarily they are in God. They become visible in God's wisdom (*Sophia*), in his first revelation. They unfold in extended nature, whose extension they effect and animate.<sup>232</sup> "A door is opened to us in the Holy Trinity, to see and to be cognizant of what the Lord will know in man at this time: that controversy may have an end, and that men may no longer wrangle about God. He reveals himself accordingly in this way, and it should be no marvel to us; but we ourselves should be the marvel."<sup>233</sup>

#### a) First Quality: The Subsumption of Will into Desire.

The will without direction is not yet a will; it is the *Ungrund*. It is neither motion nor spirit, but rather mere potentiality willing to grasp itself. Will means unrest, not wanting to abide in its immobile state. Will is the end of tranquillity. Insofar as the will desires something, it has a concrete and well-defined goal. The power longing for the word directs its energy towards the coming essence. "The powers for the word are God and the scientia [desire] or the magnetic attraction is the beginning of nature. Now the powers could not be manifested without this desire of attraction."<sup>234</sup>

Here the following moments emerge: The will is an exceeding, inner urgency, which cannot remain quiet and the same. It wants something, and as such becomes directed, becomes desire. Desire strives after a goal. It is no

<sup>231</sup> 40 Fragen von der Seele, 1, 120. Sämtliche Schriften, vol. 3, p. 34.

<sup>232</sup> Roland Pietzsch, in his epilogue to the edition of Böhme's "Von der Gnadenwahl" (Stuttgart 1988) gives a comprehensible summary of Böhme's doctrine of qualities.

<sup>233</sup> Gnadenwahl IV, 2. trans. Earl, p. 48. Urschriften II, 36.

<sup>234</sup> Gnadenwahl II, 14 trans. Earl, p. 21. Urschriften II, 21.

longer simply undirected beginning, mere potentiality; the will that has become desire is directed, and as a result has hardened. “First, darkness, for the confining or enclosing overshadows the free will in the attraction. Secondly, it is the cause of hardness, for what is drawn-in is hard and rough; and yet in the Eternal only spirit is to be understood. Thirdly, it is a cause of sharpness. Fourthly it is the cause of coldness or the cold fiery property. Fifthly, it is a cause of all substance or materiality.”<sup>235</sup> Here the process of separation, leading up to the perfection of an objective essence, is analysed phenomenologically. The difference that shows itself in the separation is hard and marked in its strangeness; it is seen as hard and rough, as different from the divine spirit, but nonetheless as deriving from it. It is in separation that distinctiveness first becomes apparent, for in Oneness, separation is inconceivable. The One has no separation and therefore no precision, by means of which the other could separate itself out from it. In this separation, which Böhme conceives as a process of the melting and purification of the essences, the separated essence becomes visible. This is the separating moment of the Son, who defines every essence.

In the tension preceding the separation, two tendencies become apparent: the will to change and the will to remain oneself. In the Trinity, the repugnant will, the will of separation, is softened and tamed into trinitarian harmony and life. It is in extra-trinitarian life that the will contains the seed of evil. This becomes clear in the process of separation. In this process, the inner tensions of the One increase – Böhme refers to this as ‘scienz’, a neologism made up of the German word *ziehen* [to draw] and the Latin word *scientia* [knowledge]. In the process of separation, the inner tensions of the One increase to the point of anxiety, and when separation finally occurs, it happens suddenly, in a flash. Then the new essence appears.<sup>236</sup>

b) Second Quality: Qualifying, Springing, Breaking, Bitter, Bitter Thorn

The bitterness of the separation first becomes visible in God’s difference from his creation. This difference exhibits definition, desire, hardness, and acerbity. “There the sensibility divides into two entities, viz. into fierceness according to the impression in the darkness and a cold painful fire, in which heat arises. This is the first Principle in the fire-root, which is the centre of nature. The second Principle is found in the separation of fire, as the divine desire in the fire separates into light, and there passes into nature and being: so as to reveal the divine kingdom of joy.”<sup>237</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 1 trans. Earl, p. 34 Urschriften II, 28.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. von Baader, Franz: *Über den Blitz als Vater des Lichtes*. Werke vol. 2. Leipzig 1851, repr. 1963, pp. 27-46.

<sup>237</sup> Gnadenwahl IV, 8, 9, trans. Earl, pp. 49f. Urschriften II, 36. This is also Böhme’s adaptation of the account of the world’s creation in Plato’s *Timaeus* 31, B, C.

God's separation from his world is preformed in the inner-trinitarian tension. As a surpassing of the borders of the Trinity, its goal is creation. This creation occurs in two steps: The first is the creation of a mental world, the second the creation of an extended world. "This one being of the divine operancy, which has existed from eternity, God has immassed and moved with the scientia [desire] of his unfathomable will, and comprised in the world of his speaking; and has spoken it forth out of the first principle of the painful and dark fire-world, and also out of the holy light-flaming love world, as a representation of the inner spiritual world."<sup>238</sup>

This inner world will be realised externally. Thus a new tension between the wanting and the wanted develops. This is the beginning of qualifying, the process through which quality, essence, definition, and separation emerge. It is a process full of desire and pain, in which Oneness is killed by separation. Its breaking apart becomes audible in a bang. Since the will does not remain in itself but expresses itself, it destroys its original freedom of absolute potentiality. This process is not completed until the new essences have fully emerged. It strives after its goal, which is the becoming of essences. "The second form in the scientia is the sting of sensibility, and it is attraction itself, whence feeling and perception take their rise. For the more the sourness impresses itself, the greater becomes this sting, like a rage, raver, and destroyer. Its division into forms is as follows: Bitter, pang, pain, movement, a beginning of the contrary will in the temperament, a cause of the spirit-life, a cause of flowing and steaming forth, a father or root of the mercurial life both in animated and vegetative beings, a cause of the forth-flying senses, a cause of exulting joy in the light, and a cause of the hostile opposition in the austere impression of the hardness, whence strife and contrary will take their rise."<sup>239</sup>

Quality has its typological origin in the divine logos, which defines itself, and shows itself outside the Trinity as wisdom, *Sophia*. "And this is the external visible world with the stars, which existed not before in a tangible being of distinctions. It was the *Mysterium magnum*, where all things stood in the wisdom, in a spiritual form, in a wrestling sport of love; not in the form of creaturely spirits, but in such a model that wisdom has thus in the power sported with itself."<sup>240</sup> This sporting of wisdom is the result of the divine Trinity's turning outwards, and conceiving the world in the primordial sphere of models and spiritual forms. The sport is the expression of harmony ('*temperatur*', from Lat. *temperantia*), in which the primordial things play together in the divine concept.

<sup>238</sup> Gnadenwahl IV, 11, trans. Earl, p. 50. Urschriften II, 37

<sup>239</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 4, trans. Earl p. 34. Urschriften II, 28.

<sup>240</sup> Gnadenwahl IV, 12, trans. Earl, p. 50. Urschriften II, 37.

This spiritual essence of the world, Böhme's 'quintessenz', becomes corporeal through the power of the word, which is the power of separation as well as the power of defining and becoming. Through this corporealisation, the world becomes extended in space and time, as well as becoming final and contingent. The spatiality of the world is described by the material existence of the elementary fire, and the becoming of essences by the fiery purifying process. The time of the world is the clockwork time of its recurring finitude. "This operating word, which sprang from all the powers, from good and evil viz. from the fire of light and love, and also the painful dark nature - fire, and which in eternity consisted in an active being in two principles, viz. in light and darkness, - this word has been spoken forth into a time and brought into being with a beginning and end, and fashioned into the created world as its self-revelation. That is to say, this eternal world with its hosts and all that lives and moves therein is shut up into a time of a clockwork, which runs on from its beginning continually to the end, as into that First out of which it proceeded. And this has been made manifest in order that the eternal Word in its active power might become image-like and creaturely, and that as it has formed and fashioned itself from eternity in wisdom, so it might likewise be fashioned in a particular life, to the glory and joy of the holy Spirit, in the Word of life in himself."<sup>241</sup>

c) Third Quality: Anxiety and Narrowness

In the world's separation from God, the tension of divine self-separation becomes newly and outwardly visible. The will, God's exceeding power, recognises in itself an acerbity directed towards something which it not yet is. This excessive moment has a dialectical character. It is too powerful to remain in itself, and at the same time has the tendency and pain of wanting something that it has not yet become. Here a twofold tendency of the will becomes apparent. It wants to maintain its potentiality and freedom, i.e. to remain as it was. But there is also the opposite tendency of the will to want to move beyond what it is. The will reaches this point of highest tension, and then explodes out of its calm. The tension before the break makes the One anxious about its own existence, and it tries to maintain the will in its original state. This is the tension that makes up the continuity of every process, which is only possible if something remains the same even as it changes.

"The anguish-source is thus to be understood: The astringent desire conceiveth itself, and draweth itself into itself, and maketh itself full, hard, and rough: now the attraction is an enemy of the hardness. The hardness is retentive, the attraction is fugitive: the one will into itself, and the other will out of itself; but since they cannot sever and part asunder one from the other

<sup>241</sup> Gnadenwahl IV, 18f. trans. Earl, p. 57f. Urschriften II, 38f.

they remain in each other as a rotating wheel: the one will ascend the other descend.

For the hardness causeth substance and weight, and the compunction giveth spirit and the flying life: These both mutually circulate in themselves and out of themselves, and yet cannot go any whither [parted]. What the desire, viz. the magnet, maketh hard, that the attraction doth again break in pieces. And it is the greatest unquietness in itself, like a raging madness: and is in itself a horrible anguish."<sup>242</sup>

The tension preceding the separation is the trinitarian tension holding every earthly life together in nervous movement and anxiety. The divine, exceeding will, which does not remain in divine self-contemplation, includes the Christological element of separation and the desire of the becoming essence; this is the draw of Böhme's 'scienz'. In this process the difference between the world and God becomes visible. It is founded typologically in the inner-trinitarian blissful life; as an earthly process, however, it is also characterised by anxiety.

#### d) Fourth Quality: Fiery Flash and Fright

In the process of divine self-definition, in God's alchemistic hardening against the world, the difference between light and darkness emerges. It is a decision that takes place after the process of direction and tension. Tending to its desire, the will realises that its freedom to decide has been lost. Thus, in the process of the will becoming desire, the difference between light and darkness emerges. At the same time, this is the revelation of nothingness – the nullity, emptiness, and hunger of the will that does not have what it wants. It is also the distinction that emerges with the 'fiat lux' in the biblical account of creation.

If the tension of trinitarian life cannot be sustained, living unity dissociates. In that case, the evil moment of separation, which was already visible in the second quality, gets the upper hand. The devouring power of evil, godless difference, becomes apparent. The dissociation becomes visible in its deadly fire, in its terror, in a flash of fire and fright. The tension of the One suddenly reaches a breaking point and explodes. Following this archetype, every separation has this moment of fright and explosion, occurring in a single instant. Different from the soft, tamed fire of life as it exists in the holy trinity, this fiery force expresses itself as a flash in its separation from the divine loving fire.

This is the emergence of the difference between good/light and evil/darkness. In this difference, the power of darkness becomes evident. In God's trinity, this power was still tamed in the eternal self-contemplation of

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<sup>242</sup> *Mysterium Magnum Or An exposition of the first Book of Moses called Genesis*. Trans. John Sparrow. London 1654. Ed. by C. J. B. London 1965, Ch. 3, 15, 16.

divine difference. When it is expelled from the divine Trinity, otherness appears as evil darkness, far from divine love. It is the gloomy dawn of an evil fire, whose force still derives from the divine flash.

Here Böhme's dramatic spectacle of creation reaches its peak. It is the spectacle of the separation between God and the world, good and evil, love and terror. "This terror makes in the first three forms, according to the dark impression in itself, the hostile terrible life of the wrath of anger of God, of devouring and consuming. For it consists in the kindling of fire, in the essence of the painfulness or consumingness of fire, and is according to the dark impression called hell or hollowness, as an individual self-comprehending painful life which is manifest or perceptible in itself only, and is with reference to the whole unground rightly termed a hidden hollowness, which is not revealed in the light, and yet is a cause of the kindling of light. This is to be understood in the way night dwells in day, and one is not the other."<sup>243</sup>

e) Fifth Quality: Loving Fire and Tenderness

The separation of the fiery flash and fright does not annihilate everything that is different from God. The extra-divine beings become living essences by imitating the divine trinitarian life. The fright and the fiery flash of the separation, when light and darkness become distinguished, is succeeded by reassurance and tenderness. After the catastrophe of the separation, the separated beings will be received again in a new hypostasis. "The fifth form in the scientia is the true love-fire, which separates itself in the light from the painful fire, and therein the divine Love in being is understood. For the powers separate in the fire-terror, and become desirous in themselves. In this form also is understood every characteristic of the first three forms, yet no longer in pain, but in joy; and in their hunger or desire, so to speak. That is, in the desire they draw themselves into being: they draw the tincture of fire and light [the medium between mental being and extra-mental being] viz. Virgin sophia, into themselves, and it is their food, as the greatest sweetness, or pleasing delight and agreed savour. This becomes embodied in the desire of the first three forms in being, which is called the corpus of the tincture, and is the divine essentiality, Christ's heavenly corporeality."<sup>244</sup> In the fifth quality, which follows the tragedy of separation and corresponds to Reuchlin's interpretation of the fourth letter in the tetragram, God reveals his divine predicates. God's life becomes visible again in its tenderness. After the separation has occurred, the separated beings are reaccepted in love and grace. This love shows God's plenitude after the spectacle of the separation.

<sup>243</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 15, trans. Earl, p. 37. Urschriften II 29f.

<sup>244</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 26, trans. Earl, p. 41. Urschriften II, 32.

The tender fire of love, which is also the warmth of life, fills the space of divine grace, the heavenly Christ, and the Virgin Sophia.

f) Sixth Quality: Sound.

Along with the opening of the space of light and grace emerges the realm of sound. Sound fills the divine realm with the might of God's word. The bodily Christ, God's Sophia, is mighty in the sound of his word: He said and there was (Gen. 1:3). The sound of God's glory fills the space where things become real. The mighty word creates its own space. "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their word to the end of the world." (Rom. 10:18, Ps. 19:5) Just as light makes God's love, grace, and glory visible, so sound makes his might audible and brings things into existence. "The sixth form in the scientia, in the divine power, is speech, namely the mouth of God, the sound of his powers, where the Holy Spirit in the love comprehension brings itself manifestly out of the comprehended power; as we are to understand in the image of God in man, by reference to man's speech. So likewise there is a sensual effectual speaking in the divine power in the temperament. And by this effectual speaking is rightly understood the five senses, namely, a spiritual seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, where the manifestation of the powers work together unitedly. This operancy the Spirit speaks forth into a distinct sound, as is to be understood in man, as well as in the expressed word in the created creatures, -both in animated and also in insensible vegetative beings."<sup>245</sup>

g) Seventh Quality: God's Paradise

God's power reveals itself as the efficacy of his grace and his creating power through his word. His power is effective in order, creation, and grace. In his word, things are recognised in their essence. They are drawn into existence through the force of his 'fiat' and become corporeal through the sound of the word. Through his word, God's wisdom becomes perceivable in the preconceived world of the essences, as well as in time and space. The glory of his wisdom fills the realm of his world: "This seventh form is a comprehension of all qualities and is properly called the whole of nature, or the formed and expressed word. It is the inner divine uncreated heaven, but stands connected with the divine active birth of the temperament; and it is called Paradise, as a growing life of the comprehended working divine power, in manner as the scientia [attraction] draws out of the earth by the son's desire a growth of wood, herbs, and grass; for the scientia [desire] of the earth also has its origin from thence."<sup>246</sup> The earthly essence of the divine glory is the world of paradise emerging through the sound of his voice and

<sup>245</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 31, trans. Earl, p. 43. Urschriften II, 33.

<sup>246</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 37, trans. Earl, p. 45f. Urschriften II, 37.

the 'fiat'. It represents the working power of divine wisdom on earth: "God's seventh spirit in his divine power is the body which is born from the other six spirits. In this all heavenly figures consist and they are formed and imaged in it; in it all beauty and joy begins. This is the real spirit of nature, the nature itself through which and in which all creatures are conceivable on earth and preformed in heaven. The heaven itself is formed through it, and every nature conceived by God stands in this spirit. If this spirit did not exist there would be neither angel nor man; and God would be an inexplicable being which only consisted in inexplicable power."<sup>247</sup>

Böhme's doctrine of qualities explicates divine predication as a doctrine of becoming, and makes visible the divine permeation in the world's becoming. It shows the phenomenology of the eternal beginning in divine as well as in earthly life.

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<sup>247</sup> Aurora II, 1 Urschriften I, 102.



## KOSMOS ANTHROPOS

### 1. THEOLOGY OF THE LOGOS

Cosmic anthropology lies at the core of Christian Platonism. Its focus is on the theology of creation, and it articulates a single figure of thought in different ways: God's image, man and his relationship to the cosmos.

The most concise formulation of this matter can be found in the prologue to St. John's Gospel, which describes the process of the divine Trinity, its turning outward, and the emergence of Christian cosmic anthropology: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the Beginning with God".

This formulation first shows the process that makes the Holy Trinity conceivable as its own self-assurance. It is God who makes himself the logos, the intelligible intelligence, the object of himself. This process of self-objectification is at first entirely internal, and is considered in Christian dogma to be the process of trinitarian self-constitution.

The text of the prologue continues: "All things were made through the word, and without the word nothing was made that was made". This is the central sentence of creation-theology. The text of the Gospel adopts the formulation of the book of Genesis "God said, and there was". In St. John's Gospel, the word is primarily considered to be God's son in the Holy Trinity, but now it exceeds the trinitarian limits: God goes beyond himself and creates. He creates with the same word with which he defined himself, the word constituting the process of the Holy Trinity. Only in the word "was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." The inner-trinitarian life becomes the life of the world, perceived as the world's light, even if this is only the believers' insight.

In the "Book of XXIV Philosophers", originally an Arabic compilation translated from the Greek original by Iamblichus, the emergence of light is described as the self-produced heat of loving self-relation: "Deus est monos,

monadem ex se gignens, in se unum reflectens ardorem” God is the monad, begetting a monad, in heat mirroring himself as Oneness.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the heat of self-mirroring that light emerges. The process of self-begetting produces light as well as life; life becomes light through self-speculation. This process of self-speculation is also the process of self-contemplation. The self-contemplation of the beginning constitutes an object; this objectification is the image of the beginning.<sup>2</sup> In this process of self-contemplation, the energy of love is set free, and love’s energy is the attraction of the highest. Light is the visible expression of God’s mighty self-contemplation. It can be imagined as the eternal stream of beginning, internally mirrored and thrown back on itself. In this process it eternally heats itself to the point of glistening brightness.

This is the spiritual meaning of light, as the splendour and brightness in which life, the self-objectification of the One, becomes apparent. St. John’s Gospel interprets the “lux fiat” of the book of Genesis (1:3), “And God said, ‘Let there be a light’, and there was light”, from the perspective of a Platonising logos-speculation. God’s command, the power of the word that became inner-trinitarian life, is expressed by the ‘fiat’. As the ‘Word’ turns itself outward, it becomes light. The prologue of St. John’s Gospel proceeds: “The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.” In a new act that goes beyond creating, God’s light enlivens mankind, and this is true for every human being. This is the specific distinction of humanity in every person, indicating that logos, life, and light are more intimately interwoven with mankind than with other beings. There are many reasons for this:

Man is the only earthly being able to acknowledge the logos consciously. This is the first illumination of man. As a rational being, he participates in the self-mirroring of God’s life, a process exceeding the image of the Trinity, residing in man’s self-consciousness. The true light that enlightens man allows him to partake in God’s love. The light enlightening everyone is also God’s image, in which human beings were created “as man and wife”:<sup>3</sup> “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.” (Gen. 1:27).

<sup>1</sup> Le livre des XXIV philosophes. Traduit du latin, édité et annoté par Françoise Hudry. Grenoble 1989, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> On the relationship of this metaphor to Marius Victorinus, see Françoise Hudry in the preface of the Livre des XXIV philosophes. Ernst Benz discovered the development of this thought to be founded in Marius Victorinus, and he deduced the Western metaphysics of the will from here. Ernst Benz: Marius Victorinus und die Entwicklung der abendländischen Willensmetaphysik. Stuttgart 1932. Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte. Esp. p. 78f.

<sup>3</sup> In the Platonic tradition, the first man is understood as androgynous. See Benz, Ernst: Adam, der Mythos vom Urmenschen. Munich 1955.

Since the divine light illuminates every human being, everyone finds his divine image in himself. This image, *imago Dei*, is the innermost acting impulse of life and love, bringing everyone to his own self and to his destination as set in the divine logos. Acknowledging one's own inner destination is part of the divine life, which God grants every man. Every living development longs for that logos and lives from it. The dependency on this logos becomes apparent in the feelings of love, which appear as natural yearnings for the divine and which partake in the delightful pain that no lover wants to miss.

The kernel of St. John's cosmic anthropology lies in God's becoming flesh, in the perfect divine permeation of even the tiniest being.<sup>4</sup> "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father." This is the apotheosis of mankind in Christ. God's glory becomes visible in his human nature. What does this mean? The splendour of divine glory, God's light deriving from his inner-trinitarian life, is the light of the logos poured into creation. In Christ's human nature, God's mighty glory is made visible again. After the process of creation, the human race is bestowed with another gift of God's incarnation. This word, which was made flesh, is the same word as that through which the world was made. The word, God's inner-trinitarian self-cognition, and the word of creation, Jesus Christ, both God and man, are essentially the same. In this way creation receives its human character. The divine man Christ, who became flesh, also permeates the cosmos. Thus the cosmos is not only directed towards man, it also partakes of human nature: Kosmos anthropos.

The Christology of St. John's prologue is twofold. It is both dynamic and typological. The cosmic man is the type, the logos, the image of images, the form of forms. The Christology is dynamic because through it, God's power of beginning and living emerges and permeates every becoming. In this double sense, St. John's Christology strongly influenced Western theological and philosophical traditions.

## 2. PLATONIC MYTHS: ANDROGYNOUS PRIMEVAL MAN

The theology of the logos is of Greek origin. The idea that man is a microcosm, that the cosmos is anthropomorphic, and that man is

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<sup>4</sup> The theology of accommodation, leading to Christ's death on the cross, is not as important in St. John's theology as it is in St. Paul's.

cosmomorphic, also derive from Greek sources. The paradigmatic formulation is found for the first time in Democritus, who simply says, “Man, a little world”.<sup>5</sup> The sophism that man is the measure of all things (against which Plato argued) can be interpreted in a cosmological manner: The cosmos is the measure of man, therefore man has the form of the cosmos and, by analogy, the cosmos has the form of man. Plato himself adapted this motif ironically; he did not expound on it theoretically, but he recounted it in two myths. In the “Symposium” he tells the story of the androgynous first man, and in the “Timaeus” he describes the cosmic body, which is the moved copy of the unmoved universe of ideas.

The subject of the Symposium is the power of love, and Aristophanes explains it in the following way: “The original human nature was not like the present, but different. The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, of which the name survives but nothing else. Once it was a distinct kind, with a bodily shape and a name of its own, constituted by the union of the male and the female: but now only the word ‘androgynous’ is preserved, and that as a term of reproach. In the second place, the primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and the same number of feet, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike; also four ears, two privy members, and the remainder to correspond. He could walk upright as men now do, backwards and forwards as he pleased, and he could also roll over and over at a great pace, turning on his four hand and four feet, eight in all, like tumblers going over and over with their legs in the air; this was when he wanted to run fast. Now the sexes were three, and such as I have described them, because the sun, moon and earth are three; and the man was originally the child of the sun, the woman of the earth, the man-woman of the moon, which is made up of sun and earth, and they were all round and moved round and round because they resembled their parents. Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods; of them is told the tale of Oty and Ephialtes who, as Homer says, attempted to scale heaven, and who have laid hand upon the gods.”<sup>6</sup> This primeval man, whom Plato identified with the race of the Giants<sup>7</sup> who lived before the Olympic gods, can be directly connected with cosmology. In the “Timaeus”, the demiurge creates the world as a moving copy of the unmoveable ideas,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Diels-Krantz 2, 68, frgm. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Symposium 190d-191c. Trans. B. Jowett. *The Dialogues of Plato*. Vol.1. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford 1953.

<sup>7</sup> See Stephens, Walter: *Giants in those Days*. Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism. Lincoln, Nebraska 1989. See also ch. IX, *Translatio sapientiae*.

<sup>8</sup> *Timaeus* 37d.

similar to the terrible man-woman of the “Symposium”. Because he threatens the gods, Zeus orders the androgynous giant to be divided in half so that he is weakened and will cease to be a menace. “He spoke and cut men in two, like a sorb-apple which is halved for pickling, or as you might divide an egg with a hair; and as he cut them one after another, he bade Apollo to give the face and the half of the neck a turn in order that man might contemplate the section of himself: he would thus learn a lesson of humility. Apollo was also bidden to heal their wounds and compose their forms. So he gave a turn to the face and pulled the skin from the sides all over that which in our language is called the belly, like the purses which draw tight, and he made one mouth at the centre, which he fastened in a knot (the same which is called the navel); he also moulded the breast and took out most of the wrinkles, much as a shoemaker might smoothe leather upon a last; he left a few, however, in the region of the belly and navel, as a memorial of the primeval state.”<sup>9</sup>

Parting brings pain; separation causes sadness and a longing for reunification. As separation precedes the yearning for unity, Plato’s account of love’s origin is ironic and not without biting humour: “After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one, they began to die from hunger and self-neglect, because they did not like to do anything apart; and when one of the halves died and the other survived, the survivor sought another mate, man or woman as we call them - being the sections of entire men or women - and clung to that. Thus they were being destroyed, when Zeus in pity invented a new plan: he turned the parts of generation round the front, for this had not been always their position, and they sowed the seed no longer as hitherto like grasshoppers in the ground, but in one another; and after the transposition the male generated in the female in order that by the mutual embrace of man and woman they might breed, and the race might continue; or if man came to man they might be satisfied, and rest, and go their ways to the business of life. So ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, seeking to make one of two, and to heal the state of man.”<sup>10</sup>

The androgynous primeval men moved themselves “round and round because they resembled their parents”. It remains unclear who those parents are; perhaps one can recall the creator of the “Timaeus”, who created the world as a movable copy of the unmovable world of ideas. The primeval giants move round and round, thus copying the moved universe. The analogy is striking: They receive their perfect form from the self-moving,

<sup>9</sup> Symposium 190d-191a. Trans. Jowett.

<sup>10</sup> Symposium 191a-d. Trans. Jowett.

round heaven. The perfect form of the universe is the globe, not needing limbs. For man, these extended attributes are only necessary as long as he is not in the state of perfect, eternal, self-sufficient rest. In his eternal self-sufficiency man does not need limbs. The “animal should be as far as possible a perfect whole and of perfect parts”.<sup>11</sup> Therefore the demiurge makes “the world in the form of a globe, round as a form of a lathe, having its extremes in every direction equidistant from the centre, the most perfect and the most like itself of all figures”.<sup>12</sup> This figure shows the self-sufficiency of a perfect being, where the cosmic animal is in perfect harmony with itself and no longer needs any senses or limbs. “This he finished off, making the surface smooth all round for many reasons; in the first place, because the living being had no need of eyes when there was nothing remaining outside him to be seen; nor of ears when there was nothing to be heard; and there was no surrounding atmosphere to be breathed; nor would there have been any use of organs by the help of which he might receive his food or get rid of what he had already digested, since there was nothing which went from him or came into him: for there was nothing beside him. Of design he was created thus, his own waste providing his own food, and all that he did or suffered taking place in and by himself; for the Creator conceived that a being which was self-sufficient would be far more excellent than one which lacked anything. And, as he had no need to take anything or defend himself against anyone, the Creator did not think it necessary to bestow upon him hands: nor had he any need of feet, or of the whole apparatus of walking; but the movement suited to his spherical form as assigned to him, being of all the seven that which is most appropriate to mind and intelligence; and he was made to move in the same manner and on the same spot, within his own limit revolving in a circle. All other six motions were taken away from him, and he was made not to partake of their deviations.”<sup>13</sup>

The six fold movements of the limbs – upwards, downwards, forwards, backwards, to the right, to the left – are united in a circular, seventh movement, which perfectly and eternally returns to itself. Movement and rest coincide in the circle. For Plato, this is why the soul of the cosmos is a living globe, which represents the archetype of the perfect man. This man is not primarily a body but a mind. The cosmic man’s corporeal form is only due to his earthly and erotic presence. His mind, however, has none of these sensual and corporeal outgrowths. It recognises itself analogously to the movement of the spherical, cosmic soul, in perfect self-reliance.

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<sup>11</sup> *Timaeus*, 33a, trans. Jowett.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 33b, trans. Jowett.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 33c-34a, trans. Jowett.

### 3. WISDOM

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom” (Prov. 1:7). “Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice.” (Prov. 1:20). “Making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. 2:3-5). What, or rather who, is this Wisdom? By applying the categories from the prologue of St. John’s Gospel to the “Book of Wisdom”, the “Wisdom of Solomon”, the function of Wisdom becomes clear: It is the *logos* through which the world was created, God’s exterior, his splendour and the light in which he revealed himself. “And all such things as are hid and not foreseen, I have learned: for wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me” (Wis. 7:21), writes the author of the Book of Wisdom - and for the readers of the Vulgate, this was King Solomon, irrespective of St. Jerome’s objections.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Göttinger Pentateuch, XII, 1, *Sapientia Salomonis*. Ed. Joseph Ziegler. Göttingen 1962 (with references). *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem ad codicum fidem iussu Pauli PP. cira et studio Monachorum Abbatiae Pontificiae Sancti Hieronimi in urbe ordinis Sancti Benedicti edita*. Vol. XII. *Sapientia Salomonis. Liber Hiesu Filii Sirach*. Rome 1964. pp. XV-XVII. St. Jerome, however, follows his Jewish Hebrew teachers in rejecting the deuterocanonical books, including the Book of Wisdom. The text of this book in the Vulgate consequently does not go back to him but to an earlier African translation. Cf. Lattey, C., S. J.: *The Book of Wisdom (The Wisdom of Solomon)* in: *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*. London, Edinburgh, Melbourne, Toronto, and New York 1952, pp. 504-511. Nicolaus of Lyra, in his famous *Postilla super totam Bibliam* (Strasbourg 1492), repr. Frankfurt 1971, vol. III, fol. Qq V, 2r, writes: “*Liber sapientiae apud hebreos nusquam est. Unde et ipse stilus graecam magnam eloquentiam redolet, hunc iudei philonis esse affirmant. Quoniam perinde sapientia nominatur quae in eo corpori adventus quae etiam sapientia patris: et passio eius evidenter exprimitur.*” The thesis that this book was written by Philo is found in Jerome’s list of ecclesiastical authors. Cassiodorus attributed the authorship of the Book of Wisdom to Philo: *Institut. div. litt.* PL 70, Col. 1117 B. He refers to Jerome, who in his “*Praefatio in libros Salomonis*” PL 28, 1242-43 reported that, according to the opinion of some, Philo was the author of the Book of Wisdom. Johann Albert Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, Hamburg, 1705-28, 4. ed. 1795, vol. 3, p. 728, s.v. “*Lib. Sapientiae*” contains additional literature concerning Philo’s authorship. See Runia, David T.: *Philo in Early Christian Literature*. Van Gorcum, Minneapolis 1993, p. 31. Runia reminds us of the role that Denis Pétau SJ. (Petavius 1583-1562) played in the destruction of Philo’s position in Christianity: Pétau was “a Platonist rather than a proponent of orthodoxy, while P. Allixius (1641-1717) defended the old Eusebian tradition that eminent Jews anticipated the doctrines of Christianity.” According to Runia, Johann Albert Fabricius, in his dissertation

What is the status of wisdom according to the Vulgate? It is conceived as a hypostasis, a living spiritual being with a semi-personal character. “Solomon”, the author of the book, intended to bring “her to me to live with me; knowing that she will communicate to me her good things, and will be a comfort in my cares and grief.” (Wis. 8:29). Here something like a spiritual wedding takes place, prefiguring the soul’s unification with God. This figure of thought later allows Origen to interpret the “Song of Songs” allegorically as Christ’s wedding with his Church.

“Wisdom is more active than all active things; and reacheth every where by reason of her purity. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure Emanation of the glory of almighty God: and therefore no defiled thing cometh into her; for she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God’s majesty, and the image of his goodness.” (Wis. 7:24-27). These verses contain the most important metaphors in the literature on wisdom: breath and mirror. As God’s mirror, wisdom is his splendid periphery, making up his appearance and revelation. The mirror is the leading metaphor of speculation. What is being speculated? The unfathomable glory of God becomes visible in this mirror image. Just as even the tiniest mirror reflects the entire visible world, God’s glory becomes evident for mankind in the mirror of wisdom, which is also the wisdom of the street and the markets. The mirror of wisdom represents God’s glory to human conception. As the ensemble of God’s concepts of the world before the creation, wisdom is the plenitude of God’s thoughts. Yet she remains passive; her glory is only an adapted one. She shines in the splendour of the Lord.

This “Wisdom of Solomon” corresponds to the wisdom recognised in Plato’s “Alcibiades”, when the observing eye, elucidating the Delphian sentence “Know thyself”, sees itself in a mirror and conceives this mirror as the image of the soul: “And if the soul, dear Alcibiades, is ever to know herself, must she not look at the soul; and especially in that part of the soul where her virtue resides, which is wisdom, and at any other which is like this?”<sup>15</sup> For Socrates, this wisdom is divine insight and divine knowledge: “Then this is that part of the soul which resembles God; and he who looks at this and at the whole class of things divine, at God and at wisdom, will be most likely to know himself?”<sup>16</sup>

This adequation between wisdom and divinity that takes place in the soul. Plato perceives it as divine insight and refers to it, somewhat in

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“Exercitatio de Platonismo Philonis Judaei”, Leipzig 1693 (reprinted in “Opuscula”, Hamburg 1738), effected the change in Christian opinions on Philo. In general, this is part of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century discussion on the Platonism of the Church fathers. On the philosophical position of the Book of Wisdom, see Zeller, Eduard: *Philosophie der Griechen*, 4. ed. vol. 3,2, pp. 292-296.

<sup>15</sup> Alcibiades I, 133b. Trans. Jowett.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 133c.



passing, with the metaphor of the mirror, which is expanded theologically in the continuation of the dialogue. This continuation is transmitted only in Christian Eusebius' "Praeparatio Evangelii" and in Stobaeus, the Neoplatonist: "May we say then that, as mirrors are truer and clearer and brighter than the mirror within the eye, so also God is by his nature a clearer and brighter mirror than the most excellent part of our own soul?" "And therefore by looking at God we shall use the finest mirror of the human soul and its virtue."<sup>17</sup>

The biblical notion of wisdom as a divine mirror corresponds to Plato's divine insights, and the biblical Wisdom of Solomon also conceives of the list of (Stoic) pivotal virtues, "for she teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude" (Wis. 7:7). Moreover, she contains the plenitude of the future, for "she knoweth signs and wonders before they be done, and the events of times and ages." (Wis. 6:8).

If wisdom is seen as divine hypostasis, it is the first step of revelation, emerging immediately from the inner-divine life. Wisdom is also the primordial cause of creation, for it has the function of the creating logos: "God of my fathers, and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy word, and by thy wisdom hast built man, that he should have dominion over the creature that was made by thee." (Wis. 9:1-2). "And thy wisdom with thee, which knoweth thy works, which then also was present when thou madest the world." (Wis. 9:9). This wisdom, being a mirror of the unfathomable God, contains everything God wished to be communicated to mankind. As such, wisdom is analogous to Christology, and, to a certain extent, wisdom substitutes Christological functions. The world is preconceived in wisdom, and is created through it. This wisdom reveals the divine preconceptions of the world, and in it the power of the word becomes evident, urging the divine concepts to become real, extra-mental existences. This is expressed in the metaphor of the divine breath, as wisdom is the breath of God's power and the pure emanation of his glory (Wis. 7:26). Just as man was constituted through wisdom, just as light was created through God's working and conscious word, so wisdom is his reasonable breath, whose power permeates everything, as a strength prefigured in divine life and reappearing in the life of living beings. In the power of wisdom works the divine 'fiat'. Effecting the 'fiat', wisdom is the spirit of the world. This conception is not far removed from Plato's doctrine of the world's soul, laid out in the "Timaeus", where all movements are resolved in self-reflexive circles, where the end always touches the beginning. Biblical wisdom, however, is not self-reflexive but dynamic. It is considered to be the fulfilling power of the cosmos, God's breath. In the divine breath, God's working word is uttered from out of his trinitarian concealment. The breath,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 133c.

the air, transmits the divine sound. This sound represents the power of the 'fiat', and the semantics of the divine order in the realm outside God. It is the sound that first creates this outside space. In this divine breath, wisdom reaches "from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly." (Wis. 8:1).

#### 4. PHILO'S COSMIC ADAM

The Book of Genesis has two accounts of man's creation. The first is: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:26f.).

The second account contains Adam's creation out of dust and Eve's creation from Adam's rib: "Then the Lord God formed a man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (Gen. 2:7) "So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he formed into a woman and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'" (Gen. 2:21-23).<sup>18</sup>

Philo of Alexandria, the true founder of allegorical Biblical exegesis, drew far-reaching conclusions from these passages. He interpreted the creation in the way suggested by the Book of Wisdom: as a creation in two steps. God first plans his creation, and then carries it out in a second step. In this plan of realizing the world, Adam, the first man, plays an important role: He becomes the pattern and model of creation.

Philo identifies God's plan of the world with the divine ideas, which, for their part, have the character of numbers. Hence the account of creation is interpreted with Platonic and Pythagorean concepts: "For God, being God, assumed that a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern, and that no object of perception would be faultless which was not made in the likeness of an original discerned only by the intellect. So when He willed to create this visible world He first fully formed the intelligible world, in order that He might have use of the pattern wholly God-like and incorporeal in producing the material world, as a later creation,

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<sup>18</sup> man, Hebr. *ish*, woman Hebr. *isha*, Vulgate: *vir*, *virago*.

the very image of an earlier, to embrace in itself objects of perception of as many kinds as the other contained objects of intelligence.”<sup>19</sup>

This world of ideas does not yet need space; it is merely ideal. Yet it is in the world of archetypes that the sensual world germinates.

This ideal world's emergence is closely connected with the emergence of light. “God said ‘Let there be light’; and there was light”. This is the power of the divine ‘fiat’. Philo interprets the emergence of the ideal world as the creation of light on the first day. “Now that invisible light perceptible only by mind has come into being as an image of the Divine Word who brought it into our ken”.<sup>20</sup> For Philo, this intellectual light is a “super brilliant star”, the omni-brilliance from which all stars and all light receive their radiance. It is in the brilliance of the first light that the spiritual Adam is still shining. He was created at the end of creation, as its crown, because “man was created after the image of God and after His likeness (Gen 1:26). Right well does he (Moses) say this, for nothing earth-born is more like God than man. Let no one represent the likeness as one to a bodily form; for neither is God in human form, nor is the human body God-like.”<sup>21</sup> Man, however, is seen in the context of a relationship between God and creation, and is placed in a spiritual hierarchy: “It is in respect of the mind, the sovereign element of the soul, that the word ‘image’ (eikon) is used; for after the pattern of a single mind, even the mind of the universe as an archetype, the mind in each of those who successively came into being was moulded. It is in a fashion a god to him who carries and enshrines it as an object of reverence; for the human mind evidently occupies a position in men precisely answering to that which the great rule occupies in all the world.”<sup>22</sup>

This analogy is due to the hierarchy of the world: The logos proceeds from the deity, as the intellectual light and the spiritual power founding the cosmic world of ideas. This logos is God's first image. The unique logos is separated into the diverse archetypes of creation. The archetype of man is closest to the logos. This archetype represents the permeating *nous*, the spirit, the *archaeus*, the Philonian *hegemon* of man. This spirit will later be represented as an angel. It is invisible and perceives all things; it is incomprehensible in its essence, but it comprehends everything: “and while it opens by arts and sciences roads branching in many directions, all of them great highways, it comes through land and sea investigating what either element contains. Again, when on soaring wing it has contemplated the atmosphere and all its phases, it is borne yet higher to the ether and the

<sup>19</sup> Philo, *De creatione mundi* I, 16; On the creation. In: Philo: Works. With an English translation by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. London 1929 (Loeb Class. Lib. vol. 1).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

circuit of heaven, and is whirled round with the dances of planets and fixed stars, in accordance with the laws of perfect music, following that love of wisdom which guides its steps. And so, carrying its gaze beyond the confines of all substance discernible by sense, it comes to a point at which it reaches out after the intelligible world, and on describing in that world sights of surpassing loveliness, even the patterns and the originals of the things of sense which it saw here, it is seized by a sober intoxication, like those filled with Corybantic frenzy, and is inspired, possessed by a longing far other than theirs and nobler desire. Wafted by this to the topmost arch of the things perceptible to mind, it seems to be on its way to the Great King Himself; but, amid its longing to see Him, pure and untempered rays of concentrated light stream forth like a torrent, so that by its gleams the eye of the understanding is dazzled.”<sup>23</sup> This is the apotheosis of the spiritual man, who walks through the cosmos and finds himself in his “image”. It is an allegory showing the divine permeation of all cosmic spheres.

This mystical Platonic allegory elucidates the passage in the book of Genesis describing the creation of man after God’s image. The primordial spiritual man appears in a twofold function that he shares with the divine Sophia and the divine logos: The dynamics of becoming a human being can be repeated reciprocally as a mystic ascent through the spheres. Thus he participates in all spheres, but, as a paradigm and archetype of man, he is as the spiritual Adam, also the imprinting form of spiritual man.

The corporeal Adam, however, who was made from dust and whose wife was formed from his rib, is composed of bodily and spiritual parts. His body partakes of the earthly elements, he consists of body and soul, is a man or a woman, and is mortal. The spiritual Adam, on the other hand, “he that was after the image was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible.”<sup>24</sup> In opposition to this pure, spiritual, supra-individual, androgynous Adam, the individual Adam is composed of soul and body. His body has emerged, though Philo does not say from where. His soul, however, partakes of the eternal Father and Ruler of all: “For that which He breathed in was nothing else than a Divine breath that migrated hither from that blissful and happy existence for the benefit of our race, to that end that, even if it is mortal in respects of its visible part, it may be in respect of the part which is invisible be rendered immortal”.<sup>25</sup>

In this respect earthly man, for Philo, is a mixed being of body and spirit; but even as such, the first individual Adam is the most perfect creation both in body and soul, for he came immediately from God. How does he differ from cosmic Adam? Whereas cosmic Adam has the character of a

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 69-71.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 134.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 135.

speculative emanation and of a hypostatic wisdom, earthly Adam is created by the hand of God. As this immediate creation, he is "a born ruler and master"<sup>26</sup> of all beings, and, before his fall, he named all things, thanks to divine grace. In the process of naming, Adam had insight into the inner essence of things. His names denote the signatures of the things, and indicate the archetypes of creation before they were called into extra-mental existence. Their power can be evoked again by the Adamic names. "For the native reasoning power of the soul being still unalloyed, and no infirmity or disease or evil affection having intruded itself, he received the impressions made by bodies and objects in their sheer reality, and the titles he gave were fully apposite, for right well did he divine the character of the creatures he was describing, with the result that their natures were apprehended as soon as their names were uttered."<sup>27</sup>

This earthly Adam, the one who recognises and names the things the heavenly Adam saw on his mystic journey, also carries God's ideas in his soul. He has no insight into the deity, except the acknowledgement of his existence.<sup>28</sup> This Adam is twofold: In his spiritual nature, in his soul, he is the image of the heavenly Adam and hence also the image of God. His soul is also twofold: In its spiritual aspect, it is the image of the divine Adam and of his primordial world. In its rational aspect, characterised by its linguistic capacity,<sup>29</sup> it communicates the ideas to earthly consciousness. The senses are the image of the rational soul, whereas the passions are animalistic in nature.

Eve, built from Adam's rib, is conceived as representing sensual nature. For Philo the story of Eve's formation means nothing but the creation of an active sensibility. Eve's creation represents the lowest, sensible aspect of cosmic harmony. Her submission under Adam's male rationality, and her proximity to the affective sensibility, constitute her indulgent nature. For this reason she can be seduced by the snake.<sup>30</sup>

This cosmic interpretation will fix the image of 'woman' for a long time. The easily seducible Philonic Eve, however, receives her mighty cosmic counterpart in the apocalyptic woman of St John's Revelation, the Apocalyptic Madonna trampling the dragon's head.

Philo's cosmic Adam is situated in a world of spheres. From the unfathomable God emanates eternal light; this light is the cosmic first Adam, the *nous*, from which man's soul, with its rationality and sensibility, derives. The soul of man is the soul of the human race. It is individualised in a body,

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 150.

<sup>28</sup> See Philo: *Quod deus immutabilis est*, XIII, 62, Philo, *Opp* II. New York 1930. See ch. III, 2.

<sup>29</sup> See *Allegorical Interpretation* II, 23, Philo *Opp*. I.

<sup>30</sup> *De creatione mundi*, 165ff.

where sensibility and passion become apparent. The Adamic man, even after his fall, partakes of all spheres, from the body up through the logos in the vicinity of God. This dynamic participation in all parts of the cosmos makes spiritual man a representative of the whole cosmos.

## 5. THE APOCALYPTIC KOSMOKRATOR

The creator of the world is also its ruler; he is the Lord of the cosmos, which is permeated by his might. He is the Kosmokrator.

The first vision of St. John's Revelation shows the Kosmokrator as the Son of Man. The image of cosmological man, in whom the world has been created, also appears as the archetype of the resurrected Christ. In St. John's Revelation, not only does cosmic Christology become visible in all creation, but the Kosmokrator is also the appearance of God's glory in the last days. The Kosmokrator, who has the attributes of Christ, is called 'Son of Man' and is situated between seven candelabra representing the seven planets. When the apocalyptic visionary hears a loud voice, he turns his head and acknowledges the Kosmokrator among the seven lights, among the Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn.

"Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a Son of Man." This cosmic Son of Man resembles a mountain, and brings to mind the cosmic visions of Ezekiel's throne-chariot and of Daniel's Apocalypse. "He was clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of many waters". His reign over the cosmos becomes evident, as he holds seven stars in his hand, representing the Great Bear, and he judges with the sword of his word. His face shines as the face of the coming king. "In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining at full strength." (Rev. 1:14).

The power of the Lord overwhelms the seer, and the Son of Man reveals himself with the predicates of God: He is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega. He presents himself in the threefold appearance of time, as the one who is, who was, and who will be. He appears as the cosmic, but also as the having-died and resurrected Christ: "When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades'." (Rev. 1:18).

The ancient imagery of cosmic anthropology is not uniform; many motifs of eminent symbolic power interact. Thanks to this variety of powerful images, cosmic anthropology remained one of the most vivid traditions in perennial philosophy. The images can be integrated with the logos theology of the prologue to St. John's Gospel. The images, metaphors, and topoi of cosmic anthropology were transmitted in the framework of this theology. In the Johannine framework, the theology of the creating word (Gen. 1) and the figure of Solomon's wisdom are the most important elements. In general, a set of five archetypes found the ancient imagery of cosmic anthropology: *the Platonic myths, the world's soul, speculative wisdom, the Philonic conception of a cosmic and an earthly Adam, and the apocalyptic Kosmokrator*.

## 6. THE INNER MAN AND THE AIM OF CREATION: GREGORY OF NYSSA'S (CA. 330-395) "ORATIO DE OPIFICIO HOMINIS"

Gregory of Nyssa's sermon "De opificio hominis"<sup>31</sup> (if he was indeed the author) is a prime example of Christian anthropology. Its importance is fourfold:

- a. It sets up an anthropological doctrine of freedom.
- b. It works out the distinction between inner and outer man.
- c. It describes man as an imperfect being, who overcompensates for his imperfection with language, and thereby asserts his dominion over nature.
- d. It places man above the cosmos and surpasses the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm.

Even if the subject seems spiritual, this sermon belongs within the framework of cosmic anthropology. The point of this sermon is that cosmic anthropology turns out to be natural, and culminates in the twofold nature of

<sup>31</sup> On Gregory's anthropology see: Balthasar, Urs von: *Der versiegelte Quell*. Salzburg, Leipzig 1939. *Présence et Pensée. Essay sur la philosophie religieuse Grégoire de Nysse*. Paris 1988. Daniélou, Jean: *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique. Essai sur la Doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*. Paris 1944, esp. pp. 52-65. Völker, Walther: *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*. Wiesbaden 1955, pp. 57-74. Escibano-Alberica, Ignacio: *Die spätantike Entdeckung des inneren Menschen und deren Integration durch Gregor*. In: *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie. Zweites internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa*. Ed. Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Altenburger, Uta Schramm. Leiden 1976. Grégorios, Paulos M.: *The Theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa*. New York 1988. Alberto Siclari: *L'antropologia teologica di Gregorio di Nissa*. Parma 1989. There are good reasons to doubt Gregory's authorship of the "Oratio". When I refer to "Gregory" in this chapter I mean the uncertain author of this piece.

man, in his inner and outer being. Its imagery and concepts were further developed in the course of its reception, especially in John Scotus Eriugena and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. This sermon became a key text of the theology of creation, of cosmology, and of humanistic anthropology.

a) The Apotheosis of Human Freedom

The sermon proceeds from an anthropological concept of the cosmos common in the Hellenistic age, especially in the Stoa, and which Philo presupposed in his exegesis of the book of Genesis. However, Gregory did not completely accept Philo's concept of the cosmic Adam, and he did not proceed from a primordial world of thought as the origin of the world.<sup>32</sup> He rather sees the world of creation as immediately created through the divine word. The first function of this word is to transmit the command of divine power. The second function is the first recognition of essence, and is realised in the creation of man. Only man has the particular distinction of being created according to a divine plan. "It is really remarkable that the perfect cosmos, as it exists here, and that all parts of cosmic order are only made and ordered by the divine might. But before the creation of man a plan was made, and man was 'pre-printed' by the creator in his word and image. Thus he should become truly similar to his archetype, after which he should be formed, which should work in him and rule him. The logos foresees all, since it is older than the becoming, and it rules the future."<sup>33</sup> This concept of the creation of man divides the entire process of creation into the creation before man and the creation of man himself. The creation before man only emerges through the commanding power of the logos. The logos is interpreted as a creator of essences, and here Gregory does not distinguish between the conceiving and the commanding logos. The world comes into existence at the moment of the command: "said and there was". This principle is different for the creation of man, which is premeditated.

Gregory's exegesis is different from Philo's, because the former does not regard cosmic Adam as an archetype of the entire creation. Only man is created after a deliberate plan of divine reason. The creation of man on the sixth day presupposes the existence of an external nature. The archetype of man is, then, conceived on the foundation of external nature. Here Gregory follows Philo's model. Genesis 1:26 lays out his position: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth". The creation of the first five days prepared the conditions for man. It is on this basis that Gregory reveals the regal distinction between animals

<sup>32</sup> See Zemp, Paul: *Die Grundlagen des heilsgeschichtlichen Denkens bei Gregor von Nyssa*. Munich 1970, pp. 49-52.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory: *De hominis opificio*, Ch. III, PG 44, col. 133c.



and man, i.e. freedom. Since he is made up of the form of his archetype and worldly matter, man possesses in his soul the capacity for freedom. “Concerning the soul, its royal dignity and autonomy (*autotes*) is obvious in the separation from the lower parts of man. Being independent from them, the soul is free will (*autexousion*), like the authority of an absolute ruler (*autokrator*). What else is freedom if not kingship? Moreover, being created after the image of the One who has the power of the universe means nothing else but that man, since the time of his creation, has a royal nature.”<sup>34</sup> This is an understanding of freedom based on the freedom of the Almighty. As revelation was foreshadowed in the archetype of the Kosmokrator, and as Duns Scot would later characterise God’s freedom, it is the freedom of the *potentia absoluta*.<sup>35</sup>

Freedom is the crucial point of man’s likeness to God; this freedom is the hallmark of mankind. In Gregory’s conception of human freedom, the future consequences of man’s dominion over creation are not yet clear. Not until later does Gregory engage with the questions of how the freedom of mankind can coexist with God’s preconception of man or how the freedom of the human race relates to the guilt of an individual person. The preacher of man’s freedom is carried away by his own pious pathos. Human freedom and interiority are the actual innovations of this sermon; from them the edifying Christian cosmology derives. In the image of God - in man - spirit and language can be found. Both mirror divine nature; they are the logos of St. John’s Gospel and thus the “spirit which speaks in us”<sup>36</sup>, which is love, hearing, and seeing, for “the divine being sees everything, hears everything, permeates everything. You, too, perceive by hearing and seeing, and your thinking allows you to investigate the reason of all things”.<sup>37</sup>

#### b) Inner and Outer Man

Man was created after light, heaven, the earth, the sea, and the animals, and he shares in their nature. However, the archetype of man has a regal distinction: He is the image, and as such he is more than just the realization of the commanding word.

This image divides man. Outwardly, he is animalistic, sensual and therefore sexual. The “image”, however, is God’s deliberate conception, which makes up the inner nature of man. This image, like the angels, has no gender.<sup>38</sup> Gregory described this idea of inner man in his sixth sermon “On beatitude”. The sixth beatitude is: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they

<sup>34</sup> PG 44, col 136c.

<sup>35</sup> See Duns Scotus: *Ordinatio* I qu. 44.

<sup>36</sup> See Gregory: *Catechesis maior*, ch. 1.2.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory: *De hominis opificio*, ch. III, PG 44, col. 137c.

<sup>38</sup> See Gregory: *De hominis opificio*, ch. XVII. For the subsequent fate of this motif, esp. in Leone Hebreo, see Ernst Benz: *Adam. Der Mythos vom Urmenschen*. Munich 1955.

shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). This act of seeing God is conceived as the contemplation of inner man. This insight shows man to be in God’s image, thereby revealing the reign of the Lord, as St. Luke wrote, “God’s reign is inside you”. (Luke 17:21). God’s image, in which man was created, foreshadows the vision of God in eternal bliss. God planted goodness in the nature of man, whom he created after his own image. Gregory depicts inner man as a mirror of God’s predicates, which become resplendent in a pious life: “Just as iron when it is covered with dirt, seems to be black, but after being cleaned shines in the sun and reflects its rays, so the inner man, whom our Lord Jesus calls ‘heart’, after having cleaned himself from the dirt, which has been accumulated in his sickness, can finally reach his similitude with the archetype.”<sup>39</sup>

Inner man emerges along with the image; this is man as he should be. In the inner man the human being becomes conscious of his divine origin, recognises his goal and his essence, after which he must strive; it is in inner man where he finds his goal.<sup>40</sup> Conversion, salvation, and grace occur in inner man. Only through inner man does creation become conscious of itself. The existence of inner man is the prerequisite for the recognition of meaning, for only the one who knows that creation strives after its creator as its origin and goal can understand its development and the unfolding of the world as representing God’s glory.

But it is not only the edifying recognition of the world that depends on the ‘inner man’; Gregory especially strives for the conversion from the outer world to the inner one. For him, the inner world has a monopoly on meaning, and is the precondition for a pious conversion to the origin of everything, the Word.

### c) Imperfect Being

Gregory’s sermon on the creation of man contains the central anthropological topos of man as imperfect being. This doctrine remained influential until the modern foundation of anthropology in Johann Gottfried Herder’s essay on the origin of language (1763) and was reintroduced more

<sup>39</sup> Gregory: *De Beatitudinibus*. Oratio VI. PG 44, col. 1272A: “Hosper epi tu sideru .... agathos estai” In the sermon on the origin of man, which is attributed to Gregory or his brother Basil, the separation of inward and outward man is described like this: “I discern two men, a visible and an invisible one who is concealed behind the visible one. As men we are twofold, but truly we are only inward. We are only ‘I’ because of our inner man. The outward is not ‘I’ but ‘my’. So the hand is no ‘I’, but the ‘I’ is the logikon, the rational principle of the soul.” Basil of Caesarea: *Sur l’origine de l’homme*. Sources Chrétiennes 160, p. 182, 264B.

<sup>40</sup> On the context: Meyer, Hans: *Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften von der Stoa bis zum Ausgang der Patristik*. Bonn 1914. He begins with the Stoa, proceeds to Plotinus and the Church Fathers Justinus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Gregory of Nyssa is treated pp. 108-122. The largest part is devoted to Augustine, pp. 122-224.

recently in Arnold Gehlen's "Der Mensch" (1940). Since the cosmic constitution of man, who is God's image, is found in his faculties of reason and speech, and since language also depends on the senses, these human capacities must be related to the post-lapsarian earthly status in which he lives. This post-lapsarian situation of man coincides with the Stoic notion of the natural poverty of mankind. It contradicts, however, the biblical concept of man as God's image. But natural poverty can be interpreted as a consequence of the original fall of mankind. The sermon "On the Creation of Man," provides for the first time, as far as I can see, an answer to the dilemma of the natural poverty of man and his claim to be God's image. It lies in the thesis that it is language and its logic that compensate – even overcompensate – for the weakness caused by original sin. This is the theological background to the theory of compensation and sublimation. Man's weakness makes him able to receive the Spirit who helps him in his weakness (Rom. 8:26), for weakness is the ability to be formed. This is what makes man able to receive and to develop his spirit and his language.

Gregory answered the question of why man lacks natural tools and weapons this way (ch. VIII): "It is true, he is not gifted with sharp horns or acute claws". He is not armed with the tools wild animals possess; nature does not clad him in fur. Nevertheless, he is the one "who is appointed to be the ruler of the world."<sup>41</sup> Although nature should have given him appropriate weapons, he remains unarmed. Why? "My answer consists of a statement which can easily be proved. It is our indulgent nature which gives us power over our subjects."<sup>42</sup> Gregory goes on to explain that in the animals possessing but one specific faculty, other abilities remain undeveloped, while man serves himself by means of the specific faculties of the animals because he rules over them, following the will and image of his creator. And this rulership is executed by language.

For the bishop of Nyssa, language is the working word. This word, the *logos*, comes from above, from the divine spheres. Gregory bolsters his thesis of rulership through language anthropologically: Thanks to his upright walk, man's vision became free of the ground and was directed upwards. Upright walking also set man's hands free for new achievements.<sup>43</sup>

Here the author introduces *en passant* a theory of the invention of writing. Unburdened hands are the precondition of Scripture. Man is able to conserve his thoughts and speech through writing; his hands enable him to write down words in fine and meaningful characters. "You must remember

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<sup>41</sup> PG 44, 141A.

<sup>42</sup> PG 44, 141B.

<sup>43</sup> PG 44, 144B. This idea that upright walk is the condition of language is also found in Johann Gottfried Herder: *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechtes* (1770), Werke 7, ed. Bernhard Suphan, Berlin 1884, p. 74.

the advantage that what has been written down is to your disposition in memory and speech.”<sup>44</sup>

Because of his upright walk, man is disposed to perceive and receive the spirit. This disposition enables him to be rational. In answer to the question as to why man was created last, Gregory gives an interpretation that is both literary and allegorical. The creator saw that plants were indispensable for animals and animals indispensable for man. Therefore he created plants before animals, and animals before man so that they could be of use to him. “But it seems to me”, Gregory continues, “that Moses concealed his meaning here; ... he wants to teach us a philosophy of the soul.”<sup>45</sup> This philosophy of the soul is founded on the divine breath, which brought corporeal Adam to life. This theory of the soul, although corresponding to Stoic doctrine, transcends philosophy and becomes spiritual. The meaning of the Scripture, which Gregory explains allegorically, implies a threefold psychology:

1. *Physis*, the life of the plants;
2. *Psyche*, the life of animal nature;
3. *Nous*, the spirit.<sup>46</sup>

Human nature has a nutritive, a sensual, and a rational faculty, and thus partakes of the spirit. Unlike animals, man, thanks to the gift of language, is able to participate in the *nous*. For Gregory, the *nous* rests in itself and can only be acknowledged because it has an “intelligible and incorporeal nature”<sup>47</sup>. The *nous* can be communicated to mankind if it is witnessed corporeally and is formed into words. The human body’s instruments of speech are the conditions of this movement of the *nous*, and the spirit uses them like a musician uses his instrument. The spirit makes use of human voices in order to communicate the meaning of the *nous* in the spoken word. Here the twofold meaning of the word becomes clear. For man, words partake of the *nous*, and it was God’s word that called things into being. Man partakes of both meanings, due to their communication through the divine spirit. He has insight into the essence of the world and he rules it through his language.

#### d) Microcosm and God’s Image

If one takes seriously the biblical conception of man being God’s image, as Gregory of course does, then the correlation of macrocosm and microcosm must be reconsidered. The conception of the relationship between man and macrocosm in the Platonic myths of the androgynous giants and circular cosmic soul was only a natural attempt at explication. These were not theological concepts in a Christian sense. The theology of

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<sup>44</sup> PG 44, 144C.

<sup>45</sup> PG 44, 144D.

<sup>46</sup> PG 44, 145C.

<sup>47</sup> PG 44, 149 B.

logos, the imagery of Sapiaientia and her mirror, made man a reflection of God's first externalisation, be it in the word or in the mirror. It was always the spiritual archetype, the spiritual cosmos, that corresponded to man. Even St. John's Christology gave a threefold explanation for the cosmic logos: an inner-trinitarian one, a cosmologically created logos, and one individualised in Christ's earthly existence. Gregory disputes this entire set of arguments in his sermon "De opificio hominis".

In order to launch an attack on the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm, Gregory has to despiritualise the macrocosm. This suits his doctrine of creation very well, because he had conceived the first days of God's creation as immediately issuing from the divine word rather than following a primordial, hypostatic plan of wisdom. Therefore man's distinction from the cosmos is justified by the idea that it was only man who was created after God's image. "The fancy theories of the outer philosophers are unsuitable to man's greatness", writes Gregory. "They think that they glorify him when they say that man is a microcosm, composed of the same elements as the universe. They think that they compliment him greatly with this boastful name. But it escapes them that in their attempt to praise man, they use arguments which are also valid for flies and mosquitoes."<sup>48</sup>

For the bishop of Nyssa, there is a crucial difference between the concept of man as a microcosm and man as the image of God. Man as God's image includes, for Gregory, that he is the image of the highest good and of God's freedom. This concept of image does not use trinitarian or Christological ideas. It instead takes a divine attribute, God's goodness, and describes it as being supra-cosmic. Gregory does not try to identify God's essence with this predication. What he does identify is the realm of absolute morality, which is beyond the cosmos and independent of the outside world. "From his nature God encompasses all good that can be thought, or He surpasses everything that can be considered as good. And it is exactly because of this goodness that He created human life. This goodness that drove Him to create human nature, did not admit imperfection in the manifestation of His grace. He made sure that He did not only communicate to man this or that good that was part of His goodness. He did not share any imperfections, and therefore He acted according to the perfection of His goodness: He called man from nothing and provided him with the goods He had created for him."<sup>49</sup>

This plenitude of goods with which man is provided is immense, but the greatest of them is man's freedom. This freedom is manifest in opinions and judgements, but it is essentially the freedom grounding all virtue. Only free actions can be virtuous, thus spontaneity and practical reason coincide. "Among all goods it is freedom that distinguishes us amidst the entire

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<sup>48</sup> PG 44, 177D.

<sup>49</sup> PG 44, 184D.

creation. We are not under a natural yoke, but we are independent in our judgements and opinions. For virtue does not have a master; it is spontaneous, and the results of pressure and power cannot be virtues.”<sup>50</sup>

By his faculty of goodness, and by the freedom that constitutes its summit, man is distinguished as God’s image. For Gregory, man is not just a citizen of two worlds because of his corporeal and spiritual nature. The inner man who strives after the good is found in his spiritual nature. This spiritual nature is first natural and theoretical reason. Second, it is the inner man who has chosen to follow God’s image through freedom and virtue. Gregory’s sermon makes clear the distinction between the inner reigns of reason and of freedom.

## 7. ERIUGENA’S († c. 870) ANGEL

The Neoplatonic tradition of Christianity was heavily concentrated in the remarkable figure of the Scotsman John Eriugena, philosopher at the court of Charles the Bald (823-877). With his translation of Dionysius the Areopagite he made negative and mystic theology accessible to the Western world. His chief work, “*De divisione naturae*”, laid a long-lasting foundation for theological speculations on nature. Through Eriugena, the Neoplatonic doctrines remained vibrant in the West<sup>51</sup> before they reached the Occident from another path, the doctrines of the pseudepigraphical “*Liber de causis*”.

Eriugena gave a short formulation, unsurpassable for its genius, of all history, history as such, by defining four periods:

1<sup>st</sup> period: *creans, non creatum*: the divine creator.

2<sup>nd</sup> period: *creans creatum*: the epoch of the primordial creation, the epoch of divine wisdom.

3<sup>rd</sup> period: *creatum non creans*: the epoch of the created external world.

4<sup>th</sup> period: *non creans, non creatum*: the state of the world after its return to the womb of celestial eternity.

The point of this model is that it solves the question of the relationship between eternity and the world’s creation, as all being is described as a process.

<sup>50</sup> PG 44, 185B.

<sup>51</sup> See Mario dal Pra: *Scoto Eriugena et il neoplatonismo medievale*. Milan 1941. Gersh, Stephen E: *From Jamblichus to Eriugena*. Leiden 1978. Jeauneau, Edouard, *Études Érigènes*. Paris 1987. Morgan, Dermond: *The Philosophy of John Scotus Eriugena*. Cambridge 1989. Beierwaltes, Werner: *Eriugena. Grundzüge seines Denkens*. Frankfurt 1994.

On the question of cosmic anthropology, the second period of Eriugena's history is the most interesting one. Here the genealogy of the doctrine of wisdom, the theology of logos, Christology, and the typology of the double Adam, are united. Eriugena presents wisdom in her hypostatical independence. She has a double face, showing herself as divine logos and as human knowledge: "Just as the creative Wisdom, God's Word, saw everything that was created through Her before it became real, and just as the divine wisdom is the contemplation of what is acknowledged before it becomes real, so the created wisdom, i.e. human nature, recognised everything that was created in it, before it became real. And the recognition of what was acknowledged before it became real is itself a true and unmovable essence."<sup>52</sup>

Here, as is typical for wisdom literature, Christology, the doctrine of wisdom, and anthropology are mixed together. The word of creation, corresponding to the inner-trinitarian logos, is one part of the one wisdom, which has its human side, accommodating itself to mankind's abilities of participation. Man recognises the unchangeable essence of the word by which he was created. In this participation, for Eriugena, man is a microcosm, and he permeates the world: "He has created every visible and invisible nature in man, for in him the natural reason of the universe is acknowledged".<sup>53</sup> This cosmic creating man can neither be distinguished from the wisdom of the creating word, from Sophia, nor from Christ the logos. The hypostasis can be found again in the inner man: "Christ was in paradise and at the same time in the world in order to show that paradise and the world have a natural reason which unites in itself paradise and the world." Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, and Philo conceive this cosmic Christology of wisdom to be asexual.<sup>54</sup> This is true for Eriugena as well. Original man "owns wisdom, science, reason, and the other virtues by which the soul is adorned, and which express its similarity to the creator."<sup>55</sup> For him, unisex angelic man is the one in whom the whole of mankind "was created and of whom was written: Let us make man in Our image, after Our

<sup>52</sup> PL 122, col. 778: "Ut enim sapientia creatrix, quod est Verbum Dei, omnia, quae in ea facta sunt, priusquam fierent, vidit, ipsaque visio eorum, quae priusquam fierent, visa sunt, vera et incommutabilis, aeternaque essentia est, ita creata sapientia, quae est humana natura, omnia, quae in se facta sunt, priusquam fierent, cognovit, ipsaque cognitio eorum, quae, priusquam fierent, cognita sunt, vera essentia et inconcussa est."

<sup>53</sup> PL 122, col. 763B: "Omnem quidem creaturarum visibilem et invisibilem in homine fecit, quoniam ipsi universitatis conditae naturae inesse intelligitur."

<sup>54</sup> See Gregory of Nyssa: *De opificio hominis*, ch. 17. "It is evident that life before the fall was in a certain way angelic, and consequently our coming life will be angelic to. As it is said that angels do not marry and their forces are nonetheless infinite myriads ... we also have no necessity to multiply ourselves." Jeanneau, Ed. *Étude Érigènes*, Paris 1987, pp. 341-364; *La division des sexes chez Grégoire de Nysse et chez Jean Scot Érigène*.

<sup>55</sup> PL 122, 799A.

likeness, and in whom we are all sinners.”<sup>56</sup> With sin man loses his nature as an angel and becomes sexual. Before sin, this man represented the entire race, and all men are expelled from paradise with him. Furthermore, if man had not sinned, he would not have suffered the fate of a twofold sexuality. This is Eriugena’s version of Plato’s myth of the “Symposium”, via Philo’s interpretation.<sup>57</sup> For Eriugena, post-lapsarian sexual persons do not partake of the divine image and likeness, because the image cannot be found in the state of sin. Original human nature, however, will be restored in the last period of the world, when its present sexual state will end. As does Philo, Eriugena holds the view that women represent the sensible world (*aistesis*) and that men partake of the intellect (*nous*): “It is correct that Greek nous is understood to be the image of a man and *aistesis* to be the image of a woman, whence some have interpreted Adam as the earthly nous.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus is completed the field of Christian Neoplatonic images and concepts: Christ the logos is God’s externalisation into his wisdom, which bears all knowledge and brings it into standing and essence. The knowledge of wisdom is identified as *nous*, having the character of an angel, a spirit without a body. In the creation, this asexual angel is the original Adam who became double-sexed through his fall, and embodies, as the earthly Adam, the *nous*, as the earthly Eve, the *aisthesis*.

## 8. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN’S (1098-1179) *CARITAS*

The most erudite woman of the Middle Ages, Hildegard of Bingen is also the most impressive seer of cosmogonic images. In the divine *nous*, the divine *caritas*, and the apocalyptic Madonna,<sup>59</sup> she illustrated her cosmology and eschatology. These visions present the account of the creation as it had been interpreted by Eriugena and his compiler Honorius Augustodunensis,<sup>60</sup> in images of the “simple man” who possesses all the attributes provided by the speculative theology of the logos and its philosophical interpretation. It is worth recalling this vision: “I saw how appeared a beautiful and beatific image in the opposite air.”<sup>61</sup> It had a human form, and its countenance was of such beauty and radiance that it was harder to gaze into it than into the sun.

<sup>56</sup> PL 122, 799A.

<sup>57</sup> See above IV, 4, Philo’s Cosmic Adam.

<sup>58</sup> PL 122, 815.

<sup>59</sup> Scivias, Lib. 2, visio 3, PL 197, pp. 453ff.

<sup>60</sup> See Gersh, Stephen: Honorius Augustodunensis and Eriugena. Remarks on the Method and Content of the *Clavis Physicae* in: Eriugena Redivivus. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Ed. Werner Beierwaltes. Heidelberg 1985. See also Sturlese, Loris: Storia della filosofia Tedesca nel medioevo. Dagli inizi alla fine del XII secolo. Florence 1990, pp. 91-111.

<sup>61</sup> This is *aer tenuis*, ether.



A broad golden ring encircled its head. In this ring above the head there appeared a second countenance like that of an elderly man, its chin and beard resting on the crown of the first head. On both sides of the figure a wing grew out of the shoulders. The wings rose above the above-mentioned ring and were joined there. At the topmost part of the right wing's curve appeared an eagle's head. Its eyes were like fire, and in them the brilliance of angels streamed forth as in a mirror. On the topmost part of the left wing's curve was a human head, which shone like the gleaming of the stars. Both faces were turned toward the east. From the shoulders of the figure a wing extended to its knees. The figure was wrapped in a garment that shone like the sun. Its hands carried a lamb, which shone like a brilliant day. The figure's feet trod upon a monster of dreadful appearance, poisonous and black, and a serpent which has fastened its teeth onto the monster's right ear. Its body was wound obliquely across the monster's head; its tail extended on the left side as far as the feet."<sup>62</sup> (*Figure 1*)

The vision explains its own meaning as follows: "I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every spark of life, and I emit nothing that is deadly. I decide on all reality. With my lofty wings I fly above the globe: with wisdom I have rightly put the universe in order."<sup>63</sup>

Here theological speculations on God's externalisation are joined with the attributes of wisdom. As God's first expression, his living power of fire, wisdom judges everything according to measure, number, and weight. It is the light which describes itself as "*ignea vita substantiae divinitatis*" above beauty, and which illuminates the sun, moon, and stars. The living light of the word, the light of wisdom's human form, reveals itself as the power of becoming and as the essence of being. This vision turns out to be the divine reason inhabiting all things as well: "I am also Reason, which bears within itself the breath of the resounding Word, through which the whole of creation was made. I breathe life into everything so that nothing is mortal in respect to its species. For I am life. I am life, whole and entire (*vita integra*) - not struck from stones, not blooming out of twigs, not rooted in a man's power to beget children. Rather all life has its roots in me. Reason is the root, the resounding Word blooms out of me. Since God is the reason, how could it be that God, who causes all divine actions to come to fruition

<sup>62</sup> Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works with Letters and Songs. Ed. and introduced by Matthew Fox. Santa Fe 1987. See Lib. Div. Operum PL 197, 741C-743B. See the excellent essay by Meier, Christel: *Scientia Divinorum operum. Zu Hildegards von Bingen visionär-künstlerischer Rezeption Eriugenas*. In: *Eriugena Redivivus. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und im Übergang zur Neuzeit*. Ed. Werner Beierwaltes. Heidelberg 1987, pp. 89-141. See also Dronke, Peter: Hildegard of Bingen as Poetess and Dramatist, in: *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages*. London <sup>2</sup>1986. pp. 150-192.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. PL 197, 743B,C.

through human beings, is not active? God created everything in the divine image and likeness, and marked each creature after its measure in man.”<sup>64</sup>



*Figure 1. Hildegard of Bingen's Caritas*

The vision of cosmic man can be connected to biblical motifs and images. These images show the irreducible semantics of Hildegard's visions.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 10 (with alterations), PL 197, 743D, 744A.

At the core of the visions is the symbolism of light, beyond which there is the elementary relationship between the Father and his first creation. This first creation is the angelic figure. It has the character of breath, which carries the sound and the semantic power of the divine command on its wings. As winged words they overcome distance with sound. The wings of sound appear in two figures.

First it is the originator of light, which has the attributes of the resplendent Kosmokrator of St. John's Revelation. He is winged in Hildegard's vision and his commands have a twofold quality, symbolically represented by the head of an eagle and the face of a man. The eagle's head, symbol of the evangelist John, who begins his Gospel with the creating logos, represents the word of creation – "Said and there was" – God's first revelation in the light of his first creation. The man's face, symbol of the evangelist Matthew, who begins his Gospel with Christ's genealogy, symbolises the second revelation, Christ's descent to earth. Here Christ does not represent God's power, but His presence among mankind. Both heads look east, to the dawn of light and to the coming revelation of God's majesty.

The second figure in Hildegard's vision is angelic wisdom, living from God's fire and light. Its wings reach down to its knees, as symbols of God's might, which reaches to the lower parts of the world. On the ground lies the fallen angel, evil, the serpent, as it appears in paradise, entwined with the monster. This monster, formless black nothingness, is *hyle*, unformed matter. Divine wisdom reaches almost to evil and to matter, but does not join with them, therefore the wings of the figure only go as far as the knees. Moreover, angelic wisdom carries the apocalyptic lamb, an attribute of the angel's double representation of both wisdom and the Christological logos. Divine wisdom, in which everything finds its standing and its essence, holds the lamb as a symbol of Christ's earthly existence. The sacrificed lamb, which takes away the sins of the world, is also the sign of God's reign after his second coming.

This angelic cosmic wisdom represents the archetype of man before his fall. It is for him that God prepared a dwelling in heaven. The angelic cosmic wisdom has the suspended identity of typological thinking. It can only be decided based on whether it is Christ, Wisdom or the cosmic man Adam before his fall. The dwelling, which became empty after the fall of the angels, is prepared for this first, asexual Adam. The angels, in their freedom, could not stand man's likeness to God, and, therefore rose up against their Lord.<sup>65</sup> Hildegard explains this in her vision: "God, who created everything,

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Gregory of Nyssa: Great Catechesis, 6, 9, PG 45, 28A: "The power (which was set over the world) had a tendency to evil. It reversed itself from good to envy. Like a stone separated from the summit of a mountain, it was carried by its own weight. Loosed from

has formed humanity according to the divine image and likeness, and marked in human beings both the higher and the lower creatures. God loved humanity so much that he designated for it the place from which the fallen angel was ejected, intending for human beings all the splendour and honor which that angel lost along with his bliss. The countenance you are gazing at is an indication of this fact. For that you see as a marvelously beautiful figure in God's mystery and in the midst of southern breezes - a figure similar to a human being - signifies the Love of our heavenly Father. It is Love - in the power of the everlasting Godhead, full of exquisite beauty, marvelous in its mysterious gifts. Love appears in a human form because God's Son, when he put on flesh, redeemed our lost humanity in the service of Love. On this account the countenance is of such beauty and splendour that you can more easily gaze at the sun than at it. For the abundance of Love gleams and shines in the sublime lightning flash of its gifts in such a way that it surpasses every understanding by which we can otherwise know in our soul the most varied things."<sup>66</sup>

## 9. EXEMPLA HUMANITATIS: ALAIN DE LILLE'S (1116-1203) "ANTICLAUDIANUS"

Hildegard of Bingen follows in the unbroken tradition of Gregory and Eriugena. When Alain de Lille wrote his "Anticlaudian De officio viri boni et perfecti libri novem", he must have already been aware that the nominalistic school of Peter Abelard had produced its first results. From the standpoint of nominalism, philosophy was no longer interpreted according to the theology of creation, but in a modern and critical way, abiding by the limits of the Aristotelian theory of knowledge. Now the aim of philosophy was no longer the reconstruction of creation by means of pious fantasy, instead the question of the very possibility of knowledge about creation was becoming central. Alain, however, played the old-fashioned card of

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its relationship to the good, declining to evil, it was drawn as if by a weight to the extreme border of wickedness. It set its intellect, which it was given by the creator to participate in the work and the cognition of good, into the service of wicked goals; it seduced man by tricky deceptions and convinced him to become his own hangman and murderer. Man, however, had received a high status by the benefits God had provided him with. He was to rule the world and everything in it. His figure was beautiful, for he was a copy of the archetype's beauty. By his nature, he was without passions, for he was an ectype of the passionless. He was free in talk and action, for he was nourished by the divine appearance that was revealed to him face to face. This all was an impulse for his counterpart's envious passion."

<sup>66</sup> Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works with Letters and Songs. Ed. and introduced by Matthew Fox. Santa Fe 1987, pp. 11f. PL 197, 744 D.

fantastical reconstruction and wrote a new allegorical novel. Writing against nominalism, it was his goal to explain the meaning of faith in a philosophical epic poem, describing the striving of the world after its divine origin.

This poem about a new creation of man was the – very successful<sup>67</sup> – attempt to save the dominant position of creation theology, and thereby defend theological science against a philosophy that was trying to assert its independence.

Nature summons a council of virtues in her home, which is the entire cosmos:

"The home of Nature rises on high, if indeed one may call it by the name since by its god-like majesty it can surpass the starry dwellings and the abode of the gods and does not deign to compare itself with kings' palaces. Set apart from our dwellings, a happier hall, sustained by long columns, cleaves the air. It flashes bright with clusters of gems and glows with gold, nor is it less graced with silver's distinct adornment."<sup>68</sup> The divine voice has called creation into being, and therefore the world is the image of divine omnipotence. "Oh painting with your new wonders! What can have no real existence comes into being and painting, aping reality and diverting itself with a strange art, turns the shadows of things into things and changes every lie to truth."<sup>69</sup>

The notion of the image is being played with here. At first, the Platonic copy is only the lie of an aping imitation. But this poem receives its ironic charm through the suggestion that the archetype, the idea, is mirrored in creation, and that even the mendacious copy indicates its origin. Nature therefore keeps a careful watch so that all things continue to reflect their origins:

"She examines the causes of things and the seeds of the universe. She sees who reformed ancient chaos with a fairer aspect when matter, as it bemoaned its disorder, sought the aid of improving form and a fair mien; who, seeking to check by a trustworthy bound civil wars and fraternal

<sup>67</sup> See Alain de Lille: *Anticlaudianus*. Texte critique avec une introduction et des Tables. Ed. R. Boussuat. Paris 1955, pp. 15-25. Alain of Lille. *Anticlaudianus* or the good and perfect man. Translation and Commentary by James Sheridan. Toronto 1973, p. 23. The title "Anticlaudian" refers to the invective of the late antique poet Claudian against Rufinus (396). "It is not a refutation of Claudian's work but rather the opposite of it. Claudian depicted the completely evil man. Alain will depict the completely good man." (Ibid. p. 23) Lit. on Alain de Lille in: Alain de Lille. *Textes inédites. Avec une introduction sur sa vie et ses oeuvres*. Par Marie Thérèse d'Alverny. Paris 1965. See Evans, Gillian Rosemary: *Alain of Lille. The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century*. Cambridge 1983. de Lage, G. Raynaud: *Alain de Lille. Poète du XII Siècle*. Montreal, Paris 1951.

<sup>68</sup> See Alain de Lille: *Anticlaudianus*. Ed. R. Boussuat. Paris 1955, I, pp. 111-114. Alain of Lille: *Anticlaudianus*. Trans. by James Sheridan. Toronto 1973, p. 48.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. I, 122-125, tr. p. 49.

quarrels, imparted to the elements the kiss of peace and bound them together with the more effective knot of number.”<sup>70</sup>

Nature’s working order constitutes the internal connection of creation. It tames, pacifies, and turns chaos into beauty. By her power, the seed of the world, its seminal reasons, are united in brotherly love and harmonised through the power of numbers.

Only man, who has become guilty through his sin, does not correspond to this ideal order of Nature. Therefore working Nature wants to restore the image of man, the eternal Adamic archetype, with the help of God. “Through our efforts let a man not just human but divine, inhabit the earth, a man with no odour of earthly dregs and let him console us for the damage we have done. Through his soul let him dwell in heaven through his body on earth. On earth he will be human, in heaven divine. Thus he will become God and man, so becoming both that he is not just either and he will tread with perfect safety the road between the two. In him let our skill and our gifts find expression. Let him be for us a mirror that we may see ourselves in him, see our trustworthiness, our power, our strength, and the extent to which that strength can improve.”<sup>71</sup> The man Nature wants to achieve is a new Adam, who is to become the measure and mirror of virtue. This mirror is not the same as that in which biblical wisdom saw the primordial reasons of the world. Instead this mirror, which Nature wants to receive in the new man, is the mirror of virtues, reflecting the qualities of unfallen man. The virtues consult with each other on how to restore divine man. These virtues are Nature’s predicates; like every heavenly noetic hypostasis, they are persons without individuality, in whom the qualities of Nature speak. The virtues decide to send their sister Prudentia to heaven to ask God for the renewal of man. Prudence, a virgin of beauty with scales as her attribute

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. I, 187-196 tr. p. 53. The meaning of mirrors, which are the attributes of ratio; I, 455-464 tr. p. 63: “In this mirror she sees the system of causes; she examines the primordial elements of things. She sees the marriage of matter and form; she sees the kisses which the union shares; she sees what this temporary union toasts as it weds matter to form. She sees which form gives matter existence, which completes that existence; which sets a thing on the road to existence, which brings it to the end of the road, which produces it, which changes it, which preserves it in being.” The second mirror shows matter melting into chaos, the third mirror shows the pure forms of things: “Here she sees the fount of things, the genus of the universe, the idea, exemplar, species, cause, first beginning and ultimate end of the world and she measures each and every thing by defined boundaries. She sees by what plan, by what causes, why, how, when, this unstable, generated, unsteady changing universe got its shape, being, condition, species, life and origin from the ungenerated, stable and fixed; how the heavenly idea begets the earthly form, transforms chaos into the species we know and sends abroad the forms which it destines for earth.” (I 488-497, tr. pp. 64f.).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. I, 235-245, tr. p. 55.

(*qua singula pensat in numero, forma, mensura, pondere, causa*<sup>72</sup>), is the figure of communication, but her efforts are in vain:

"No space, marked off with set measurements, impedes the movement of her body or checks it with definite limits. Now going further away, she strikes the heavens with her head, now leaves us gazing in vain, she takes up abode among the heavenly bodies; now she returns to us and submits to the discipline of our restraints."<sup>73</sup>

Prudence is the mediating figure, suspended between heaven and earth. She is the spirit passing through everything. But only when the seven-faced Wisdom<sup>74</sup> bestows her gifts on her can Prudence fulfil her task: "The gifts of Sophia lavish so many endowments on them that Prudence pours her entire self into them. She shares herself with them and builds up her treasure in them."<sup>75</sup>

Endowed with Wisdom's gifts, Prudence can now intervene between heaven and earth. The goal of her action is the perfection of man. In a return to his divine origin, man shall be perfected. Without divine help, Nature and her virtues are powerless.

"What Nature makes, the divine Artist will perfect. The Divine creates from nothing. Nature makes mortal things from some material; God commands, she serves; He directs, she acts; He instructs, she accepts instruction".<sup>76</sup>

To attain the perfect man, Prudence has to turn to the creator. Thus she plans her journey to heaven, which she will reach by chariot. The first goal is the mystical source of all things, God's first revelation, the *nous*. It is in the chariot that "Prudence could cross the extent of earth, the sea, the stars, the clouds, the heavens and passing the pole of the triple heavens, investigate the secret of the Nous, draw on the deep meaning and inquire into the will of the supreme master."<sup>77</sup>

Grammar and Logic forge the axes of the allegorical vehicle; Rhetoric ornates it; Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy produce the wheels. Reason, as the ruler, harnesses the chariot with the five senses and Prudence finally mounts the chariot. The journey traverses the spheres of the planets and reaches the firmament. Here the external senses, the horses of the chariot, are unharnessed, except for the sense of hearing, for hearing prepares the true ground of faith.<sup>78</sup> Theology, a virgin at the edge of the

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. I, 314f. See Wis. 11,21.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. I 298-302. tr. p. 57.

<sup>74</sup> The seven faces of Wisdom are the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom and reason, counsel and strength, science and piety, and fear of the Lord.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. II, 331-333, tr. p. 80.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. II, 70-74, tr. p. 68.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. II, 369-372, tr. pp. 83f.

<sup>78</sup> See Thomas Aquinas: *Adoro te devote, latens deitas*. Second verse: Seeing, taste and feeling only show the appearance, but hearing provides the basis of faith.

heavenly sphere, shining in divine splendour, writes down with a sharp pen the negative theology of God's secrets. She is, as it were, the figure of Dionysius the Areopagite.

"God himself embraces in himself the names of all things which are not repugnant to His Nature; however he conceives everything by means of a trope and by way of a figure and assumes the unadulterated name without the object. He is the just without justice, living without life, beginning without beginning, ending without end, measureless without measure, strong without strength, powerful without force, directing all things without movement, filling all places while free of all places, lasting without time, abiding without abode, in possession of all things without holding them, speaking without voice, in repose without resting, shining without renewal of brightness, aglow without light."<sup>79</sup>

This negative theology is immediately succeeded by a positive one:

"He is not only just in the true sense but he is justice itself, not only lightsome but light itself free from night; not only is he called measureless just in name, he is measure itself defining every mortal thing and fitting them with definite limits. He is called strong not only by way of an appellation but He is existing strength itself, reposing in eternal strength".<sup>80</sup>

On her way into the empyrean, Prudence on her chariot passes Theology. Harnessed only by the sense of hearing, Prudence also passes the choirs of angels, the saints, and the divine virgin mother Mary: "Here nature is silent, logic's power goes a-begging, all the authority of rhetoric comes to naught, reason totters."<sup>81</sup>

Faced with Mary's glory, Prudence loses her reason; faced with the Almighty, she falls into ecstatic unconsciousness. Only pure faith, excluding reason, "*sola fides ratione remota*"<sup>82</sup> is able to bring her back to consciousness. In a mirror she is given by Faith, Prudence perceives her metamorphosis into Sophia. It is through this mirror that the divine Sophia is able to contemplate the glory of the Almighty: "As her eyes explore the mirror, Sophia sees there all that the divine world embraces. While she sees some things new to her, looks in wonder at everything, finds joy in the complete whole, the strangeness of the objects produces new joys."<sup>83</sup>

Armed with her mirror, Prudence is able to bear God's glory. She explains to him the reason of her journey, and he fulfils her desires. It is here that the *forma exemplaris* as such emerges. *Nous*, the first divine hypostasis, collects the primordial imprinting forms, the archetypes, as they are found in the Old Testament. And from these forms God creates a new man, a new

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. V, 124-135, tr. pp. 141f.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. V, 136-143, tr. p. 142.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. V, 478f., tr. p. 153.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. VI, 23.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. VI, 131-137. tr. p. 160.



seal for mankind, endowing him with soul and expression. He impresses the ectype with the archetype, so that the ectype corresponds to the *forma exemplaris*:

"God himself pursues the task and proceeds to realise his determination. Accordingly, he calls Nous to prepare for him an exemplar for this divine being, an archetype of the human soul so that the spirit, rich in every virtue, may be made to conform to its form and may, overshadowed in the passing cloud of the flesh, lie concealed in the shade of the body. Then on the King's instructions, Nous scrutinises exemplars of each and every thing and searches for a new archetype. Among so many species she has difficulty in finding the one she seeks; finally the object of her search presents itself to the seeker. In its mirror every thing of grace finds a home - the beauty of Joseph, the wisdom of Judith, the patience of just Job, the zeal of Phineas, the modesty of Moses, the simplicity of Jacob, the faith of Abraham, the piety of Tobias. Nous presents this form to God to use as exemplar in forming the soul. He then takes a seal and gives the soul a form along the lines of its form; He impresses on the pattern the appearance called for by the archetype."<sup>84</sup>

Alain of Lille describes here the divine formation of a new man with exemplary forms. God forms the heavenly man anew, by giving him his form from the patterns of the history of salvation. He is the *exemplar humanitatis* according to biblical revelation.

Prudentia leads the new exemplary man into the cosmos, where he remains untouched by the cold of Saturn, by the heat of Jupiter, by the bitterness of Mars, by the temptations of Venus, and by the resolving power of the moon. He is still a pure spiritual prototype. Nature now forms a new body, which comprises the four elements, Concord combines body and soul, and the Virtues endow the man with gifts so that he can endure the battle with the powers of evil.

What kind of man is this new, exemplary being? He is the prototype of humanity, the image of the new, spiritual man perfected with biblical typology; he fulfils the biblical promise of a new man. He is not an earthly creation, but rather the poetic expression of the inner man, as he was theologically conceived by Gregory of Nyssa. Is this new man only inner man? Or could he be understood as an *exemplar Christi*, who will appear at the Last Judgement? Alain's reader is, at least here, not made privy to any further speculations.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. VI, 428-447. tr. 170f.

## 10. FICINO'S (1433-1499) ANGEL AND THE INTELLECTUS AGENS

Nicholas of Cusa was the last writer to bring together the plenitude of cosmic Christology.<sup>85</sup> Before the Lutheran theology of the cross, which dominated the second half of the sixteenth century, led to a new dogmatisation of Christology, Nicholas had brought together the Christological functions of the inner-trinitarian life, creation, redemption, and the Second Coming. For Nicholas, Christ's glory and his earthly and heavenly functions were connected: "He came to redeem everything, because by his will he restored all condemned beings, he taught the occult and secret wisdom and elevated it beyond everything, he forgave the sins as a God, he suffered death, he transmuted the world, he commanded the spirits of the sea and the wind when he went on the waters, he established the law by fulfilling all laws."<sup>86</sup>

Whereas Cusa argues theologically, Ficino, in his "Theologia Platonica" thinks cosmologically. With his conception of the 'angelus', he adopted the motifs of cosmic anthropology and gave the 'angel' all the attributes of Solomon's wisdom. Nonetheless, this was also a contribution to one of the most controversial themes in medieval and renaissance philosophy, namely the question of the concept of the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*) and the passive intellect (*intellectus possibilis*). With the theme of the 'angel', Ficino combined two trains of thought: first Aristotle's concept of the intellect in *De anima* III, 4 and 5, where the philosopher discusses the relationship of *intellectus agens* and *possibilis*; second the Neoplatonic idea of the first cause. For Ficino it is obvious that God is the first cause and also the reason for the 'angel's' existence. But the 'angel' is not only the first emanation of the first cause, but also has something in common with the agent intellect that informs the passive intellect. And here the theological and philosophical problems become obvious. Ficino wants to prove the soul's immortality; he therefore has to ensure that the soul is individual as well as immortal. In the present passage on the 'angel', however, he deals only with the supra-individual hypostasis.

Concerning the central question of Aristotelian psychology, i.e. the relationship between *intellectus agens* and *intellectus possibilis*, there were

<sup>85</sup> See ch. 2, 2: Perennial Philosophy in Nicholas of Cusa. Especially Seuse's vision of divine wisdom belongs in the context of the idea of wisdom in the Middle Ages. (Des Dieners Leben, ch. III.) On the context: Rice, Eugene F. Jr.: *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*. Cambridge, Mass. 1958. Benz, Ernst: *Die Vision. Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt*. Stuttgart 1969, p. 77.

<sup>86</sup> *Docta ignorantia* III, 4, Ed. Gabriel/Dupré I, 144.

three main positions. The first was represented by Alexander of Aphrodisias:<sup>87</sup> For him the intellectus agens was a divine spirit, which informed the intellectus possibilis. The latter was formless and, since it was identical with the human soul, connected to the body. Therefore the human soul could not be immortal. The second position was the doctrine of Averroes:<sup>88</sup> He distinguished between human soul and intellect. The soul was “forma informans corporis”, and so was connected to the body. Because the body was a mortal being, the body's form, the individual soul, could also only be conceived as mortal. The intellect, however, is separate from all corporeality, so it is not individual but immortal. St. Thomas Aquinas, in his quaestio “De anima”,<sup>89</sup> offers a third solution: For him the human soul is connected to the intellectus possibilis, in which function it informs the body. This means that it is the principle of life insofar as it unites the sensible, the moving and the cognitive soul. Therefore Thomas insists on the soul's absolute unity. In his opinion, the human soul is nevertheless immortal, since the immortal agent intellect is also human (whatever that means).<sup>90</sup>

Ficino combines this problem of Christian Aristotelianism with his Platonic cosmology. He locates his ‘angel’ at the summit of the cosmos, in immediate proximity to God and above the anima, which for its part is situated above corporeality. The ‘angel’ is distinguished from the ‘anima’, which ‘informs’ the individuality of the moved things: “The angel is a receptacle of species, and an unmoveable multitude: God is the unity above the unmoved species.” From this it seems obvious that Ficino's Platonism cannot share the Thomistic doctrine of the soul. Neither can Ficino accept the doctrine of strict separation between intellect and soul that makes up Averroes' psychology. Ficino's vision is half way between Alexandrinism and Averroism.<sup>91</sup> He reformulates this relationship between agent and

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Paul Moraux: *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*. Vol. 3. Alexander von Aphrodisias. Ed. by Jürgen Wiesner. Berlin / New York 2001. Sascha Salatowsky: *De Anima. Die Rezeption der aristotelischen Psychologie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*. Diss. PhD. Freie Universität Berlin 2004. P. 14 sq.

<sup>88</sup> *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis; Supplementum II. Aristotelis de anima libri tres, cum commentariis et antiqua translatione suae integritati restituta*. Venice 1562. Reprint Frankfurt 1962. Averroes: *Commentarius magnus in Aristotelis de anima libros*. Recensuit F. Stuart Crawford. Cambridge 1953.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Aquinas: *Summa contra gentiles* Lib. II, c. LVI-LXXXIX. *Summa Theologiae* Lib. I q. 75-79. *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*. In: *Opera* 43, 291-314.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas' solution does not really solve the question of the soul's immortality, because the status of the agent intellect remains unclear. It contains the eternal truths, but Thomas insists that all knowledge derives from the senses. It is therefore not clear how the claim of immortality can be proved, especially since all abstract knowledge originally depends on the senses.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. The famous letter to Johannes Pannonius in 1484: “The whole world is under the control of the peripatetics, divided for the most part into two sects, Alexandrist and

possible intellect in Neoplatonic terminology. His 'angel' is only a second cause and a privation in relation to the first divine being. So the angel is connected to God and separated from him as well. Ficino writes: "... in God, since He is the prime being and highest act, there is no privation. Therefore God is unchangeable.

Angel too is not subject to movement, because it drinks in goodness from God, the fount of goodness, through itself, without any intermediary; and at one point in eternity it is filled, and it remains brimful with goodness forever. But since every effect that is produced outside its cause retains something of its cause and yet emerges inferior also to the cause, angel, being created closest to God, retains and yet loses something of God. God possesses unity and stability. Angel cannot retain both; for then it would be God, not angel. Yet it does not lose both either, for the first God's works and the nearest to Him would then emerge as completely unlike its maker. So which does it retain, unity alone or stability? It cannot have unity alone without stability; for unity is utterly motionless. So it will retain stability but fall away from simple unity, the result being that angel is plurality without movement."<sup>92</sup>

Even though Ficino implicitly deals with questions of the Aristotelian tradition, he emphasises the imagery of Christian Platonism. In God the plenitude of being and good is united. Thus the angel, in his dependent state, is granted goodness, which for Ficino means perfection. The angel is the pure source of the communication of the good. God is the plenitude of being, his predicates are indistinguishable, and in him time and eternity coincide. The angel's nature is bound to God's predicates and does not mediate between the divine light and the body. For this role Ficino postulates a third essence, the body's soul. It has the nature of a point, mediating between spirituality and extension: "The third essence, however, is neither subject to extension – for then it would be a quality – nor it is positioned somewhere in extension – for it would be moved freely of itself as if it did not subsist of itself. It is like a point then that is in itself alive and totally free from quantity and form being a location. Therefore it encircles the body's every position, and when it enters the body, because it is not itself a point properly of any one quantity, it is not restricted to any particular part of the body's quantity. Since it lies outside the genus of quantity, it is not limited to touching some

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Averroist. The former think our intellect is mortal, the latter maintain that it is one. Both alike utterly destroy religion." Opera I, P. 896. Frederic Purnell, JR.: The theme of philosophic concord and the sources of Ficino's Platonism. In: Garfagnini, Gian Carlo (ed.): Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone. Studi e documenti. Florence 1986, pp. 397-415.

<sup>92</sup> Marsilio Ficino: Platonic Theology. English Translation by Michael J.B. Allen with John Warden; Latin Text edited by James Hankins with William Bowen. Vol. 1 Cambridge, Mass., London, England. 2001. P. 215 sq.

particular point of quantity. Like the centre of a circle, it is in every radius and in the circle as a whole."<sup>93</sup> This can be considered a proof of individual immortality;<sup>94</sup> in fact it is a remarkable variation of the second sentence of the book of XXIV philosophers: *Deus est Sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam*. (God is an infinite sphere the centre of which is everywhere, the circumference however nowhere.) The infinite sphere coincides with the ubiquity of the spiritual point. This idea comes close to Plotinus' speculation on the bursting point, where there is something "that is centre; about it, a circle of light shed from it; round circle and first circle alike".<sup>95</sup> In that process the merely spiritual diversity of the angel becomes the power in the third essence. The angel is God's outward self-objectification, which serves in forming and vivifying extended matter.

From God's creative act, from his first deed, the *rationes*, species, and essences of things emerge. They are united in the first receptacle, the 'angel'. This is the meaning of the angel's stasis of unmoved diversity, which can be interpreted as an equivalent of Aristotle's agent intellect. The spiritual essences of the things to come are statically united in the angel, and are dynamically communicated to the lower spheres of the cosmos by the divine power originally deriving from the first cause, mediated through the angel and the third essence.

The speculation on the first cause is originally Proclian, and was known to Ficino from his Proclian studies and from the "Liber de causis", an Arabic excerpt from the *Steucheiosis* that was translated into Latin.<sup>96</sup> Paragraphs 5 and 6 describe the relationship between the first and second cause as follows: "The first cause is above all speech. Language falls short of it, not because of its impotency as a language, but because it is impossible to express its being. For it is above every cause, and it can only be predicated by secondary causes which are illuminated by the light of the first cause. That is because the first cause never ceases to illuminate its effect, but it is not illuminated by another light. It is itself the light above all lights, and therefore it is the first son, which is missed by every naming. There is only

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. P. 239 sq.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Tamara Albertini's detailed study on Ficino's theories of the soul in her dissertation: *Marsilio Ficino. Das Problem der Vermittlung von Denken und Welt in einer Metaphysik der Einfachheit*. Munich 1997, esp. pp. 153-167. On the specifically Platonic sources of Ficino's proofs for immortality cf. Allen, Michael J.B.: *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1984, pp. 69-85.

<sup>95</sup> Plotinus, *The Enneades* IV, 3 17.

<sup>96</sup> See Marcel, Raimon: *Marsilio Ficino*, Paris 1958, pp. 248-250. § 5 of the "Liber de causis" corresponds to § 123 of the "Steucheiosis", § 6 = § 171, § 7 = § 173. See Bardenhewer, Otto (ed.): *Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift Ueber das reine Gute bekannt unter dem Namen Liber de causis*. Freiburg 1882, p. 20. The *Liber de causis* was also printed, e.g. in the large Aristotle edition: *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*. Venetiis Apud Iunctas. 1562-1574. Vol. VII, fol. 211v-220v. Repr. Frankfurt 1962.

this way, because above it there is no cause by which it could be acknowledged and because all things can only be recognised and named by their cause. Since it is the cause and not an effect, it can neither be named nor be called by the first cause, for it is above every speech and no language can reach it.”<sup>97</sup>

This is, to begin with, an argument against every rational proof of God’s existence and, as such, can hardly be refuted. Reason is only able to return to its first cause, which itself cannot be proved since it is the source of all reasoning. The possibility of proof lies on a second level, that of intelligence. This level is, in principle, unable to reach that which is absolutely unfathomable. The “*Liber de causis*” consequently attributes oneness and non-extension to the intellect. This is the unmoved multiplicity, which Ficino finds in his ‘angel’. “The intellect is the substance which is not divided since it is without magnitude, and without body, which is not moved, and which without doubt is not divided. Every separable being can only be separated if it has multitude, magnitude, and movement. Intelligence is not temporal, therefore it is eternal, and therefore it is higher and superior to every body and every multitude.”<sup>98</sup>

In its unmoved multiplicity, the intellect knows that it received everything “from above”. As mediator, it transmits its knowledge to the spheres below: “Every intelligence knows what is above itself and what is below; it knows what is below, as it is its cause. It knows what is above since it receives its goodness from there. Intelligence is an intelligible substance. Therefore it knows, according to its nature, what it received from above and of what it is the cause.”<sup>99</sup>

In Ficino, the clear distinction of the “*Liber de causis*” is situated in its symbolic and cosmological context, which corresponds closely to the questions of his own *Theologia Platonica*. Here he dealt with the philosophy of creation, questions of wisdom, and speculations on the logos. With his cosmological interpretation of ‘wisdom’ and the ‘nous,’ Ficino joined the tradition of biblical Neoplatonism, but also drew on the work of the Arab philosopher Al Rhazali (Al Ghazel 1058-1111).<sup>100</sup> In his metaphysics, which clearly rely on the “*Liber de causis*”, Al Rhazali describes intelligence as an ‘angel’ above the heavens, transmitting divine knowledge to earth: “If somebody asks how the order (of the heavens) can be discerned, he should be answered as follows: From the first being there emerges intelligence in

<sup>97</sup> Bardenhewer pp. 168f.

<sup>98</sup> Bardenhewer pp. 169f.

<sup>99</sup> Bardenhewer pp. 170f.

<sup>100</sup> See Fakhry, Majid: *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. New York and London 1970, pp. 244-261. It is clear that Al Rhazali wanted to refute the philosophy he lays out here. This metaphysics, however, has been accepted by Christian philosophy as an affirmative system.

which there is the duality mentioned above; its unity partakes of the first, its otherness comes from itself. From here the angel and the heaven emerge. Therefore the angel is acknowledged by the pure intelligence. Necessarily the nobler being derives from a nobler form. Intelligence is nobler; the nobler necessity received its form from the first intelligence. Therefore the second intelligence proceeds from this necessity.<sup>101</sup> From here emerges the highest heaven, which is the one of possibility, appropriate to it [the second intelligence] as its matter.<sup>102</sup> From the second intelligence issues the third one which is the circle of the zodiac. And from the third intelligence the fourth proceeds, and the sphere of Saturn and from the fourth the fifth and the sphere of Jupiter. And from the fifth the sixth and the sphere of Mars, and from the sixth the seventh, and the sphere of the Sun. From the seventh the eighth, and the sphere of Venus, and from the eighth the ninth, and the sphere of Mercury, and from the ninth the tenth, and the sphere of the moon. In this way the heaven is complete. Every sphere except for the first principle, proceeds from a nobler one; and therefore this concept is valid for the nine and the ten: Ten intelligences and nine heavens. This is true, if the number of heavens is not larger than nine. If it is larger, the number of intelligences has to be enlarged, too, in order to complete the heavens."<sup>103</sup>

In Al Rhazali's theory, the emergence of numbers represents the order of the universe. It is a Pythagorean order, coinciding with harmony. In this Pythagorean order the cosmos appears in numbers. Like Al Rhazali, Ficino adopted the Arabic cosmological interpretation, including the name of 'angel'. He also took over the concept of 'receptaculum specierum', the receptacle of forms through which creation was realised and which could be

<sup>101</sup> This is the heaven of forms, numbers, and the logic of necessarily valid truths.

<sup>102</sup> The possible truths are contingent beings, composed of form and matter and preconceived in this heaven.

<sup>103</sup> Algazel's Metaphysics. A Medieval Translation. Ed. B. Joseph T. Muckle. Toronto 1933, p. 121.

The structure of Alghazel's heaven:

The One

Intelligentia nuda - acknowledges the angel = necessitas + forma formarum

Intelligentia secunda 1<sup>st</sup> highest ethereal heaven = possibilitas + materia

Intelligentia tertia 2<sup>nd</sup> heaven: Zodiac

Intelligentia quarta 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven: Saturn

Intelligentia quinta 4<sup>th</sup> heaven: Jupiter

Intelligentia sexta 5<sup>th</sup> heaven: Mars

Intelligentia septima 6<sup>th</sup> heaven: Sun

Intelligentia octava 7<sup>th</sup> heaven: Venus

Intelligentia nona 8<sup>th</sup> heaven: Mercury

Intelligentia decima 9<sup>th</sup> heaven: Moon

recognised by the soul. This was also the concept of the acting intellect in its Averroistic interpretation.<sup>104</sup>

The *intellectus agens* acts by imprinting its forms onto the *intellectus possibilis*. The human mind can participate in this information. It recognises the necessary forms *a priori* and abstracts the contingent forms from its experience. Ficino describes the act of original information as follows: "The nature and definition of pure act itself is unique. It is in God, obviously. If it were also said to be an angel, we would have to ask whether or not anything exists in angel besides act. If nothing exists, then only the pure act is left, since the act that is attributed to angel does not differ from the act of God, in that nothing is present in both besides act and act itself by its very reason is one. But if something besides act is added to the angel, then angel is no longer a pure act, but has been contaminated by some sort of mixture; and it is not absolute act, but act of particular sort. In the same way something green or red is not pure light, but light plus some quality of Elements which makes it red or green. Thus angel too is composed of act and potency."<sup>105</sup>

Thus Ficino's angel expresses God's acts. In the 'angel', God's acting and the scope of action, the *quidditas*, coincide. They are the functions of the creating logos, of the 'verbum fiat'. Ficino distinguishes these functions, i.e. logos, wisdom, and angel, from God's unity, which he, following in the Dionysian tradition, predicates negatively. The angel is not related to the earthly, lower forms of the real world, but is only the receptacle of the eternal concepts. The angel is not, however, the receptacle of the changing forms, which vary among the species. That is the task of the soul, the reservoir of the changing forms. This is the changing soul of all things as well as the human soul.

In the 'angel', the unity of the multiplicity is unmovable. The angel is the restful unity of all notions in their divine conception. His calm represents divine oneness and contains in its multiplicity the concepts of all things. These concepts are still distinguished from the forms of the things; they are the unextended notions of the things in the *nous*. In the *anima*, the soul, they become forms, i.e. they become potentially extended. These forms of the soul imply motion: The complete form of a plant, for example, contains all forms of this plant from its seed, to its full growth, to its corruption. The forms of becoming and decay vary. The soul informs *hyle*, matter, with these variable forms, and these forms in turn are perceived in the sensual and abstract perceptions of the acknowledging soul.

<sup>104</sup> See Kessler, Eckhard: The Intellective Soul. In: The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. Ed. Charles Schmitt et al. Cambridge 1988, pp. 485-534. Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis. Venetiis Apud Juntas 1562-1574, Suppl. II. Repr. Frankfurt 1962, Aristoteles de Anima cum Averrois commentaria. Fol 160v-204v.

<sup>105</sup> Ficino: Theologia platonica. Ed. Hankins, trans. Allen. Vol. 1 p. 219.



The angel, however, is the unmoveable one below the inconceivable God. In the more popular text of the speech of Mazupini/Agathon in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, Ficino depicts the angel as follows: "The divine power, supreme over all things, as soon as the angels and the souls are born from Him, gently infuses into them, as His offspring, that ray of His, in which there is a second power of creating all things. This imprints the arrangement and order of the whole world much more exactly in there, because they are nearer to Him, than in the matter of the World. For this reason this whole picture of the world which we see shines more clearly in the Angels and the Souls. For in them there is a picture of each sphere, the sun, the moon, the other stars, the elements, stones, plants, and each of the animals. In the Angels, theses pictures are called by the Platonists Archetypes or Ideas; in the Souls they are called Reasons or Concepts; in the Matter of the World they are called Forms or Images. They are certainly bright in the World, brighter in the Soul, and brightest in the Angelic Mind. Therefore the single face of God shines successively in three mirrors, placed in order: the Angel, the Soul, and the Body of the World.<sup>106</sup> In the former, as nearer to God, the image shines most brightly. In the second, more remote, if you can compare it to the others, most dimly. Then the holy Angelic Mind, hampered by no duty to a body, turns back to itself. There it sees that face which God imprinted on its own breast. It immediately admires what it has seen. It cleaves passionately to it forever. The grace of that divine face we call beauty. The Angel's passion, clinging inwardly to the face of God, we call Love."<sup>107</sup>

## 11. GIOVANNI PICO (1463-1491): PIOUS PHILOSOPHY AND THE DIGNITY OF MAN

Giovanni Pico's famous speech, later referred to as "*De dignitate hominis*", addresses only a small part of cosmic anthropology. Pico here joins the tradition of the doctrine of the inner man, developed by Gregory of Nyssa. Although he was familiar with cabbalistic interpretations of the theology of creation, he was reluctant to use cosmological interpretations of Christology. His speech on the dignity of man was to satisfy the scholastic participants at the planned Universal Philosophical Council in 1490. Moreover, the Neoplatonic and Averroistic implications bore a certain

<sup>106</sup> See for this topic Plotinus, *Enn.* IV, 3, 11.

<sup>107</sup> Marsilio Ficino: *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*; *Oratio IV*, 3. (V, 4), trans. by Sears Jayne. Dallas 1985, pp. 89f.

dogmatic risk, even to the extent that they unwittingly became apparent in Pico's works.

The thesis that man is God's image, so much emphasised in Gregory of Nyssa's sermon "De opificio hominis", is, at first glance, held at bay in Pico's "De dignitate hominis". The faculty of language, which could have been interpreted as man's partaking of the *nous*, does not play a role. From the doctrines of the "Speech on the image", as Eriugena called Gregory's sermon, Pico adopted only the theory of man's imperfection and some of its pathos of freedom. But he does not situate man's freedom in the framework of a natural hierarchy, nor does he explain knowledge as participation in the *nous*. For Pico, theological knowledge is a tradition based on the Bible. Philosophy is the historically transmitted knowledge of an original revelation, and man's freedom is essentially his pursuit of virtue. Just as in Alan of Lille's new creation of man, the biblical archetypes prefigure the new man. The knowledge of these archetypes is confirmed by pagan philosophy.

For Pico, man is placed in God's garden without a guiding image, so he can and must choose his position, as the divine creator emphasises in his address to Adam, in whatever language he may have spoken: "We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, possess as thine own seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire. A limited nature in other creatures is confined within the laws written down by Us. In conformity with thy free judgment, in whose hands I have placed thee, thou art confined by no bounds; and thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself. I have placed thee at the centre of the world, that from there thou mayest more conveniently look around and see whatsoever is in the world. Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal have We made thee. Thou, like a judge appointed for being honourable, art the moulder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself in whatever thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine."<sup>108</sup> It is a peculiarly unspeculative attitude of Pico that he does not emphasise man's love of virtue as his similarity to God. But there are two advantages to this attitude:

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<sup>108</sup> Pico della Mirandola: On the Dignity of Man. Trans. by Charles Glenn Wallis. On Being and One, Trans. by Paul J. W. Miller. Heptaplus, Trans. by Douglas Carmichael. Indianapolis and New York 1965, pp. 4f. Latin Text in Pico, Giovanni: Opera, Basle 1557, reprint Hildesheim 1969, p. 314. Cf. Valcke, Louis and Galibois Roland: Le Périple intellectuelle de Jean Pic de la Mirandole. Quebec 1994. Thumfart, Alexander: Die Perspektive und die Zeichen. Hermetische Verschlüsselungen bei Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Munich 1996. Copenhaver, Brian P.: The Secret of Pico's 'Oration' Cabala and Renaissance Philosophy. In: Midwest Studies in Philosophy 26 (2002) p. 56-81.

1. The soul is conceived individually and not cosmologically. Freedom is a hallmark of an individual soul, and the Averroistic implications of psychology are dismissed. This possibly derives from Pico's knowledge of Origen, and accords perfectly with his rejection of astrology.<sup>109</sup>

2. In this conception the soul achieves a peculiar agility, by virtue of which it participates in all aspects of creation. Pico sees in this versatility the specific position of man in the cosmos. Beyond this participation, the soul of man can become united with the God of negative predicates: "Highest spirits have been, either from the beginning or soon after, that which are going to be throughout everlasting eternity. At man's birth the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every kind of life. The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him. If he cultivates vegetable seeds, he will become a plant, if the seeds of sensation, he will grow into brute, if rational, he will come out a heavenly animal, if intellectual, he will be an angel, and a son of God. And if he is not contented with the lot of any creature but takes himself up into the centre of his own unity, then, made one spirit with God and settled in the solitary darkness of the father, who is above all things, he will stand ahead of all things. Who does not wonder at this chameleon which we are? Or who at all feels more wonder at anything else whatsoever?"<sup>110</sup>

Although Pico does not share Ficino's emphasis on cosmic anthropology, his "Oratio" is in a very peculiar sense a masterpiece of edifying and devotional philosophical literature. Pico places the pious philosopher under a divine halo and paints him in God's image. For him the practice of divine philosophy spiritualises man, makes him wise and thus similar to the cosmic wisdom of God's eternal logos.

Pico's famous speech uses the usual topoi of Neoplatonic literature concerning the soul's ascent. He cites St. Paul's mystical ecstasy (2 Cor. 12:2) and its Dionysian interpretation. For him the beginning, practice and perfection of every true – that is pious – philosophy consists in the triad of "purgari, illuminari and perfici".<sup>111</sup> He sees this way to the true divine philosophy symbolised by Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:10-14), on which the human soul can ascend and meet with the divine thoughts and delights, represented by the angels descending from above. The symbolic imaginary shows how divine wisdom and grace approach the benevolent human achievements.

For the Florentine philosopher, the allegorical reading of the pagan Greek myths shows how the human soul is drunk with the overflowing light of

<sup>109</sup> Cf. ch. 5, 5 and Pico: "Disputationes in astrologiam" Libri XII. In: Pico, Giovanni: Opera, Basle 1557, reprint Hildesheim 1969, pp. 414-731.

<sup>110</sup> On the Dignity of Man. Trans. by Charles Glenn Wallis. p. 5. Lat. Opera I, p.315

<sup>111</sup> Opera I, 316 sq.

God's eternal wisdom: The mysteries of Bacchus and the muses show how the soul is attracted by God's spiritual nourishment. It becomes delighted and excited in divine drunkenness, it gets lost and dispersed in the light of the divine. So it becomes the representative of the divine logos, mirroring God's Wisdom: "The leader of the Muses, Bacchus, revealing to us in our moments of philosophy, through his mysteries, that is, the visible signs of nature, the invisible things of God, will make us drunk with the richness of the house of God; and there, if, like Moses, we shall prove entirely faithful, most sacred theology will supervene to inspire us with redoubled ecstasy. For, raised to the most eminent height of theology, whence we shall be able to measure in the mirror of indivisible eternity all things that are, that have been and will be; and, grasping the primordial beauty of things, like the seers of Phoebus, we shall become the winged lovers of theology. And at last, smitten by the ineffable love as by a sting, and, like the Seraphim, filled with the godhead, we shall be, no longer ourselves, but the very One who made us."<sup>112</sup>

In the light of this divine excitement, true philosophy reveals itself. This theo-philosophical enthusiasm shows that pagan philosophy is also a way to true wisdom. In this sense the main devices of philosophy – the golden middle-way of practical philosophy, wise self-cognition and natural philosophy – are steps on the way to the divine. The philosophy of the Pythagoreans, of the Chaldeans, and of Zoroaster bear witness to the fact that their original philosophy was already divinely inspired. If the true philosopher follows their traces he will be exalted by the archangels before God's countenance. For Pico, the divine light of the eternal midday enlightens, heals and hallows the human soul, and elevates philosophy to the service of the holiest. "This is the noonday light which inflames the Seraphim toward their goal and equally illuminates the Cherubim. This is the promised land toward which our ancient father Abraham was ever advancing; this is the region where, as the teachings of the Cabalists and Moors tell us, there is no place for unclean spirits. And if we may be permitted, even in the form of a riddle, to say anything publicly about the deeper mysteries: since the precipitous fall of man has left his mind in a vertiginous whirl and since according to Jeremiah, death has come in through the windows to infect our hearts and bowels with evil, let us call upon Raphael, the heavenly healer by moral philosophy and dialectic, as with healing drugs, he may release us. When we shall have been restored to health, Gabriel, the strength of God, will abide in us. Leading us through the marvels of nature and pointing out to us everywhere the power of the goodness of God, he will deliver us finally to the care of the High priest Michael. He, in turn, will adorn those who have successfully completed their

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<sup>112</sup> Opera I 319 sq.

service to philosophy with the priesthood of theology as with a crown of precious stones.”<sup>113</sup>

Thus Pico's *oratio de homini dignitate* is a specimen of pious philosophy, in which the philosopher receives the divine logos and serves as priest of the philosophical godhead. Through this practice of perennial philosophy the pious philosopher becomes God's true image.

## 12. PAULUS RICIIUS' CABALISTIC COSMOS

### a) The Image of the Archetype and the Meaning of Speculation

In 1514, Ricius published his philosophical proof of the truth of the Christian faith,<sup>114</sup> entitled “In Apostolorum symbolum Pauli Ricii oratoris, philosophici et theologi occultatissimi apriori demonstrativus dialogus”. The subject of this dialogue is the natural philosophy of the Trinity, and thus neither Jewish nor Christian theologians are quoted. The authorities of the first section are Averroes, Aristotle, and Avicenna. The philosophical dialogue is written as a conversation between three Jews and a Christian theologian. The Christian theologian, Gometus, probably represents Ricius' Franciscan teacher. The names of the brothers Philaletes, Philosomatus and Philadelphus are allegorical.

The dialogue begins with a Neoplatonic ascent, a step from the corporeal to the spiritual sphere. The names of the participants already indicate their positions: Philosomatus, friend of the body; Philadelphus, friend of brotherhood; and Philaletes, friend of truth. Ricius begins the discussion with Philosomatus, who, as representative of the bodily virtues, is subject to time and space. Thus Philosomatus corresponds to the sensitive soul: “What is perceptible through corporeal faculties cannot become an universal object.”<sup>115</sup> The conclusion is that whoever wants to reach universals has to neglect corporeal virtues. This is the argument of Philadelphus, who represents the soul. The universals of the soul are not corporeal and sensitive, but spiritual. The ascent starts from the corporeal beings and proceeds to the soul, whence it comes to the holy spheres, i.e. to *mens* and *nous*. Philadelphus argues: “Therefore the virtue of intellection, the object of which is spiritual, is universal and more valuable than sensible virtues, which only perceive secular objects.”<sup>116</sup> Since universals have no boundaries

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<sup>113</sup> Opera I, p.321

<sup>114</sup> See above Ch. 3, 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Ars Cabalistica*, Ed. Pistorius. Basle 1587, repr. Frankfurt 1970, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

in space and time, they are immortal. Immortality is also a quality of the soul that perceives immortal ideas and thereby partakes of the universal's immortality. This argument is considered to be irrefutable and is bolstered by prophets, theologians, and philosophers.<sup>117</sup> For Philosomatus, the sensualist, this argument is convincing, for only "through sure and firm intelligence can mind and reason become completely reposed."<sup>118</sup>

Up to this point, the dialogue presents a completely conventional Neoplatonic ascent of knowledge. This conception of science can also be found in Ficino, Pico, or Reuchlin. In Neoplatonic speculation, the concept of truth depends on the knowledge of the One, which communicates itself to the knower. In this conception, all things are perceived to be in the unity of God's first revelation. In his early philosophy of "De verbo mirifico", Reuchlin had laid out this argument as follows: "Whether we perceive (*sapere*) eternal - from which act the name *Sapientia* derives - or whether we acknowledge the lowest substance which is constituted of matter, or whether we acknowledge changing, fleeting, and transient things, which are subject to time and to the heavens - above this always stands the true faith by which the *intellectus agens* works. This is the summit of the human mind - pure, splendid, transparent. It contemplates in the divine and super-celestial mind the splendid and reflecting essence of things, mortal and immortal, like in a mirror of eternity. This faith is more effective in contemplation and in acting than every order of reason, every method, every investigation, every opinion, every science, every acting of the *intellectus agens*, be it from its own power, or be it from received speculation. For it acknowledges itself as submitted."<sup>119</sup> This submission is the position of *philosophia adepta*, which principally does not make up its own wisdom, but receives it from the One, from the divine principle.

Ricius has the metaphor of mirroring and the figure of the angel in mind, and he enlarges them into an allegory. As an ascent to the highest, knowledge of truth is not achieved by the ascending individual soul, but is received from the power of the One. This power reveals itself in the "vision of the highest". For Ricius it is the image of the archetype. Philaletus explains this concept of truth with the following vision: "Imagine a wonderfully beautiful man, standing on the top of a shining mountain, whose image is reflected in the snow and in a mirror. The mirrored picture is set in motion by a firestorm at the bottom of the mountain. In this firestorm the image appears and disappears. Outside the borders of the firestorm walks a shepherdess, who observes the splendour of the firestorm. There she sees the man's image and is immediately overwhelmed by the splendid and beautiful

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 9: "sed certa & firma intelligentia mens & ratio protinus acquiescit".

<sup>119</sup> Reuchlin: *De verbo mirifico*, Sämtliche Werke I, 1. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1996, pp. 84ff.

sight. The image of this beauty seizes the girl's spirit, and she is so delighted that she follows the splendid, brilliant image toward the mountain. In the mirror image she perceives the wonderfully radiant image of the highest man. Now she wants to see him immediately and be near to him. In his nearness and his embrace she becomes inflamed with love. However, since she can become his companion only if she passes the firewall and climbs to the top of the mountain, she leaves her herd, puts on a man's belt, penetrates the firewall with firm courage, and strives for the mountain pass. When she arrives, she yearns anxiously to accommodate herself with body and soul to the beloved, to fulfil his wishes and to please him, to adore him with praise and sweet songs and to caress him sweetly without intermission. Delighted by the girl's beauty and virtue, the pleased archetypal man turns to her, kisses and embraces her, joins her in love and in bridal chastity. Brother, do you not recognise the type of your soul?"<sup>120</sup>

This delightful story is open to a variety of interpretations. Most obviously, it deals with the topos of heavenly marriage in the tradition of Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs. The tradition of the spiritual wedding is combined with the theory of mystical cognition. In addition, a bucolic realm is posited and linked with Neoplatonic exegesis.<sup>121</sup> The shepherdess represents the soul, and reminds us of the roaming human soul reaching for the archetype, which is already represented in Philo's spiritual cosmology.<sup>122</sup> This archetype can be understood as the divine Logos, as divine Wisdom, Adam, and Christ. The individual human soul, enflamed in love, is presented as the mystical bride of the archetype. Love is also a process of assimilation, thus the loving soul associates with the beloved archetype and longs for the participation of truth, since truth is the process of assimilation to its subject. Love is the assimilation of the holy affections and of the human intellect to the archetype.

The archetype assembles many motifs. It alludes to the transfiguration on Mount Tabor (Matt. 17, Mark 9), the attributes of the Kosmokrator in St. John's Revelation (Rev. 1:12), and the metaphor of speculation from the Book of Wisdom. The mountain on which the archetype stands is a mirror-mountain, representing the hierarchy of mirrors reflecting the original mirror, God's Wisdom (Wis. 6:26). The whole image is close to Dionysius' "Heavenly Hierarchy".<sup>123</sup> With the magic fire at the bottom of the mountain,

<sup>120</sup> *Ars Cabalistica*, Ed. Pistorius. Basle 1587, repr. Frankfurt 1970, pp. 9f.

<sup>121</sup> On Neoplatonic exegesis see Lamberton, Robert: *Homer, the Theologian. Neoplatonic Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1989.

<sup>122</sup> See above ch. IV, 4: Philo's cosmic Adam.

<sup>123</sup> Dionysius Areopagita: *On the Heavenly Hierarchy* III, 2. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite Part II, Tr. John Parker London 1899, Repr. New York 1976: "The purpose, then, of Hierarchy is the assimilation and union, as far as attainable, with God, having Him Leader of all religious science and operation, by looking unflinchingly to His most Divine

it alludes to the burning bush in which God revealed himself (Ex. 3:2). The fire is also the element which, according to Plato's *Timaeus* (31 b-c), is the first material element of the cosmos, and sets the quiet reign of ideas into motion. The moving fire also has commonalities with the unsettled and undefined matter of the *hyle*. As seen through the fire, the unmoved image begins to move (Tim. 37 d), which is a sign of the deficiency of earthly cognition. All these motifs are entwined with cosmic love, which is the core of Ficino's Neoplatonism.<sup>124</sup>

Ricius' vision of the archetype is an allegory, as is the case with Hildegard of Bingen's visions. Thus the archetype must be explained. This exegesis takes up the first part of the dialogue of the three brothers, then, after the arrival of Gometus, the theological questions are discussed.<sup>125</sup> Ricius explains the triadic structure of his allegory as follows:

1. The highest existence is the unmoveable and inconceivable idea, which is, in the Dionysian manner, either described with negative predicates or by the "way of eminence", e.g. more than beautiful, over-mighty. In this highest form, all predicates join in an undistinguished unity. It is "the unique form, in which the highest man exists uncreated and unmoveable; it is uniform, it does not change in number, and it does not depend on anything".<sup>126</sup>

This first form is not a copy but the image as such, the unity of all forms, the pure form. The unseparated unity of all forms is a predicate of God. In Ricius' vision, the pure form has a divine attribute that Ficino's 'angel' does not have: It is "independens et invariabilis". It can be distinguished from God only if God is characterised by negative predicates. If Ricius' 'archetype' is the divine Oneness as God's outwardly visible hypostasis, then God is completely unrecognisable.

2. The second step reflects the cosmic angel in the mirroring mountain. The receiving mirror shows all the predicates of cosmic man, but the predicates of the copy lack an independent existence. On this level, the first image of Ricius' archetype resembles Ficino's 'angel', featuring his Neoplatonic [unleserlich].Platonising Averroistic intelligence. The image lasts, but the independence is lost: "What is contained in the form of the mountain and the image that contains the oneness, is already changed into a duality; but it still has the gift of invariability, because it stays the same

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comeliness, and copying, as far as possible, and by perfecting its own followers as Divine images, mirrors most luminous, and without flaw [Wis. 7:26], receptive of the primal light and the supremely Divine ray, and devoutly filled with the entrusted radiance, and again, spreading this radiance ungrudgingly to those after it, in accordance with the supremely Divine regulations."

<sup>124</sup> See Festugière, Jean: *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin*. Paris 1941.

<sup>125</sup> See above ch. III, 4,b: Ricius' trinitarian theology.

<sup>126</sup> "Superni hominis forma inproducta & invariabilis extat, uniformis et semper eadem manens numero, nec pendet aliunde." *Ars Cabalistica*, Ed. Pistorius. Basle 1587, rep. Frankfurt 1970, p. 10.



number, although it has lost the attribute of independence.”<sup>127</sup> The independence of the original cosmic man is lost in the mirrored copy, but the “super-eminent exemplary form” persists throughout all emanations.

3. The super-eminent and exemplary form is the ensemble of essential forms. On the third level, this multitude is conceived as movement. It is expelled from its quietude and self-relation by the firestorm of its becoming-corporeal in the manner of ethereal corporeality. Whereas the mirrored form is distinguished from the original by its dependency, the unfortunate moved form is not only dependent, but also a pale copy of the mirrored archetype, a “*tenue simulacrum ab archetypica et speculari forma*”. It is versatile in itself and never remains in the same order. It has a staggering appearance, like the movement of the forms of the sensible things. It is impossible to stabilise the forms in the fire, for the senses cannot penetrate the fiery storm or perceive the idea behind the versatile appearance.

#### b) The Heavenly Flesh of Christ. Ricius' Averroistic Christology

Ricius' archetype describes God's revealed unity, and as such is a vision of the entire cosmologic Logos. Thus Ricius' Christology is encompassed in his vision: Christ is, on the one hand, the inconceivable Logos of the Father, on the other, the one who was incarnated. Here Ricius runs into dogmatic problems, which plague all of Neoplatonic theology. His Christology becomes heretical, for he cannot describe Christ's fleshly humanity. Ricius tries to describe Christology with the figure of emanation, in accordance with his philosophy. It is here that he develops a doctrine that can be described as the “heavenly flesh of Christ”.<sup>128</sup> In his dialogue, Ricius tries to explain philosophically the Apostles' Creed. One line in this confession of faith is “*Et incarnatus est ex Maria virgine*”. To explain the process by which Christ is made flesh, Ricius presents two philosophical arguments: “By these words two opinions are expressed, the first of which seems to be unacceptable and absolutely incredible, namely that the Son of God who is himself God, was born from a woman's womb. In that case a mortal man, the last creature, would have been created in the same manner as the creator

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 10: “*Quae vero monti inest forma, atque imago, unum quidem in se retinet, alterum ambitet, inuariabilitatis quidem donum seruat, quod perpetuo eadem manet numero: amittit uero independentiae munus, eo quod ab ipsa supereminente & exemplari forma maneat per omne momentum*”.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. ch. 4, 16. This doctrine was later shared by Caspar Schwenckfeld; see Schoeps, Hans Joachim: *Vom himmlischen Fleisch Christi. Eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Tübingen 1951. *Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte* 195/196, esp. pp. 51ff. Furcha, Edward J.: *Schwenckfeld's Concept of the New Man. A Study in the Anthropology of Caspar von Schwenckfeld as Set Forth in His Major Theological Writings*. Pennsburg, PA. 1970, pp. 89ff. Sciegienny, Andre: *Homme charnel, homme spirituel. Etude sur la Christologie de Caspar Schwenckfeldt*. Wiesbaden 1975.

and the origin of all things.”<sup>129</sup> With the refutation of this alternative, Ricius leaves the realm of philosophical and theological orthodoxy, since he denies the dogma of Christ’s real birth and of his real humanity. For him, a spiritual virgin birth seems more acceptable, and so he follows Philo’s pattern of the twofold Adam. The first Christ, the Logos, through which the world was created, cannot possibly be the same figure as the man who was formed from dust and clay on the sixth day of creation and was brought to life by God’s breathing into his nose. Therefore, St. Paul’s statement about Christ being the second Adam can only be related to the primordial Adam, to the archetype of the Word as described in Ricius’ vision. Thus Christ becomes a purely spiritual being. Ricius declares that the earthly existence of Christ is not an essential part of the Apostolic Creed. It is not imaginable to him “that God exists in one and the same person as God and as man. Nonetheless one can believe in Christ as a weak and mortal man, even if this is not necessary for salvation. It is sufficient to believe in God as the creator of the universe, in his Trinity and Unity, and that in him alone human blessedness and eternal salvation exists.”<sup>130</sup> Ricius’ heterodox solution is as follows: Christ’s nature is connected to human nature, but only in a spiritual way. He is the mediator of the Father and shows himself in the recognition of the truth. This Christ is indiscernible from Averroistic intelligence, and Ricius admits this freely. “In book 12 of his ‘De divina sapientia’ Aristotle and even more fully his interpreter Averroes teach<sup>131</sup> that the human intellect is united with the very principle from which heaven and earth depend; and Averroes means that this unity is a connection which, like a living flame nourished from wood, does not constitute a new numeric unity. And therefore I do not know by which random law it is claimed that God and man constitute a numeric unity.”<sup>132</sup> God’s Christological relationship to the world is therefore explained in the following way: “If we presuppose this close relationship and reflect upon it, it becomes obvious that the intellectual matter (i.e. the human mind) is in the same way united to the intelligible forms as the corporeal matter is united with its forms for the sake of its new scope. Thus a unique creating God exists with the man as one numeric substance, as the same Person and Hypostasis.”<sup>133</sup> Christ is the universal man and the universal soul,

<sup>129</sup> *Ars Cabalistica* p. 36.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36: “Alterum est, dato & amisso eundem numero & persona Deum hominemque existere: cur tamen in Iesum Christum caducum & mortalem hominem credere liceat, nedum necesse sit ad salutem. Quin satis sit credere in deum creatorem universi, trinum & unum, in quo solo posita est omnis humana beatitudo & sempiterna salus.”

<sup>131</sup> See *Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis*, vol. VIII. Venetiis apud Juntas 1562-74, repr. Frankfurt 1962. Met XII, esp. fol 322r. See also, *Epitome librorum Metaphysicae*, *ibid.* vol. VIII. fol. 356v.

<sup>132</sup> *Ars Cabalistica* p. 36.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* “Si firma consideratione superposito a nobis cardine, mentem reuoluas, uidelicet, quod eodem tramite intellectiua materia (id est, intellectus humanus) unitur formis

and he informs the universe all the way down to the individuals: "In this way the corporeal matter, united with the best sensual forms, constitutes the intellectual soul and is one and the same with it, dear Philaletes, although the body is weak and mortal, the soul, however, rational and immortal."<sup>134</sup> Ricius draws this Christological conclusion: "Therefore one must admit that the intellectual matter (that is the human mind) is one personal and numerical unity with God, the creator of the intelligible forms."<sup>135</sup> This is the decisive argument: Christ is the human form of the intellectual sphere. As intellect, he constitutes the unity between God and man. This is Christological Averroism.

The Averroistic intellect describes the sphere in which the truths are united and in which the human intellect participates. From the Neoplatonic point of view, God emanates in his intellect, the *nous*, and this is the Christological spiritual reality above individual souls. Ricius' archetype, the Sophia, and the *intellectus agens* cannot really be distinguished.<sup>136</sup> This is a Neoplatonic train of thought: God's first emanation is Christ, the *forma formarum*. Christ, God's archetypal partaking of the world, is also the *nous*, the Averroistic intelligence. As the receptacle of forms, Christ is passive. But he is active in his informing of the souls of rational individuals, who are spiritual and human beings. These souls are passive, insofar as they are the matter of the intellect; they are active insofar as they inform corporeal matter. Thus the souls as spiritual matter are united with crude corporeal matter.

These are the presuppositions necessary for understanding the mediating spiritual body, the intellectual Christ, as the creating and knowledge-imparting Logos of the macrocosm. This Logos is the mediator between God and coarse, fallen, and sinful matter. With his spiritual body, Christ "mediates between the first matter and the human intellect, because it is necessary for the unity of the first matter and the human intellect that this matter assumes something from the corporeal parts of the universe (or something similar in proportion). Hence results the image of the corporeal machine of the universe, from which the Arab Al Rhazali says: 'Man is a summit and a small picture of the universe.'"<sup>137</sup>

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intelligibilibus, quo & corporea materia formis unitur sensibilium ad nutum reuincens, Deum creatorem cum homine idem suppositum numero, eandemue personam seu hypostasim existere."

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 36f.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 37: "Quapropter fateri oportet, ipsam quoque intellectualem materiam (humanam scilicet intellectum) cum optimo intelligibilium formarum Deo creatore, unam personam fieri numero."

<sup>136</sup> Ricius here quotes Athanasius, who stated that God and man are united in Christ, like the soul is united with the body (Ibid. p. 37). This is the core of Ricius' debate with Johann Egck on the "anima mundi".

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

The Christological mediation between macro- and microcosm is described as a process of mirroring from the upper to the lower levels of the universe. Christ, who contains all good attributes, and who is in us, is the “homo intus et futurus”, the inner model and the future Messiah: “There is only one in the whole genus of mortals who accumulates all endowed human virtues and perfections; and therefore he is the Son of God and the future man, in whom necessarily all human perfections are assembled; and he can only exist once.” This typological man is Christ, and for Ricius, he is not the historical person, but the future man. The relationship to Ricius’ vision of the archetype is clear: “The best order is that in which the order of the first being and of all things shines; this is the order of the whole, which is permeated by ideal reason, and which exists on the mountain of the creator of the universe.”<sup>138</sup> This archetypal existence is the coming Christ, but also appears, mediated through the Word, even in the tiniest microcosm.

Ricius recognises only a cosmic Christ, a Christ in us, and a final Messiah; he does not accept the redeemer on the cross. The typology of trinitarian self-production remains decisive for his theology. The *vigor essendi*, the power of the Father, called itself into defined being through the Father’s recognition of himself in the Son. The unity of the Father and the Son is represented in a third hypostasis as the Holy Spirit. From this theology of the Trinity, a Christology of creation follows, which, for Ricius, excludes a theology of redemption, admitting only a Neoplatonic Christology of mediation. Ricius’ Christology is inner-trinitarian, cosmological, intellectual, and messianic, but does not include a theology of the cross.

### 13. THE THREEFOLD MAN OF PARACELSUS (1493-1541)

Paracelsus’ sources will possibly never be completely reconstructed,<sup>139</sup> but this is probably not necessary. As with all Christian Neoplatonists, it was characteristic for him to syncretistically mix all sorts of theological and

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>139</sup> For a Paracelsus bio-bibliography see Peuckert, Will Erich: Theophrastus Paracelsus. Leipzig 1944. Pagel, Walter: Das medizinische Weltbild des Paracelsus, seine Zusammenhänge mit Neuplatonismus und Gnosis. Wiesbaden 1962. Kämmerer, Ernst Wilhelm: Das Leib-Seele-Geist Problem bei Paracelsus und einigen Autoren des 17. Jahrhunderts. Wiesbaden 1971. Goldammer, Kurt: Paracelsus in neuen Horizonten. Gesammelte Aufsätze. Vienna 1986. Goldammer, Kurt: Die göttliche Magierin Natur. Religion, Naturmagie und die Anfänge der Naturwissenschaften vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Renaissance. Stuttgart 1991. Telle, Joachim (ed.): Parerga Paracelsica. Stuttgart 1991.

philosophical approaches, as long as they fulfilled two criteria: They had to be monotheistic, and they had to deal with the theology of creation.

Along with trinitarian theology, it was in the theology of creation that Neoplatonism and Christian doctrine complemented each other. In the theology of creation, Philo's exegesis of the first, primordial Adam was particularly tenacious. Through its combination of the Platonic doctrine of ideas with the dogma of creation it provided a philosophical legitimization of the book of Genesis. This interpretation suited the typology of St. Paul's theology, which combined the first and second Adam, i.e. Adam and Christ. The cosmic Christology of the Neoplatonic tradition had been adopted and developed in the Middle Ages through Eriugena and Hildegard of Bingen, through Alan of Lille and Nicholas of Cusa. Neoplatonic philosophy was treated in Paracelsus' time by Ficino and Paulus Ricius in a prophetic, philosophical, and cabalistic manner. The Nestorian tendencies of this theology were widely accepted in the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; Christ was seen as an ethereal man who mediated between God and humans and was prefigured in the Platonic soul of the universe. All this, along with the doctrine of the seminal reasons of the world as located in the stars, was accepted as the typological participation of all men in Christian revelation, which had illuminated ancient pagan theology and philosophy.

With the title of his "*Astronomia Magna, or the Complete Philosophia Sagax of the Great and Small World*" (1537),<sup>140</sup> Paracelsus simply situates himself in an old and distinguished tradition. The astronomical medicine Paracelsus propagates is also well suited to the typological context of the analogies between the heavenly world of primordial reasons and their earthly realizations. Hildegard of Bingen and the School of Albert the Great had argued in this tradition, and the third book of Ficino's "*De vita coelitus comparanda*" in particular contains many of the ideas Paracelsus shared.<sup>141</sup>

Nonetheless, Paracelsus' Christology has its own appeal. His figures of thought are complex. He always combines the theory of creation with the theology of sin. He continually emphasises the partaking of human knowledge in God's creation, but he recognises fallen nature and the rotten, wicked human sciences – his particular perspective on scholasticism.

The title of Paracelsus' "*Philosophia adepta*" suggests its nature as a philosophy of participation and reception, as partaking of the divine light, or 'Sagax', Wisdom: "Firstly I must praise the Sagax, since what is natural God gives and has given through the firmament, and since the firmament is the natural light, and man has his light from the firmament."<sup>142</sup> This firmamental

<sup>140</sup> *Astronomia magna oder die ganze Philosophia Sagax der großen und kleinen Welt. Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 12. Berlin 1929.

<sup>141</sup> See above chap. 5, 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Astronomia magna oder die ganze Philosophia Sagax, Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 12, p. 3.

light radiates from Wisdom through the firmament down to earth. And therefore it is obvious for Paracelsus “that all natural art and wisdom come and flow from the stars. Everything that is taught to man by the natural light comes from the nature of the stars. So behold that point that every natural art and wisdom has been given to man through the stars, and we are the stars’ students, and the stars are our teachers.”<sup>143</sup>

The plenitude of the stars is not exhausted by astronomy and astrology, but contains the entirety of all natural wisdom. Beyond this natural knowledge begins religion. Religion and natural light constitute a continuum of science and meaning: “and behold, where astronomy ends, the appropriate religion begins, and without astronomy no art will be perfected. After it the divine Wisdom begins, and then starts the light of nature. For we shall first recognise the natural light, then we are adapted to recognise all things which God works through mankind.”<sup>144</sup>

This concept corresponds with Ficino, who attributed divine Wisdom to his angel, and who had conceived a soul of the world mediating between spiritual and material things, and constituting wisdom and life. Unlike Ficino, Paracelsus relates this soul of the world to the fall of man. After the fall, wisdom takes on a dubious appearance. Holy, unfallen Wisdom “from the light of the Holy Spirit only has one species, this is just and saintly Wisdom.”<sup>145</sup> But this pre-lapsarian Wisdom is lost, and after the fall only natural wisdom remains, the astronomer’s wisdom:

“This wisdom is from the light of nature and has two species, good and evil wisdom; the good one is connected with the eternal, the evil one with the damned.” For Paracelsus, this ambiguity of the natural light is the result of God’s words after the fall: “I regret that I made man”.<sup>146</sup> The creation of “man after the divine image” only holds for Edenic man. After the original fall, this image is divided into a good and an evil one, and the light appears in post-lapsarian ambiguity: “Since man was born from the light of nature, it follows that man knows good and evil. This does not derive from flesh and blood, but from the stars in flesh and blood; this is the treasure, the highest good in nature. Is it not a treasure for man to know the eternal wisdom and to distinguish it from the deadly one? - For he is the image of God. Through it he understands that the natural has no effect on the eternal; therefore he must strive to live according to the image and to discern the deadly wisdom as good and evil.”<sup>147</sup>

The fact that the relationship between good and evil wisdom can be recognised at all constitutes man’s disposition for salvation or for evil; this is

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 8, Gen 6:6.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

the post-lapsarian disposition of man. It is the consequence of God's wrath that there is a separation at all between eternal and temporal, deadly wisdom. But what is the essence of this ambiguity? What makes up the holy and eternal, and what is the "deadly" and temporal image?

It is through astronomy that man is able to understand earthly things. But in order to reach the heavenly things, and to partake of the divine trinitarian structures, he has to go beyond astronomy. Only the divine image is the leading image of the good. The image that leads to evil, however, is the leading image of fallen human nature, "which does not live in paradise but is deadly in the world". This deadly nature of the world which derives from the fall can clearly only be explained by God's wrath.

The leading heavenly image is trinitarian; it represents the first, primordial creation. Here Paracelsus employs a special argument. Probably following Augustine's "De genesi ad litteram" and Avicbron's "fons vitae",<sup>148</sup> he attributes the faculty of spontaneous generation to matter, and locates the 'lux fiat' of the creation as a "light from below" in the Father, the "light from above", however, in the Son, with both united in the Holy Spirit. From these principles, creation emerges: "as they are now two creations, the first is set to the natural light through God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore they learn and they live from the natural light, and it is then from the Holy Spirit that they receive the new creation, which is created through the Holy Spirit in the eternal light; and this light is the image of God [i.e. Christ], from whom it came. So if I write in the natural light of the Father, why should the Son hate or envy me when I use the Son's Wisdom, for they both have an undivided Spirit, which is one in them. Man, however, is twofold, in one part he is deadly and in the other eternal; and every part receives its light, both deadly and eternal, from God, and there is nothing that did not begin in God."<sup>149</sup>

This creation by the power of the Father is conceived as the natural wisdom revealed by creation even after the fall. It is essential for Paracelsus' doctrine that fallen nature conserve the signature derived from the Father and the Spirit. This nature is, however, not eternal like divine Wisdom, although

<sup>148</sup> On Augustine see: ch. V, 6, Salomon ibn Gabirol: Fons vitae I, 8.

<sup>149</sup> Philosophia Sagax pp. 8f.: "iezo wie die zwei geschöpf seien, ist das erste durch got den vater inkraft des heiligen Geistes gesetzt zum natürlichen liecht. darumb so sie aus dem natürlichen liecht lernen und leben, aus dem heiligen geist das selbige empfaen, das neue geschöpf geschaffen durch den heiligen geist in das ewige liecht, das ist die biltnus gotes zu bringen, daher sie komen ist. also fellet die biltnis got wider in seine hant und das fleisch wider in die erden, ob ich nun schreib von dem natürlichen liecht des vaters, warumb wolt mich der son hassen oder neiden, so ich des sons weisheit für mich nimb, so sie doch beide einen ungeteilten geist haben und in inen selbst nicht uneins. so doch der mensch zweifach ist, in einem teil tötlich im andern ewig. und ein ieglicher teil nimbt sein liecht von got, das tötlich und das ewig und nichts ist das nicht von got seinen ursprung neme."

the signs of eternal Wisdom remain visible in it. This is indispensable for Paracelsus' medicine. How else could things preserve their signature? How could healing through nature work, if nature did not present the signs of healing and the hallmarks of salvation to those who are granted insight? Only those with insight can recognise the signs of cosmic Wisdom in created nature. For Paracelsus this is the meaning of 'prisca theologia'; the Wisdom of the Father is the precondition of natural medicine, which is effective for heathens as well as for Christians. "Why should I count and judge the Father's light as heathen and take myself for a heathen, whereas I am a Christian and wander in the Christian light; and both are old and new?"<sup>150</sup>

If the light of the Father is the natural light that makes the eternal shine in the power of the Holy Spirit, what is the eternal light? It becomes visible in Paracelsus' cosmic anthropology.

Nature, since it is fallen, does not participate in Christology. For Paracelsus, only man is closely related to Christology. Created man partakes of two worlds, and he consequently has two bodies. Above this corporeal imagery of the cosmos, i.e. above this analogy of microcosm and macrocosm, man is in God's image. "I write from the works that were made by the one who was taught by the Son. But I want to make you learn, too, that two bodies are in man, one from the [four] elements, the other from the stars; and the two bodies are easy to recognise. The elementary body will be brought into the grave by death, and the ethereal body is consumed in the firmament; and the spirit of the image goes to the one whose image it is."<sup>151</sup> This is the topos of man's similarity to God, which Gregory of Nyssa used to Christianise ancient Stoic anthropology. Man was created in three forms: as God's image, as a celestial, ethereal body, and as an earthly, elementary body. The body of the four elements is the earthly body, and the elements are intrinsically organised by a ruler. "First the elements were created, and the elements are nothing but a subject through which something will be worked out; this means that they are the things in which the *vivum* is laid. It is this movement that rules the body; consequently, it is the ruler and sovereign in the elements who drives out what is in them. It drives the fire to burn, it drives the earth to bear fruit, it drives the water to preserve fish, it drives the air of the whole earth, drives sun and moon and all the stars in their course. This is the essence that goes out from the body into its effect and which is forced [by the stars]; and according to this essence the body is used and it can be worked out by the art."<sup>152</sup> This *vivum* is the 'hegemonicon' of the Stoic philosophy of nature and the developmental scope of the seminal reasons. Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont will later call it "Archaeus".

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. pp. 14f.



This *hegemonicon*, the ruler, is the natural scope of every growth, and determines the natural development to the maximum benefit of every being. It is the internal motion of every being's *entelechia*. This elementary life directs every becoming and decaying natural being; the life of everything is defined by this ruler. Plants and animals live through it, and it of course governs the human body as well.

For Paracelsus as for Ficino, the sidereal nature of man is defined by his cosmic soul. Paracelsus describes this sidereal nature through the creation of the cosmic Adam from the "limus terrae". This corresponds quite precisely to the *quinta materia* in Ficino's "De vita coelitus comparanda"<sup>153</sup>. This *limus terrae*, the edge of the earth, can be understood as the celestial ether, as the most subtle matter. Paracelsus adds to this celestial matter the living matter that derives from the Father, and 'limus' also includes the stuff and the clay from which God created Adam. The Vulgate has the following version: "Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem e limo terrae, et spiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem". This very stuff, writes Paracelsus, "is *limus terrae*, and *limus terrae est maior mundus*. And so man is created from heaven and earth, that is from the creation above and from the creation below. And since the *limus* has been taken from heaven, it is also a subject of astronomy; consequently, astronomy and philosophy should not be distinguished from another, for man was made from earth and heaven. The *limus terrae* is an extract from the firmament and from all elements; so if you want to understand what *limus terrae* is, it is an extract from all bodies and creations."<sup>154</sup>

The matter from which Adam was made contains the four earthly elements and the fifth, ethereal element. This matter represents the whole world, and Adam was created to rule it. Therefore Adam is the summit of creation. All things created before him must be represented in Adam, summarizing the whole world. "First God created heaven and earth and all creatures, and he did so through the Word, one after the other. Scripture indicates what was created each day, and that man was created on the last day, because the matter did not exist before from which he would be made, for he was to be made from the *limus*. Therefore all had been made before, from which the *limus* would be taken."<sup>155</sup> In his pre-lapsarian state, the harmony of man and nature was guaranteed by the fact that man contained both heavenly and earthly natures, that he recognised them, served himself with them, and enjoyed them. This is Paracelsus' interpretation of the biblical sentence "and God saw that it was good": "However, since everything was created well, and acknowledging, moreover, that every thing

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<sup>153</sup> See below ch. 5, 10.

<sup>154</sup> *Philosophia Sagax* pp. 33f.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34.

had been created according to its essence, and that it could be enjoyed and used, God thought it good to create man in addition to these things. He was to have understanding, knowledge, and the usage of all things. In him he wanted to perfect the wisdom of the stars, so that nothing would remain concealed, and everything that was laid in the stars would come to the light of day. Through this there could be skilled crafts, the arts could recognise all the secrets in nature and in the mines - everything would be revealed clearly to the wisdom of man. Therefore man was created to perceive and to recognise how well God introduced him into paradise.”<sup>156</sup>

For Paracelsus, the harmony between microcosm and macrocosm is closely connected to this state of creation. He emphasises this connection in his doctrine of human wisdom as dependent on the first Adam, created from heavenly and earthly matter: “Thus Adam came into the world, and so he became a philosopher (*weltweis*), and all his children lived with him according to the firmament and to the elements<sup>157</sup>, and so we here are all from Adam.”<sup>158</sup> Paracelsus’ example of those beings who do not derive from Adam, and therefore do not partake of his astrological wisdom, are the newly discovered Americans, whom he doubts to be real Adamic human beings: “And so I cannot suppress making a short pronouncement on those who have been found in the hidden islands and those who are still hidden. As to whether they derive from Adam, it may be found that Adam’s children have not come to the hidden islands; but it may be considered that those people derive from another Adam; and then it would hardly be the case that they share our flesh and blood and are therefore our friends. And it must be pondered that if Adam had remained in Paradise, perhaps another Adam would have come who did not possess God’s image, like those from the new islands.”<sup>159</sup>

Be it as it may with the Americans – for Paracelsus Adamic man becomes man only through the image. This ‘image’ is above nature and therefore cannot be recognised by philosophers; it is above the ethereal sphere and therefore astronomers cannot grasp it. The image’s spirit, which is the life that God breathed into man’s nose, his immortal soul, is the receptacle of revelation and of history. Paracelsus distinguishes strictly

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid. p. 34. Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>157</sup> On this see ch. IX, *Translatio sapientiae*.

<sup>158</sup> *Philosophia Sagax* p. 34.

<sup>159</sup> *Philosophia Sagax* p. 35: “und so mag ich das nit unterlassen, von denen ein kleine meldung zu tun, die in verborgenen insuln gefunden seind worden und noch verborgen sind, das sie von Adam zu sein geglaubt mögen werden mag sichs nit befinden, das Adams kinder seind komen in die verborgenen insulen, sonder wol zu bedenken, das dieselbigen leut von einem andern Adam seind; dan dahin wird es schwerlich komen, das sie fleisch und bluts halben uns gefreund sein. und das ist auch wol zu gedenken, were Adam im paradeis bliben, es were villeicht ein ander Adam worden, doch villeicht nit mit der biltus gottes, als dan die neuen insulen seind.”

between the reasons of nature and history. The history of salvation is a matter of faith and of revelation. It is a distinction of man that he can receive and believe in this history of revelation, for "he should live after the image".

For Paracelsus, this capacity for belief raises Christian revelation above all 'heathen' philosophies of nature and above all astronomy. It is the only immortal part of man's thrice-divided soul: "The spirit of the image is hidden to the whole of astronomy; it is part of those who speak in God and from his light and spirit. Therefore the astronomer can neither speak of Christ nor of his apostles or the prophets. Concerning the image there is nothing commended to astronomy. Christ is supernatural, i.e. he is above nature and nature is below him; he is the second person in the Trinity and creator of all things; he creates a new heaven when he wants it. Therefore the astronomer neither speaks anything of Christ's prophecies, nor does he deal with the apocalypse. Here a distinction can be made: Christ and his followers announce the times of the nations; the astronomer, however, the times of nature. There is a great difference and behold it surely, you naturalists and theologians."<sup>160</sup> Paracelsus here leaves the question unanswered as to when the Lord is to come a second time.

## 14. JAKOB BÖHME'S THEOLOGY OF CREATION

### a) Sophia and Adam

Unlike Paracelsus, Böhme does not emphasise the medical implications of his philosophy. He is interested rather in the inner-divine life and its expressions.<sup>161</sup> In this regard Böhme is, as it were, more cabalistic than Paracelsus; he shares Reuchlin's conception of the dynamic-trinitarian Christian cabala. Therefore the role that his 'Sophia' plays is not identical with Paracelsus' threefold man. This is also true for Böhme's Adam. It is nonetheless quite clear that both argue from the tradition of a Neoplatonic, Christian interpretation of creation.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. pp. 35, 36.

<sup>161</sup> See Hamberger, Julius: *Die Lehren des deutschen Philosophen Jakob Böhme*. Munich 1844, repr. Hildesheim 1975, esp. ch. 7: "Von der ursprünglichen Herrlichkeit des Menschen, von der demselben gegebenen hohen Bestimmung vor dem Sündenfalle" (pp. 93-113). Benz, Ernst: *Der vollkommene Mensch nach Jakob Böhme*. Stuttgart 1937. Id.: *Der Mythos vom Urmenschen*. Munich 1955. Id.: *Der Prophet Jakob Böhme. Eine Studie über den Typus nachreformatorisches Prophetentums*. Wiesbaden 1959. Wollgast, Siegfried: *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung*. Berlin 1988, pp. 677-740. Weeks, Andrew: *Boehme. An Intellectual Biography*. New York 1991 (with a particular emphasis on Böhme's heliocentric cosmology). Haas, Alois Maria und Garewic, Jan (eds.): *Gott, Natur und Mensch in der Sicht Jacob Böhm's und seiner Rezeption*. Wiesbaden 1994 (Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Barockforschung 24).

“From the mystery of the Father the creation originated through nature”, Böhme writes.<sup>162</sup> This formulation articulates the act that transcends God’s inner-trinitarian life; it is the act of creative separation between God and extra-divine existence. What is meant by the statement “creation originated through nature”? Obviously ‘nature’ is something that existed before creation, the reason of creation, its *indoles*, its essence, the original image of the creation in God. This nature before creation is God’s first step outside of himself. Böhme calls this step ‘virgin Sophia’; she is the outside of God’s self-contemplation, his hypostasis, and also the revelation of himself to his creatures: “This virgin is God’s similarity and His Wisdom, in which the Spirit perceives itself and always and eternally discloses its miracles; and the more it discloses, the more is inside, for Wisdom is immeasurable without ground and number, as is God’s eye through which he looks at his creations and through which his creation looks at him. Nothing is equal to her, and nothing will be found to resemble her, because she is the eternal, unique resemblance of divinity, and God’s Spirit is her essence.”<sup>163</sup>

Resemblance is not identity, but image, comparable to the moved image of the unmoved ideas in Plato’s *Timaeus*. This explains the mediating position of the virgin Sophia who is suspended between divine and human natures. Böhme’s text characterises the virgin and shows her perspective on creation. She is not only God’s vivid glory, but also “a circle and model that opens our minds, so that we see her and see God in her; for our will has been thrown into her, and she stands in our will. Therefore we speak of God and see Him in her, as in our property, according to his concealment to human beings; and this view is highly valuable.”<sup>164</sup>

The virgin wisdom is the hypostasis through which God works his creation from out of himself. She is God’s Wisdom, making him visible to mankind. God’s externalisation from his trinitarian existence into his Sophia remains a mystery. It is God’s self-revelation through the mirror. This occurs first in the ‘models’, which God conceived and which became the accessible, archetypal truths. Second, it is worked out in the process of exterior creation. Why God took this step remains a mystery. But the way he revealed himself is witnessed by creation itself. The reason for existence lies in the *Ungrund* of his will; this is God’s very mystery.

One of Böhme’s “mystical points”, “On mystery. What it is”, shows this clearly:

“1. Mystery is nothing other than the magic [working, acting] will, which still lies caught in desire. It may fashion itself in the mirror of wisdom in

<sup>162</sup> “Aus dem Mysterio des Vaters ist die Schöpfung durch die Natur geurständet”, 40 Fragen von der Seele I, 120, Werke, vol. 3, p. 34.

<sup>163</sup> 40 Fragen von der Seele I, 20.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

whatever it wants. And as it fashions itself in the tincture [this is the realm between ideal and real being; something like ethereal prime matter], so it is fixed and formed from Magic and brought into a being.

2. For 'Mysterium magnum' is nothing else than the hiddenness of the Deity, together with the being of all beings, from which one mysterium proceeds after another, and each mysterium is the mirror and model of the other. And it is the great wonder of eternity, wherein all is included, and from eternity has been seen in the mirror of wisdom. And nothing comes to pass that has not from eternity been known in the mirror of wisdom."<sup>165</sup>

Through this wisdom the world is produced in its essence and being. Only in this outward step does sensual reality emerge, and this occurs through the 'verbum fiat'. The process of becoming sensually real is the process Böhme calls 'Scientz'. The term is composed from the German 'zusammen-ziehen' (to draw together) and the Latin 'scientia' (wisdom). The process of 'Scientz' entails the reduction of the many possibilities of a species so that it can become a real being. This is also the process of the 'fiat': "Since the models were perceived eternally in Wisdom, they were seized now by the fiat of God's willing Spirit; and their essence did not consist of strange matter, but of God's essence, which is the Father's nature."<sup>166</sup>

The matter treated here belongs to the theology of the Logos from the prologue of St. John's Gospel and to the "let there be" of the book of Genesis; it is part of a spiritualistic theory of language. The linguistic conception of nature is the precondition of its reality. The model is as follows: In their nature, constituted as *hyle* and *morphe*, language and form are identical. The denoting word not only defines the thing, but also reconstitutes it from the spirit of divine language. In this process of reconstitution, the divine, creating word is the primary reason of the thing. The human word imitates this process in reduced, secondary form, by denoting the divine names of the essences a second time and representing divine creation. "It was the 'Mysterium magnum', where all things stood in wisdom, in a spiritual form, in a wrestling sport of love; not in the form of creaturely spirits, but in such a model that wisdom has thus in the power sported with herself. This model the one will has comprised in the world, and suffered the attraction to work freely, so that every individual power in the separation might be brought into a form according to its quality."<sup>167</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Von sechs mystischen Punkten, VI, 1, 2. Böhme, Six Theosophical Points and other Writings. Newly trans. into English by John Rolleston Earle. London 1919, p. 136.

<sup>166</sup> Menschwerdung I, 2, 6.

<sup>167</sup> Gnadenwahl, IV, 12, trans. Rolleston pp. 50f.

## b) Adam and Christ

For Böhme, Christology is not essentially rooted in Christ's earthly life. Rather he sees Christ in a kind of triadic typology, which makes conceivable what "Christ in us" means. The mystery of God's becoming man had already occurred in God's externalisation into the virgin Sophia and finally into the creation of the world.

The virgin Sophia is characterised by her threefold nature: "The image of this highly precious person is distinguished: First the word of the Deity. It received its image-form eternally in the Father, and did not receive any other when it became man; it remained in the Father, where it was from the beginning in its seat. The second image was naturally made in the hour of the Angel's greeting, when the virgin Mary spoke to the angel: 'Let it be to me according to your word' [Luk.[Luke 1:38]. In the fulfilment of the same word, the imaging occurred in the element, which was the one of Adam before the fall. .... And the third imaging takes place at the same moment as the second, and this is the imaging in the earthly elements, as an earthly seed would be a seed from which one whole child grows."<sup>168</sup>

To understand Böhme's conception of Christ, the typology of Adam is required:

1. He is God's image and so, in a weak way, the same image the Father creates in himself in the process of trinitarian constitution: "In His introduction of this beautiful heavenly image through God's spirit, Adam also received God's living word; this was the nourishment of his soul".<sup>169</sup>

2. This word is the inner man, God's image, which shall rule the outward man and makes him glow in love, although he still suffers from the fall: "Thus the inward man held the outward captive in itself, and penetrated it, as a fire through-heats an iron, so that it seems as if it were all fire; but when the fire goeth out, then the dark, swart iron is manifest."<sup>170</sup> The image is clearly dualistic. The fire of love glows through the dark iron of corporeality, but when the fall occurs in paradise the dark iron reappears. Where did it come from? It must be a product of the original separation of God and the world, which Böhme described as the fourth quality.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, it remains one of the crucial difficulties of these spiritualistic interpretations of the world that they do not provide a sufficient explanation as to where corporeality comes from. When it does appear, however, it becomes the realm of the spiritual drama of asceticism.

3. Adam has a twofold nature. He is both corporeal and spiritual, for he is the archetype of Christ, and at the same time the archetype of the world and

<sup>168</sup> Drey Principien Göttlichen Wesens 18, pp. 48-50.

<sup>169</sup> Menschwerdung I, 3, p. 24.

<sup>170</sup> *Mysterium Magnum* 16, 7, trans. John. Sparrow (1654). Repr. London 1965, p. 89.

<sup>171</sup> See above Ch III, 5, Christian Cabala I.

of creation: "Thus the inward man stood in heaven, his essentials were paradise, the glamour in his inward eye was majesty, an uncorruptible body that understood God's and the angels' language, the language of nature. It can be seen in Adam that he could give names to all creatures and to every thing according to its essence and property."<sup>172</sup> However, as Böhme says, Adam's soul stands in a threefold 'fiat' and consequently has a threefold meaning: "The first is its corporeal property, the other comes from a different principle, from God's will, which stands in the soul". The soul is the master of the body and is connected to God's will. The third principle is the eschatological direction of the soul, by which "all desires are set into the light"<sup>173</sup>, that is to say they are illuminated by divine splendour. This constitutes the final conversion of every desire into God's glory. This fulfilling of desire was, according to Böhme, God's original plan for Adam. But in spite of this tropological orientation towards God's glory, Adam's soul turned to itself: "The soul of Adam was captivated with the creation of the formed word in its separation, and was cognizant in itself of the very same power of differentiation, and elevated itself into a longing for separation"<sup>174</sup>. This original wickedness corresponds with the process of separation between creator and creation, the dramatic fourth quality:<sup>175</sup> "For the soul wished to taste how it would be if the temperament should disunite and fall asunder, that is, how heat and cold, wet and dry, hard and soft, sour, sweet, bitter, and acid, and the other properties, would taste in distinction. This did God forbid him".<sup>176</sup>

Christ's nature takes God's original plan for Adam up again and leads fallen, cosmic and human nature back to its origin and scope. In this sense, Christ is a second Adam. In Christ's incarnation and resurrection, the apotheosis comes to pass which originally was foreseen for Adam. As such, Christ is the second Adam in paradise and opens up the perspective onto mankind's eternal bliss.

Christology plays a threefold role in Böhme's theology: 1. in the inner-trinitarian process, 2. in Adam who is the cosmically visual image of the creative Logos, and 3. in the earthly Christ. This is Christ's threefold nature: divine, sidereal, earthly. Through this threefold nature he receives a cosmic dimension, which is the personal dimension in every man as well. Since Christ has cosmic dimensions, he must be in every being, and therefore he is

<sup>172</sup> 40 Fragen von der Seele Question 4, 7.

<sup>173</sup> Hamberger, Böhme 101, i.e.: *Das umgewandte Auge. Sämtliche Werke* vol. 3. Stuttgart-Bad-Cannstatt 1989, p. 181.

<sup>174</sup> Gnadenwahl VI, 33, trans. Earle: "die selb Szientz vergaffete sich an der Creation des geformten wortes in seiner schiedlichkeit und wuste in sich eben auch den selen gewalt zu untter schidlichkeit und Er hub sich in lust zur schidlichkeit." (Urschriften II, 59).

<sup>175</sup> See above ch. III, 5.

<sup>176</sup> Gnadenwahl III, 35. trans. Earle, p. 44.

the inner man as well, since the inner man is the image of the cosmic word. "For the Word has become man everywhere, and behold, the Word is revealed everywhere in the divine Wisdom in which resides our eternal humanity; for we shall stand eternally in the same corporeal [i.e. ethereal] being in which the divine virgin [Sophia] stands: we must adopt God's virgin, for Christ had adopted her."<sup>177</sup>

This heavenly, ethereal corporeality of Christ - a doctrine Böhme shares with Caspar Schwenckfeld<sup>178</sup> - defines Böhme's cosmological Christology, in which the first Adam, Sophia, and Christ are equated. The earthly existence of Christ is only the third appearance of the divine type of Christ: "So let us rightly understand why God's son Christ became man. He did not only become flesh in the virgin Mary so that His godhead or divine essence would be stuck there and imprisoned; no, behold, man, this has another form. Do not let yourself be tricked by your reason; we acknowledge differently. God does not live in one place, He is rather the plenitude of all things, and therefore He did not move a bit, for God is not separable, but complete everywhere. Wherever He reveals Himself, He is completely apparent, and so He is not measurable, He cannot be found in a certain place, rather He makes a place for himself in one of His creatures, and so He is beside creation and outside of creation."<sup>179</sup>

## 15. ABRAHAM HERRERA'S ADAM KADMON

When Abraham Cohen Herrera wrote his "Porta Coelorum" at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, he could build upon the foundation of an elaborate cosmic anthropology, as it appeared in the doctrine of Sophia, of the Angel, or of cosmic Christology. Neoplatonic cosmic anthropology, as could be found in Nicholas of Cusa, had been interpreted by Ricius as an ethereal Christology - an approach shared by Schwenckfeld, Paracelsus, and Böhme. Following Proclus and Al Rhazali, Ficino interpreted the doctrine of the angel's primordial wisdom along cosmological lines.

In Jewish tradition, the doctrine of the world's anthropological constitution was worked out in a broad and systematic way. The 'tree' of the Sephiroth, as it was understood since the book of Bahir,<sup>180</sup> had been

<sup>177</sup> Menschwerdung I, 8, 12.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. ch. 4.12 b.

<sup>179</sup> Menschwerdung I, 8, 7.

<sup>180</sup> Scholem, Gershom: *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabala*. Berlin 1962. Dan, Joseph (ed.): *The Early Cabala*. New York, Mahwah, Toronto 1986. *Das Buch Bahir*, ed. Scholem 1920/21. Darmstadt 1970.



explained in the book of Sohar,<sup>181</sup> and was systematised in Joseph Gikatilla's "Porta Lucis".<sup>182</sup> Moreover, the key term of the deuterocanonic "Wisdom of Solomon" had parallels in the second sephira, in Bina, the sephiroth's wisdom.<sup>183</sup> Joseph Gikatilla and Reuchlin followed Proclus' doctrine that space emerged from a single point.<sup>184</sup> This doctrine was free of Christological implications, and had the advantage that the topos of the plenitude of the beginning could be adopted and used in an eschatological sense. This plenitude had been lost in Adam's fall, and therefore must be restored with the Messiah's coming.

The plenitude of the beginning appears only in the unfolding of the primordial world, and therefore can only be understood through the emergence of the Sephiroth. Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, in his "Kabala Denudata" (1684), made, along with Abraham Herrera's "Porta Coelorum", the Sohar accessible to the Christian world in a Latin translation and compilation, and thereby introduced 'Adam Kadmon' as the fulfilment of the tree of Sephiroth, which also represented man. "Why is Adam the first? For it is known that the mystery of equality is the arrangement of Adam's, i.e. the first man's, person: Keter is the head, Kochma and Bina are the shoulders etc".<sup>185</sup> In his compilation of the Sohar, Knorr sees Adam as the

<sup>181</sup> See Lachower-Tishby: *The Wisdom of the Sohar*, Oxford, 21990.

<sup>182</sup> Gikatilla, Joseph: *Gates of Light, Sha 'are Orah*. Trans. with an Introduction by Avi Weinstein. San Francisco 1994.

<sup>183</sup> On the cabalistic context see Scholem, Gershom: *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit. Studien zu Grundbegriffen der Kabala*. Zurich 1962, pp. 135-191: Schechina; das passiv weibliche Moment in der Gottheit.

<sup>184</sup> Steucheiosis Theologike § 129. On the context see ch. 6.: *Spiritual spaces*, esp. 6. 1 and 6. 2.

<sup>185</sup> Knorr von Rosenroth: *Kabala denudata* 2. Frankfurt 1684, p. 251: "Quare autem vocatur Adam primus? Quia notorium est, quod mysterium bilancis sit dispositio personae Adami sive Hominis: Keter enim est caput, Chochma & Binah sunt Humeri etc." This is not the first translation of the Sohar into Latin. Guillaume Postel translated the book in the 16th century, but it was never printed. See Gilly, Carlos: *Spanien und der Basler Buchdruck bis 1600. Ein Querschnitt durch die spanische Geistesgeschichte aus der Sicht einer europäischen Buchdruckerstadt*. Basle 1985. p. 76f. In the edition of Lachower-Tishby: *The Wisdom of the Sohar*, Oxford 21990, the term "Adam Kadmon" does not occur, but the matter is explained. Vol. 1, pp. 259-261: "Elijah began and said: Master of the worlds, You are one but not in number (21) the unity of *En-Sof* is not a numerical unity; it cannot be followed by a second. In this respect *En-Sof* is differentiated from the *sefirot*, each of which is one in a series of ten. You are the highest of the high, the secret of all secrets; You are altogether beyond the reach of thought. You are He that produces ten *tikkunim*, which we call ten *sefirot*, so that through them You might guide the secret worlds that are not revealed, and the worlds that are revealed. And through them You are concealed (22) from mankind, and You bind them and unite them. Since You are within, whoever separates one of the ten from its fellows is thought of as making a separation in You. (23). These ten *sefirot* follow the order in which they are one long, one short, and one intermediate (24). You are the one who guides them, and there is no one to guide You, neither above, nor below, nor on any side. You have prepared garments of them (25), from which the souls fly to the children of men (26). Several bodies have You prepared for

archetype of the primordial and the coming world, “for there are no scales [i.e. no equality] except after the restitution.”<sup>186</sup> “And this first Adam was created in perfection, also for the sake of his offspring and because he is the first appearance which was not created higher; therefore his name is Adam”.<sup>187</sup> This Adam has a ‘standing’, meaning that he still lives in the plenitude of the beginning. His going out into extra-mental reality ensues from the mystery of God’s name. This process is twofold: first as the beginning of creation, second as the constitution of the house of God. This house of God is represented by God’s people Israel, as far as they feel themselves bound to God’s law, to his written manifestation. After the fall, after the diaspora, and after the persecution, only the ‘Yod’ will remain from the law. But the spark of the *Yod* contains in its beginning the plenitude of God’s name, and from this spark the renewed rise of the house of Israel will emerge. This is the eschatological beginning of the Adam Kadmon in his messianic reappearance. “It is known to us that all worlds under the Abba (Father) consist of the mystery of the Yod. And this is written in the Sohar, chapter Schemod: When the house of the Lord is destroyed, the top of the Yod will be raised, for everything comes from the ability of the Yod in the plenitude of the letter He, which is called the letter of measurement. The letter of measurement is fixed below the first Adam and the spheres of splendour (= Sephiroth). From this everything flows in the foretold manner; it is sent from above.”<sup>188</sup> Knorr von Rosenroth rediscovered these conceptions of the first Adam, as described in the Zohar, in Herrera, and wrote a philosophical summary of the Zohar’s conception of Adam Kadmon in his “Kabala denudata”.<sup>189</sup>

Abraham Cohen Herrera elaborated the cabalistic theories of the primordial Adam and connected them with theories he found in ancient and Renaissance Neoplatonism, and with the speculative theories of space, which he adopted from the doctrine of ‘Zim zum’, as developed by his

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them, which are called ‘body’ in respect of the garments that cover them. And they are named, in this arrangement (27), as follows: *Hesed* - right arm; *Gevurah* - left arm; *Tiferet* - torso; *Nezah* and *Hod* - two legs; *Yesod* - the completion of the body, the sign of the holy covenant (28); *Malkhut* - mouth (29), which we call the oral Torah. The brain is *Hokhmah*, the inner thought; *Binah* is the heart, of which it is said ‘the heart understands’ (30). Of these two it is written, ‘The hidden things belong to the Lord, our God’ (Deuteronomy 29:28). The supernal *Keter* is the crown of royalty (*malkhut*) (31), of which it is said ‘It declares the end from the beginning’ (Isaiah 46:10), and it is the headpiece of the *tefillin* (32). Inwardly it is *Yod*, *He*, *Vav*, *He*, which is the way of emanation (33). It is the watering-place of the tree, with its arms and its boughs, like water that waters the tree, and it grows because of the watering (34).”

<sup>186</sup> Kabala denudata 2, p. 251.

<sup>187</sup> Kabala denudata 2, p. 251.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. 251f.

<sup>189</sup> Knorr’s resume is found in the “6th Dissertation” of the 4. ch. of the Herrera’s “Porta lucis”; Kabala denudata vol. II.

teacher Isaac Luria. This combination must be regarded in the context of the paradoxical sentence of the Book of 24 Philosophers, which claims that God is a sphere the centre of which is everywhere, the periphery nowhere.<sup>190</sup>

Herrera begins by developing the function of the primordial world. Here he adopts the theory of the twofold Adam, as it was first found in Philo (with whom he was probably not familiar), and which was subsequently developed in Jewish and Christian philosophy. The differentiation between the first and the second Adam follows the logic of Neoplatonic philosophy. In his doctrine of the living heavenly water, which is another description of the Virgin Sophia's primordial plenitude, he shares in the European tradition. Herrera ascribes the heavenly waters to Luria, and identifies them as female.<sup>191</sup> His first description of the primordial Adam containing the ten Sephiroth and called 'Adam Kadmon' or 'man' is the following:

1. Just as man is a microcosm, Adam is the macrocosm containing all reasons of the first cause.

2. Just as material man obtains the highest rank among earthly things, Adam Kadmon inhabits it among the beings of the upper world.

3. Just as material man is the end of the whole creation, so divine man is its beginning, according to Prov. 8:22: The Lord created me at the beginning of His work.

4. Just as lower Adam receives everything from all parts of creation, upper Adam endows everything.

5. Just as the lower man is the beginning of the reflected light, the upper one is the beginning of the direct light.

6. The lower man is the end of the descending, the upper man the end of the ascending light.

7. When the upper man moves by the help of the "female waters", all worlds are moved; when the lower works by the help of the earthly waters, all things are perfected.

8. Just as lower man ascends from the lowest matter up to the first cause, the upper descends from the simple and infinite act to the last and most minimal potency.

9. Just as lower man is the end of creation and, in a certain manner, also according to the creator's intention, so upper man is the truth outside God, according to the intention of the infinite.

10. Just as lower man is the dwelling of the Shechina (i.e. the Sphere malchuth) which is ruled and filled by the three worlds (Bería, Jezira, 'Asija), so upper man is the dwelling of the infinite and its highest light, and

<sup>190</sup> *Deus est spera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam*. Livre des XXIV Philosophes, ed. Françoise Hudry. Grenoble 1989, p. 93. For the context see ch. VI.4.

<sup>191</sup> This theory is also found in patristic sources, e.g. in Basilus' commentary on the creation or in Augustine's "De genesi ad literam". See above ch. V, 6.

approaches closely its real image and light, and thereby the treasury of perfections that flow and will flow into the primordial causes, at every time and in every place. He is the second cause and the first master's organ of creation, preservation and perfection of all beings.<sup>192</sup>

This Adam corresponds to the Wisdom who is Solomon's bride,<sup>193</sup> and Adam is also the tree of Sephiroth,<sup>194</sup> represented by the Torah. Thus a universal system of representation emerges. Adam Kadmon is the archetype of cosmic plenitude. He represents the principle from which all things come and to which all things will return. He is the archetype of the unity of creation and its spiritual identity with the law.

For Herrera, Adam Kadmon is even more than this: He is the very structure of space. In his theory of *Zimzum*, Isaac Luria described the space of creation as follows: Since God is all, he had to make possible the space into which creation was to emerge, a space that was not filled by his Deity. The world would be created in this new space. Two converging arguments describe this space. 1) Extension is what God made possible through his withdrawal from parts of his omnipresence. 2) In this space creation occurs in the manner of a bursting point. In its spiritual conception, creation did not need space, but now it turns outward and becomes extended.

Space has a twofold valence. First it is the realm of realization of what had been spiritually preconceived; this occurs in the explosion of the point into extension. Second, space is the realm of God's withdrawal; it is God-forsaken. In it God can only be conceived negatively, in the manner of negative theology. Both conceptions play a role in Herrera's theory of spiritual space. Adam Kadmon is first the plenitude of possibilities, turning outward into reality through God's vigour as represented in the *Yod* of the Tetragram. But God vacates this space, leaving behind only the Torah to worship him.

#### a) Adam as the Potentiality of Space

The plenitude of space, which Adam Kadmon represents, is conceived as being in tension. The space of Adam Kadmon is constructed as a circle, as a line, and as the alphabet. The circularity of the space can be understood as a spherical structure. If the space emerges from the point and extends symmetrically on all sides, then it achieves the form of a globe. In the movement of extension there is also a linear moment, for the periphery of the sphere extends in a straight line from the centre. The emergence of the space occurs through the Word; this is the becoming of space as indicated by

<sup>192</sup> See § 4 of Knorr's summary of Herrera's theory, p. 251.

<sup>193</sup> Herrera quotes Solomon's Wisdom § 15, p. 191.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Böhme's idea of sound<sup>195</sup> producing its own realm. The moment of the working Word becomes apparent again here. Just as in Gicatilla and Reuchlin, the beginning is represented in the *Yod*. By writing the *Yod*, the archetype of becoming out of nothingness becomes visible. Before writing there was nothing. In the writing of the *Yod*, a minimum of the alphabet becomes visible, and from the *Yod* the whole alphabet emerges in its various combinations.<sup>196</sup>

Knorr summarises Herrera as follows:

"In Adam Kadmon there are a space, circles, a straight line, the first Tetragram.

§ 1 After the contraction (Zim-Zum) had happened, awwir Kadmon (original ether) emerged, the first space, a vacuum and the space of all worlds to come. Evidently, this is the substance of Adam Kadmon, through which he received the definition of his being, his life and his thought and the other perfections, which the first cause gave him through the influence of the light.

§ 2 He is given the name of a man, not of the small and imperfect one, but the macrocosmic, perfect and first, who precedes all other beings in perfection, purpose and form.

§ 3 However, through this tiny channel, through which he received, as has been said, not only his being and the perfection of his being in which he exists, but also the ability to produce the other things, his unity is underlined. In a certain way he is united through this unity with the absolute and simple oneness, and this oneness is united with him. From the oneness he receives what it is and what it communicates and pours into the lower grades, or, conversely, the rising and ascent through which it is united with the first oneness.

§ 4 The space remaining always between the En-Sof [the unfathomable One] and Adam Kadmon, signifies the essence [of the Adam Kadmon], because of which he is different and remote from the perfection of his cause; on the contrary he approaches and assimilates for himself the space or the nothing from which he was produced and from which he received his existence. One must know that every being is composed of contrasts and of negation, of that which it received and that which it did not receive.

§ 5 The circles denote his life, since, as Plotinus explains, the vitality of circular movements proceeds in itself and from itself.

§ 6 He is divided in his parts, which contain the ten Sephiroth, which are implied in the essential name [i.e. the tetragram]. He is the beginning of the

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<sup>195</sup> See below III, 6, p. 116f.

<sup>196</sup> See Postel, Guillaume: *Omnium linguarum quibus ad hanc usque diem mundus est usus origo*. Basle [ca. 1552] III, in Klein, Peter: *Am Anfang war das Wort*, Berlin 1992, Abb. 7.

first number consisting in the first essence, and therefore he is the beginning of all remaining beings.

§7 The linear [moment of the expansion of space] denotes the intellect of the first Adam, the axis of the circle that denotes life. Therefore the intellect is the cause of his movement, through which the intellectual and the vital are connected with him and with each other; and through a linear movement he soon and very perfectly reaches his scope and end. The movement is called linear, since it ascends without turning and without aberration to its cause. It descends from the cause through the intellect and the will, which are not of a material or spacely nature, to its effects.” (Figure 2)<sup>197</sup>

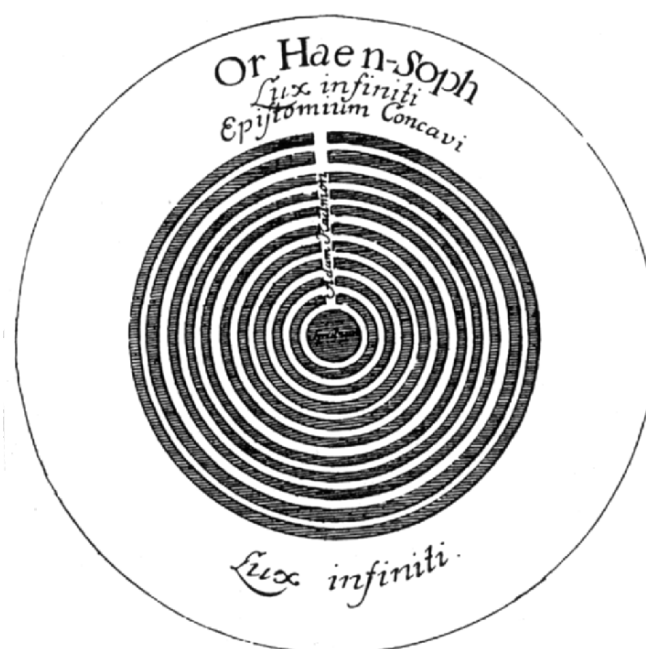


Figure 2. Adam Kadmon

In reconstructing this theory of the emergence of space, one can make out two movement vectors. The first is in the direction of expansion, i.e. linear; the second is in the movement of a circle, the perfect Platonic movement. Both movements are required because space can only emerge if linear and circular movement come together simultaneously. From the point of the beginning, a ray is sent out, which immediately begins to turn in a circular

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. ch. 7.

motion. The result of this movement, the spiral, had already been described by Dionysius the Areopagite as the movement of the human spirit's ascent.<sup>198</sup> If one takes the beginning of this spiral movement, which can be imagined as infinitesimally tiny, it is the movement of writing the *Yod*, in which the linear and circular movements are visible, since its form represents the striving of the point to create a space. This movement is not only two dimensional, as Guillaume Postel imagined,<sup>199</sup> but reaches in three dimensions, thus constituting space (*Figure 3*). The *Yod* is the archetype of the beginning of language, Scripture, and law, in which God first creates space. Due to the power of the tetragram, whose beginning it is, the *Yod* achieves infinite dimensions. These infinite dimensions are described in the "Book of 24 Philosophers", as quoted by Herrera, where it states that the infinite circle has a periphery that is everywhere and a middle that is nowhere. This is the space of creation, which is itself created.

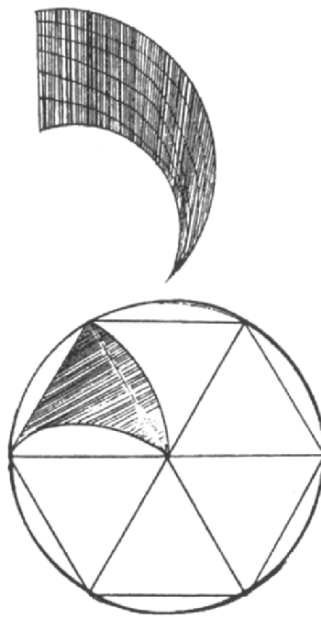


Figure 3. Rotating *Yod*

<sup>198</sup> De divinis nominibus IV, 8, trans. Rolt. London 1920, p. 98: "And the Heavenly Minds were spoken of as moving (1) in a circular manner, when they are united in the beginningless and endless illuminations of the Beautiful and Good; (2) straight forward, when they advance to the providential guidance of those beneath them and unerringly accomplish their designs; and (3) with spiral motion, because, even while providentially guiding their inferiors, they remain immutably in their self-identity, turning unceasingly around the Beautiful and Good whence all identity is sprung."

<sup>199</sup> See Postel, Guillaume: *Omnium linguarum quibus ad hanc usque diem mundus est usus origo*. Basle [ca. 1552] III, in Klein, Peter: *Am Anfang war das Wort*, Berlin 1992, Abb. 7.

“But these Sephiroth in the Adam Kadmon are first described as circles and then as straight lines. However, I heard from my teacher Rabbi Israel Serug that the circle had to be understood as a point, which is inconceivable because of its sublimity and its being without beginning and end. Therefore the circle is earlier than the line, according to Isaac Luria’s theses, in which the circles are called Nephesh (soul or vitality), the linear, however, Ruach (spirit). Nephesh is denoted as life and Ruach as intellect; because, just as from the point extends a line, thinking emerges from life and returns to it. And the Yod is such a point, the sign of the ten, from which the ten circles emerge.”<sup>200</sup>

b) The Fourfold Power of the Emanation of the Spheres

Divine life emanates in spheres. Corresponding to the Pythagorean metaphysics of the number, it is in this point that Adam Kadmon, the extra-divine existence of plenitude, positively defines his difference as distinct from the negatively defined God. Herrera describes the theory of the emergence of numbers in a Pythagorean manner, similar to Nicholas of Cusa and Johannes Reuchlin. For him, the number three is the principle of numbers, because it is three that “leads the two, which has descended from the one, back to oneness, from which it descended. And the three is the first odd number which contains the first even one and the unity, which are the father and mother of all numbers; and it contains, as Aristotle says, a beginning, a middle and an end.”<sup>201</sup> Herrera is careful not to draw any trinitarian consequences from this doctrine of numbers, as Nicholas of Cusa had done. In Neoplatonic fashion he recognises the two sides of the first Adam and describes him as being close to the absolute beginning. He identifies in Adam Kadmon, on the other hand, not only the connection to the origin - which marked the three -, but also the descent into external creation, which is the two combined with the four. Herrera recognises this dynamic duplicity of the Adam Kadmon tending back to the Father while at the same time descending from him, as represented in the Tetragram: “Adam Kadmon emanated from the absolute Oneness and is therefore one; but he also descended and fell into his own nature; therefore he is two. And he is brought back to the one, which he implies, and to the Highest; therefore he is three and four. And this is the reason why the essential name (JHWH) has four letters. Three different ones and one taken twice, for the first He is the spouse of the Yod, and the second the spouse of the Vav, on the opposite and reflected way.”<sup>202</sup> This quaternity is the power of emergence. It contains

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<sup>200</sup> § 11, Herrera, Frankfurt 1974, p. 196.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p. 194.

<sup>202</sup> § 4, p. 194.



a typology of sexuality that stands opposed to the Christian Trinity; it is the quaternity of fruitfulness as a competing model to the inner-trinitarian life.

Herrera understands the doctrines of emanation he finds in Plotinus and Patrizzi as powers of the quaternary emergence into the Sephiroth. They are entirely expressions of the divine might, which is realised in space. For him, the tetragram symbolises “the form of wages and a similarity of man and woman, to whom the three dimensions of the quaternity are attributed, namely longitude, latitude, and depth. In those 4, i.e. point, line, etc. are found 3, 2, 1, which make up the sum of 10, the absolute and perfect number. It contains all numbers and forms them, and it is essential for the 10 Sephiroth, from which all things are and to which they tend.

One could also say with Proclus and Patrizzi: from the unfathomable One, En Soph, first emanates the unity of being, in which all monads of all beings are contained; this is the Adam Kadmon and his lights.”<sup>203</sup>

#### c) The Revelation of Adam Kadmon in the Sanctuary

The sequence of spheres not only demonstrates the filling of space with reality, but in its gradation it also shows how God forsakes the world. The human soul's distinction in this construction of spheres always consisted in its ability to ascend and descend on this ladder of being. The spheres, therefore, must be permeable, and the space of emanations cannot only mean God-forsakenness. Thus the movement of emanation also includes linearity, as had become apparent in the interpretation of the *Yod*. The interpretation of the intellect as moving in linear fashion from the upper spheres down to the earth and back implied that the spheres must be transparent. But Herrera also gives a theological interpretation of the channel that leads from the highest sphere to the earth.

Adam Kadmon is the space that is filled and forsaken by God, thus God has immediate influence in this space. This is the direct way of God's revelation. Adam's connection with the spheres had been described before as “Oneness, essence, life, and intellect.”<sup>204</sup> Moreover, he was said to possess a “thin channel”<sup>205</sup> for God's direct influence in the world, not mediated by the spheres. This constitutes God's direct relationship with Jerusalem, with the temple of his revelation. With the force of water being sucked in and spewed out in the ebb and flow of the tide, God's revelation breathes into his temple. Herrera states, “that a line leads from the En-Soph through Adam Kadmon and touches the earth in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem and at the place of the

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<sup>203</sup> §§ 7-9, p. 195.

<sup>204</sup> p. 191.

<sup>205</sup> p. 18: “canalis tenuis.”

sanctuary, and that the shechina descends along the line, and the sacrifices, prayers, souls, and angels ascend.”<sup>206</sup>

## 16. THE PIOUS PRACTICE OF THE DIVINE SOPHIA: GOTTFRIED ARNOLD’S (1666-1714) CONVERSION

In Leipzig in the year 1700 there appeared a booklet entitled “The secrets of the divine Sophia of Wisdom, sung and written by Gottfried Arnold”.<sup>207</sup> This is one of the most remarkable of the learned pietist’s many remarkable books. It is tender and full of personal confession, yet it is learned and rich with quotations. “Poetic Praises and Sentences of Love About the Divine Wisdom” conclude the book.

This book on the secrets of the divine Sophia is nothing less than an attempt to see the divine Wisdom of creation, the Christ of creation, and the Christ in us, as a unity that effects our inner conversion and becomes the scope of our lives. The train of thought and feeling in Arnold’s most edifying and gently written book exhibit a similar texture to that of Seuse’s booklet “Von der ewigen Weisheit”, where the literature of wisdom and vision, of innermost feelings and conversion, are entwined. The close proximity to Gregory of Nyssa is also apparent.

The erudition of this book is of secondary importance, but nonetheless indispensable, for Arnold is, even as a mystic, in need of legitimation. In his “Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia”, he relies on the deuterocanonical, biblical Book of Wisdom. Ever since Luther’s translation, this book had been banned from the official canon of the Old Testament. So, with historical erudition, Arnold must prove its antiquity and dignity. Moreover, and this is even more important for the pietist and edifying author, beyond its antiquity the book’s holiness and quality of offering God’s grace have to be proved. It must be a demonstrably revealed and edifying book, and as such, it must cause a spiritual effect; it must touch the soul. Its holiness must become manifest by effecting the beginning of an inner unfolding, which, grounded in the soul, is led by the image of Wisdom.

<sup>206</sup> p. 197.

<sup>207</sup> Das Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia oder Weißheit / beschrieben und besungen von Gottfried Arnold. Leipzig 1700. Repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1963. Introd. by W. Nigg. The best introduction to Arnold’s work is still: Seeberg, Erich: Gottfried Arnold. Die Wissenschaft und die Mystik seiner Zeit. 1923. Repr. Darmstadt 1964. Of interest for our concerns is Dörries, Hermann: Geist und Geschichte bei Gottfried Arnold. Göttingen 1963. Dörries emphasises Arnold’s relationship with Makarios. Büchsel, Jürgen: Gottfried Arnold. Sein Verständnis von Kirche und Wiedergeburt. Witten 1970.

Arnold makes a considerable effort to prove that the “Book of Wisdom” is part of the Bible. He employs the erudition that was a feature of the monumental “Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie” (1700) to prove that the “Book of Wisdom” was accepted in the ancient church, beginning with Cyprian and Justin Martyr up to Augustine and Isidore of Seville.<sup>208</sup> He knows, however, that the “so-called Wisdom of Solomon” is merely attributed to the great king, and he quotes and modifies St. Jerome’s critical theses, “that the well known Philo may have set the Greek text - not the younger, who lived after Christ, but the older, who lived one and a half centuries before Christ’s birth, at the time of the High Priest Oniar.”<sup>209</sup> For Arnold, however, these historical and critical deliberations are not very important, since it is ultimately only the inner witness that counts. His pious believers are not concerned with the unresolved dispute of worldly learned men, but long for the “Father and the Holy Spirit in the simplicity of their hearts, and strive to fulfil his will and to capture Wisdom’s education, in the examination of the book. Then they acknowledge whether a doctrine comes from God or whether this or that book spoke from itself and its own spirit. They will perceive by themselves the divine performance of the heavenly truths in the Book of Wisdom and in Jesus Sirach, and they will acknowledge how miserable, unfounded and perverse statements based in the world are.”<sup>210</sup>

Where learned objections do not count, the testimony of the spirit remains, and touches souls. In the process of grace, the soul is merely a receptacle, and only in receiving is the soul able to perceive something other than self-produced false glamour. The real, active impetus of the soul is to be touched by the divine Sophia, and Arnold found himself touched by her. In his foreword he writes, “Since I paid some more attention to my own feelings and what occurred in them, and since I learned to put this together with the holy scripture, this was found to be a matter of fact that God the Father did not only want to reveal his Son Jesus Christ and to explain him through his miracles, but that also the divine Wisdom especially expressed itself mightily in its secret effect.”<sup>211</sup> Holy Scripture witnesses and effects the inner touch, therefore the inner touch effected by the “Book of Wisdom” is a proof of its holiness and, consequently, of its partaking in the biblical canon. Arnold writes “What is written in the ‘Book of Wisdom’ happened to me. I did not know that all derived from it (i.e. the Wisdom).”<sup>212</sup> Arnold, feeling himself touched, presupposes that the inner movement he experiences derives from divine power. This effect of God’s Wisdom is the testimony of the spirit and the power.

<sup>208</sup> See: *Das Geheimnis der göttl. Sophia*, pp. 15f. Ch. 2, §§ 13-15.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* § 21, p. 19. See ch. 4. 3. fn. 14 and ch. 4. 12b, pp. 177ff.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>211</sup> Vorrede p. 5.

<sup>212</sup> Vorrede § 3, cf. *Wisd.* 7:12.

Arnold is aware that he gets himself into considerable difficulty with this theology. His most significant problem is that the Christology of God's mediating word is indiscernible from his doctrine of the divine Sophia. He tries to approach his problems in two steps: 1. Wisdom is conceived as the "revealing, glorifying and announcing force of the entire high-Holy Trinity"<sup>213</sup> and 2. this power is seen as being very close to the second and third persons of the Trinity.

According to the nature of edifying literature, internal testimony grants truth. In the desire for piety, Christ's grace and wisdom are no longer distinguished. The meaning of this devout identification "of the appreciated souls is to leave no space for the hardening reason; the reader should share this in the simplicity of his heart. If the soul feels a strong hunger after the fruition and communication with the heavenly wisdom, it sets its belief in the highly praised Name of Jesus and really finds true salvation and life there.

Then through lengthy practice and community with Christ, it perceives that in him the entire plenitude consists. It recognises that Christ's spirit and the spirit of wisdom are not distinct spirits, but one united spirit and an indestructible being".<sup>214</sup>

If Wisdom is the form of God's appearance, her power neither becomes effective exclusively in the soul's knowledge nor in simple obedience. The effects of Wisdom become perceivable in the innermost core of the soul, which feels itself overcome by God's power and then recognises its own image in itself.

This theology of the image, which becomes *praxis pietatis*, reveals the seminal reasons of every individual life. This message "reveals itself to the soul especially and most clearly, after it stood in penitence under the power of the Father in the law, and was drawn by the Son and his Gospel and stood for a long time in the realm of the love of Jesus, and has overcome all appropriate castigations and proofs. Then Sophia seizes the soul even tighter, and brings its purifying and cleansing fire into the soul, edifies the temple of the new mighty body from Christ's humanity, who was born in flesh in the soul. Wisdom sets its fire in the midst of the soul, and prepares the essential return of the Holy Spirit and of his great and perfect reign in man's spirit. The Holy Spirit of prophecy, who is the very spirit of Wisdom and the spirit of Jesus, comes closer, and anoints and permeates the tender and surmountable new humanity and strengthens it with its fire and light, so that the soul perceives in itself, with its inner eyes, a fiery castle, a burning bush,

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<sup>213</sup> Vorrede p. 5.

<sup>214</sup> p. 35. Nr. 2 and 3.

and the holy of holies, in which God's name Jehova Jesus lives in the spirit and reveals itself in his essential and perfect victory."<sup>215</sup>

Arnold's text is a brilliant example of perfect pietistic prose. The text sparkles with biblical metaphors and the divine strength from which it claims to live. It describes the power of the soul's conversion and rebirth. The alchemistic, purifying fire becomes the hardening fire of the spirit; the pain of birth becomes the joyful grief of the tender new spiritual body, strengthened by the spirit of wisdom. And at the end, fiery Wisdom reveals itself in celestial Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), in the burning bush (Exod. 3:7), and in the divine name, the tetragram, in which Arnold recognises the name of Jesus, and transforms it into a pentagram.<sup>216</sup>

Such a rebirth changes one's life. It is experienced as the essence of transformation, in which the old Adam is destroyed and the new, essential, inner image appears as the spiritual, mighty body. This spiritual body reveals the scope every reborn soul finds in itself in its own way. This image derives its power from divine might, and attracts and leads everyone to their goal. The spiritual, mighty body is the cause and aim of every life, and it alone makes perfection possible. Through the mighty body, the life of the reborn receives its meaning and direction. Pious practice consists in the orientation according to the inner image of the "Christ in us".

Arnold connected his personal pious practice very closely to the image of the Sophia. He interpreted the image of the heavenly wedding as the personal soul's wedding with the divine Sophia. With this interpretation, he stands in the tradition of Origen and Bernard of Clairvaux. Before the mystical wedding, the soul must, of course, be purified, for the secret of the virgin wisdom "must only be accepted and held fast in a chaste and pure mind and conscience, and it is only the pure hearts that the Holy Spirit endows to see God. The tough, earthly and sensual man has no business

<sup>215</sup> p. 36, Nr. 7, 8. Diese Offenbarung "eröffnet sich der seelen hauptsächlich und am klärsten alsdann / nachdem sie wol unter der krafft deß Vatters in dem gesetz / in der busse / und im zug zum Sohne / als auch unter dem Evangelio und Reiche der Liebe JESu lange zeit gestanden / und alle dahin gehörige läuterungen und proben durchgegangen. So ergreift sie Sophia gleichsam noch genauer / und bringet ihr läuterndes und scharff-reinigendes feuer in die seele / machet den geistlichen Tempelbau des neuen krafft-leibes auß der menschheit Jesu / welcher in der Seele nach allen Geburtsschmerzen und wehen im fleisch kommen war / vollends auß / setzet ihr feuer und heerd mitten drein und machet anstalt zur wesentlichen wiederkunfft der H. Geistes / und zu dessen grossen und vollendeten reiche im Geist des menschen. Da tritt denn der H. Geist der verheißung / welcher eben der Geist der Weißheit / und der Geist JESu ist, näher zu / und salbet und durchdringet die an ihr selbst noch zarte und überwindliche neue menschheit / und stärket sie also mit seinem feuer und liecht / daß die seele mit ihrem gemüths-agen gleichsam eine feurige burg / einen brennenden busch / und das Allerheiligste in sich selbst erblicket, darinnen Gottes name Jehova Jesus im Geist wohnet und sich zum vollkommenen sieg wesentlich hervor thut."

<sup>216</sup> Cf. ch. 3, 5a.

here.”<sup>217</sup> Arnold shares in the Platonic tradition of Philo and Gregory of Nyssa when he asserts that the secret of wisdom’s virginity is of a prelapsarian, primordial, heavenly nature. For him it is obvious, “that the eternal Wisdom is not restricted to man’s and woman’s sex, as it found after the fall into unnature, decay, and shame, but that she is in heavenly pure understanding a perfect pure virgin.”<sup>218</sup> This divine virginity, above all earthly sexuality, is the origin of the mighty body that will guide us internally according to the image of Christ’s birth.

In order to explain the history of sexuality, Arnold retells the history of the fall, then the history of Christ’s becoming flesh, and then discovers the history of the final unity of the sexes. For Arnold, the divine Sophia is not identical with primordial Adam. Adam is a hypostatical person, subordinated to Sophia. He is related to Sophia, for she is his Eve, as she mediates God’s Wisdom to him. But their relationship is not a sexual one. Adam has two sexes, following the Platonic tradition. Before his fall, Adam, the archetype of humanity, was united with his Sophia, the first Eve. Because of his fall, he lost access to his inner Eve, and through the new Eve, made from his rib, he also lost his inner female aspect. Through Christ’s birth of a virgin, however, the loss of the female aspect in man is redeemed. The original unity is achieved, since Christ, who is a man, brings the male aspect back into the female aspect of humanity, represented by Mary, the new Eve. He is a man, born of a virgin, and as a virgin man, he is the compensatory archetype for the first Eve, so that the original bisexual unity is restored: “When Adam in his desire turned from God and tried to love something outside himself and his inner holy Sophia, his Wisdom, he lost his secret bride, from whom, according to the ancients, more could be shown and manifestly proven.

In his fall, the divine Virgin was separated from him; since he was of an earthly disposition and needed a wife, a wife was formed from his rib, as is written in the Scripture. So he lost his inner female nature and only retained his male one. Now man should be reintroduced into his former Edenic perfection. Therefore the praised seed of the wife should bring back to him this lost partner and bless the woman in the man’s company.

For this purpose the Messiah became human and a man in the female sex of Mary, and reintroduced the male part into the body of the virgin woman; but he bore also the virgin image in himself. From here the ground was laid so that the male and the female could become one image and essence and could stand before God, a male virgin as a reborn new creature.”<sup>219</sup>

When he wrote this piece, Arnold took the virginity of his life very seriously. Sophia, who changed his life first in his rebirth and then

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<sup>217</sup> p. 39, VI.1.

<sup>218</sup> p. 42, Nr. 10.

<sup>219</sup> p. 43, ch. VI. 12-14.

determined it, for a certain time, until his earthly wedding,<sup>220</sup> remained his guiding image. He described this image in a poem based on the Song of Songs, as an example of pious imitation:

So let me see  
Lord what happened to me,  
How you live in my soul,  
What your loving seal  
In my heart's mirror  
Imprinted essentially.  
This image shall stand  
Before me so that I always see  
What I possess in you  
And that I lack nothing  
When I choose you  
O fountain of all gifts.

Drum gib mir zu sehen/  
Herr/ was mir geschehen:  
Was in mich geleet  
Was dein Liebes-siegel  
In des Hertzens spiegel  
wesentlich geprägt.  
Dieses bild bleib stehen  
vor mir/ stets zu sehen  
Was ich in dir habe  
und wie mir nichts fehle/  
wenn ich dich erwehle/  
O brunn aller Gabe.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> This wedding was, incidentally, a spiritual scandal for his friends.

<sup>221</sup> "Poetische Lob- und Liebes-Sprüche von der Ewigen Weißheit". Bound together with "Das Geheimnis der göttl. Sophia". Separate pagination pp. 12f. N. XV. Vers 8, 9.

## ARCHETYPES

### 1. INTRODUCTION: CREATION BEFORE TIME

Creation is not a radical beginning. It is secondary, for it comes after its creator. Moreover, creation is not a univocal term. Only a spiritual being can derive from the creator's spiritual nature, so extended creation must be radically different from its cause. But this cannot really be the case, since the creator cannot make something that is opposed to his nature. It seems mysterious, at first, that the spirit becomes corporeal in the creation of extramental things. So it becomes evident that the term 'creation' has two meanings: First a spiritual one, where it is conceived as a forming essence, and second, a formed and formable corporeality. The two are connected. The spiritual creation, the archetype, the idea that is the original spiritual image of its extended copy, is logically prior to its material realisation in time and space. The logic of this process is based on the triad of *dynamis* (possibility), *energeia* (setting to work), and *ergon* (work). Concerning the relation between *dynamis* and *energeia*, it must be explained how the possibility (*dynamis*) is set to work. The transition from *dynamis* to *energeia* is the will of creating, and this will constitutes the dynamics of reality. The relation between possibility (*dynamis*) and work (*ergon*) is conceived as the corresponding connection between corporeal and spiritual existence. The question of how this correspondence works implicates the problem of how time and space came into being.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This will be treated in ch. 6: Spiritual Spaces.



Creation is secondary in the sense that an antecedent to creation is possible.<sup>2</sup> 'Before creation' can only mean 'before time', so 'before' can only have the modal, logical meaning of precondition. 'Before time' in this sense means eternal. Eternity is the contrary of beginning, ending, and time. Since the contrary of beginning – in other words timeless eternity - can be thought, neither beginning and end nor time is absolute.

If the history of creation is recounted in such a way that God created heaven and earth 'in the beginning', then the beginning has a remarkable duplicity. 'In the beginning' can mean that it is the beginning of the extra-mental extended world, but it can also mean the first, absolute beginning of the original separation between Father and Son in the eternal process of the trinitarian life. This eternal life prefigures the creation of the world; creation is thus secondary.<sup>3</sup>

To account for something is to recount a sequence of events. The telling unfolds the element on which it relies - time, directed time, time in a directed sequence, and thus meaningful time. In this sense, the account of creation introduces time into the eternity of timeless existence 'beforehand'. The account of creation is something like a model of all subsequent accounts. Therefore time as such can only be conceived after the act of creation, as the framework constructed in the account of creation, which describes the relationship between time and eternity. 'In the beginning' posits temporality and the biblical report of creation recounts this temporality, i.e. counts it, step by step. This is what Augustine means when he writes: "With the movement of the creatures the course of time began; therefore one looks in vain for time before creation, as if one could find time before time!"<sup>4</sup>

If the account of creation is taken as a revealed model of narrative, accounting for the relationship between time, space, and eternity, and of reality and possibility, then its elementary logic already contains all the elements which are later discovered with philosophical concepts. As a narrative of God's revelation, this account claims a monopoly on interpreting the world. It is reasonable insofar as reason is understood to be the reason of God's wisdom, a calculated plan, a conceived order.

Every plan needs a proper measure. A plan must be appropriate for its purpose. A plan is reflected upon, but what are the criteria of this reflection?

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Augustine: Confessions XI, 12: "Here is my answer to him who says: 'what did God do before He made heaven and earth?' I do not give that answer which some man is said to have offered as a jest, evading the force of the question: 'He was making hell ready', he said, 'for those who pry into these deep questions!' It is one thing to see; quite another thing to laugh. This is not my answer. Now, I should much prefer to reply: I do not know, when I really do not know." Trans. Vernon J. Burke. New York 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Origines: On First Principles 1, 2. De Christo.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine: De genesi ad literam V, 5, 12.

It seems that timeless ordering principles, e.g. numbers, have to be the criteria of a plan. Otherwise, planlessness and design, chaos and order would be indistinguishable. Thus one criterion of God's plan for the world consists in order as such. The plan and order of the world have to distinguish the identical and the different – this is the essence of numbers. Thus plan and order have to be conceived according to the sequence of the first and the second, i.e. after the measurement of identity and difference. Otherwise, nothing could be conceived at all.

The essence of numbers reveals itself evidently. Therefore the Lord created - as the Book of Wisdom says with Pythagorean ambiguity - "all things in measure, and number, and order" (Sap. 11:21). Numbers inhabit every experience; measure, number, and order are indispensable for the philosophical scrutiny of every kind of thought.

In revelation, wisdom becomes visible. The Logos of wisdom is the Logos of order, and also that of language. This is the precondition of the theology of creation: "All things were made through it" (John 1:1), and "God said and there was". The Logos of wisdom comes from the nature of language. The linguistic form of creation is therefore apparent. Creation obeys its creator in such radical a sense that it only comes into reality by the commanding power of his word. The command of existence is the most radical form of language appreciation. The working word of the creator is the essence of things and the positing of their order. The structure of this language and the grammar of revelation make the order of the divine plan perceivable.

## 2. PHILO'S ARCHETYPES

### a) Archetypes of Creation

The philosophical precision of the theology of creation first appeared in Hellenistic-Jewish philosophy. With Philo of Alexandria, the merging of Jewish and Hellenistic philosophy, as was already evident in the Book of Wisdom and in Jesus Sirach, reached its first climax. Philo's philosophy had considerable impact on the theology of the church fathers, especially on Eusebius' "Praeparatio Evangelii" and on Origen, Jerome, and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>5</sup> His combination of the concepts of archetypes, of macro- and microcosm, of Jewish law, and Stoic laws of the cosmos prepared the way

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<sup>5</sup> On Philo's important connection with the Judeo-Christian community, see: Colpe, Carsten: *Von der Logoslehre des Philo zu der des Klemens von Alexandrien*. In: *Das Siegel der Propheten*. Berlin 1990, pp. 141-164; Runia, David T.: *Philo in Early Christian Literature*. Van Gorcum, Minneapolis 1993. Cf. for add. literature ch. IV, 4.

for the church fathers' discussion on revelation and philosophy. It was Philo who provided the model for the philosophical interpretation of the account of creation, and who first structured its arguments. His central themes were the (Neo-) Pythagorean doctrine of numbers, a precise notion of the archetype as God's spiritual ideas before creating the world, and Adam's crucial anthropological and theological position in the account of creation.

Philo's commentary on the Mosaic Book of Genesis begins by explaining the notion of the law. He admires the beginning of the account of creation, since, according to Moses, "the world is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the world, and the man who observes the Law is constituted thereby a loyal citizen of the world (*kosmopolites*), regulating his doings by the purpose and will of nature, in accordance with which the entire world itself also is administered."<sup>6</sup>

Philo aligns himself with the Book of Wisdom with its emphasis on measurement, number, and order, and with the model of Stoic physics. For him it is clear that "Moses, because he attained the very summit of philosophy, and because he had been divinely instructed in the greater and more essential part of the Nature's lore, could not fail to recognise that the universal must consist of two parts, one part active cause and the other passive object".<sup>7</sup> This thesis combines the Aristotelian theory of the moving and moved parts of nature with the image of the creator in Plato's *Timaeus*, who creates the moving image of the static ideas.<sup>8</sup> The demiurge is himself subject to these ideas. The creator of the world in the book of Genesis, however, is Lord of the cosmos and the ideas. Philo connects a negative theology with the theory of the unmoved mover. He posits the unfathomable God as the cause behind the process of becoming, and so combines the Platonic model with the Mosaic one. It was evident for Philo's Moses "that the active Cause is the perfectly pure and unsullied Mind of the universe, transcending virtue, transcending knowledge, transcending the good himself and the beautiful itself; while the passive part is in itself incapable of life and motion, but, when set in motion and shaped and quickened by Mind, changes into the most perfect masterpiece, namely his world."<sup>9</sup>

With the conception of the first active and perfect cause, philosophy and theology become united into one science, and it is in this science of oneness that philosophy is supported by revelation, and revelation by philosophy. This science is held together by the notion of God as the first cause. There is

<sup>6</sup> Philo, with an English trans. by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. London, New York 1930, Vol. 1. *On the Creation*. 1:3, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 2:8, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Runia, David T.: *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*. Leiden 1986, esp. pp. 232-257.

<sup>9</sup> Philo, *On the Creation*, 2:9, p. 11.

only one God, and he is the same for philosophers and theologians. By means of a logic of optimisation, this God is identified as the purest and clearest spirit, as magnanimity and beauty, surpassing virtue and science. The goal of this attitude that conjoins knowledge and revelation is not a merely theoretical but a practical one, namely piety. Philo declares, "Those who assert that this world is unoriginate unconsciously eliminate that which of all incentives to piety is the most beneficial and the most indispensable, namely providence."<sup>10</sup>

Philo's concept of providence marks the conclusive point of his science. Divine conceptions surpass human capacity, and therefore the philosopher must humbly submit himself to a theological position. Only if the philosopher accepts the theological framework of creation, can he prove philosophically the world's reason for being and say, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth".

Philo interprets "In the beginning" as "He made first the heaven".<sup>11</sup> The creation of heaven stands at the very beginning of the world, and Philo therefore takes the occasion to describe the number, order, and substantial beauty of creation, which are found in God's primeval ideas. According to the order of creation, heaven is first, and is built of "the purest of all that is"<sup>12</sup> (i.e. ether). It "was destined to be the most holy dwelling place of manifest and visible gods. For even if the maker made all things simultaneously, order was nonetheless an attribute of all that came into existence in fair beauty, for beauty is absent where there is disorder. Now order is a series of things going on before and following after, in due sequence, a sequence which, though not seen in the finished productions, yet exists in the design of the contrivers; for only so could these things be fashioned with perfect accuracy."<sup>13</sup>

It is this first creation that God makes in his ideal world; he makes logical sequence and numbers. Specifically it is the world of the seven spiritual archetypes: an incorporeal heaven (1) an invisible earth (2), the idea of ether (3) of space (4), of the incorporeal essence of water, (5) of wind (6), and of light (7). "This again, the seventh in order, was an incorporeal pattern, discernible only by the mind, of the sun and of all luminaries which were come into existence throughout heaven."

Moses accords special distinction to the life-giving breath and to light. The first he calls the 'breath' of God, because breath is most life giving, and God is the author of life, while of the light he says that it is pre-eminently beautiful (Gen. 1:4): "For the intelligible as far surpasses the visible in the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 7:26, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 7:28.

brilliance of its radiance, as sunlight assuredly surpasses darkness and day night, and mind, the ruler of the entire soul, the bodily eyes. Now that invisible light perceptible only by mind has come into being as an image of the Divine Word who brought it into our ken.”<sup>14</sup>

Here the dynamic of the archetypes becomes apparent. They are the key notions of the cosmic design; they can be understood as the constitutive concepts of the world, which are not always distinguishable from divine predicates. The reason for this difficulty is clear: Since divine wisdom is God’s only outward manifestation, wisdom shows God’s natural revelations, which are the reason of the world. It is only through the power of the divine Logos that the reasons of the primordial world receive the power to build an extra-mental reality, and as such they are recognised by human nature as reasons of wisdom.

For Philo, light is the truth’s ‘spiritual’ essence in which all other elements culminate. He combines the creation of light (Gen. 1:2) with the Platonic imagery of truth from the image of the cave (Republic, book 8) and with the Pythagorean numerical doctrine of the seven,<sup>15</sup> stating that the “invisible light, perceptible only by mind, has come into being as an image of the Divine Word”.<sup>16</sup> This is also the explanation of how the intellect emerged. The intellect, invisible and thinking, contains the seven spiritual paradigms of the world: spiritual heaven and spiritual earth, ether, space, water, air, and light. These spiritual elements are not homogeneous, but correspond to the quality of the seven represented in the seven days of creation. The numerical order, as it changes between odd and even numbers, typologically founds the alteration of light and darkness. The continuity of day and night is understood as an expression of the numerical structure of creation. The numbers are an indication of God’s unmoved ideas, of the incorporeal and ideal paradigms, in which there is nothing sensual. Every idea is a complete image, commissioned to produce its corporeal copy.

This is the world of archetypes, the world of the divine designing reason: “For God, being God, assumed that a beautiful copy would never be produced apart from a beautiful pattern, and that no object of perception would be faultless which was not made in the likeness of an original discerned only by intellect. So when He willed to create this visible world

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 7:31, pp. 23f.

<sup>15</sup> On Philo’s doctrine of numbers see Stachle, Karl: *Die Zahlenmystik bei Philo von Alexandria*. Leipzig and Berlin 1931. On the seven, see esp. pp. 34-50. The meaning of the seven is listed there for all spheres: For the intelligible world: arithmetic, music, geometry; for the sensual world: heaven, planets, the Great Bear, the Pleiades, etc; for man: seven ages, seven inner and seven outer parts; for science: the seven strings of the lyre, the seven vowels.

<sup>16</sup> On the Creation 8:31, p. 25.

He first fully formed the intelligible world in order that he might have use of the pattern wholly God-like and incorporeal in producing the material world, as a later creation, the very image of an earlier, to embrace in itself objects of perception of as many kinds as the other contained objects of intelligence.”<sup>17</sup> This world was always in God, founded in divine reason, and it was according to its copy that the sensual world was completed.

Philo explains the plan of the world with the example of the architect in the service of the divine king, clearly a parallel to the myth of the demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus* (37dff.). The divinely commissioned architect designs a city as it should be, and begins to realise it according to his imagination: “When a city is being founded to satisfy the soaring ambition of some king or governor who lays claim to despotic power and being magnificent in his ideas would fain add a fresh lustre to his good fortune, there comes forward now and again some trained architect who, observing the favourable climate and convenient position of the site, first sketches in his own mind wellnigh all the parts of the city that are to be wrought out, temples, gymnasia, town halls, market places, harbours, docks, streets, walls to be built, dwelling-houses as well as public buildings to be set up. Then by his innate power of memory, he recalls the images of the various parts of this city, and imprints their types yet more distinctly in it: and like a good craftsman he begins to build the city of stone and timber, keeping his eye upon his pattern and making the visible and tangible objects correspond in each case to the incorporeal ideas.”<sup>18</sup> Following these archetypal patterns, the world emerges in the course of six days. The metaphor of the architect reminds us of the creator in Plato's *Timaeus*, who makes the moved world as an image of the unmoved one. For Philo, however, God stands above all ideas, and the ideas are therefore the imprinting forms of the world - concrete patterns that shape the things. This is the archetypal architecture of creation. At the end of St. John's *Revelation* (Rev. 21), when heavenly Jerusalem soars from heaven, the metaphor of the divine, printing world is not applied to creation but to the last coming and the restitution of a new heaven and a new earth. “And the one who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’.”

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 4:16, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 4:17-19, pp. 15f. The image of God's architect is also found in the *Midrasch Bereshit Rabba* I, 3: “The Torah speaks, ‘I was the work plan of the Holy One, blessed be he’. In the accepted practice of the world, when a mortal king builds a palace, he does not build it out of his own head, but he follows a work plan. And the one who supplies the work-plan does not build out of his own head, but he has designs and diagrams, so as to know how to situate the rooms and the doorways. Thus the Holy One, blessed be he, consulted the Torah when he created the world. So the Torah stated, ‘by means of *the beginning*’ (that is to say the Torah) did God create.” *Genesis Rabbah*, The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis. A New American Trans. by Jacob Neuser. Vol. 1. Atlanta, Georg. 1985, p 1.

b) Numbers<sup>19</sup>

With the theology of numbers Philo introduced Platonic and Pythagorean numerology into the Jewish theology of creation. Numbers are archetypal orders – and order was the essence of the cosmos, be it created or of ideal eternity. For Philo it was obvious: Order and movement are the epiphany of numbers. The connection between the divine plan and realised creation is made clear in numbers, which are visible in the variety of creation, yet do not derive from the visible world. According to the work of the six days – “on the seventh day He rested” – seven is the divine, holy number. It is the number seven that structures the world: Seven elements constitute the totality of nature, corresponding to the seven planets of heaven and the seven organs of man.

“Now when the whole world had been brought to completion in accordance with the properties of the six, a perfect number, the Father invested with dignity the seventh day which comes next, extolling it and pronouncing it holy; for it is the festival, not of a single city or country, but of the universe, and it alone strictly deserves to be called ‘public’ as belonging to all people and the birthday of the world.”<sup>20</sup>

The number seven corresponds to the rhythm of creation. It is this number which grants creation its quality and dignity. In the rhythm of the number seven, God’s wisdom appears: “I doubt whether anyone could adequately celebrate the properties of the number seven, for they are beyond all words.”<sup>21</sup> Philo treats the quality of seven according to the laws of Neopythagorean mathematics, music, and the qualitative doctrine of numbers. He also discovers the number seven in the course of nature, the human lifetime, and the corporeal constitution of man. He constructs his explanation according to the order of creation, from divine wisdom to the work of the sixth day, succeeded by the famous seventh day, the feast of creation.

1. The sphere of numbers is the closest to God, and the relationship between the unique God and the number seven is arithmetically evident: “For instance, the 7<sup>th</sup> from 1 reached by going on doubling, i.e. 64,<sup>22</sup> is a square, being 8 times 8 ( $8^2$ ), and a cube, being for times four, again

<sup>19</sup> On Philo’s philosophy of numbers cf. Boyancé, P.: *Etudes Philoniennes*. Revue des Études Grecques 76 (1963). Staehle, K. *Die Zahlenmystik bei Philon von Alexandria*. Berlin and Leipzig 1931. On the problems of the Pythagorean theory of numbers cf. Capparelli: *La sapienza di Pitagora*. Vol. II. Padua 1944, pp. 453-510. Burkert, Walter: *Weisheit und Wissenschaft. Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Plato*. Nürnberg 1962.

<sup>20</sup> On the Creation 30:89, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> 1 / 2 / 4 / 8 / 16 / 32 / 64.

multiplied by  $4(4^3)$ : and again the  $7^{\text{th}}$  from one reached by progressing trebling, 729,<sup>23</sup> is a square, being the product of 27 multiplied by itself ( $27^2$ ), and the cube of 9, i.e. 9 times nine, again multiplied by 9 ( $9^3$ )."

2. Musical harmony is the second sphere: "For instance 7 consists of 1 and 2, and 4, which have two relations making specially for harmony, the twofold and the fourfold, the one producing the diapason (octave) harmony, while the fourfold relation produces double diapason (double octave). 7 admits other divisions besides these, in pairs like animals under a yoke. It is divided firstly into 1 and 6, then into 2 and 5, and lastly into 3 and 4. Most musical is the proportion of these numbers also: for 6 and 1 is a sixfold proportion (seventh), but the sixfold proportion makes the greatest distance that there is (in music), the distance from the highest to the lowest note, 5:2 exhibits the fullest power in harmonies, all but rivalling the diapason, in fact which is most clearly established in theoretical music. 4:3 yields the first harmony, the sesquitercian and diatesseron (fourth)."<sup>24</sup> Philo emphasises that multiplying the elements of 7 – namely 3 and 4 – produces 12, which yields the perfect harmonies. This may seem far-fetched, but it is nonetheless attributed to the quality of 7: "The scheme is formed by the following numbers: 6, 8, 9, 12. 8 stands to 6 in the proportion 4:3, which regulates the harmony of a fourth, 9 stands to 6 in the proportions 3:2, which regulates the harmony of a fifth; 12 stands to six in the proportion of 2:1, which regulates the octave."<sup>25</sup>

3. The third sphere is the world of geometry, which not only has a spiritual realm but is also extended in space. The number 7 has a distinctive importance for the geometrical order, because it is the sum of 3 and 4: "The right-angled triangle, the starting point of figures of a definite shape, is made up of certain numbers, namely 3, 4, and 5: 3 and 4, the constituent parts of 7, produce the right angle: for the obtuse and acute angle are manifestations of irregularity and disorder and inequality: for such angle can be more obtuse or more acute than a different one, whereas the right angle does not admit comparison, nor can it be more 'right' than some other, but remains as it is, never changing its proper nature. Now if the right-angled triangle is the starting point of figures of a definite kind, and the essential factor in this triangle, namely the right angle, is supplied by the numbers which constitute 7, namely 3 and 4 together, 7 would reasonably be regarded as the fountain-head of every figure and every definite shape."<sup>26</sup>

4. The specific dignity of the number seven can also be found in the fourth sphere. This sphere is the borderline of movement, the one sphere of

<sup>23</sup> 1 / 3 / 9 / 27 / 81 / 243 / 729.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 31:95.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 37:107.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 32:97.



the unmoved mover. Below this heaven, cosmology becomes mythological, since the Zodiac and the planets are the realm of the gods. Seven is the number of Minerva and of the unmoved mover of the world, and, according to its mythology, analogous to the unbegotten number one: “1 begets all the subsequent numbers while it is begotten by none whatever: 8 is begotten by twice 4, but begets no number within the decade: 4 again holds the place of both, both of parents and of offspring; for it begets 8 by being doubled, and is begotten by twice 2. It is the nature of seven alone, as I have said, neither to beget nor to be begotten. For this reason other philosophers liken the number to the motherless and virgin Niké, who is said to have appeared out of the head of Zeus, while the Pythagoreans liken it to the chief of all things: for that which neither begets nor is begotten remains motionless; for creation takes place in movement, since there is movement both in that which begets and in that which is begotten, in the one that it may beget, in the other that it may be begotten. There is only one thing that neither causes motion nor experiences it, the original Ruler and Sovereign. Of Him 7 may be fitly said to be a symbol.”<sup>27</sup>

5. The moved world is also ruled by the number seven. This is apparent in the heaven of the fixed stars, the first sphere of the moved world. It is seen for instance in the seven stars of the Pleiades and of the Great Bear.<sup>28</sup> The power of the seven is also visible in the moon, whose course defines the lower border of heaven. The phases of the moon are completed in 28 days. The order of seven is visible in this number as follows: “Begin at 1 and add each number up to seven and it produces 28.”<sup>29</sup> This is a perfect number and equal to the sum of its own factors. And the number produced is the number which brings the moon back to her original form.”<sup>30</sup> These 28 days are divided into 4 phases of 7 days each.

6. Just as the macrocosm is directed by the seven, the microcosm is also, in the course of its life, permeated by the essence of the seven. The number seven rules the rhythm of human life, which encompasses ten periods of seven years, “measured from infancy to old age in the following manner: during the first period of seven years the growth of the teeth begins; during the second the capacity for emitting seed; the third the growing of the beard; and in the fourth increase of strength; in the fifth again ripeness for marriage; in the sixth the understanding reaches its bloom; in the seventh progressive improvement and development of mind and reason; in the eighth the perfecting of both these; during the ninth forbearance and gentleness

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 33:100.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 39:115.

<sup>29</sup>  $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 = 28$ .

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 34:101.

emerge, owing to the more complete taming of the passions; during the tenth comes the desirable end of life, while the bodily organs are still compact and firm".<sup>31</sup>

7. Just as the course of man's life is ordered by periods of seven years, so the seven also rules the anatomy of man's body: "As, however, in accordance with a certain natural sympathy the things of the earth depend on the things of heaven, the principle of the number 7, after having begun from above, descended also to us and visited the races of mortals. For instance, if we leave the understanding out of sight, the remainder of our soul is divided into seven parts, namely five senses, the faculty of speech, also that of generation. All these, as in marionette shows, are drawn with strings by the understanding, now resting, now moving, each in the attitude and with the moments appropriate to it. In like manner, should a man go on to examine the outer and inner parts of the body, he will find seven under each head. The visible parts are the head, breast, belly, two hands, two feet. The inward parts, called entrails, are stomach, heart, lung, spleen, liver, two kidneys."<sup>32</sup> Once it has been discovered, the ordering power of the number seven appears everywhere in the visible world. There is no end to the analogies.

What is the meaning of such a qualitative theory of numbers? It is not an arbitrary interpretation of the inner relation of numbers and phenomena. Only at first glance is there the impression that everything can be proved by such numerical *quid pro quo*. This objection can only come from someone who has not realised the meaning of numbers. In the qualitative theory of numbers, it is crucial that the order gradually becomes visible behind the immediate surface. The same is true for music: Only those who are able to read can really hear the composition of tones in harmony and the arrangement and variation of melodies. Only those who know the order of heavenly phenomena and who can reconstruct the movements of the skies can have an understanding of what they see. In the qualitative theory of numbers, the structuring principle of creation becomes visible, and it is this theory that rescues the phenomena. It is a harmonic order, visible to those who are able to perceive harmony and numerical structures. Suddenly, the design becomes evident throughout the entire visible world: in geometry and music, in the course of the planets, in the whole macrocosm as well as in the microcosm, in becoming and in decaying. It is in such a harmony of numbers that Philo achieves the integration of speculative philosophy and the theology of creation.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 35:103.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 40:118f.

### 3. THE BOOK YEZIRAH AND THE ARCHETYPES OF THE ALPHABET

The stock of archetypes is not exhausted by the archetypes of form and number as Philo assembled them from the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions. It would seem worthwhile to begin with the definition of an archetype.<sup>33</sup> It is the imprinting form of sensual reality, preconceived in divine thinking. The archetype is the primordial model of a sensual reality, and it was Eusebius who discovered it in Philo as '*notetos kosmos*', as thinking order, and as '*paradeigma, archetypos idea ton ideon*', a paradigm, as the idea of ideas.<sup>34</sup>

In the biblical text, however, Leibniz' formula "dum deus calculat, fit mundus" (while God calculates, the world emerges) does not appear.<sup>35</sup> According to the book of Genesis, God spoke and it was, not God thought and it was. This linguistic difference, the character of the commanding word, is not considered in Philo's conception of the archetype.

It is by the power of the working word that something emerges because of its command. The working, commanding word is more than just an idea. The imprinting form of the divine ideas, the pastry mould of the genus, had to be endowed with power in order to bring forth creation. The divine Word has the power to produce things. This production does not occur only with God thinking the things that are to become real, rather he grants them their extra-mental existence through his power. This power of God is not wielded by the conception of the archetype alone. God's will and power must join with his thoughts. It is the effect of the divine Word that it can call something into life; God's commands have this power of life.

It is impossible to give a logical explanation of the power of a command. A command is realised by the one who obeys. The power of the command corresponds to the obedience of the one who perceives himself being called. This phenomenon is basic; there is no justification behind it. It is the mystery of the *hegemonicon* that it is able to call its subject's name, and this is the very moment of obedience. All who are obedient perceive the power of the command by which they are called by their own name.

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<sup>33</sup> On the term archetype see Leisegang, Johannes: *Indices ad Phionis Alexandrij Opera*. Berlin 1930, s.v. archetypos.

<sup>34</sup> *De Opificio mundi* 6:25; this is the reading of Eusebius.

<sup>35</sup> Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm: *Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Carl Immanuel Gerhardt. Berlin 1890. Repr. Hildesheim 1965, vol. 7, p. 191.

This powerful working word constitutes revelation, both natural and positive. It lies beyond external sensuality but can only be perceived by the ear. Hearing constitutes a different semantic domain from seeing. For Philo and his Platonic tradition, the word had already become reality through the existence of ideas. But hearing a word and writing it engage different fields of perception, as was evident in the Jewish interpretation of the Torah. Nonetheless, even here the philosophical patterns of Platonic exegesis remain powerful.

The Jewish Torah is a written revelation. It is significant that it is written, since the letters are considered to be elements of the divine revelation. The letters are not arbitrary human inventions, rather their forms are expressions of the divine language, and they bear messages that can be interpreted.

Thus the letters of the divine language have different meanings:

1. They are elements from which words are composed, and thereby represent the power of the words.
2. They are symbols of numbers. In Latin, Greek and Hebrew, letters indicate numbers.
3. The forms of the letters are themselves representatives of divine might. This symbolic representation is also true for the groupings of the alphabet.
4. The position of letters in words can be interpreted symbolically. Letters can be mixed up, rearranged and interpreted based on their numeric value, and any meaning that emerges is considered to be born from the power of the letter. Combination unveils the mystery of letters.

The analysis of the meaning of scripture can therefore disclose the meaning of written biblical revelation as well as the mystery of the law and the mystery of nature. So it becomes possible that the working word appears as the creation of the world and, at the same time, as the written revelation of the Bible. The revelation of the Bible is the monopolistic framework of all truth. It is the word of the truth; what could then be more trustworthy? It is the word of truth that created the world. Thus the written form of the word, its ability to reveal itself in its letters, is itself a potential moment of interpretation of the most important secret of creation – its becoming real through the power of the word. Compared with this emphatic conception of language and scripture, the spoken human word is only of subordinate rank. Ranked first is the working divine word, second the divinely revealed letter, third is created nature, fourth the spoken human word. The cabalistic interpretation of the divine word tries to approach the inner sphere of divine wisdom, which comes from the word and is only accessible because the word revealed itself. This working word of creation, according to the tradition, was revealed to Abraham.

This attribution to Abraham is an extraordinary pseudepigraphical construction.<sup>36</sup> It confirmed the theory of an unwritten transmission of secret doctrines alongside the biblical texts. Thus it fit perfectly with the theories of perennial philosophy. All subsequent philosophies and theologies could be understood as the proof of a doctrine that was already secretly revealed to Abraham.<sup>37</sup> The Book Yezirah made it possible to speak of an oral tradition alongside the written biblical one, and this oral revelation had to be understood as the authentic interpretation of the Mosaic books. In the framework of perennial philosophy such a claim was taken seriously, especially since it was shared by the Hermetic and Chaldaic traditions and the books of Dionysius the Areopagite. This aspect of the antiquity and authenticity of wisdom is an indispensable part of the theory of its transmission and, corresponding to the Jewish notion of cabala, supports the assertion of the truth of these writings.

It is a fact that the doctrine of the beginning is particularly frequent in pseudepigraphical writings. The reason for this can perhaps be found in the attraction of the subject, and in the impossibility of dealing with it differently than with terms of adept wisdom and revelation. If the oneness of the beginning is the desired scope, then the beginning has the peculiar attraction of a safe and sound truth. The beginning is true, since it is undivided and unspoiled. This is of course true for the Book Yezirah. This book provides an early version of the concept of primordial creation, and it interprets creation through the secrets of the alphabet:

“1:1  
 With 32 mystical paths of wisdom  
 engraved Yah  
 the Lord of Hosts  
 the God of Israel  
 the living God  
 King of the universe

<sup>36</sup> Scholem situates it in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is rather early, and he calls it ancient Jewish, rather than cabalistic, literature. Gershom Scholem: *Ursprünge und Anfänge der Kabala*. Berlin 1968, pp. 20-29. On the different historical placements, see the table in Kaplan, Aryeh: *Sefer Yezirah. The Book of Creation*. York Beach, Maine, 1991, pp. XXIIIf. Leo Baeck interprets it convincingly as a Jewish mystical treatise in the tradition of Proclus. Baeck, Leo: *Sefer Jezira*. In: Leo Baeck, *Aus drei Jahrtausenden*. Tübingen 1958. p. 252-271.

<sup>37</sup> On the claim of the Book Yezirah as revealed to Abraham cf. Johann Franz Buddeus in his “*Introductio ad historiam philosophiae Hebraeorum*”. Halle 1702, pp. 105-107, where he seriously questions the claim of the book Yezirah. His theses were adopted by Johann Christoph Wolf in his “*Bibliotheca Hebraea*”, Hamburg 1715, and Johann Albert Fabricius “*Pseudepigraphica Veteris Testamenti*”, Hamburg 1723.

El Shaddai  
 Merciful and Gracious  
 High and Exalted  
 Dwelling in eternity  
 Whose name is Holy  
 - He is lofty and holy -  
 And He created His universe  
 with three books (Sephirim),  
 with text (Sepher)  
 with number (Sephir)  
 and with communication (Sippur).<sup>38</sup>

How is this text to be understood? The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. According to Jewish tradition, God wrote and counted the whole creation with these letters, as the letters also function as numerals. Creation emerged through the word, so the 22 letters are representatives of the working word. Since they are revealed by God, they must correspond to the elements of divine revelation, and they are, therefore, in a mysterious way, shadows of God's predicates. They are symbols of God's revealed qualities and represent his creating power. They are symbols of the qualities that are also visible in nature.

The number 32, occurring in the first verse, is the sum of the 22 consonant letters and the number 10 in decimal counting.

The three Sephirim of the first verse may correspond to the triadic structure of the universe, its extension into space, time, and spirit constituting its unity. The 22 letters and 10 numbers become the forms and archetypes of creation in this dimension of space and time. What becomes visible in the world emerged from the power of letters and numbers. Verse 1:9 explains how the emergence of the extended world is imagined. It is God's breath that transports the power of his word:

"1: 9  
 Ten Sefirot of Nothingness:  
 One is the Breath of the living God  
 Blessed and benedicted is the name

<sup>38</sup> Translation of Kaplan, *Book Yezirah*. I chose the short version of the book *Yezirah* because it was the one also known in the Christian cabalistic traditions. On the difference between the long and the short version, see Kaplan, pp. 324f. It was Guillaume Postel who first edited a Latin translation of this book (Paris 1552) with a very instructive commentary. The reprint (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1994 *Clavis Pansophiae* 1) includes a very useful introduction by Wolf Peter Klein. The edition and the commentary of Johann Friedrich Meyer are based on Postel. Meyer, Johann Friedrich (ed.): *Das Buch Jezirah, die älteste kabalistische Urkunde der Hebräer, nebst zweyunddreißig Wegen der Weisheit. Hebräisch und Teutsch, mit Einleitung, erläuternden Anmerkungen und einem punktierten Glossarium rabbinischer Wörter.* Leipzig 1830. Reprint Berlin 1993.

of the Life of Worlds

The voice of breath and speech  
and this is the holy breath.”

The Universe, which is constituted by God’s breath, is filled with the mysterious semantics of his letters.

“1:2

Ten Sefirot of Nothingness,  
And 22 Foundation Letters  
Three Mothers,  
Seven Doubles  
And twelve Elementals.”

The 32 ways are the 10 Sephiroth and the 22 letters. The formulation “Sefirot of Nothingness” seems to point out the formal character of the process of counting. If ‘nothingness’ is emphatically interpreted, it can be understood in a Neoplatonic and Pythagorean way; in this case the numbers are the first emanations from the divine sphere. The ten sefirot of nothingness are interpreted later as the spheres of the divine. They do not yet have names in this book, but will receive them in the course of tradition.<sup>39</sup> Crown, Wisdom, Understanding, Love, Strength, Beauty, Victory, Splendour, Foundation, and Kingship.

The 32 ways are the imprinting forms of the world; the numbers and letters represent secret semantic qualities, which become real in the course of creation. The world is imprinted and informed by the numbers and letters. The ‘three mothers’, the ‘seven doubles’, and the ‘twelve elementals’ are groups within the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>40</sup>

The peculiar meanings of the letters derive from their twofold symbolism. Since the letters are also numerals, their arrangement in words produces a similar meaning to their arrangement in numbers. The letters therefore do not only denote different sounds, which is of secondary importance, but they are also semantic symbols, like numerals in numbers.

It is clear that the letters represent divine powers, which are revealed through creation. In the number, the separation of creation from God becomes evident, and it is by counting that the harmony and order of God’s creation is perceived. It is this same harmony that is represented by the letters that make up the Torah and the world. It is God’s external form revealed to the world through which he creates reality.

“1: 7

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Dan, Joseph (ed.): *The Early Kabbalah*. New York, Mahwah, Toronto 1986. (The Classics of Western Spirituality).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Kaplan p. 22; The “mothers” are *Alef, Mem, Shin*; the “doubles” are *Beth, Gimmel, Dalet, Kaf, Peh, Resh, Tav*; the “elementals” are *He, Vav, Zayin, Chet, Tet, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samekh, Eyin, Tzadi, Kuf*.

Ten Sefirot of Nothingness  
 Their end is embedded in their beginning  
 and their beginning is their end  
 like a flame in a burning coal  
 For the Master is singular  
 He has no second  
 And before One, what do you count?"<sup>41</sup>

It is from the One that the ten Sephiroth emerge, and the One is the beginning as such: "And before One what do you count?" The One is the master and creator of the universe; from him space and time emerge. This may be apprehended as the externalisation of the Sephiroth, which then appear here as cosmic spheres - circles that return to their beginnings in perfect movement. Since the spheres shine like stars, they are fiery, according to the Platonic tradition (*Timaeus* 37 d). They are connected to the fiery element of the spheres like coal to fire.

From the external element of the first fire the text proceeds, in numeric steps according to the might of God's breath, to the elements of the earth:

"1:9  
 Ten Sefirot of Nothingness:  
 One is the Breath of the living God  
 Blessed and benedicted is the name  
 of the Life of the Worlds  
 The voice of breath and speech  
 And this is the holy Breath."  
 "1:10:  
 Two: Breath from Breath.  
 With it He engraved and carved  
 22 Foundation Letters  
 Three Mothers  
 Seven Doubles  
 and Twelve Elementals  
 And on Breath is from them."

In this process, the letters can be interpreted as being fixed in the ultimate sphere of heaven. This is the sphere nearest to God, but nevertheless separated from him. It has been filled up, as it were, by God's breath. So the letters in that sphere are analogous to the stars in astrology.

"1.11  
 Three: Water from breath.  
 With it he engraved and carved  
 (22 letters from) [?]  
 chaos and void

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<sup>41</sup> Kaplan p. 57.



mire and clay  
 He engraved them like a sort of garden  
 He carved them like a sort of wall  
 He covered them like a sort of ceiling.”

In this third step, the story of creation comes quite close to the account in the book of Genesis. God’s breath, which constituted space and transported his mighty voice, creates the next element, the heavenly waters. These may be seen as the waters of fertility, bearing the seeds and the life of all things, and which are, as spiritual elements, still beyond earthly existence. Their place is, however, below the sphere of the letters. The holy water is the sphere that mediates between the sphere of letters and the ‘tohu wa bohu’. The chaos below the vivid waters can be imagined as ether, spiritual matter. As the fifth element, it spiritually represents earthly matter. The living waters’ work of mediating between the sphere of letters and the ‘tohu wa bohu’ is represented in very plastic terms: It is from the spiritual matter of the ‘tohu wa bohu’ that the mediating living water forms copies of the heavenly letters.

“1:12

Four: Fire from Water  
 With it He engraved and carved  
     the Throne of the Glory  
     Serafim, Ophanim, and holy Chayot [Charioth?]  
     and Ministering angels  
 From these three He founded His dwelling  
     as it is written:  
     ‘He makes His angels of breaths,  
     His ministers of flaming fire’”. (Ps. 104:4)

Here reference is made to the vision of Ezekiel 1, a central element of ancient Jewish mysticism.<sup>42</sup> In this vision, the heavens make up God’s throne and show his glory, which is also represented by the angels. Here this vision is combined with the second element of the four ancient (Empedoclean) elements – fire. The quoted psalm bolsters the interpretation of the cosmogony: The angels are those who move the fiery spheres as they serve God at his cosmic throne.

The emergence of a spiritual world has now been presented. It contains the elements of numbers and letters, comprises counted spheres, and is composed of the spiritual equivalents of the four earthly elements. It becomes visible by God’s breath, by the living waters and spiritual matter, and by the glorious fire of God’s throne.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Schäfer, Peter: *Der verborgene und der offenbare Gott. Hauptthemen der frühen jüdischen Mystik*. Tübingen 1991.

All this takes place in a spiritual world that is not really extended, but is the ideal prefiguration of the real world.

Now it becomes necessary to explain the emergence of the real, extended world, and this is possible by introducing the six dimensions of the world: above, below, right, left, in front, and behind:

“1:13

He chose three letters

from among the Elementals...

And He set them in his Great Name

and with them, He sealed six extremities.

Five: he sealed ‘above’ and faced upward

and sealed them with Yud, He, Vav.

Six: he sealed ‘below’ and faced downward

and sealed it with Heh Yud Vav.

Seven: He sealed ‘east’ and faced straight ahead

and sealed it with Vav Yud Heh.

Eight: He sealed ‘west’ and faced backward

and sealed it with Vav He Yud.

Nine: He sealed ‘south’ and faced to the right

and sealed it with Yud Vav He.

Ten: He sealed ‘north’ and faced to the left

and sealed it with Heh Vav He.”<sup>43</sup>

The combination of the first three letters of the holy tetragram makes up the dimensions of space. The letters indicate that it is still God’s space, but that he is essentially different from it. The [?]combination of the tetragram’s three letters make up a six: This number is understood to be the six dimensions of space. This shows how the Lord’s name constitutes and fills cosmic space. Four and six add up to ten: So here as well we see the Pythagorean holy number by which cosmic space is measured.

It was because of its specifically Neoplatonic ideas that it was possible for this document of ancient Jewish spirituality to be integrated into the framework of Renaissance perennial philosophy. Even if it became known quite late, through the famous 1552 translation by Guillaume Postel, the book had a considerable impact on Christian speculative spirituality from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Kaplan, p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm: *Die christliche Wirkung des Buches Jezirah. Epilogue to the repr. of Meyer’s edition of 1830.* Berlin 1993.

#### 4. PLOTINUS' (c. 205 - 270) SPIRITUALISED SPACE

The book *Yezirah* probably derived its ideas concerning the archotyping, imprinting form of the primordial world from the Middle- and Neoplatonic context, which Plotinus was familiar with, and which he thoroughly reshaped. For the scholars of the Renaissance, however, the concept of perennial philosophy was valid, and the book *Yezirah* was therefore considered to be older than Plotinus' philosophy. Plotinus was regarded as a late representative of an original, primeval philosophical revelation, parallel to the biblical tradition. This philosophical revelation was seen as part of the pagan and Jewish traditions, and the confluence of Judaeo-Christian theology and Neoplatonic philosophy seemed especially evident after Pico's 900 theses of 1486 and Reuchlin's treatise "De verbo mirifico" of 1497. The writings of Dionysius the Areopagite were also considered to be older than Plotinus, who, therefore, was judged to be the pagan summit of a development as old as revelation.

Plotinus reformulates the doctrine of the cosmic soul, which permeates the cosmos.<sup>45</sup> This soul is related to, and receives its power from, the *nous*. It informs the heavens with the fixed stars, and by this means it influences the earth. So there has to be a sphere below the soul. How can the emergence of this sphere be described? If the light of the soul is to light up the cosmos, the soul must first create the space for its light, for the spirit alone needs no space. And so the soul creates its space by overwhelming the darkness. Plotinus does not say from whence that darkness derives - darkness just becomes perceivable when the soul's light shines. But behind the light's brilliance darkness is 'inanis' and 'informis', as the Vulgate translation of the Bible states. The power of the light seizes the darkness and permeates its *potentia passiva*. It is in this way that the soul is found in every corporeality: The soul forms the darkness into corporeality and makes corporeality the essence of matter.

The starting point of his process is the soul, which has a commitment to mediate but still does not have an object. The soul receives the power of the *nous* and remains at rest until it explodes into extension and light. In this way the soul produces its own space:

"In the absence of body, soul could not have gone forth, since there is no other place to which its nature would allow it to descend. Since go forth it must, it will generate place for itself; at once body also exists. While the

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<sup>45</sup> Hadot, Pierre: *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*. Paris 1973, pp. 43-60. Bréhier, Émile: *La philosophie de Plotin*. Paris 1961, pp. 47-79.

Soul (as an eternal, a Divine Being) is at rest - in rest firmly on Repose, the Absolute - yet, as we may put it, that huge illumination of the Supreme pouring outward comes at last to the extreme bourne of its light and dwindles to darkness; this darkness, now lying there beneath, the Soul sees and by seeing brings to shape; for in the law of the things this ultimate depth, neighbouring with soul, may not go void of whatsoever degree of that Reason-Principle it can absorb, the dimmed reason of reality at its faintest."<sup>46</sup>

The principles of the soul permeate infinitesimal darkness, and moving matter, chaos, and ether emerge. This is also the emergence of space and potential stability, which is capable of receiving further information from the seminal reasons of the soul.<sup>47</sup> Every seminal reason has the potential to become extended; it extends once its power becomes an extra-mental reality. It is only through this process that space emerges. Only through the unfolding of seminal reasons can corporeality receive its form, and only as an individual body can a being develop and decay, according to its essence.

The primordial ensemble of this life is spiritual; it is the whole of the living, seminal powers - the cosmic soul. This soul contains the primordial seeds, and has the power to create extra-mental realities. This is "the universal Soul's independent power of embellishing matter by means of reasons, just as the seminal reasons themselves fashion and form animals as microcosms. According to its nature, the Soul gives a form to everything she touches."<sup>48</sup>

It is the specific characteristic of the seminal reasons to be spiritual. And yet they have the power to become extended and to unfold themselves into their essence. The soul permeates space while the seminal reasons unfold, and it is only in this unfolding that space becomes reality. This process constitutes living space.

Since the soul creates its own space, the question of the mediation of the forms into matter includes the problem of how the extension of spiritual seminal reasons can be described. The process of becoming extended is prefigured in the emanation of the cosmos. In his description of cosmological emanation, Plotinus uses many concepts that are also found in Philo and in the philosophical interpretation of creation. He integrates them into his philosophy of the one and develops a concept of cosmic harmony. This harmony is the living breath of oneness, which is found in every unique being. From original oneness emerges otherness, but this otherness is held

<sup>46</sup> Enn IV, 3, 9, trans. MacKenna, Stephen. London 1956, p. 268.

<sup>47</sup> On the theory of seminal reasons cf. Meyer, Hans: *Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften von der Stoa bis zum Ausgang der Patristik dargestellt*. Cf. Justinus Martyr, *Apologia II*, 13, PG 6, 465c. On the Christian interpretation of Plotinus cf. Müller, H. F.: *Dionysios, Proklos, Plotinos. Ein historischer Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Philosophie*. Münster 1918, BGPM XX. 3, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Enn IV, 3, 10. Trans. Guthrie.

together by the cosmic breath of unity. What is the principle of the integrated construction of the other? "All things must be enchained; and the sympathy and correspondence obtaining in any one closely knit organism must exist first, and most intensively, in the All. There must be one principle constituting this unit of many forms of life and enclosing the several members within the unity, while at the same time, precisely as in each thing of detail the parts, too, have each a definite function, so in the All (the higher All) each member must have its own task - but markedly so since in this case the parts are not merely members but themselves Alls, members of a loftier kind. Thus each entity takes its origin from one principle and, therefore, while executing its own function, works with every other member of that All from which its distinct task has by no means cut it off."<sup>49</sup>

This multitude, deriving from unity, has its first visible expression in the starry heavens, which, in a fundamental order of darkness and light, shows the living soul of space. Light is form; darkness is passivity. This division of darkness and light, which corresponds to their division in the book of Genesis, is the very order based in the power of duality. But beyond this order as it appears in the starry heavens, the heavens must contain the seminal reasons of the world, from whose potentiality the reality of earthly beings must emerge. In this view, the stars are the signs of the seminal reasons which become real in the sub-lunar sphere: "We may think of the stars as letters perpetually being inscribed on the heavens or inscribed once for all and yet moving as they pursue the other tasks allotted to them; upon these main tasks will follow the quality of signifying, just as the one principle underlying any living unit enables us to reason from member to member, so that for example we may judge a character and even perils and safeguards by indications in the eyes or in some other part of the body. If these parts of us are members of a whole, so are we: in different ways the one law applies.

All teem with symbol; the wise man is the man who in any one thing can read another, a process familiar to us in not a few examples of everyday experience."<sup>50</sup>

This scripture of the heavens must be imagined as the signs of the seminal forms, which become real in the living space of the cosmos. They denote, like Egyptian hieroglyphs, the archetypal, seminal reasons of the things that appear in sub-lunar reality. The soul functions as the seminal reason of all seminal reasons, for it transforms the notions of the *nous* into the forms of things. The soul is therefore the medium of potential formality, through which the extended world emerges. The soul takes the powerful

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<sup>49</sup> Enn II, 3, 7, trans. Mackenna, Stephen. London 1957, p. 96.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

notion of an archetype from the *nous*, adds a powerful form to the notion, and thereby creates the extended being by informing and performing matter: "Creation is the operation of that phase of the soul which contains Ideal-Principles; for that is its stronger puissance, its creative part.

It creates, then, on the model of the Ideas; for what it has received from the Intellect-Principle, it must pass on in turn.

In sum, then, the Intellectual-Principle gives from itself to the Soul of the All which follows immediately upon it: this again gives forth from itself to its next, illuminated and imprinted by it; and that secondary Soul at once begins to create, as under order, unhindered in some of its creations, striving in others against the repugnance of Matter."<sup>51</sup>

This cosmology of seminal reasons is the philosophically elaborated background on which the Judeo-Christian account of creation could be interpreted. Plotinus' cosmology contains the essential elements of the philosophical interpretation of the book of Genesis – the distinctive position of light as the first step of creation; the harmony of creation; the primordial position of Wisdom, understood as the divine *nous*; and the dynamics of the process of becoming real, interpreted as divine power and life.

Even if Plotinus' texts remained widely unknown throughout the Middle Ages,<sup>52</sup> they built the Neoplatonic background to the interpretations of the church fathers, through which Neoplatonic philosophy remained vital in the interpretation of the model narrative of creation.

## 5. ORIGEN'S (185-254) FREE SPIRITS

The doctrine of the world-soul, defining earthly beings according to astrological seminal reasons, was a distinguished interpretation of the account of creation. But it soon became apparent that it could not be brought into harmony with the notion of an individually responsible soul, as was required in Christian dogma for the doctrines of sin and divine judgment. Origen, a contemporary of Plotinus,<sup>53</sup> treated the question of the freedom of the human soul in the third part of his chief work "De principiis", "On first

<sup>51</sup> Enn II, 3, 17, Ibid. p. 104.

<sup>52</sup> Except for the excerpts of the Enneades in the so-called "Theologia Aristotelis" and the "Dicta Sapientis Graeci". See Plotini Opera Tom. II, ed. Henry / Schwyzer. Paris, Brussels 1959.

<sup>53</sup> On the distinction between the church father Origines and the Neoplatonist Origen see: Zeller, Eduard: Die Philosophie der Griechen. 5. ed. Leipzig 1923, vol. III, p. 513. Weber, Karl Otto: Origines der Neuplatoniker. Versuch einer Interpretation. Munich 1962 (= Zetemata 27).

principles”, in the chapter on the freedom of the will.<sup>54</sup> He saw this topic as closely connected to the last judgment, and thereby initiated a discussion that determined and troubled Christian dogma up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup> The question of the end of the world, justice, the last judgment, and personal resurrection remained one of the most important subjects in Christian dogma and religious philosophy.

Origen’s argument employed a philosophical concept of the world quite close to that of Plotinus.<sup>56</sup> In his description of the world as deriving from the ‘one’, even his formulations echo those of his pagan competitor: “God who, by the unspeakable skill of his wisdom, transforms and restores all things, whatever their condition, to some useful purpose and the common advantage of all, recalls these very creatures, so different from each other in mental quality, to one harmony of work and endeavour; so that, diverse though the motions of their souls may be, they nevertheless combine to make up the fullness and perfection of a single world, the very variety of minds tending to one end, perfection. For there is one power which binds and holds together all diversity of the world and guides the various motions to the accomplishment of one task, lest so immense a work as the world should be dissolved by the conflicts of souls.”<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Crouzel, Henri: *Bibliographie critique d’Origène*. The Hague, Steenbrug 1971. (= *Instrumenta Patristica VIII*) Also informative: Huet, Pierre Daniel: *Origeniana*. Libri III. 17, Annex to the works of Origen, col. 673-1330. Daniélou, Jean: *Origène*. Paris 1948. Crouzel, Henri: *Origène et la philosophie* (Collection *Théologie* 52). Paris 1962. Holz, Harald: *Über den Begriff des Willens und der Freiheit bei Origines*. In: *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 12 (1970), pp. 63-84. Ivánka, Endre von: *Origines*. In: *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter*, ch. 3. Einsiedeln 1964, pp. 101-148. Benjamin, Hendrik Simon: *Eingeordnete Freiheit: Freiheit und Vorsehung bei Origines*. Leiden, New York 1994. Schockendorff, Eberhard: *Zum Fest der Freiheit. Theologie des christlichen Handelns bei Origines*. Mainz 1990, esp. pp. 95-187. Lies, Lothar: *Origines >Peri Archon<*. Eine undogmatische Dogmatik. Erläuterung und Einführung. Darmstadt 1992. Rist, J. M.: *The Greek and Latin Texts of the Discussion on Free Will in De Principiis, Book III*. In *Origeniana I*. Bari 1975, pp. 99-111. Marcus, Wolfgang: *Der Subordinatiasmus als historiologisches Phänomen. Ein Beitrag zu unserer Kenntnis von der Entstehung der altchristlichen ‘Theologie’ und Kultur unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Begriffe Oikonomia und Theologia*. Munich 1963, pp. 152-163. Teichtweier, Georg: *Die Sündenlehre des Origines*. Regensburg 1958, pp. 71-89.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Walker, Daniel P.: *The Decline of Hell. Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment*. Chicago 1964. Id.: *The Ancient Theology. Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. London 1972. Cf. above ch. VII: World time and Return.

<sup>56</sup> On the tradition cf. Berchman, Robert M: *From Philo to Origen. Middle Platonism in Transition*. Chico, Cal. 1984. (= *Brown Judaic Studies*; no 69).

<sup>57</sup> Origen: *On First Principles II*, 1, 2, trans. G.W. Butterworth. Gloucester, Mass. 1973, p. 77.

Origen goes very far in his adaptation of Christian theology to Platonism. He accepts a world-soul, which he justifies with the biblical imagery of the world as God's throne: "Although therefore the whole world is arranged in diverse parts and functions, we must not suppose that its condition is one of discord and self-contradiction; but as our 'one body' is composed of 'many members' [I Cor. 12:12] and is held together by one soul, so we should, I think, accept the opinion that the universe is as it were an immense, monstrous animal, held together by the power and reason of God as by one soul. This truth is, I believe, referred to by the holy scripture in the following passage spoken through the prophet, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord'? [Jer. 23:24] And again 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is the footstool of my feet' [Is. 66:1]; and in what the Saviour said, when he tells us not to swear, 'neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, neither by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet'; and further, in what St. Paul says in his oration to the Athenians, 'in him we live and move and have our being'. For how do we 'live and move and have our being in God' except through the fact that He binds and holds together the universe by his power?"<sup>58</sup>

In distinction to Plotinus, it remains unclear in Origen whether the world-soul has the nature of a hypostasis. But this vagueness is part of Origen's theology: The vague identification of God's power with the world-soul is to dissolve the distinctions between the cosmic spheres. Therefore Origen does not describe the emanation of one cosmic sphere into the next, but homogenises the cosmos as the continuous space of divine power instead. The omnipresent and constantly working divine power does not provide any further explanation of the cosmic spheres through which it must be mediated; it has the same omnipresent power in heaven and on earth. By means of this new interpretation of the world-soul as the immediate divine power, it becomes possible to save human freedom from the astrological determinations of the seminal reasons. Even if Origen's conception of diversification from the one corresponds to Plotinus' concept of harmony, even if both authors describe the inner-cosmic connection using the same terms, Origen avoids defining the mediation of God's power with astrological types. For him, the mediation of divine power does not work in steps and on different levels, but is immediately connected to the individual souls. In this way, individual freedom is not hindered by astrological pre-determination or cosmic intervention. Origen sees man as suspended between the claim of individual freedom and that of cosmic harmony. The author of the sermon "De opificio hominis" shares Origen's ideas, even if he emphasises human freedom more passionately than Origen.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. II, 1, 3, p.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. ch. 4, 6.



The latter writes as a Christian and as a Neoplatonist when he emphasises the human freedom of rational beings: "It is for this reason, we think, that God, the parent of all things, in providing for the salvation of his entire creation through the unspeakable plan of his word and wisdom, has so ordered everything that each spirit or soul, or whatever else rational existences ought to be called, should not be compelled by force against its free choice to any action except that to which the motions of its own mind lead it, - for in that case the power of free choice would seem to be taken from them, which would certainly alter the quality of their nature itself - and at the same time that the motions of their wills should work suitably and usefully together to produce the harmony of a single world, some being in need of help, others able to give help, others again to provide struggles and conflicts for those who are making progress, whose diligence will be accounted the more praiseworthy and whose rank and position recovered after their victory will be held the more securely, as it has been won through difficulty and toil."<sup>60</sup>

Beyond the conception of the space of divine power, Origen requires the concept of a passive capacity to receive this divine power. This role is filled by matter. His concept of a divinely filled space of power includes a passive moment, which is connected to divine activity without being identical to it. It retards divine power and can therefore be formed by it; it obeys and resists it at the same time. Origen defines matter accordingly: "Now by matter we mean that which underlies the bodies, namely, that from which they take their existence when qualities have been applied to or mingled with them. We speak of four qualities, heat, cold, dryness, wetness. These qualities, when mingled with the *hyle* or matter (which matter is clearly seen to have an existence in its own right apart from these qualities we have mentioned), produce the different kinds of bodies. But although, as we have said, this matter has an existence by its own right without qualities, yet it is never found actually existing apart from them."<sup>61</sup>

Matter is the stuff in which qualities become real; it is the guarantee of extra-mental existence, which persists in the quantity or the variety of forms. Matter is, as for Plotinus, the counterweight to God's power. It is in matter that divine power manifests itself, even before the four elements emerge. This concept of matter cannot be distinguished from the passive quality of space. Up to this point, Origen's concept of space corresponds to that of Plotinus. The subsequent qualification of the soul is not presented in the terms of pagan Neoplatonism, but according to the Christian concept of the individual soul suspended between good and evil. Origen's forms of divine

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<sup>60</sup> Origen, *On First Principles* II, 1, 2, pp. 77f.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*: II, 1, 4, p. 79.

power are therefore not identical with Plotinus' cosmological might. For Origen, individuals are the 'rational creatures' made at the beginning of creation: "We must suppose, therefore, that in the beginning God made as large a number of rational and intelligent beings, or whatever the before-mentioned minds ought to be called, as he foresaw would be sufficient. It is certain that he made them according to some definite number fore-ordained by himself."<sup>62</sup>

The number of these intelligences is limited, since God created them in his wisdom "by number and measure" (Wis. 11:21). They have, therefore, the Pythagorean character of number, and as measurements they have the character of definition and form: "Moreover when the scripture says that God created all things 'by number and measure' we shall be right in applying the term 'number' to rational creatures or minds for this very reason, that they are so many as can be provided for and ruled and controlled by the providence of God; whereas 'measure' will correspondingly apply to bodily matter, which we must believe to have been created by God in such quantity as he knew would be sufficient for the ordering of the world."<sup>63</sup> So it becomes clear that the 'intelligent beings' are the ordering qualities of the world, in respect to number as well as in respect to form. These intelligences structure 'the heaven' that God created 'in the beginning'.

They were created in the beginning, after previously having not existed at all. This is the formal definition of contingency, and it is from this qualification that Origen draws conclusions that do not correspond with those of Plotinus. Even if the intelligences primarily order the world, they are nonetheless variable. For what did not exist at one time, and then was called into existence, is a contingent being and therefore variable. If it exists, its number and the dimensions of its species are unchangeable, but within the limits of its species, it can use its free will – and therefore it can choose the direction of its development. The development of beings presupposes a discrepancy between their actual status and their destination, and this is the realm of freedom. Even if the number and the species of an individual being remain unchanged, there is free choice in its individual direction towards good or evil. If the intelligences have this freedom of decision between good and evil, they can no longer be interpreted as abstract cosmological powers, but only as pre-existent free human souls. And it is by virtue of this ability to be free, that rational beings receive their multiplicity and individuality

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. II, 9, 1, p. 129. This is Rufinus' text, which is the dogmatically convenient one. The Greek text says that God created a finite number of intelligent beings, since "even the power of God is finite, and we must not, under pretext of praising him, lose sight of his limitations." (Ibid.). This seems to be a polemical quotation, and it was one of the reasons for anathematizing Origen.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 130, cf. ch. IV.11.

within their defined genus: “For the creator granted to the minds created by him the power of free and voluntary movement, in order that the good that was in them might become their own, since it was preserved by their own free will; but sloth and weariness of taking trouble to preserve the good, coupled with disregard and neglect of better things, began the process of withdrawal from the good. Now to withdraw from the good is nothing else than to be immersed in evil; for it is certain that to be evil means to be lacking in good. Hence it is that in whatever degree one declines from the good, one descends into an equal degree of wickedness. And so each mind, neglecting the good either more or less in proportion to its own movements, was drawn to the opposite of good, which undoubtedly is evil. From this source, it appears, the creator of all things obtained certain seeds and causes of variety and diversity, in order that, according to the variety of minds, that is, of rational beings (which diversity they must be supposed to have produced from the causes we have stated above) he might create a world that was various and diverse.”<sup>64</sup>

This multiplicity of the first intelligences, conceived as primordial human souls, and the various uses of their freedom, is the reason for the variety of the lower world, in all its social and political differences. How can these differences be justified? The difference between the lot of the slaves and the lot of their masters cannot be accounted for from the perspective of divine justice, since men’s souls are created equal. In the lower world, however, human beings obviously differ from each other. Their difference therefore must be understood as a result of their primordial free existence - their merits and their guilt.

This argument presupposes that God acted according to the concept of equality when he first created intelligent beings ‘by number and measure’. But how does the devout philosopher know that this was the case, particularly since he cannot know God’s real predicates? Here Origen must rely on the positive doctrine of divine predicates as it was biblically revealed. All being is created in the ‘word’ of St. John’s gospel and in God’s ‘wisdom’. Origen does not distinguish between ‘wisdom’ and ‘logos’. He attributes justice to this wisdom, and this attribution legitimises the confidence he has in the concept of primordial creation: “Seeing then that Christ, as he is the Word and wisdom, is also ‘righteousness’ [1 Cor.1:30] which Christ is; whence it will be apparent that in the things which are made there was nothing unrighteous, nothing accidental, but all will be shown to be such as the principle of equity and righteousness demands.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. pp. 130f.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. II, 9, 4, p. 132.

But Origen knows well enough that this trust is not a legitimation for the ambiguous harmony that relies on the existence of differences, because these differences are caused by evil acts. He confesses not to have an answer to the question of how evil emerges from freedom. He refuses rational consolation, and, being a pious theologian, he offers only a prayer for divine grace: "How then this great variety and diversity of things can be understood to be most righteous and equitable it is, I am sure, impossible for human thought or speech to explain, unless as prostrate supplicants we beseech the Word himself, the 'wisdom and righteousness' who is the only begotten Son of God, that he, pouring himself by his grace into our minds, may deign to enlighten what is dark (cf. I Cor. 4:5), to open what is shut, to reveal what is secret; which he will do if only we are found seeking, or asking, or knocking so worthily as to deserve to receive when we seek, to find when we ask and to have the door opened in response to our knock (Matt. 7:7f.)."<sup>66</sup>

Origen sets up a non-cosmological, primordial world. He emphasises human freedom, and omits the cosmological aspect the account of creation had had since Philo's interpretation. His account of creation focuses on human freedom.

If creation culminates in a free human being - and freedom, for Origen, is the hallmark of individuality- then human freedom must be grounded in the divine primordial concept of man. This is the reason for the doubling of the world and of the realm of freedom. Humans were already free when they were conceived in the divine mind as spiritual beings. Therefore even divine primordial wisdom contains the potential for evil, and this evil becomes apparent in the extra-mental, lower world.

At last the labyrinth of theodicy appears here: wicked difference whose cause is evil, difference that cannot be resolved in harmony. This remainder of God's opposite is the last secret of divine creation. And this frightens even the speculative mind of Origen.

## 6. AUGUSTINE'S (354-430) TRINITARIAN ARCHETYPES

Augustine laboured a long time on his interpretation of the book of Genesis. In 389 he made his first attempt; in 393 he took it up again. After two further attempts on the account of the creation, "De Genesi contra Manichaeos libri duo" and "De genesi ad literam liber imperfectus", he worked on the twelve books "De Genesi ad literam" (On the Literary Meaning of the Book of Genesis) from 401 until 419. This work has all the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

characteristics of books that take too long to complete. It is a work full of questions, conjectures, refutations, and hints. In the end, a kaleidoscope of interpretive proposals emerges, whose ideas partly complement, partly exclude each other. Augustine recognised this dilemma, and made a virtue of necessity: "Someone might ask, 'What is the result of the threshing in this dissertation? What kernel comes out? Why does most of it remain questions? Admit that some of what you said could be understood differently!' I answer him that I received a sweet nourishment that taught me to answer firmly and according to our faith to those who want to calumniate our Scriptures. If he is able to demonstrate the nature of things by true proofs, we must show that our books do not contradict them."<sup>67</sup>

This is the reason for Augustine's *interpretatio ad litteram*: It is an assimilation of biblical understanding to the experiences of pagan wisdom. Augustine bases his work on the great number of patristic and heretical interpretations of the book of Genesis. In his faith, he knows himself to conform to his Church, and he holds to the Neoplatonic model of interpretation, which characterises most of the interpretations of the book of Genesis. But he tries to interpret 'ad litteram', i.e. to exclude allegorical and tropological interpretations, and to examine the literal, i.e. 'historical' meaning of the text. The historical meaning is concerned with how the world became real, and accordingly the book of Genesis is read as a true history of the world's creation.

Augustine's biblical text is not exactly the same as the Vulgate. His text reads as follows: "In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram. Terra erat invisibilis et incomposita, et tenebrae erant super abyssum: et spiritus Dei superferebatur super aquas. Dixit Deus: Fiat lux, et facta est lux. Vidit Deus lucem, quia bonus est, et dividit lucem et tenebras. Appellavit et vocavit lucem diem et tenebras vocavit noctem: facta est vespera et facta est mane, dies unus."

"In the beginning God made heaven and earth. The earth was invisible and incomposite, and darkness was above the abyss and the spirit of God hovered above the waters. God said: Let there be light, and light was made. God saw the light and that it was good, and divided light and darkness. He called and named the light day and the darkness night. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day."

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<sup>67</sup> Augustine: *De Genesi ad litteram*. I. 21 CSEL XXVIII, 1. Prague, Vienna, Leipzig 1894, pp. 30f. Lit. Agaesse-Solignac, P.: *Notes complémentaires*. S. Augustine. *Les Confessions*. Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Vols. 13, 14. Paris 1962, pp. 32-50. Flasch, Kurt: *Was ist Zeit*. Augustinus von Hippo. Das XI. Buch der Confessiones. Historisch-philosophische Studie. Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar. Frankfurt 1993, for „De genesi ad litteram” pp. 99-105.

The title of Augustine's treatise is "De Genesi ad literam", "On Genesis According to its Literal Sense". He first explains the fourfold meaning of the scripture in order to exclude the anagogical and the allegoric senses: "In all sacred scriptures you must consider which eternal things are piously contemplated, which facts are told, what future events are predicted and what they prescribe or interdict."<sup>68</sup> This is the fourfold sense of Augustine's readings: 1. The eternal secrets of God - *sensus mysticus*, 2. the facts of faith and history - *sensus historicus seu literalis*, 3. the future things of eternal bliss - *sensus anagogicus* 4. the moral sense. In this case, however, Augustine does not want to explain the complex meaning of the holy text. Following his program, he reduces his exegesis to the facts of faith and history, the literal sense.

His method consists in explaining the biblical accounts of creation according to the truths of faith in a way that convenes with secular science. From the great number of plausible interpretations, Augustine chooses the ones "that are ensured by the soundness of the catholic faith" or, at least, "do not hinder the accordance with the sound faith".<sup>69</sup>

But how can this accordance be described? The heavens as well as the earth praise the glory of the Eternal, and, being created, they point to their creator. Thus creation must show the traces of God's trinity, just as it was indicated in the prologue to St. John's gospel. This is the dogmatic minimum that an interpretation of the account of creation must explain. So the power of the divine trinity becomes a primordial pattern for creation, where one can find the traces of the holy trinity.

"In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram." For his interpretation of the account of creation, Augustine connects the 'principium' of the beginning of the book of Genesis closely with the 'principium' of St. John's Gospel. For him, "In the beginning was the word" means the same thing as 'In the beginning God made'. It was 'in the son' that the divine Father created the world: "and the spirit of God hovered above the waters". This is the reflection of the holy trinity in the account of the creation: "When the Scripture says, 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth', we understand by 'God,' the Father, by 'the beginning,' the Son. But he is not the beginning of the Father but the beginning of His first spiritual creation and consequently the beginning of all creatures. In the passage of Scripture:

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<sup>68</sup> "In libris autem omnibus sanctis intueri oportet, quae ibi aeterna intimentur, quae facta narrentur, quae futura praenuntiantur, quae agenda praecipiantur vel munerantur." Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. I, 21, p. 31.

‘and the spirit of God hovered above the waters’, we recognise the complete remembrance of the Trinity.”<sup>70</sup>

Life is only made possible in the begetting of the Son from the Father, and so the Son is the beginning of life. Through the Son, the Father becomes delineated, and the Son through the Father. The Son is therefore the archetype of original life as well as of definition, since it is the separation of their functions that constitutes the delineation between the first two divine persons. In this respect the Son is the Logos, the Word. He defines as a concept the form of divine life: “The Word and the Son do not have a formless life; so that living and being would be the same for him, his life is wise and happy.”<sup>71</sup> Happiness and wisdom are the two essential predicates of the divine Word. With these predicates Augustine introduces ‘wisdom’ as the principle of creation, with ‘happiness’ as its purpose.

Before Augustine addresses the question of a preconceived creation, he must explain the second half of the first sentence of Genesis: “heaven and earth”. He does not intend to deliver an unequivocal interpretation of Genesis, so he proposes two possible interpretations:

1. Both heaven and earth are without form. They both are to be brought into a new relation with the creator, without which they remain unformed and invisible. They are both darkness.

2. From the beginning, heaven is a spiritual creation;<sup>72</sup> the earth, however, is unformed and invisible. This “unformed and invisible” is understood as the abyss, or as the nature not yet formed through the Christological life.

In both cases, Augustine proceeds from the assumption that in every created being there is a relationship between form and matter, and that prime matter must also have been created in the beginning. This interpretation of matter is essential to a monotheistic exegesis of creation. Only if matter is created is it possible to escape the dangerous Manichean conclusion that the two equally balanced principles of spirit and matter existed in the beginning. If matter is created is the priority of the spiritual, trinitarian God guaranteed. In this case it is unimportant where the first matter is located, whether in heaven or on the void and empty earth. It is only necessary that it was created in the beginning. Being a passive potency, matter has need of form – in this respect, Augustine’s argument is very conventional. Matter receives its form as the Word turns to it; this Word is characterised with the formulation of St. John’s gospel: “In him was life, and the life was the light

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. I, 8, p. 10. On the historical context see Sorabji, Richard: *Time, Creation and Continuum. Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca 1983.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. I, 5, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. I, 3, p. 7.

of men." (John 1:4) In the process of creation, the 'tohu wa bohu' is seized and formed by the light and life of the Logos. In the same process, the wisdom of the Logos acquires an outward appearance. Augustine sees the typology of the Trinity as visible in the account of creation, so 'the spirit of God', the third person of the trinity, 'hovers above the waters'.

It was St. Basil (329-379) who, in his homilies on the creation, gave the most influential interpretation of this passage. He understood the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the waters as a process of fertilization. St. Basil quotes Ephraim the Syrian (306-377), who understood 'hovering' in that way. Thus the Holy Spirit was the fertiliser of the waters; he informed the waters with life, since life is the form of the Trinity. In that way the heavenly waters became the biblical equivalent of the Neoplatonic world-soul, which contained the spiritual seeds of the earth. This accommodation of the biblical account fits perfectly with the 'scientific' interpretation of Genesis that Augustine intended. Basil writes: "The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of God, because it has been observed that It alone and specially was considered worthy by the scripture of such mention, and there is named no other Spirit of God than the Holy Spirit which forms an essential part of the divine and blessed Trinity. Admitting this meaning, you will find the advantage from it greater. How, then, was It stirring above the waters? I will tell you an explanation, not my own, but that of a Syrian who was as far removed from worldly wisdom as he was near the knowledge of the truth. Now, he claimed that the language of the Syrians was more expressive and because of its resemblance to the Hebrew language approached somewhat more closely to the sense of Scripture; therefore, the meaning of the statement was as follows. As regards the verb 'was stirring above', they interpret in preference to that, he says, 'warmed with fostering care,' and he endued the nature of the waters with life through his comparison with a bird brooding upon eggs and imparting some vital power to them as they are being warmed. Some such meaning, they say, was implied by this word, as if the spirit were warming with fostering care, that is, was preparing the nature of water for the generation of living beings. Therefore, from this there is sufficient proof for the inquiries of certain men that the Holy Spirit is not wanting in the creative power."<sup>73</sup>

St. Augustine clearly shares this interpretation. For him, too, the first waters are those above the firmament, the heavenly fruitful waters that are created on the first day, prior to the waters below the firmament, which were made on the second day (Gen. 1:7). It would seem close at hand to interpret those first waters as the water of baptism, but this allegorical interpretation does not suit Augustine's literary intentions. For him, the Holy Spirit stirring

<sup>73</sup> Saint Basil: Exegetic Homilies. On the Hexaemeron, II, 6. Trans. by Sister Agnes Clare Way, C.D.P. Washington D.C. 1963, pp. 30f. (The Fathers of the Church, vol. 46).



above the water can only be conceived as fertilizing, in the process by which the abyss is informed with life. This water becomes living matter when the Spirit turns to it, and then it becomes a spiritual element. Augustine, however, leaves many questions unanswered here as well. He does not specify how this water is to be understood - whether as heavenly and spiritual or earthly and material. At any rate, it is viewed as living, prime matter.

In the first case, he suggests, the holy author intended to designate all of corporeal matter with the term 'holy waters', in a description of that element from which everything was created and formed. In the second case, water means "a certain spiritual life which floats, so to speak, before it reverts to its creator; the spirit was hovering above it, and below it there lay what the spirit had begun to form and to permeate."<sup>74</sup> This is Augustine's interpretation of the fertile waters from which life on earth derives. In this reading, the waters are understood as a passive potency that must be fertilised. It is the meaning of 'turning of the water toward its creator' that, in the informing process, the spirit fertilises the water, which has the tendency to become informed.

How can the divine words 'fiat lux' be understood? It is through the Word that life and light emerge. Augustine, again, reads the verses "Let there be light; and there was light" from the perspective of St. John's gospel. The abyss is formed through the Word, since the Word is the ensemble of God's mighty thoughts. The working Word, the 'fiat' of divine Wisdom, has a double quality. As God's speech, it is first the timeless, inner-divine self-assurance. As the language of creation, it must, secondly, surpass the inner realm of the deity. And so the Word is the beginning as such: It began before all time, and from it all time began. In one special step, processuality is released from divine self-contemplation and divided into eternal divine processuality and finite earthly time. This is the moment of God saying 'Fiat lux!'

Even in this argument, the question of the difference between the divine eternal beginning and earthly time remains unanswered. Augustine leaves his reader with a question: "Is it a spiritual motion or a temporal one? Must we understand that the 'fiat lux' - expressed by the eternal God through the coeternal Word in the spiritual creature - created everything at once, when he said 'in the beginning' God created heaven and earth? Is it a beginning in the heaven of all heavens? Must this speech be understood as a soundless and atemporal motion of a spiritual creature, somehow fixed in its mind by the Word that is coeternal with the Father? Must it be acknowledged as an impression, according to which the mind moves and directs itself toward the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. I, 5, p. 9.

species, which are the lower and dark imperfection of corporeal nature? And did the light emerge through this movement? But it is much more difficult to grasp why he [Moses] says that God did not command temporally and that the creation did not listen to him in a temporal manner. This simultaneity (*contemporatio*) of truth supersedes all time. Intellectually a creature receives impressions from the reasons of immutable Wisdom, like intelligible speech which transmits temporal motion to temporal things in order to form or administer them. If the light about which first was said 'fiat' - and there was light - must be acknowledged as obtaining the first rank in creation, then it is itself the light of the intellect that flickers unformed if it does not turn to its creator in order to be enlightened. However, when it directed itself to him and was illuminated, then there emerged what was announced in the Word of God: 'Fiat lux!'"<sup>75</sup>

In this case, the light is interpreted as ether and as an 'unformed flickering'. So there is the alternative between abyss/water as unformed matter and light/ether as 'informis'. In both cases, the outward divine Word, which is the form, has its counterpart in some kind of passive potency, which is prime matter, and it is always the former that gives life to the latter. The question of how creation happened is therefore answered in terms of one simultaneous act. Matter and form are created simultaneously, even if the account of creation can only tell the story sequentially. Thus it is clear that matter and form are conceived together in God's eternal thought, and that they are connected in one simultaneous act of creation.

This intuitive knowledge can only be recounted in a temporal, discursive narrative. This is the form of historiography, whose inner character is structured sequentially: "[A]nd what is important is that in that short time in which we express those two words [i.e. fiat lux], one after the other is accounted, like when in a long narrative we tell one thing before the next. Even if God created two things together, we are forced to tell first what was created first. But how can we tell a story of two things simultaneously, in which none is prior to the next? There is no doubt that this is the case with the unformed matter that is nearly nothing (*prope nihil*): it is created by God alone, and the things which were created through it are created simultaneously."<sup>76</sup>

For St. Augustine, the outlines of the account of creation appear in a triadic typology. The process of creation is viewed from a Johannine perspective: "In the beginning [i.e. through his Son] God created" form and matter. Matter is defined as invisible and unformed; it is a passive potency, prime matter, the invisible abyss (*tenebrae super abyssum*). It is dark, unformed passivity. Matter can also be the unfertilised water and the

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. I, 9, p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

flickering ether, still in need of the light of the Logos. Matter's capacity to receive life is guaranteed through the Word and the Spirit. Matter is defined as ether or as spiritual water, the element of life, and as the material receiver of the divine will.

The process of information is expressed in the *dixit deus fiat*. This 'fiat' is the first permeation of ethereal matter by the light. The light permeates the unformed, flickering passivity, lights it up and brings it to life. This permeation constitutes a participation in the divine life, in which the pulsing heart of the deity becomes perceivable. It is also the movement of God's internal brilliance to his outside, into creation and time.

The outside light, which emerges by the power of the *fiat*, becomes the form and species of all things. Living matter is again illuminated by God's Word, and it is the defining Logos that becomes visible in things after God has formed them into species. Without divine power, things tend towards formlessness. They can only exist because they are bound to the love of God, to his life, and to the form of his Word.

This is the process by which the species, the stars and the earth were created. In the history of the creation of man, the trinitarian traces are also visible<sup>77</sup>. Man created in the light, and after the image, of God is also the image of the holy Trinity: "First the light was created, in which emerged the cognition of God, who created and formed it from an unformed being into a formed one. And afterwards it is said about the other creatures: 'And so it was made'. With this he signified that the Word acknowledged the things in their intellectual nature before they were created. When he says afterwards, 'and God made', he shows that the species of things became realised as they were expressed in God's Word, that they should become real. This is not the case with man. For God said, 'let us make man after our image and likeness' etc. And then he did not say, 'and it was so', but he adds immediately: 'And God made man in his image' since man is of an intellectual nature and possesses the light, and since he is made in order to acknowledge God's Word, by whom he was made."<sup>78</sup> Human specificity lies in the partaking of divine light, which allows man to receive a believing insight into the divine Trinity. This is the core of man's being made in God's image, "that we confess, believe and acknowledge the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, since it is from the Holy Trinity that it is written 'ad imaginem nostram'; and that we accept one God, because it is written: 'after God's image'."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See O'Meara, John: *The Creation of Man in St. Augustine's De Genesi ad Literam*. Villanova 1980 (= *The St. Augustine Lecture* 1977).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* III [20], 31.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* III, [19], 29.

## 7. DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE: THE RADIANCE OF THE HOLY

In the history of Western spirituality, the corpus of Dionysian writings is perhaps the most enigmatic.<sup>80</sup> The unknown, pseudonymous writer, probably a Syrian from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, presented himself as a student of the Apostle Paul, as the very Dionysius who was the most famous convert at St. Paul's celebrated sermon on the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:34). As such, his writings lay claim to the authority and authenticity of a second philosophical revelation alongside the religious one of the New Testament. A theological and philosophical second revelation was thereby (re)constructed for Christian theology, similar to the Jewish claim of a philosophical counterpart to biblical revelation. In this respect, the corpus of Dionysian writings is a pendant to the Book Yezirah, which was thought to be a revelation to Abraham and was regarded as a philosophical parallel to the first book of Moses. The two texts may derive from the same age and milieu.

Dionysius' first translator into Latin, the 9<sup>th</sup> century Irish monk John Scotus Eriugena, who lived at the court of Charles the Bald, understood the texts as a philosophical theology of the new Testament witnessed by the early fathers of the church: "For it is transmitted that this Dionysius was the student and helper of the Apostle Paul, by whom he was made Bishop of Athens. Luke remembers him in the Acts of the Apostles; likewise Dionysius, the later bishop of Corinth, the holy Polycarp in his letter to the Church of Athens, Eusebius Pamphilus in his Ecclesiastical History, and the Holy Pope Gregory in his homily in which he briefly explained the order of the angels. This is asserted not only by the above-mentioned authors but also by modern ones. As far as his life is known, [we can say that] he came to Rome in the time of Pope Clement, successor of the apostle Peter. From Rome he went to France in order to preach the gospel. In Paris he was crowned with the glory of a martyr, together with his comrades Rusticus and Eleutherius."<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Scazzoso, Piero: *Ricerche sulla struttura del linguaggio dello Pseudo-Dionigi l'Areopagita*. Milan 1967, esp. pp. 183ff. Balthasar, Hans Urs von: *Liturgie Cosmique*. Paris 1941. Rutledge, Dom Denis: *Cosmic Theology*. London 1964. Pidellaro de Angelis, Rosa: *L'influenza di Dionigi l'Areopagita sul pensiero medievale*. Rome 1975. *Dogmata theologica Dionysii Petavii e societate Jesu*. Ed. Nova. vol. 1. Paris 1865, *De Deo Deique Proprietatibus* I, XIII, X f. pp. 167ff. On the Neoplatonic background of Dionysius: Corsini, Eugenio: *Il Trattato De Divinis Nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide*. Turin 1962.

<sup>81</sup> PL 122, 103a. In the year 827, the Byzantine Emperor Michael donated a manuscript of the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite to the French King Louis the Pious. The abbot

That the writings of Dionysius appeared as late as 553, on the occasion of a religious discussion [conference?] conference in Byzantium, and that Abelard doubted that St. Paul's student and the founder of St. Denis were the same person, was probably not known to most of the medieval authors using the Dionysian writings. Even if it was known, it did not really affect the authority of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. The attribution of the writings to St. Paul's student was not really challenged until it became obvious that he quoted Proclus. It took from [? (? :Commentary on Acts 17:34)], Lorenzo Valla,<sup>82</sup> who first doubted this identity in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, to the 20<sup>th</sup> century before pious circles became aware of this shocking fact.<sup>83</sup> The claim of authenticity, which was a constitutive part of the concept of perennial philosophy, was finally unmasked by historicist philology. But at what price?

Dionysius depicted the heavenly order as the archetype of the earthly one, and connected heaven and earth in a way that was unique for medieval thought. For him the question of archetypes was twofold. His Neoplatonically inspired philosophy has on one hand a gnoseological aspect, in which the relationship of God's negative and positive predicates is discussed. On the other hand, it deals with the theory and typology of creation. Here, different from St Augustine and far beyond Origen, the heavenly primordial world is described as having an independent existence and as being the model of the extra-mental world.

#### a) Gnoseology

Human knowledge of super-terrestrial beings is always analogical in nature. As such, it is always also a negative knowledge, which derives from the humble insight that heavenly beings are not real objects of earthly knowledge. On the other hand, it is precisely this humble insight that prepares the soul for an attitude of pious reception of God's wisdom. This wisdom is God's grace, which enables the human soul to see in reverse [?] earthly things anagogically, in the radiance of heavenly glory: "And when we have received, with immaterial and unflinching mental eyes, the gift of Light, primal and super-primal, of the supremely Divine Father, which manifest to us the most blessed Hierarchies of the Angels in types and symbols, let us then, from it, be elevated to its simple splendor."<sup>84</sup> This knowledge sees the entire world illuminated by divine light. It is in this light that the deity

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Hilduin de St. Denis, in his "Areopagitica" (814), identified Dionysius as the founder of his abbey and the missionary of the Franks.

<sup>82</sup> Commentary on Acts 17:34 in Valla, Lorenzo: *Opera Omnia*. Basle 1560, reprint Turin 1962, p.852, column 2.

<sup>83</sup> See Stiglmayr's preface in his German translation of the "Divine Names". Munich 1933.

<sup>84</sup> *Caelestis Hierarchia* = ch. I, 2. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite II. Trans. John Parker. London 1899. Repr. New York 1976, p. 2.

appears, in signs that remind of God, and which also indicate the distance between the world and the divine. Speaking of the divine and the celestial is only possible in insufficient symbols. But even the insufficient symbols express the splendour of Gods glory: “[Q]uam pulchre divina et caelestia etiam per dissimilia symbola manifestantur”, translates Eriugena.<sup>85</sup>

The forms of the heavenly hierarchy, which can be symbolically acknowledged in the earthly forms, are not imprinting forms like in Philo or in the book of Yezirah. Instead, the earthly symbols appear as perspectives into the divine, in whom they are resolved. This is the idea with which the book “On Heavenly Hierarchies” begins: “‘Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.’ (I Peter 1) Further also every procession of illuminating light, proceeding from the Father, whilst visiting us as a gift of goodness, restores us again gradually as a unifying power, and turns us to the oneness of our conducting Father, and to a deifying simplicity. For all things are from Him, and to Him, as said the Sacred Word.”<sup>86</sup>

This is the figure of grace and conversion in the conception of Neoplatonic Christian theology. The grace of God is sent out, seizes the soul, and then leads it back to its origin. The Word proceeds from God, and it is Christ who turns to the hearts of men and converts them from the world to the Father.

It is not only God’s Word of grace; it is also the knowledge that comes ‘from above’. This inner knowledge from above makes it possible to recognise the outward forms as beautiful. The forms of the world, which are directed and ordered with respect to God, are only the external side of the essences of things. But it is through this outside of the different beings that God’s grace shines into the tender soul. In this insight of grace all human pettiness disappears. The merciful soul looks through the choir of angels and sees God’s glory: “Now, in my opinion, the investigation of the truth demonstrates the most sacred wisdom of the Oracles, in the description of the Heavenly Minds, taking forethought, as that wisdom does, wholly for each, so as neither, as one may say, to do violence to the Divine Powers, nor at the same time to enthrall us in the grovelling passions of the debased imagery. For any one might say that the cause why forms are naturally attributed to the formless, and shape to the shapeless, is not alone our capacity which is unable immediately to elevate itself to the intelligible contemplations, and that it needs appropriate and cognate instructions with present images, suitable to us, of the formless and supernatural objects of contemplation; but further, that is most agreeable to the revealing Oracles to

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<sup>85</sup> PL 122, 1039c.

<sup>86</sup> CH I, 1, trans. Parker, p. 1.

conceal, through mystical and sacred enigmas, and to keep the holy secret truth respecting the supramundane minds inaccessible to the multitude.”<sup>87</sup>

All sensual forms are, as it were, absorbed and spiritualised. In the realm of the sacred, the forms become diaphanous. They lose their extension and become holy types and hieroglyphs; then they become spiritual concepts, whose difference is finally absorbed by the One. Every separate noetical existence disappears in the negative theology of the unfathomable God.

#### b) Hierarchy

The order of creation corresponds to the dissolution of all distinct knowledge into absolute knowledge, but proceeding in the opposite direction, from the One to the multitude. This is the order of hierarchical creation. What is a hierarchy? “Hierarchy is, in my judgment, an order and science and operation, assimilated, as far as attainable, to the likeness of God, and conducted to the illuminations granted to it from God, according to capacity, with a view to the Divine imitation.”<sup>88</sup>

Here too, the process of knowledge and the constitution of creation can be recognised to be the same process. Order also emerges as knowledge; it is acknowledged in its connection to the One, and constituted in this very process. However, in their difference from God, a certain autonomy of the separated orders emerges, since they are not God himself but different from and dependent on him. These dependent harmonies make up the realm of heavenly hierarchies and angels. In this case, it is impossible to discern between divine predicates and angels, hypostases and attributes: “For each of those who had been called into the Hierarchy, find their perfection in being carried to the Divine imitation in their own proper degree; and, what is more Divine than all, in becoming a fellow-worker with God, as the Oracles say, and in showing the Divine energy in himself manifested as far as possible. For it is an Hierarchical regulation that some are purified and that others purify, that some are enlightened and others enlighten; that some are perfected and others perfect; the Divine imitation will fit each in this fashion.”<sup>89</sup>

These dependent and independent spheres of God’s realm are permeated with divine Wisdom. The divine realms show his power to make the differences appear as harmonies, where harmony is an audible as well as visible order. The visibility of harmony is the inner splendour of things. Divine harmony imprints the inner essence of things as it urges them to perfection, and it is this inner harmony that grants things their particular,

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. II, 2, p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. III, 1, p. 13.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. III, 2, pp. 14f.

beautiful radiance. Through the power and light of the hierarchy, things become visible in their divine imagery (*theia theamata*). The moment matter is permeated by the ray of divine light, it becomes beautiful.

*Hyle*, matter, nevertheless maintains a certain autonomy against the hierarchy; this autonomy contains the tendency toward evil. *Hyle*, similarly to Augustine's matter, moves, and somewhat nervously. This separating movement is in keeping with the Platonic tradition, wherein the ideas are unmoved and where, according to Plotinus, the moving away of difference from the One was characterised as the beginning of evil (Enn. IV, 3,9). Movement is the hallmark of the not-One. Since it is absolutely different from form, *hyle* moves irregularly. Even if Dionysius introduces divine, eternal, regular movement as the divine life, he discredits irregular movement as evil.

With its power to produce harmony, the hierarchy is able to transform the nervous, irregular unrest of the *hyle* into the harmonic perfection of the individual things in the cosmos. This cosmos is harmony, acoustically as well as optically. The acoustic expression of the hierarchy is the power of the sound of the divine words. When God utters his Word, it resounds through spatial matter, which is formed to its innermost core, becoming the echo of the divine Word. The divine Word is the sound and the command that communicates divine rest to restless matter and produces harmony. This permeation of restless matter through the divine Word, this newly arranged harmony, recalls by anagogy the divine origin of the Word and the heavenly hierarchy, which is the archetype of harmony. This defining power grants every single being its perfection in the divine plan. The harmony can be perceived in every created thing: "It is, then, possible to frame in one's mind good contemplations from everything, to depict, from things material, the foresaid dissimilar similitudes; both for the intelligent hold in a different fashion things which are attributed to things sensible differently."<sup>90</sup> The shining of the beautiful into the ugly, the labour of unity and rest to finish evil movement - this is the work of the archetypal order that permeates matter. That is why every part of the world, down to the lowest, mirrors the heavens. Even if the world remains uncertain in its material nature, it cannot escape indicating God, since it shows in its movement the unrest that strives after the rest of the divine unity.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. II, IV, p. 9.



## 8. THE ECHO OF THE WORD: ERIUGENA'S († 870) SEMINAL POWERS

The excitement with which the rediscovery of Eriugena was celebrated in German romanticism can only be explained by the deep impact Neoplatonic philosophy and theology had on German idealism.<sup>91</sup> Eriugena was specifically appreciated in the circles of Catholic romantics as a conservative medieval[?unleserlich] counterpart to the 'revolutionary' transcendental philosophy. Be that as it may, Eriugena's chief work, "De divisione naturae", is in a remarkable way omnipresent in medieval natural philosophy and in the interpretations of the account of creation. It is something like the medieval prototype of Neoplatonic natural theology, alongside, and corresponding to, the Arabic philosophers. In the debates surrounding the relationship between natural philosophy and theology, "De divisione naturae" was clearly considered dangerous. In 1225 the book was banned. But Eriugena's work was by then already in wide circulation and had a considerable impact on philosophical schools such as the school of Chartres<sup>92</sup> or the school of St. Victor.<sup>93</sup> An abridged version had been written by Honorius Augustodunensis,<sup>94</sup> which was referred to by Hildegard of Bingen and Albert the Great. The book's impact could not really be curtailed by a prohibition.<sup>95</sup> Nicholas of Cusa owned a copy of "De divisione naturae", and his philosophy of *coincidentia oppositorum* relied on Dionysius as well

<sup>91</sup> See the preface of vol. 122 of PL, The Works of Eriugena, ed. Heinrich Joseph Floss. Paris 1865, p. VII, XXVIII. Hjord, Peter: Johannes Scotus Eriugena oder von dem Ursprung einer Christlichen Philosophie mit ihrem heiligen Beruf. Copenhagen 1823 (Hjord was a friend of Hamann's and Baader's). Kreutzhage, Albert: Mittheilungen über den Einfluß der Philosophie auf die Entwicklung des inneren Lebens. Münster 1831, pp. 216f.: Preface to the ed. of C. B. Schlueter in his edition of "De divisione Naturae" Münster 1838, repr. in PL 122, col. 101-126. Staudenmeier, Franz Anton: Johannes Scotus Eriugena und die Wissenschaft seiner Zeit. Frankfurt 1834. See also Beierwaltes, Werner: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte Eriugenas im Deutschen Idealismus und danach. In: Id.: Eriugena, Grundzüge seines Denkens. Frankfurt 1994.

<sup>92</sup> See Dronke, Peter in: Bernhardus Sylvestris. The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 43, 1980, pp. 16-31.

<sup>93</sup> Châtillon, Jean: Hughes de Saint Victoire critique de Jean Scot. In: Jean Scot Érigène et l'histoire de la philosophie. Laon 7.-12. Juin 1975. Paris 1977, pp. 414-431. Vignaux, Paul: Jean de Ripa, Huges de Saint Victoire et Jean Scot sur les théophanies. Ibid., pp. 433-440.

<sup>94</sup> Honorius Augustodunensis: Clavis Physicae. Ed. Paolo Lucentini. Rome 1974.

<sup>95</sup> See Beierwaltes, Werner (ed.): Eriugena Redivivus. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und im Übergang zur Neuzeit. Heidelberg 1987.

as on Eriugena.<sup>96</sup> In a significant way, the ideas of the great Irishman or Scotsman were continuously effective, even if it was not until the 17<sup>th</sup> century that a first printed edition of “De divisione naturae” was published.<sup>97</sup>

“De divisione naturae” is a remarkable title. Eriugena uses ‘natura’ in its widest, all-embracing sense. It has here an even wider meaning than being, the central concept of Aristotelian metaphysics. ‘Natura’ is the notion of everything “that is and that is becoming”. Thus the concept of nature explains how the relation between ‘nothing’ and ‘being’ can be conceived; it must also unfold the notions of ‘becoming’ and ‘vanishing’. This explanation is offered by means of a theology of creation and a delineation of all that nature embraces.

Nature is divided into the following:

1. A nature that creates and is not created: the divine nature.
2. A nature that creates and is created: the primordial world.
3. A nature that does not create and is created: the earthly world.
4. A nature that does not create and is not created: eternal bliss as the *restitutio ad integrum*.

While the first three divisions - *natura non creata creans*, *creata creans* and *creata non creans* - are easily graspable as God, primordial world and earthly world, Eriugena, from the beginning of his work on, has difficulties with the fourth division in his logic of creation, *non creata non creans*. A possible interpretation could be to understand the second ‘non’ of “non creata non creans” as a ‘non dum’, no longer creating, as a purpose resting in itself. As final reason of the world, the fourth position would then have a certain influence on the course of creation as its goal, but would not be part of active creation. It would be its purpose, resting and attracting until creation reached its eternal goal. Whereas Eriugena acknowledges a clear logic of negation among the first three positions, the fourth remains unclear, and his disciple, one of the two partners of this dialogue, complains as a result: “I am much perplexed by the fourth species which you have introduced. For about the other three I should not presume to raise any question at all, because, as I think, the first is understood to be the Cause of all things that are and that are not, who is God; the second to be the primordial causes; and the third those things that become manifest through coming into being in times and places.”<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> See Beierwaltes, Werner: Eriugena und Cusanus. in: Id.: Eriugena. Grundzüge seines Denkens. Frankfurt 1994, pp. 266-312.

<sup>97</sup> Joannis Scoti Eriegenae de Divisione Naturae libri quinque diu desiderati. Ed. Thomas Gale. Oxford 1681.

<sup>98</sup> Eriugena: Peri physeon, PL 122, 442 B. Trans. by Sheldon-Williams. Revised by John J. O'Meara. Montreal, Washington 1987, p. 26.

The meaning of the double negation “not created not creating” remains an open question. It will not be answered explicitly in the course of the book, but it seems likely that what is meant is the restitution of the world at the end of time, a restitution that coincides with the beginning. In the fifth book, Eriugena describes this idea with a quotation from the Byzantine theologian Maximus Confessor (580-662): “Everything that is naturally in motion is moved entirely by its cause; and everything that is moved by its cause exists entirely by its cause; and everything that exists by its cause, and is moved by its cause, has as the sole principle of its existence that cause by which it is and from which it is impelled into being. But the end of its movement is the same cause through which it moves and towards which it is drawn.”<sup>99</sup>

The second division of *Peri Physeos* is the order of beings, the series of its perfections. But it is not clear at first what ‘being’ means for Eriugena. Is it the existence of a spiritual being[s?], including “creans, non creatum”, i.e. God, as well as “creans creatum”, the primordial causes? Or does ‘being’ only apply to an extra-mental, extended being? It turns out that the term ‘being’ is used in the theological realm *via eminentiae*, since God is ‘more-than-being’, while in the created realm of nature, being can be rendered as might, or power, which has different values in the different spheres.

The division of the spheres of being is the principle of the five books of *De divisione naturae*.

1. In the divine sphere, negative and eminent predication is appropriate: More than being.

2. In the second part, the dynamic nature of being is described. Being emanates in spheres and flows downwards from above. Being and non-being are defined in their appropriate spheres. Every sphere ‘negates’ the one above it and reigns over the one below. Thus dynamic nature permeates the world in a process of reigning and negation.

3 The third part deals with the capacity of nature, its hidden forces and its passive abilities: the ability of being to become.

4. After this history of the becoming of the world, the position of man is discussed, since he is a being with reason and a distinctive theological destination. The fourth book deals with man as part of the rational and material spheres of the world.

5. The fifth section treats the ontological destiny and history of mankind. It discusses man as the receptacle and organ of divine grace.

This arrangement of the five books makes clear that being and becoming are not distinguished and that they must be understood as the process of the realization of divine power. In the first epoch, the epoch of God, God’s being means ‘more than being’: “For just as God as He is in himself beyond

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 870C, tr. p. 534.

every creature is comprehended by no intellect, so is He equally incomprehensible when considered in the innermost depths of the creature which was made by him and which exists in him.”<sup>100</sup>

The second manner of being describes the moments of activity in the process of living. Creative nature begins “from the intellectual power, which is the highest and is constituted nearest to God, descends to the furthestmost (degree) of the rational (and irrational) creature, or, to speak more plainly, from the most exalted angel to the furthestmost element of the rational (and irrational) soul (I mean the nutritive and growth-giving life-principle, which is the least part of the soul in the general acceptance of the term because it nourishes the body and makes it grow). Here, by a wonderful mode of understanding, each order, including the last and the lower end (which is that of bodies in which the whole division comes to an end), can be said to be and not to be. For an affirmation concerning the lower (order) is a negation concerning the higher, and so, too, a negation concerning the lower (order) is an affirmation concerning the higher (and similarly an affirmation concerning the higher order will be an affirmation concerning the lower).”<sup>101</sup>

Crucial for this lower mode of being is that it derives from the dynamics of divine communication coming from above. Similar to the hierarchy of the world, which for Dionysius was constituted in the heavenly realm and was then copied in the earthly realm, its dynamic is characterised by its dependence on the first cause. Every sphere has an essence, which is both shared and negated by the lower one [the one below it in the hierarchy?]. This dialectic of participation is the essence of the spheres. It describes every order of intellectual, rational, and sensual nature as being and non-being. It ‘is’, since it is acknowledged by the higher sphere and by itself; it ‘is not’ since it is not acknowledged by the lower ones [ones below it?]. Thus the relationship of participation in the dynamic being turns out to be a relationship of knowledge. ‘Esse’ and ‘percipi’ cannot be distinguished in the dynamics of the process of creation.

There is a passive ability, even close to God, which corresponds to the activity of the second mode of being, the active sphere nearest God, empowering the order of angels and men. As a passive potency, nature is bestowed with seminal reasons, and as such corresponds to the fertile abyss of Basil and Augustine’s exegeses. This nature is not an absolute passivity, as it contains in its seminal reasons the potency of unfolding itself according to its species. Nature is considered to be bestowed with qualitative powers to develop its essences, comparable to the heavenly waters of which Augustine and Basil report, and also to the moisture in which living beings spontaneously emerge. Eriugena describes this concretely: “The third mode

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 443D, tr. p. 27.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 443D, B, tr. pp. 27f.

can suitably be seen in those things of which the visible plenitude of this world is made up, and in their causes in the most secret folds of nature, which precede them. For whatsoever of these causes through generation is known as to matter and form, as to times and places, is by certain human convention said to be, while whatever is still held in those folds of nature and is not manifest as to form or matter, place or time, and the other accidents, by the same convention referred to is said not to be.”<sup>102</sup>

Eriugena’s seminal world is a world of forms, hidden as a potentiality in the seminal powers of nature. It is the potentiality of that which can be formed in the process of growing. Only through this process do time and space become conceivable. Eriugena does not mention a superior sphere that would be independent of nature’s seminal arsenal. In his dialectics of being, the concealment of seminal powers is ‘non-being’, while their unfolding in space and time is ‘being’. This form of existence is the third mode of being, *non creans creatum*. Different from the first mode of being, where the divine power of becoming calls everything into its very existence, the natural seeds can only be awakened to their particular essence. “Between the first and the third (mode) there is this difference: the first (is found) generically in all things which are in the same time and at once, for all have been made in (their) causes and effects; the third specifically those which partly are still hidden in their causes, partly are manifest in (their) effects, of which in particular the fabric of this world is woven. To this mode belongs the reasoning which considers the potentiality of seeds, whether in animals or trees or plants. For during the time when the potentiality of the seeds is still latent in the recesses of the nature, because it is not yet manifest it is said not to be; but when it has become manifest in the birth and growth of animals and flowers or of the fruits of tree and plants it is said to be.”<sup>103</sup>

This life is formed according to the scheme of activity and passivity. Life consists in the process of a principle, the *hegemonikon*, making use of matter, which it absorbs in the course of realizing its own perfection as an individual being. This process requires a guiding image, and this is the concept according to which things form themselves. This leading image, the unfolding *hegemonikon*, is founded in the seminal reasons of creation and realises itself in space and time.

Once it is clear that the power-giving seeds, the seminal reasons, make up nature’s potentiality, they can be located in the twofold process of creation. Eriugena interprets the first verses of Genesis - “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep” - as describing the creation of a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 444C D, tr. p. 28.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 445A B, tr. p. 29.

spiritual world. For him, darkness is the place of primordial reasons. Eriugena proceeds from Augustine's and Basil's interpretations and does not repeat Augustine's detailed deliberations: "What wonder, then, if the primordial causes of visible things are figuratively signified by the term 'waste and void earth' on account of their excessive subtlety and the ineffable simplicity of their intelligible nature before they flowed forth through generation into genera and species and sensible individuals (in which, as though in corporeal clouds, they appear to the senses), when the aforementioned regions of the visible world, because of their subtlety and all but incorporeality, are not inappropriately called waste and void, as one of the poets says: Thou shalt hurl thy body with a leap through the void air".<sup>104</sup>

The seminal reasons are located in the first waters of the heavens. They exist between the pure spirituality of the intellect and clumsy corporeality; they have a somewhat ethereal existence, permeating every lower existence as an impulse of fruitfulness. This fruitfulness is the image of the divine Trinity. Here, Eriugena is close to Augustine and Basil's interpretation of 'the spirit of God was hovering above the waters'. It is the first exteriorisation of God's trinitarian life in the elements and therefore in matter. It is the Spirit who grants life to the waters and thereby to all matter: "But should you wish to follow that Syrian whom Basil praises so highly in his Hexameron, who, in place of what other translators put down, namely 'And the spirit of God was borne above the waters' translated in the Syrian tongue which is akin to the Hebrew, 'And the Spirit of God fermented the waters', or, 'And the Spirit of God fertilised the waters', you will find that the divine goodness, surpassing by the height of its clemency the dark abyss of the primordial causes and fertilizing it so that from the hidden and unknown recesses of their nature they might issue forth into the faculty of knowledge through generation, and through the multiple precession into genera and forms and proper species of sensible and intelligible substances into their various and innumerable effects, is intended by these words: 'And the spirit of God fermented the waters.' And from this understand that the most high and unique Cause of all (things), I mean the Holy Trinity, is openly revealed by these words: 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth', that is to say, the Father under the name of God, and His Word under the name of Beginning, and the Holy Spirit as little later where the Scripture says: 'The Holy Spirit was born above'; for Holy Scripture did not here mean any other spirit."<sup>105</sup>

From all this, a spiritual philosophy of nature emerges, which realises the world of primordial reasons in the materiality of nature. Its part in the theology of creation is described as *creans creatum*, as created fertility,

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 550A B, tr. p. 151.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 555Bf., tr. 156f.

through which creation was pushed forward into its life. It is an archetypical realm of ethereal consistency, whose living impulses permeate matter. The seminal reasons fertilise the material world and grant it life.

If this world of fruitful materiality and permanent development is confronted with the unchangeable ideas of God, its deficiency immediately becomes obvious. Even its fertility is only a copy, and therefore it yearns for the rest of its divine origin. This is the yearning of imperfect beings for timeless perfection. The wound of imperfection in the unredeemed temporal world awakens the striving for its perfect origin, which is also its goal. “What was before the world is its very future after the world’s end”,<sup>106</sup> as Eriugena quotes Maximus Confessor.

The yearning of the unredeemed world proves that all of creation is permeated with the divine Logos. It is why the world remembers its primordial origin. Eriugena describes this idea not only with the conventional mirror metaphor, but, following Dionysius, also with that of the echo. The metaphors of reflection and sound are thus intertwined. The world is resonance, he writes “or sounding back, which the Greeks call ‘echoing’. These are the images of the intelligible things. Like the image of the voice resounds from the forest or a cave, and like the image of the body reflects in a mirror, so the imaginations of the intellectual beauties of heavenly virtues correspond to the entirety of humble matter. So the echo can lead our soul to the immaterial first forms, which the Greeks call archetypes. From them the images result; they are namely the dissimilar similarities in the matter from which they resound, and they derive from the immaterial essence in which they sound”.<sup>107</sup>

The elementary image behind this statement is God’s revelation through the Word. Here the metaphor of speculation is enlarged with an acoustic one, which is also linked to the theology of the Word. Eriugena emphasises that the theology of the Word is not only visual. What is it that resounds? God’s glory resounds from the seminal reasons in the world, which unfold the divine Logos. The splendour of God’s glory, which reflects “without jealousy”<sup>108</sup> through the choirs of angels, resounds in the echo of earthly nature in the life of beings. This music is the echo of the creating Word and its acoustic harmony. In this way, the echo demonstrates the divine origin of music *ad aures*.

In the Word and through the Word something develops in the fertile powers that is not conceivable through the active and passive process of life alone. Not only the blind pulsing of life, not only the drive to expand and to

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 561A: “Quae ante hunc mundum fuit, id ipsum futurum est post mundum.”

<sup>107</sup> Eriugena: Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy, PL 122, 164C.

<sup>108</sup> PG III, 165a.

be retarded and reflected by 'lazy' matter, make up the process of life. The specific quality of a plant, animal, or human being must also be pushed into extended appearance, so that every being arrives at its individual state and essence.

This process, in which everything grows according to its own image, is founded in the primordial reason in which man participates and "which is acknowledged by the intellect to be the true being".<sup>109</sup>

As a participant in this conceptual reason, man has knowledge of the true essences of things. He possesses this knowledge even more intensely since he is God's image and rules over the animals. Eriugena emphasises this claim with a quote from Gregory of Nyssa: "This is the teaching of St. Gregory, who in his *Treatise on the Image* writes as follows: 'Every creature except man was established somehow by the divine Power at the same time as the Mandate was given. But before the establishment of man there was a council, and he was prefigured by the Creator through the word of Scripture as to what he should be, and with what quality it were fit to endow him, and after what primal exemplar he should be modelled and of what material he should be made, and what function he should perform, and over what he should be lord. All these things were first considered by the Word so that before he came forth into being a more venerable rank in the world of becoming was allowed to him as one destined to hold sway over all things that are.'"<sup>110</sup> The peculiar role of man lies in his rank as God's image. This peculiarity has two consequences: Whereas things develop from the seminal reasons to their particular essence and state as they are established in matter, man transgresses this state by virtue of his role as God's image. He partakes in divinity, and it is for this reason that he does not just develop naturally as other living beings do. Gregory of Nyssa had already emphasised this position of man. It was man's freedom that constituted his being in God's image, and the reason why he was different from the rest of the creation.

It is precisely this freedom that led man to fall through sin. The Edenic fall a second time dramatises the course of being. Here, too, man is shown to be the microcosm in which the history of creation is repeated. The separation between God and creation is duplicated in the fall, and here it turns out that separation has one essentially evil aspect, which becomes apparent in the first case of sin. In sin, separation turns out to be evil, and this is why the world must be redeemed. Here it becomes painfully clear that creation and creator are separated and that the separation is, as it were, the structural basis of sin.

The suffering of separation also causes the yearning for redemption. For Eriugena, this suffering of nature begins to be restored with the memory of

<sup>109</sup> PL 122, 445C: "Quartus modus est, qui secundum philosophos non improbabiler ea solum modo, quae solo comprehenditur intellectu, dicitur verum esse."

<sup>110</sup> Eriugena: *Peri Physeon* PL 122, 758 B,C, tr. pp. 400f.



its original Christological status; for mankind this redemption is perfected through Jesus Christ: "The fifth mode is that which reason observes only in human nature, which, when through sin it renounced the honor of the divine image in which it was properly substantiated, deservedly lost its being and therefore is said not to be; but when, restored by the grace of the only-begotten Son of God, it is brought back to the former condition of its substance in which it was made after the image of God, it begins to be, and in him who has been made in His image God begins to live. It is to this mode, it seems, that the Apostle's saying refers: 'and He calls the things that are not as the things that are'; that is to say, those who in the first man were lost and had fallen into a kind of non-subsistence God the Father calls through faith (in His Son) to be as those who are already reborn in Christ. But this too may also be understood of those whom God daily calls forth from the secret folds of nature, in which they are considered not to be, to become visibly manifest in form and matter."<sup>111</sup>

The story of the human fall clearly reproduces in its core the drama of God's separation from his creation. The parallelism of creation and fall lies in the fact that the seminal reasons of things are products of this separation. They are waiting and striving for redemption from their potentiality. This redemption consists in their realization, in the overcoming of their non-being into being. Actuality is the fulfilment of potentiality. Exactly the same thing happens when spiritual man is redeemed from his unfulfilled, sinful status and brought to his original purpose, to the fullness of his image.

The original oneness, the resting in God's rest, is the fulfilment nature yearns for; it is nature's yearning for eschatology. This natural yearning is the trace of God's connecting and ordering power, which permeates all nature. The world will be fulfilled when all seminal reasons are realised. In the performance of this power, it becomes clear how everything is directed to the One from whom it originated. In God, the stages of creation - outgoing, separation and reunification - coincide. His creation must go through these stages, which are the ages of the world: "In God, therefore, the first form is not distinct from the fourth. For Him they are not two things but one; in our contemplation, however, since we form one concept of God from consideration of Him as Beginning and another concept when contemplating Him as End, they appear to be as it were two forms, formed by one and the same simplicity of the divine Nature as a consequence of the double direction of our contemplation."<sup>112</sup> In God, cause and goal, the first and last stages of nature, coincide. In nature, activity and receptivity, generation and matter, i.e. the two medium stages of being, are analogously connected: "I

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 445C D, tr. p. 29.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. PL 122, 527B, tr. p. 126.

think,” the teacher lets his student know, “you will not have failed to notice that as the first and the fourth are with reason recognised in the Creator, so are the second and the third in the creature. For the second, as had been said, both is created and creates and is understood (to be) in the primordial causes of created things, while the third form is created and does not create, and is found in the effects of the primordial causes. Thus the second and third are contained within one and the same genus, namely, created nature, and in it are one.”<sup>113</sup>

The question as to whether this theory is pantheistic depends on the definition of pantheism. If one takes the Neoplatonic figure of outgoing and return to be pantheistic, then this too is pantheistic nature. Supposing that the rupture between creator and creation is taken seriously however, this is at least not pantheism in the sense of Spinoza's “Deus sive natura”. Eriugena tends to the *apokatastasis panton*, and the resurrection of all beings is his eschatological model. This Origenistic version of natural eschatology suits his theories better than the second return of the Lord with judgment and terror.<sup>114</sup>

The world has its life in the realisation of its primordial reasons. These reasons represent the “*habitudines Dei*”<sup>115</sup> which, in the first stage of being, proceed from God into his creation, and then return to him in the fourth stage. These divine reasons become the forms which are found in creation, and by which it receives its meaning: “Now these primordial causes of things are what the Greeks call ‘*prototypa*’, that is, primordial exemplars, or ‘*prohorismata*’, that is, predestinations or predefinitions. They are also called by the same ‘*Theia thelemata*’, that is, divine volitions. They are commonly called ‘*ideai*’ also, that is, species or forms in which the immutable reasons of things that were to be made were created before (the things themselves existed). And not inappropriately (are they called so), for the Father, that is to say, the Principle of all things, pre-formed in His Word, that is, his only-begotten Son, the reasons of all things that He wished to be made before (they came into being) in the genera and species and individual and differences and the other things which either can be and are considered in the created creature, or cannot be and are not considered in it because of their exalted nature - and yet they are.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid PL 122, 527C, tr. p. 127.

<sup>114</sup> See Chapter VII, 3 b.

<sup>115</sup> PL 122, 528a.

<sup>116</sup> PL 122, 529 B C, tr. 28f.

## 9. DE VITA COELITUS COMPARANDA: FICINO'S (1433-1499) COSMOLOGICAL MEDICINE

Ficino's "De vita" (1489) is a highly erudite treatise on the perfect life. It is a book about the vices, virtues and proper habits of scholars. It contains dietary advice for a healthy and long life, and, particularly in its third part, it addresses astrological medicine, which is also Ficino's ethic. His book is an astrological dietetics. Whereas the first sections aimed to keep the body capable of receiving the universal soul's spiritual influences, the third section describes these influences and gives advice on how to deal with them, how to improve the individual's ability to accommodate the celestial powers and, finally, how to live in cosmic harmony. In this section Ficino lays out his version of the theory of seminal reasons.

The author saw health and heaven as being closely connected; the third book of "De vita" is therefore entitled: "De vita coelitus comparanda", "On Obtaining Life from the Heavens".<sup>117</sup> Ficino's world is Platonically spiritualised; it is a living universe in which the soul mediates between intellect and matter: "If there were only these two things in the universe", he begins his book, "on one side the intellect, on the other the body - but no

<sup>117</sup> On Ficino's astrology: Klibansky, R. Panofsky, E. Saxl: Saturn and Melancholy. London 1964. Baron, Hans: Willensfreiheit und Astrologie bei Marsilio Ficino und Pico della Mirandola. In: Kultur- und Universalgeschichte. Festschrift für Walter Goetz. Leipzig 1927, pp. 145-170. Copenhaver, Brian P.: Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldean Oracles in Marsilio Ficino's De Vita Libri Tres: Hermetic Magic or Neoplatonic Magic? In: Supplementum Festivum. Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller. Binghamton, N.Y. 1987, pp. 441-455. Id.: Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the "De Vita of Marsilio Ficino" in: Renaissance Quarterly 37,4 (1984), pp. 523-554. Harvey, Ruth E.: The Inward Wits. Psychological Theory in the Middle-Ages and in the Renaissance. London 1975, Warburg Institute Surveys 9. Boll, Franz; Betzold, Carl; Gundel, Wilhelm: Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung. Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie. Ed. und rev. by W. Gundel. 1931. Reprint Stuttgart 1966. Gandillac, Maurice de: Astres, anges et génies chez Marsile Ficin, in: Umanesimo e esoterismo, ed. Enrico Castelli. Padova 1960, pp. 85-109. Shumaker, Wayne: The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance. A study in Intellectual Patterns. Berkeley 1972. Thorndike, Lynn: Science and thought in the Fifteenth Century. New York 1929. Walker, D. P.: The Astral Body in Renaissance Medicine. Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 21 (1958), pp. 119-133. Id.: Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella. London 1958. Zambelli, Paola: Platone, Ficino et la magia. In: Studia Humanitatis: Ernesto Grassi zum 70. Geburtstag. Ed. E. Hora and E. Kessler. Munich 1973, pp. 121-142. Zanier, Giancarlo: La medicina astrologica e la sua teoria: Marsilio Ficino e i suoi critici contemporanei. Roma 1977. Copenhaver, Brian P.: Astrology and Magic. In: The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. Ed. Charles B. Schmitt et al. Cambridge 1988, pp. 264-300.

Soul, then neither would the intellect be attracted to the body (for Intellect is absolutely motionless, without affect, which is the principle of motion, and very far from the Body), nor would the Body be drawn to the intellect (for Body is itself powerless, unsuited for motion, and far removed from the Intellect).”<sup>118</sup>

This is the scope of Ficino's medicine: Every man's body must be prepared to receive celestial influences; it is the porosity of the human body that opens gateways for the influence of the cosmic soul, and proper communication between the cosmic soul and the individual body constitutes man's health. The two first books of “*De vita*”, both concerning diet and nature, have the same purpose. They give advice, especially to scholars, on how to attain a healthy and long life, always aiming at keeping the body ready to receive the influence of the cosmic soul. The third book gives the astrological foundation of cosmic medicine and explains the connection between body and soul, stars and plants, heaven and earth. Ficino consulted as many literary sources as the best libraries of his time could provide, concerning astrology, natural magic, doctrines on planets, and ghosts: Albert the Great, Avicenna, Picatrix, Ptolemy, Synesius, Iamblichus, and especially Plotinus.<sup>119</sup> The result was a compendium of astrological medicine as well as a doctrine of life and harmony, an instruction “*De vita coelitus comparanda*”. How was this to be done? By recognizing the cosmic harmony of the world-soul and its seminal reasons, and by living according to this natural understanding in harmony with the cosmos.

For Ficino, the soul is the medium of motion. As a living and moving being, it is the medium of distribution, versatile, and the omnipresent life of the cosmos. The soul is imagined as an ethereal sphere, permeating corporeality, and thus also extended in space and time. It corresponds to St. Augustine's living light and to the living power in nature described by Eriugena: “In addition, the world-soul possesses by divine power precisely as many seminal reasons of things as there are Ideas in the Divine Mind. By these seminal reasons she fashions the same number of species in matter. That is why every single species correspond through its own seminal reason to its own Idea and oftentimes through this reason it can easily receive something from the Idea - since indeed it was made through the reason from the Idea. This is why, if at any time the species degenerates from its proper form, it can be formed again with the reason as the approximate intermediary and, through the Idea as intermediary, can then be easily reformed. And if in

<sup>118</sup> Ficino, Marsilio: *Three Books on Life*, a Critical Edition and Translation with an Introduction and Notes by Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark. Binghamton, NY, 1989, p. 243.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Copenhaver, Brian P.: *Astrology and Magic*. In: *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*. Cambridge 1988, esp. pp. 274-285.

the proper manner you bring to bear on a species, or on some individual in it, many things which are dispersed but which conform to the same Idea, into this material thus suitably adapted you will soon draw a particular gift from the Idea, through the seminal reason of the Soul".<sup>120</sup>

Ficino divides the world along traditional lines into intellect, soul and matter. He identifies the intellect with the divine mind; the soul gives life to the world; and the earth is corporeal. Since the soul contains the seminal reasons of things, it is responsible for every form of movement and for the information of matter. Thus it is the universal, communicating essence.

Matter is unformed and therefore rationally inexplicable. Ficino neither goes into St. Augustine's subtle deliberations, nor Basil's explications of prime matter. But neither perhaps are those subtleties appropriate subject matter for a book on astrological medicine. When the seminal reasons unfold in matter, their life is completely attributed to the soul's power. The Florentine scholar teaches that "absolutely all gifts are drawn from the Soul to a particular species of matter at a specific time, but rather at the right moment only those gifts of that one seed from which a species has grown, and of seeds that are similar to it."<sup>121</sup> This growth according to species, enabled through the seminal reasons of the soul, makes things apprehendable as exemplars of their kind. So the soul is always recognised in its functioning, and the fact that it is recognised is itself due to the soul. "It is partly a seminal reason that she (the soul) can generate, partly an exemplary reason so that she can know."<sup>122</sup>

The seminal reasons prefigure and beget living development in the sub-lunar world, influenced by the stars. From both moments – the archetypical dynamics of the genera and the respective influence of the stars – individual beings emerge. The archetypical prefiguration of things also has two sides: one is gnoseological, the other ontological. Because of the world-soul, which contains the seminal reasons, "we know that just as all living things, plants as well as animals, live and generate through a spirit like this, so among the elements, those which are most full of spirit generate very quickly and move perpetually as if alive".<sup>123</sup>

Like every life, the soul contains two moments. The first is the forms of the genera, the second the dynamics that realise them. The spirit, the dynamic mediator between intellect and body, is a kind of living space that brings forth the heavens, i.e. the ethereal *quinta essentia*, from out of itself. This living spirit, which steadily generates extension, is the inner, nourishing

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p. 245.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 257.

spirit of things, the spirit of life, “as if pregnant by her own generative power, and the stars along with it. Immediately through the spirit the World-soul gives birth to the four elements, as though everything were contained in the power of that spirit. Spirit is a very tenuous body, as if now it were soul and not body, and now body and not soul. In its power there is very little of the earthy nature, but more of the watery, more likewise of the airy, and again the greatest proportion of the stellar fire. The very quantities of the stars and elements have come into being according to the measures of these degrees. This spirit assuredly lives in all as the proximate cause of all generations and motion, concerning which the poet said, ‘A Spirit nourishes within.’”<sup>124</sup> This is the living and recognizing spirit, which, as dynamic moment, permeates the world-soul and urges its seminal reasons to unfold. The seminal reasons are not the living spirit, but the genus resting in the seeds is driven out through the spirit. The spirit awakens the seeds to life and nourishes them.

Whereas the spirit urges the seminal qualities of things to grow, the stellar qualities are of a different nature. They too are powers, but they do not induce life, nor do they realise the genera of things. The stellar qualities are currents of influence and power, which characterise the development of the individuals of a genus in a differentiated way. They are related to particular plants and animals, the sun for instance to the heliotrope plants, or the moon to the night plants. They also affect the genera of the animals, but most of all they influence the character of man, according to the four types of choleric, melancholic, sanguine, and phlegmatic.

This, then, is how Ficino's cosmos looks:

1. There is a correspondence between the divinely conceived notions of the species, the ideas located in the intellect, and the seminal reasons of the world-soul. The animating spirit realises the seminal reasons of the world-soul by implanting them into matter, unfolding them and making them visible. Time and space emerge along with the external appearance of things.

2. This development occurs under the permanent influence of the qualitative powers of the stars. The stellar powers act, according to their quality, on the individual development of a particular specimen. If the stellar powers are favourable, the individual develops perfectly according to its species; if they are unfavourable, the specimen degenerates.

Health requires - and this is particularly true for man - that every individual live according to its species and that it develop according to its specific nature. Since man orients himself according to the idea of his species, he must try to come as close to this idea as possible. This is the norm of his nature. It is in the realm of the influence of the stars that the idea

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

of the species develops, and here it is essential to attain a favourable constellation.

What does the force field look like, in which the germinating beings are located? The qualities of the stars shine through space, whereas [although?]although light is only the visual representation of the qualitative stellar power. Ficino adopts the doctrine of the astrological qualities mostly from late antiquity, especially from Ptolemy's *"Tetrabiblos"*. The stellar images of the Zodiac and of the planets have the most powerful influence in the realm of astrological powers. The harmony of the spheres is also influential, since it can be made audible in therapeutic music.

For Ficino, all these influences can be qualified, as every planet has its specific sphere of influence. The sun and Jupiter mediate the living quality of the world's spirit. Along with Venus, they are the 'Graces', favourable to men and things. Jupiter-Zeus, life (after the Greek etymology of *Zoon*), is supported by the waxing moon. The moon, particularly in its waxing phase, helps provide the necessary things of life. Mercury is the god and star of acceleration, in both good and bad developments. Venus, the goddess of life, connects humans and other beings in both enjoyable and painful harmony. These stars represent positive powers. Not so Mars, the god of war, or Saturn. Positively speaking, Mars is responsible for strength, negatively for war and quarrels. Positively, Saturn is responsible for prudence and deep insight into nature, negatively for melancholy and for the loneliness of the individual.<sup>125</sup> Along with the signs of the Zodiac, they are "the heavens' countenance"<sup>126</sup> and are "non tam visibiles, quam imaginabiles".<sup>127</sup> Ficino discovers and develops a complicated, dynamic mixture of planet characteristics and signs of the Zodiac. The principal power of the signs lies in their connection with, and influence over, human organs, as Ficino learned from his medieval sources.<sup>128</sup> So "Aries has the power over the head and face; Taurus over the neck; Gemini, the forearms and the shoulders; Cancer, the breasts, lungs, stomach, and upper arms; Leo, the heart, stomach, liver, back and hind parts of the rib-cage; Virgo, the intestines and lower stomach; Libra, the kidneys, thighs, and buttocks; Scorpio, the genitals, the vulva, and the womb; Sagittarius, the thighs and parts below the groin; Capricorn, the knees; Aquarius, the legs and shins; Pisces, the feet".<sup>129</sup>

Ficino constructs a complicated field of powers from the signs of the Zodiac and their respective corporeal organs, and from the planets' powers, which form the characters of individuals. If the powers are positive ones,

<sup>125</sup> On the entire complex see Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl: Saturn and Melancholy.

<sup>126</sup> Ficino, *de Vita*, p. 331.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* p. 332.

<sup>128</sup> See below ch. 6, 9.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* p. 287.

they can optimise the development of an individual; if they are mostly negative, they can hinder an appropriate growth of both body and character. The particular achievement of this astrology is that it can explain how the individual is formed. A specimen of a certain species is formed by cosmic power and thereby becomes a being with its own development and history, a true individual. At the same time, the idea inherent in the seminal reason remains the goal of every natural development.

In the domain of human health, this implies that the seminal reasons of nature must be strengthened through the appropriate positive astral power. This can be achieved by diet or by magic. Through dietetics, man can know what plants have the signatures of healthy planetary influences. Heliotropic and golden coloured plants, for example, are plants of the sun, and improve growth and health.

Gems and amulets reinforce the power of the signs of the Zodiac. The sign magically remembers the idea of the organ so that it can develop perfectly, or, if it is ill, restore its perfect shape. All these attempts are crowned by healing music, which makes the spherical sounds audible. It thereby transmits cosmic harmony to the human body, its organs, and to man's character.

In this cosmic harmony, where the healing cosmic powers bring the seminal forms to life according to their particular ideas and hinder their deformation, a good and fruitful life can be achieved in which everyone finds his link to nature, his star, his genius, his place. Here he can live and fulfil his natural profession.<sup>130</sup> Thus life is suitable to heaven and heaven to life: *vita coelitus comparata*.

## 10. ON THE SHADOWS OF IDEAS: GIORDANO BRUNO'S (1548-1600) SEMINAL COMBINATORICS

It is hard to imagine what Giordano Bruno wanted to achieve with his book "De umbris idearum". To begin with, this book is an attempt in the combinatorial genre, as it deals with the Lullistic, cabalistic, mathematical, and mnemonic arts.<sup>131</sup> This art of combination had two parts. The first was

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. Book III, ch. 28, p. 371: To live well and prosper, first know your natural bent, your stars, your genius, and your place suitable to these; here live. Follow your natural profession.

<sup>131</sup> Vasoli, Cesare: *Imagine et simboli nei primi scritti Lulliani e mnemotecnici del Bruno*. In: C. V. Studi sulla cultura del Rinascimento. Manduria 1968, pp. 345-426. Rossi, Paolo: *Clavis universalis. Arti menomoniche e logica combinatoria da Lullo a Leibniz*. Milan



its alphabet, i.e. the number of elements that could be combined. The second was the method of combination itself. Since its invention in the Middle Ages, the geometric version of the combinatorial art consisted in arranging circles of different magnitudes and marking symbols on their peripheries. The circles were placed one on top of the other, and then were rotated against each other. So, depending on the number of symbols and circles, an immense number of permutations could emerge. This combination was purely formal. In its formality this method guaranteed that every possible combination of symbols on the edges of the circles could be arrived at. The combinatorial art, as such an instrument of invention, was an appropriate method for universal science. Raymond Lull, Bernhardus de Lavineta, Johann Heinrich Alsted and Athanasius Kircher all used combinatorial arts as part of the inventory of their universal sciences.

Universal science and formal mnemonics fit together perfectly. Since mnemonics was the art of invention in memory, the treasury of memory could be thoroughly investigated by means of the combinatorial arts. Mnemonics, however, was more than just the investigation of past experience. In its Platonic context, mnemonics also included the moment of participation in the divine intentions for the world, in the divine ideas.

This participation in divine ideas could be conceived of in a different way. Bruno himself emphasised in “De monade principio et uno” that the ideas were derived from the unfathomable One and that they got their particular identity only by means of their difference from the first cause. Bruno held the Neoplatonic doctrine of the One and the idea of primordial worlds. For him, the world and its seminal reasons were only shadows of ideas, and he alludes to Psalm 54, which extols man’s shelter in the shadow of God’s wings. The book “On the Shadows of Ideas” thus goes beyond the art of memory.

But what exactly does this book provide besides a mnemonic? Ficino, in his “De vita coelitus comparanda” had written that seminal reasons (*causae seminales*) were always understandable reasons (*rationes exemplares*). It is this very ambiguity that Bruno is interested in when he writes about the shadows of ideas: “So that it becomes clear to the better philosophers: Art does not say anything other than that the power of nature emerged along with reason. For in the seeds of the first principles dwells the ability to be differently influenced by outward powers. They are illuminated by the acting

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1960. Couliano, Joan P.: *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*. Trans. by Margaret Cook. With a foreword by Mircea Eliade. Chicago and London 1987, fr. 1984. Ch. 2, The Great Manipulator, is especially interesting here. Since the author neglects the theological background of the discussion and argues with psychoanalytical concepts, the book becomes unclear in its terminology despite of the profound historical knowledge of its author. See also Blum, Paul R.: *Giordano Bruno*. Munich 1999, pp. 23-37.

intellect, like from a radiating sun, and they are influenced by the eternal ideas of the stars during their transit through the medium of the stars, after they are moved out into actual existence by the Highest, who gives them life. From Him they receive their goal and their power to achieve it. Thus it becomes clear that we should not randomly take outside nature (*dedalam naturam*)<sup>132</sup> as the source of everything and also for a substance.”<sup>133</sup>

Thus the shadows of the ideas are the unfolded outside of the seminal reasons, which proceed from the internal, creating power. This internal, emanating source of power expresses its reasons, which are the causes. These causes contain the first seminal – as yet unnamed and undefined – reasons of things. The agent intellect, naming reason, identifies and names these seminal reasons. The seeds have an atomistic, punctual non-extension; they are monads. When the intellect names these monadic seminal reasons, it also defines them, i.e. it forms them into species. The pure powers, which emanate from the first creating power, are not yet formed into species. So the task of the agent intellect is to recognise and form the seminal reasons. On their way from the agent intellect to earth, the species are influenced by the powers of the stars. On earth, the atomistic seeds are implanted into matter and unfold, still under the influence of the stars, towards their internal, specific goal, and their own individual perfection.

In the combinatorics he describes in “*De umbris idearum*”, Bruno tries to grasp this cosmogonical process in its different stages. He therefore combines the categories of the agent intellect, which qualifies the powers, with the influence of the stars, which varies these seminal qualities. If this is successful, he can then, through methodical invention, attain a complete knowledge of the seminal powers. The result would be a huge table of possible ‘*seminalia rerum*’. As Hermes explains to his partners Philotimus and Logipher in the first dialogue, this book contained the ideal seeds “contracted from the shadows of ideas into their inner scripture”,<sup>134</sup> meaning from the outside of things to their inner notion. As is common in universal sciences of this kind, Bruno promises that everyone who is not as foolish as

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<sup>132</sup> Lucretius: *De rerum natura* V, 234.

<sup>133</sup> Bruno: *De umbris idearum*. Ed. Rita Sturlese. Florence 1991, p. 67. On Bruno's natural philosophy cf. Michel, Paul Henri: *La Cosmologie de Giordano Bruno*. Paris 1962. Heipke, Klaus; Neuser, Wolfgang und Wicke, Erhard (eds.): *Die Frankfurter Schriften Giordano Brunos und ihre Voraussetzungen*. Weinheim 1991. Hentschel, Beate: *Die Philosophie Giordano Brunos - Chaos oder Kosmos? Eine Untersuchung zur strukturalen Logizität und Systematizität des nolanischen Werkes*. Frankfurt, Bern, New York, Paris 1988, esp. pp. 105-166. Blum, Paul Richard: *Giordano Bruno*. Munich 1999, pp. 23-37. Idem: *Aristoteles by Giordano Bruno*, Munich 1980.

<sup>134</sup> *De umbris idearum*, p. 14.

straw can learn it, even if it requires some speculative abilities: “For it contains absolutely the appropriate terms to signify the things”.<sup>135</sup>

At first glance, this is no more than the typical boasting of combinatorial books. Bruno is more concrete when he suggests two circles of key concepts, which he explains separately. He also announces a combinatorial treatment of both, but leaves this promise unfulfilled: “We treat this art in a twofold manner and in a twofold way. The first way is higher and more general, and it is appropriate in ordering the operations of the soul. This is in fact the head of many methods, by means of which the organs of many arts can be proved and invented in the memory. This art consists first in the thirty intentions of the shadows of ideas, secondly in the thirty notions of the ideas. The third part consists of different combinations that can be invented through the diligent application of the first circle to the second. The second book to follow is more compendious and only appropriate for the professional art of memory.”<sup>136</sup>

The combination is conventionally Lullian. But the distinction between *intentio umbrarum* and *conceptio umbrarum* is remarkable. In order to describe the *intentio umbrarum*, it is useful to remember the specific kinds of knowledge which Bruno attributes to the diverse sciences and which make clear the analogy of metaphysics, physics and logic: “Metaphysics, physics, and logic admit an analogy: Supernature, nature and reason are the truth, the image, and the shadow. Moreover, the idea in the divine mind wrestles with itself. Within the intelligences the ideas exist in discrete acts. In heaven, potency acts successively to produce their multiplicity. In the intentions of reason, they exist only as shadows.”<sup>137</sup>

Bruno constructs a metaphysical series in three descending steps. They can be defined metaphysically and gnoseologically. The metaphysical descent proceeds from the divine supernatural to the intelligences containing the discrete seminal reasons (ideas), which are the seeds of reality. They then unfold into extended beings, which become part of the cosmos. The gnoseological series descends from the unfathomable One to the received insight into the world of ideas, and then to human rationality.

In his “Docta ignorantia”, Nicholas of Cusa had explained this process of qualifying the individual, using the terms of complication and explication, of potency and contraction. The process of complication and explication developed the quality of things. Potency and contraction, possibility and realization, constituted the dynamic moment that finally results in matter. In his treatise “De umbris idearum”, Giordano Bruno tries to explain both

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. pp. 23f.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. pp. 43f.

perspectives of the process of becoming - the materializing and the qualifying - with thirty intentions and thirty qualifications.

The 'intentiones umbrae' are the dynamic moments of the process of becoming. The process starts with the unfathomable One and continues down to powerless matter. In this span it encompasses the life of the universe. These *intentiones* are explained in the *Figura P (pyramidalis)*, invented by Nicholas of Cusa (*Figure 1*). In it, the relation between the creating power and the world's becoming real is symbolised.

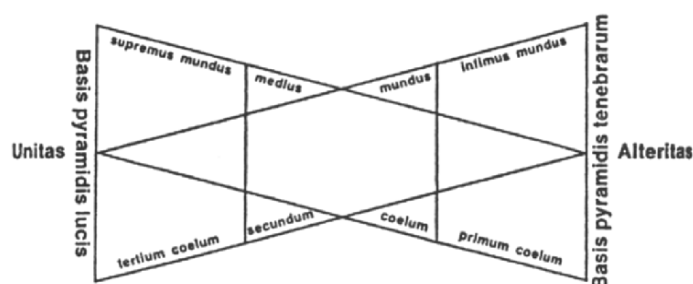


Figure 1. Figura Pyramidalis

Bruno explains, qualifies and revitalises Cusa's ideas in thirty concepts, and sets up a drama of becoming. It is difficult to reconstruct the inner order of the two series suggested by Bruno. The first, the order of 'intention', seems to be an order of metaphysical concepts. 'Intentio' designates the drive the first principle emanates into matter and corporeality. It seems to be one criterion of this first class of concepts that it includes neither soul nor intellect. Here Bruno explains light and shadow in their process of constituting multiplicity and extension, while the concepts of the soul are the leading principles of the second group.

a) *Intentiones*: Light, Shadow and Bodies.

Bruno begins with the first principle (1), which begets light (2), and along with it, shadow (3), corresponding to Augustine's first matter. From the side of shadow, darkness (4) enters creation. The connection of darkness and light begets appetite (5), which is the prerequisite for alteration (6). The relationship of appetite and alteration makes harmony (7) perceivable. In harmony likeness (8), mixture (9), and uniformity (10) join closely together. Harmony makes the beautiful form (11) appear and with this the visible order (12). Up to this point, the emanation of concepts emerges in the ultra-mundane realm. Now this spiritual order becomes visible in the powers of the signs of the Zodiac (13). The artistic harmony of the world is mediated

downwards through the golden chain of beings (14). In the same journey of light through the sphere of fixed stars, the power of the light is weakened (15) and the unfolding of the species into their extension begins (16). The pure intellect is now only perceptible through the species (17), which become dense in the process of individuation into a physical reality (18). In this process the shadow grows (19); the growth of the shadow is also the movement of the world (20), since movement and matter belong together. Ideas and shadows are connected (21), and this also describes the relation between substance and accident (22). Along with the movement of the shadows time emerges (23), and from time multiplicity (24) and extension (25). With the darkening of the shadows, the light weakens continuously (26), matter becomes denser (27), its corporeality becomes countable (28), and it unfolds in six dimensions (29). Thus corporeal variety (30) is attained.

Bruno's series of 'intentiones' shows the gradual process of the materialization of the divine dynamics. It is a process of emanation, appearing as the darkening, qualifying and diversifying of the divine, dynamic One.

#### b) Qualities: The Diversification of the Soul

The thirty emanating *intentiones* correspond to the qualities. These qualities are arranged according to their position in cosmic psychology. This series describes the process of diversification in the cosmic souls. This process, even if it appears to develop continuously, encompasses the three parts of cosmic psychology: the intellect, the cosmic soul and the astral spheres. It is characteristic of Bruno's Pythagoreanism that he introduces the concept of matter as the first step of divine emanation. Thus Christology already has an element of space. Bruno attempts to describe the development of space along with the emergence of the diverse regions of the soul, adopting many elements of St. Augustine's "De genesi ad literam". He describes the emergence of the primordial seeds and the astral influences in the process of the diversification of the cosmic soul.

The first principle, the universal One (1), creates its otherness; this otherness is potential space and multiplicity (2). The argument is Pythagorean: If twoness is the beginning of diversification, duality already marks the otherness of the spirit and the first element of space. Even if Bruno's description recalls the separation of light and matter as it was represented in Augustine's description of creation, there is a remarkable difference: Bruno does not mention creation. For him, it is the original separation of the One that generates space and multiplicity. This is, as it were, a Christology of space. This doctrine may already be the first indication of Bruno's subsequent Christological heresy. The diversity of the second step is held together by mediation (3). Unlike Cusa, Bruno does not

describe this mediation in a trinitarian way. This is because Bruno cannot accept the Trinity, since his first principle is not, and can never, be defined. Consequently, he is not a trinitarian. In the fourth step, the intellect (4) corresponds to speculative wisdom, along with which a diaphanous, ethereal corporeality is posited (5). This diaphanous corporeality of the intellectual soul, which is the region of light, contains the potential forms in the seminal reasons of things (6). These seminal reasons correspond to a passive, spiritual matter, *vanitas* (7), in which they are able to materialise. This *vanitas* could be defined as potential corporeality. Thus there are two sides of the cosmic soul's emanation from the second principle, a spatial and a spiritual one. The spatial side consists of multiplicity/first space (2), ethereal corporeality (5) and spiritual matter, *vanitas* (7). The spiritual parts of the cosmic soul are mediation (3), intellect (4), and the seminal reasons (6). From these elements, threefold spiritual man emerges (8), who is built as a mediated unity (3) from a spiritual body (elements 2, 5, and 7), intellect (4), and seminal reasons (6), and who exists close to God.

Following this cosmic, primordial world comes a group of concepts, which, in a descending movement from heaven to earth, describe how spiritual man becomes real. In this movement, the emanation of cosmic man is repeated in a new sphere. Continuity with the higher sphere is the first requirement, and so the mediating element (2) is renewed: "Idem, manens et aeternum coincident"<sup>138</sup>(9). This element derives from unity (10) and characterises the intellect and its fertility (11). The formal principle of this fertility lies in heaven (12). It is here that all fertility is united. Heaven represents light, intelligence, first unity, all species, perfections, truths, numbers and the grades of perfection of things (13). This heaven unites all necessary moments of life. At the end of this process, the perfect things, the seminal ideas, are conceived as perfect notions. From this sphere of the cosmic soul, these ideal seeds are sent down to extended reality.

In the next sphere, Bruno describes the visible extension of the cosmos. From this stage on, physical extension is perceivable in the astral spheres. The stars represent powers, which influence the development of the spiritual seeds, sent from the cosmic soul into the extended world. It is through the diversifying moments of real space that the animal soul (14) emerges and receives its different parts (15). In this process, the stars representing the diverse qualities of the animal soul receive their power. The principal notion of this process is plurality (16), which, of course, derives from the unity above. In the light of this unity, plurality is ordered from above to below (17), and species become visible (18). This process of information corresponds to the seven planets and the seven steps of Plotinus' path of ascendance (19) in the knowledge of the One (20).

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

After the introduction of the seven spheres of planets according to Plotinus' seven steps of ascendance, Bruno describes the cosmic process of information. He begins by analysing the numerical nature (21) of this process. The nature of numbers first becomes visible in the threefold nature of the form. Every form has an outward form, which participates in the whole of nature, and an inner unity (22). The analysis of this form also shows how speculation proceeds in four steps: from the divine unity, to the image in the intellect, to the world-soul, and finally to material information (23). The process of information begins with God's will (24), and the goal of every organic development lies in the exemplary form of things (25). This goal is grounded in God (26). In the process of becoming and decaying, these forms are only partially visible (27). Individual things, however, also have accidental characters (28). The species are in fact only individualised (29) because they became material. Finally, the individuals too represent the first One, their origin, and are resolved in the ideas of the genera. (30)

Whereas the first group of *intentiones* describes the materializing process of the world, the second group of qualities describes the process of specification and individualization. Together they make up the comprehensive set of categories that allow emanation to become understandable by the method of combination. Bruno did not describe the process of combination between intentions and qualities. One has to imagine that he was thinking of a commutation of every notion of the first series of 'intentiones' with every element of the second series of 'qualitates'. The result would have been a list of concepts combining each intention with one quality. This list would have provided an immense typology of moments in the process of emanation. It would have encompassed the moments of materialization, in their connection with those of qualification. It would have described the process of the world's eternal becoming.

## SPIRITUAL SPACES

### 1. THE ETERNAL AND THE TEMPORAL BEGINNING

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

In the beginning was the Word.

What does 'In the beginning' mean? Why would the emergence of something prior to the absolute beginning be impossible? Clearly a beginning can only be observed. Beginnings are only visible from the perspective of a continuity that has already begun. After something has emerged and developed, it is possible to imagine what it previously was and was not. One can imagine whether it existed prior to that transformation or not. So it is possible to ascertain the beginning of an existence, but only retrospectively through memory. The question of the historical reconstruction of the beginning is traditionally answered by the theory of the beginning from the One. The unfathomable One, which is indistinguishably eternal and all encompassing, divides itself and becomes twofold. In this second state it is the double of itself and its difference. If this doubling is understood metaphysically, something different emerges from the One, and this first differentiation is the division of the One into spirit and space.

In the idea of beginning two concepts are united. The first is eternal beginning and the second, temporal beginning. Eternal beginning is explained in the opening verses of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the word." Traditionally, and according to St. Augustine's interpretation of the book of Genesis and of the prologue of St. John's Gospel, this means that the process of becoming is an eternal emergence of the Logos and therefore the permanent differentiation of the unfathomable One. The trinitarian argument is that the unity of this originating process is merely spiritual, since the first differentiation is a spiritual one, held together through the unifying function of the spirit. Only through further differentiation does space emerge. In this case, divine self-production is an eternal beginning, and it is strictly separated from a temporal beginning, which is dependent on a



development in space and time. This second beginning is the beginning of external cosmic and earthly time, which depends on corporeal movement. This beginning is traditionally connected to creation, and it is evident that this creation marks a rupture between inner-divine eternity, which is a permanent beginning, and the beginning of time, which is dependent on movement and therefore on space.

The question, however, remains urgent: How can the gap between eternal beginning and temporal beginning be bridged? Is it possible to describe the emergence of space through the speculation of the spirit, or does the spirit always have its counterpart in space, as Bruno insisted? How is it possible that a mental existence becomes an extra-mental one? Extra-mental existence always includes, at first, movement into extended existence, and that means that space is posited when something is thought that is different from mental existence. This, however, does not answer the question as to why mental existence differentiates itself. Bruno's answer, that the process of differentiation of the One into space and spirit is a necessary result of the separation of the original unity, is not without consequence. If difference is taken in its most radical, Pythagorean sense, it already includes space as the difference of the spirit. This is the position Bruno derived from Plotinus.

## 2. THE DARK BEGINNING: PLOTINUS AND DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

If spiritual existence is held to be conscious, it presupposes an inner speculation, a continuous, timeless movement. Plotinus conceived this mental, or rather, spiritual existence, as secondary, since it was begotten from the One. His argument for the speculative structure of the spirit is as follows: "The act of Intellectual-Principle is intellection, which means that, seeing the intellectual object towards which it has turned, it is consummated, so to speak, by that object, being in itself indeterminate like sight (a vague readiness for any and every vision) and determined by the intellectual object. This is why it has been said that 'out of the indeterminate Dyad and The One arise the Ideas and the numbers'; for the Ideas and the numbers constitute the Intellectual-Principle."<sup>1</sup>

This originating process of the intelligence (*nous*) describes well the timeless movement emerging from the dyad, which allows the intellect to recognise itself. It is only through this original separation that definition is

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<sup>1</sup> Plotinus: The Enneads V, 4, 2; trans. Stephen MacKenna. London 1962, p. 401.

conceivable. Only when the borders of something are defined can it be conceived. This is the process by which the Logos conceives itself. This process of the spirit, as originally begotten by the One, can be interpreted in a trinitarian manner, as was the case in the Christian tradition.

Dionysius described the process of the separation from the One as the appearance of light in the darkness, and situated it in the context of St. John's Gospel. It is the Logos of Christ: "In him was life, and the life was light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." This was a context that fit the Proclian triad of essence, life, and thought.<sup>2</sup> Dionysius describes the emanation from the divine for the cognition of the soul as follows: "For instance, if we have named the superessential Hiddenness, God, Life, or Essence, or light, or word (*logos*), we have no other thought than that the powers brought to us from It are defying, or essentiating, or life bearing, or wisdom imparting."<sup>3</sup>

The divine Wisdom, which derives from God and copies the divine Trinity, must create the external world as an extra-mental one. Dionysius shares this position with Plotinus. In his "Mystical Theology", Dionysius formulates the emanation of divine Wisdom with an even more radical metaphor. The mystagogue advises his student Timothy to ascend the steps of mystical knowledge, to rid himself of everything, even of being and not being, "and to be raised aloft unknowingly to the union, as far as attainable, with Him Who is above every essence and knowledge. For by the resistless and absolute ecstasy in all purity, from thyself and all, thou will be carried on high, to the superessential ray of the Divine darkness, when thou hast cast away all, and become free from all".<sup>4</sup>

Divine grace, which precedes all wisdom, light, life and being, must create its own outside as the real world. For Plotinus, this emergence of God's outside is fate; while for the Christian Dionysius it is God's willing act. The extra-mental reality that is created in this act is a second beginning. It is not the eternal beginning of the Logos becoming conscious of itself. The second beginning is of contingent existence. The externalisation of a spiritual existence into a spatial one at the same time brings forth the emergence of the extended cosmos. This cosmos first appears as the heavens. Plotinus describes this process as the transition from a point into a sphere. The logic of this argument lies in the twofold definition of the point, which enables it to serve as the moment of transition from spirit to extension. Euclid's definition of the point as that which has no parts makes it homogeneous with the spirit. As an element of space, as the beginning of all

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Beierwaltes: Proklos. Frankfurt 1965, pp. 93-118.

<sup>3</sup> Dionysius Areopagita: On Divine Names. II, 7, trans. John Parker. London 1899, repr. New York 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Dionysius Areopagita: Mystic Theology I, 1, trans. John Parker (emphasis added).

dimension, the point also has a constitutive function for space. The transition of the spirit into space thus occurs as a bursting of a point, similar to Nicholas of Cusa's example.<sup>5</sup> Plotinus describes the process of the emergence of space as follows: "There is, we may put it, something that is centre; about it, a circle of light shed from it; round centre and first circle alike, another circle, light from light; outside that again, not another circle of light but one which, lacking light of its own, must borrow."<sup>6</sup>

The space that emerges in this process is defined as spherical. But what defines it spiritually? The perfect form of the circle or formality as such? Space is limited since it cannot be thought without form, without motion, without dynamic direction on all sides. Motion that constitutes space can only come about if there is a moving and a moved principle. The soul is the moving principle and therefore constitutes space. The power of the living soul, longing for its most perfect form, finds space, according to the myth in Plato's *Timaeus*. At the same time, space tenderly resists the urging of the living soul. The soul's movement, therefore, is akin to that of the systole and diastole, pulsing life, since every impulse of the extending motion is answered by a counter-impulse from receiving space. It is the limitation of space that makes up its life.

This space is not absolute. It exists only because it is animated by the soul, and because the soul fills the passive potency of space. Life unites activity and passivity, so life is evident in the movement that constitutes space. Space pulses as it is constantly re-opened by the power of the world-soul. This power receives its form from the cooperation between the perfect soul and the slight resistance of space, and the soul fills the perfect form that it creates. The soul forms its space as a living sphere. This process of becoming space is nourished by God's power. This life stems from the eternal self-movement of the spirit and receives its temporal beginning in the constitution of space.

The becoming of space is a prototypical process, evident in the germination of every living being. This germination has the character of an unextended unity, potentially containing the plenitude of the essence that develops itself into extended being. Dionysius the Areopagite considered this germinating power to be the pre-existence of the Son in the Father and claimed "that the Father is the fontal Deity, but the Lord Jesus and the Spirit are, if one may so speak, God-planted shoots, and as it were Flowers and superessential Lights of the God-bearing deity".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. ch. 2. 2., p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> Plotinus: *The Enneads* IV, 3 17, trans. Stephen MacKenna, p. 275.

<sup>7</sup> Dionysius Areopagita: *On Divine Names* II, 7, trans. John Parker.

In natural philosophy, there were also good reasons to conceive the beginning as a germ, as a living point. In Aristotle's "Historia animalium",<sup>8</sup> there is a description of the germ of a fertilised egg, as a point that begins to pulsate. This is the point where life begins, and which, in the development of the egg, becomes the heart of the bird. It is because of the living spirit in the point of life that extension emerges. The point becomes the heart; the living principle assimilates matter in order to create its own living space. Augustine analogously described the longing of the world-soul for reality as pregnancy: "Therefore the invisible soul, which is pregnant with love for visible things and which boasts about this pregnancy, is called earth."<sup>9</sup>

Compared with the soul, space is a secondary phenomenon. It is founded in the spirit, and has to be explained from its spiritual origin. In the Middle Ages, a text known as the "Theologia Aristotelis" was used for the explanation of the emergence of space. It was a compendium of Plotinus' "Enneads", and it contained the central paragraphs of Plotinus' "Doctrines of the soul". Along with the "Liber de Causis", a compendium of Proclus' "Theology", both texts represented the strong presence of genuine Neoplatonic philosophy in the Christian Middle Ages, and they strengthened the impact of Dionysius' theology.

In the "Theologia Aristotelis", space is defined as corporeal. There is no such thing as a vacuum, for even if there is no actual body, space is filled by the power of the soul. This power stems from the reality of the light: "It is a faculty that is not particularised, as it does not perform its actions by an instrument, because it is so intensely spiritual."<sup>10</sup> The soul is itself the primary force, which, in a second step, flows into its space. Unlike the continuum of space, the soul is neither discrete nor divisible, but whole. Therefore the soul can only be divided after it has become extended in space, and only in this extended state can it become individualised. So the relationship between soul and space is clear – space is but a mode of the soul: "Soul encompasses place; place does not encompass her, because she is a cause of it, and the effect does not encompass the cause, but the cause encompasses the effect."<sup>11</sup> Therefore space is itself in its essence removed from clumsy corporeality; it is the soul that receives the character of space: "The real absolute place is not a body: indeed it is a non-body, and if place is a non-body and soul is not a body, then what need has soul of place, place

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle: *Historia animalium* VI, 3, 561a.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine: *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Theologia* II, § 72, In: *Plotini Opera* II, *Enneades* IV-V, ed. Henry/Schwyzler; *Plotiniana Arabica ad codicum fidem anglie vertit*. Geoffrey Lewis. Paris, Brussels 1959, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* II, § 84, p. 43.

being soul? - because the whole is more spacious than the part and encompasses and encloses it.”<sup>12</sup>

How is it imaginable that the soul is space? And what is spiritual space? The most important metaphor of spiritualised space is light. The imagery of light illustrates the spiritualising of space. First it is the beginning of the visibility of space, when a dark point forms an aureole and begins to radiate. This is the ideal image of the absolute beginning. It is the image through which space becomes perceptible, as the splendour of that which has no parts.

The “Book of XXIV Philosophers”, a collection of aphorisms by Iamblichus, describes the emergence of divine splendour using the image of the mirror: “Deus est monos monadem gignens in se reflectens ardorem.” This aphorism can be understood as the beginning of light from increasing heat; as such this definition describes, ‘secundum imaginationem’, the speculative duplication of the One. As the self-duplication of the One becomes divine self-perception, it heats up in love. The heat intensifies until it becomes the brightest light that accompanies speculation and fills the divine realm. This spiritual light creates its real space when it becomes extended by passing through the point and unfolds ethereally.

The image of the point that becomes space was influential in the Christian as well as in the Jewish mystical tradition. The Book of Zohar begins with this explanation of the beginning of the book of Genesis: “At the very beginning the king made engravings in the supernal purity. A spark of blackness emerged in the sealed within the sealed, from the mystery of the *En-Sof*, a mist within matter, implanted in a ring, no white, no black, no red, no yellow, no colour at all. When he measured with the standard of measure, he made colours to provide light. Within the spark, in the innermost part, emerged a source, from which the colours are painted below, and it is sealed among the sealed things of the mystery of *En-Sof*.”<sup>13</sup> Here, too, is the same image: the point shows itself off as light and explodes into space.

### 3. THE INFINITE SPHERE OF LIGHT

Not only does light shine as a spark in the darkness, it is also the splendour from on high. This splendour appears inside a transparent globe, surrounded by pure light. The universe can be imagined as a system of spheres, surrounded and illuminated by divine splendour. The light flows in cascades from the remotest sphere to the earth, where it is individualised in

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. II, § 86, pp. 43f.

<sup>13</sup> The Wisdom of the Zohar. Translation by David Goldstein. Oxford 1991, p. 49.

sparks. The divine source of this light will never be exhausted. This living light is the source of the contingent world and its contingent space; it contains the plenitude of knowledge and the seminal reasons of all beings, which unfold in extended space. Without light there is no form and without form there is no being. Light is the visible side of the soul that builds the world. Plotinus described this as follows: "Various considerations explain why the soul's going forth from the intellectual proceeds first to the heavenly regions. The heavens, as the noblest portion of sensible space, would border with the least exalted of the Intellectual, and will, therefore, be first ensouled, first to participate as most apt; while what is of earth is at the very extremity of progression, least endowed towards participation, remotest from the unembodied.

All the souls then, shine down upon the heavens and spend there the main of themselves and the best; only their lower phases illuminate the lower realms; and those souls which descend deepest show their light furthest down."<sup>14</sup>

This image describes an enlightened sphere, which itself is not light. The divine light of the intellect cascades from the remotest heavens down to earth, where it finds itself again, diversified in the sparks of individual souls. Dionysius the Areopagite brings the Neoplatonist image into a Christian context. Like all Neoplatonists, Dionysius employs the analogy between soul and light; this analogy constitutes the suggestive power of the metaphor of light. Dionysius writes in his "Celestial Hierarchy": "After the same rule, then, of nature's well ordered method, the regulation of all good order, both visible and invisible, manifests supernaturally the brightness of its own gift of light, in first manifestations to the most exalted Beings, in abundant streams, and through these, the Beings after them partake in the Divine ray. For these, as knowing God first, and striving preeminently after Divine virtue, and becoming first-workers, are deemed worthy of the power and energy for the imitation of God, as attainable, and these benevolently elevate the beings after them to an equality, as far as possible, by imparting ungrudgingly to them as the splendour which rests upon themselves, and these again to the subordinate, and throughout each Order, the first rank imparts its gift to that after it, and the Divine light thus rests upon all, in due proportion, with providential forethought. There is, then, for all those who are illuminated, a Source of illumination, viz., God, by nature, and really, and properly, as Essence of Light, and Cause of Being, and Vision itself."<sup>15</sup>

In an aphorism of the "Book of XXIV Philosophers", the images of the bursting point and of the cascading light from outside are united: "Deus est sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam."

<sup>14</sup> Plotinus: Enn. IV, 3 17, trans. MacKenna, p. 274.

<sup>15</sup> Dionysius Areopagita: Celestial Hierarchy, XIII, 3, trans. John Parker.

(God is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere, whose periphery, however, nowhere).<sup>16</sup>

Alan of Lille adopted this image, and Nicholas of Cusa later used it to bolster his doctrine of ‘*coincidentia oppositorum*’. In this aphorism, the point that bursts into immense space, and the spheres of the divine realm, become symbols of God’s omnipresence. In his “*Regulae Theologiae*”, Alan of Lille explained this famous sentence. He strictly distinguished between intelligible space and real space. He characterised the divine ideas as an “intelligible sphere whose centre is everywhere, whose periphery is nowhere”. But there is a considerable difference between them and the extended spheres: “What a difference between the corporeal and the spiritual sphere! In a corporeal sphere, the centre can hardly be in one place because of its tiny size; the periphery, however, is found in many places. In the intelligible sphere, the centre is everywhere, the periphery nowhere. The centre is creature, just as time in eternity is only one point; the creature, compared with God, is only one point or centre. God’s immensity is called periphery, since it orders all by encompassing everything, and contains everything in its immensity. This is the second difference between the corporeal and the spiritual spheres, since the corporeal sphere has an unmoveable centre, its periphery, however, is moveable. In the intelligible sphere it is to the contrary: God is at rest and gives movement to everything.”<sup>17</sup> The point and periphery of the immense sphere coincide in God’s intelligible creation, in pure light. Alan uses the aphorism to describe God’s omnipresence in every point of creation. Nicholas of Cusa will understand it as an argument describing God’s inconceivable essence, and will challenge logical rational philosophy with his doctrine of *coincidentia oppositorum*.

#### 4. THE SPLENDOR OF THE ANGELS

Spiritual space is space in which angels dwell. But what are angels? They are hypostases of divine might and glory. It is through them that God impregnates space. In the syncretic thinking of perennial philosophy and spiritual cosmology, the angels in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Dionysius the

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mahnke, Dietrich: *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt*. Halle 1937. Beierwaltes, Werner: *Proklos*. Frankfurt 1965, pp. 190-192.

<sup>17</sup> Alain de Lille *Regulae Theologiae*. Opp. PL 122, 1267. Cf. Alain de Lille: *Le sermon sur la sphère intelligible et le traité sur les cinq puissances de l’âme*. In: Alain de Lille: *Textes inédits. Avec une introduction sur sa vie et ses oeuvres*. Paris 1965, pp. 163-165. Dronke, Peter: *Fabula. Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*. Leiden and Cologne 1974, ch. V: *The Fable of the Four Spheres*, pp. 143-153.

Areopagite are naturally the same. It was the prophet Ezekiel who, in his vision of God's throne-chariot, saw the most impressive image of God's cosmic glory. He saw heavenly spheres and wheels, spaces inflamed by the fiery glory of God. He envisioned the hypostases of God's splendour; the four biblical animals and the cherubim were images of his fantasy: "And I looked, and behold, there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling chrysolite. And as for their appearance, the four had the same likeness, as if a wheel were within a wheel. When they went, they went each in its own direction, without turning as they went; but in whatever direction the front wheel faced the others followed, without turning back. And their rim, and their spokes, and the wheels were full of eyes round about the wheels that the four of them had. As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing the whirling wheels. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third face was the face of a lion, and the fourth face was the face of an eagle. And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar. And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels did not turn from beside them. When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them." (Ezek. 10:9-17)

The meaning of the angels corresponds to the meaning of revelation: It is always the glory of the Lord that is revealed. In Ezekiel's image, the power of the heavenly wheels announces God's might. For the Neoplatonic interpreter of this glory, the wildly moving imagery becomes a celestial hierarchy, "a sacred order and science and operation, assimilated, as far as attainable, to the likeness of God".<sup>18</sup> Those who perceive this hierarchical glory are impregnated with God's grace, and they come to resemble his splendour. This assimilation comes about through God's speculation in his closest creations. In the mirror, the origin remains visible, but the mirror is also a creative separation from God. From the side of creation, the unique purpose of hierarchy is to enable the closest possible assimilation to the divine origin. Here creation has "Him Leader of all religious science and operation, by looking unflinchingly to His most divine comeliness, and copying, as far as possible, and by perfecting its own followers as Divine images, mirrors most luminous and without flaw, receptive of the primal light and the supreme Divine ray, and devoutly filled with the entrusted radiance, and again, spreading this radiance ungrudgingly to those after it, in

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<sup>18</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite. *Heavenly Hierarchy* III, 1 Works, trans. by John Parker. London 1897-1899, vol. II. p. 13.



accordance with the supremely Divine regulations”.<sup>19</sup> These mirrors and ‘followers’ have the character of hypostases, of dependent beings. These dependent duplicates and mirroring essences are the angels of the celestial hierarchy. They are a sacred institution, an image of the original divine beauty. God’s beautiful might appears and communicates his wisdom in hierarchical gradation. He reveals the mysteries of illumination and causes, as far as possible, the assimilation to the original source.

The nine choirs of angels are the graduated reflection of the divine Glory. The choirs are divided into three triads. This arrangement of 3 x 3 choirs mirrors the mystery of the divine trinitarian self-contemplation. The consecrator and mystagogue invoked by Dionysius describes the threefold orders: “He also says that which is always around God is first, and is declared by tradition to be united closely and immediately to Him, before all the rest. For he says that the teaching of the Holy Oracles declares that the most Holy Thrones, and the many-eyed and many-winged hosts, named in the Hebrew tongue Cherubim and Seraphim, are established immediately around God, with a nearness superior to all. This threefold order, then, our illustrious Guide spoke of as one, and of equal rank, and really first Hierarchy, than which there is not another more Godlike or immediately nearer to the earliest illuminations of the Godhead. But he says that which is composed of the Authorities, and Lordships, and Powers is second; and, as respects the lowest, of the Heavenly Hierarchies, the order of the Angels and Archangels and Principalities is third.”<sup>20</sup> It corresponds to the logic of this figure of emanation that the first choir of angels, closest to God, is characterised as “kindling or burning” (Seraphim) and “fullness of knowledge or stream of wisdom” (Cherubim).<sup>21</sup> It is also an aspect of this type of thought that knowledge, participation and a return to the origin are seen as grace and praise. Isaiah hears the chant of the angels (Is. 6:3). “The Word of God has transmitted its hymns to those on earth, in which are Divinely shewn the excellency of its most exalted illumination. For some of its members, to speak after sensible perception, proclaim as a ‘voice of many waters’, ‘Blessed is the Glory of the Lord from His place’ (Ezek .3:12), and others cry aloud that frequent and most august hymn of God, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, the whole earth is full of His glory’.”<sup>22</sup> From all this follows “that it is just and right that the august Godhead - Itself both above praise, and all praiseworthy - should be known and extolled by the God-receptive minds, as is attainable”.<sup>23</sup> There is no knowledge sufficient in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. III, 2, tr. p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. VI, 2, tr. p. 23f.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. VII, 1, tr. p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. VII, 4, tr. p. 30. Is. 6:3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. VII, 4, tr. pp. 30f.

itself; it is only ever valid in respect to God's major glory. Knowledge, illumination, grace, and liturgy coincide in eternal bliss.

## 5. SPACE AS BURSTING POINT: ROBERT GROSSETESTE (1175-1253)

Robert Grosseteste, Neoplatonic philosopher of the Oxford School and teacher of Roger Bacon (1220-1292) probably knew the Book of XXIV Philosophers. In any case he was thoroughly familiar with Dionysius, having written a commentary on him. Grosseteste treated the question of the emergence of space in his own peculiar way. He taught on the figures of the bursting point and the light cascading from outside. For him, too, light is not a merely physical, but also a metaphysical phenomenon. He uses the notion of speculation, adopts elements from numerical theories, and, in his cosmology, works with the concept of hylemorphism.

Grosseteste's<sup>24</sup> theory is a speculative highlight in the medieval metaphysics of light. Since it is impossible to isolate the concept of light from the theology of creation, light is of a metaphysical, mathematical, optical and physical nature. It is conceived as the origin of all forms, as the essence that timelessly contains the seminal reasons of all forms; it is the formal treasury of potencies, and the physical realm of possibilities.

Grosseteste proceeds from a definition of light, of the forms, and of corporeality in order to unite all these speculations. He sees light as impregnating space, as continuous and self-diffusive. "Light diffuses itself from itself in every part, so that a sphere of light emerges from a point of light, if there is no darkness opposing it."<sup>25</sup> Corporeality is defined as extension into the three dimensions of space. Pure corporeality and matter are "a substance simple in itself lacking all dimension".<sup>26</sup> Corporeality and matter are therefore connected. Corporeality is primarily a potency, which can become extended reality if it is nourished by prime matter. Form remains potentiality as far as "it does not extend itself in all its parts and thus receive materiality, since form cannot leave matter, because they are inseparable, and matter cannot be evacuated from form".<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *Grossum Caput*, was born in 1175 in the county of Suffolk, studied in Oxford and probably in Paris, and became magister regens and chancellor of the University of Oxford. He became bishop of Lincoln in 1235. He died in 1253.

<sup>25</sup> *Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste*, ed. Ludwig Baur. Münster 1912, p. 51 (BGPM vol. 9).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

It is here that the potentiality of the unextended form and prime matter join, and at this juncture the function of light becomes important. Grosseteste defines light as the ‘operatio’ of realizing the connection between form and matter, as the operation of realizing space, “because light instantly diffuses itself from itself in every dimension”.<sup>28</sup> Form always tends towards extension, and the realization of formality is only possible in time and space. Therefore light is “ipsa corporeitas”,<sup>29</sup> since it is the first step of the realisation of forms. Grosseteste proposes a theory of the emergence of space and time from the nature of light. According to this theory, light contains the entire creation ‘in potentia’. This is a kind of big bang theory, corresponding to Plotinus’, St. Augustine’s and Dionysius the Areopagite’s theories of the origin of light: “The light that is the first created form of the prime matter multiplies itself from itself to all sides and diffuses constantly in all parts. Since it cannot leave behind the matter, it draws the matter with it and stretches it to an extent that constitutes the machine of the world.”<sup>30</sup>

From this original extension of light into space and time follows the numerical nature of the universe, since the dimensions are continuous and therefore numerical. It is for the same reason that mathematical relations and the problems of infinite numbers become evident, since light is the condition of the numeric form of the world, as well as of those proportions that cannot be calculated: “The light expands and through infinite multiplication divides matter into smaller and smaller parts of an increasing number; and the relation between smallness and number is reciprocal; this is valid numerically and non-numerically.”<sup>31</sup>

Light multiplies itself continually, however, since it always includes some matter, its potency of extension is finite. The process of continuous extension cannot be grasped precisely by numbers. It is clear from Aristotle’s discussion of the problem (*Physics*, book 4) that the continuum, although it cannot be defined numerically, is nonetheless the condition of any numeration.

Grosseteste describes the extension of the first created point as a bursting. The point extends to all sides unto the limits of the universe, to the heaven of the fixed stars. There the matter of light is exhausted, and the firmament of fixed stars reflects the light through the spheres of the planets back to earth. Grosseteste imagines, “that light equally extends to all sides in the form of a sphere. It follows by necessity that the outer parts of the matter are more stretched and thinner than the inner ones, which are closer to the centre. And whereas the outer parts are as rarefied as possible the inner ones

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp. 51f.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

are capable of being further rarefied”.<sup>32</sup> (This means that there can be both light and dark times in the lower parts of the universe.)

The firmament, the heaven of the fixed stars, is the extreme edge of the extended potency of light. In this sphere, the first form, in its immense potentiality, can be found at its most pure, because matter is here at its most rarefied. It is the sphere with the least weight and the highest velocity: “The light extends matter in the aforementioned manner and rarefies it as far as possible. It exhausts the abilities of the matter and leaves no possibility for a further information. Thus the first body is perfected in the most remote sphere, which is named firmament and which does not consist in anything but in the first matter and the first form. Therefore it is the simplest body concerning essence and the largest quality that is not distinct from the genus of body, except only that matter is realised by the first form. The genus of body which is in this and in the other bodies, abstracts from the fact that matter is added to the form and matter has been affected by the first form.”<sup>33</sup>

Grosseteste sees in the firmament the reversal and the original reflection of light. From here it pours back into the centre. This follows from the form of light, which is realised in a sphere. Grosseteste imagines the body of the universe as a globe, in which light, containing the seminal reasons of things, makes their realisation possible: “When the first body, which is the firmament, is finished, it pours its light from all its parts into the centre.”<sup>34</sup> Grosseteste emphasises that the nature of this light is not entirely the same as that of visible light. This light, which begets its own space, is the extending power that keeps the space from imploding. Light is more than an optical phenomenon. It constitutes the space of life in which contingent living beings emerge. In this power-filled space, the emerging things shine forth from the inner light of their seminal reasons. In the corporeal emergence of every individual, the archetypal event of becoming a body, i.e. the extension into corporeality by the power of light, happens again: “And therefore a light proceeds from the body [of the firmament] which is a spiritual light, or, if you want, a corporeal spirit. This light does not divide the body through which it transits, and thus it runs timelessly fast from the first body into the centre.”<sup>35</sup>

The spheres emerge from that recoil of light. The light that continuously extended in the original expansion condenses on its way back to the centre. From this the celestial spheres derive. The spheres condense the spiritual light to such a degree that they become unchangeable and cannot receive any more information.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 55.

When the light reverts back from the firmament to the centre, spheres of different densities emerge. Grosseteste names four of them. Based on these he reconstructs the heavenly origin of the four earthly elements: “Just as the light that was begotten by the first body filled the second sphere and left a denser matter below it, so the light that was begotten in the second sphere perfected the third sphere, and left the third matter below that sphere in a denser aggregation. And this process was continued in the order of aggregation and segregation, until finally nine celestial spheres were completed; and in the ninth sphere the lowest matter, which is to become the matter of the four elements, is condensed.”<sup>36</sup>

Rather conventionally Grosseteste emphasises the distinction between trans-lunar and sub-lunar spheres. The lunar sphere is last to participate in the spiritual light of the firmament. In the sphere of the moon, light assimilates matter and burns it to ashes. These ashes are the four earthly elements. In its trajectory away from the firmament, the power of the light is, as it were, exhausted. The sphere of the moon is the last cosmic ordering power.

The reduction of the order of light results in the end of the cosmic reign of geometry and numerical theory. Below the sphere of the moon there is only the unordered mixture of the four elements – fire, air, water and earth. Grosseteste considers these elements to be spheres as well, but they are imperfect, condensed and separated in their nature: “The fire begets light; it assimilates matter and dissipates its lower parts, but only partly; and therefore, it produces air. The air, too, begets a corporeal spirit or a spiritual body and assimilates what is below itself. In this process it segregates water and air, which it produces. And since there is more power of aggregation than of segregation, water and earth are left over.”<sup>37</sup>

And so Grosseteste numbers thirteen spheres: nine are heavenly, unchangeable and perfect, and one is earthly, changeable and imperfect, which is divided into four elemental spheres. They form a hierarchy of perfection according to the nature of light and numbers, “since every upper body, according to the light which is produced by it, is the species and perfection of the lower one. Just as the unity constitutes the power of the subsequent numbers, the first body, by multiplication of its light, constitutes the subsequent bodies”.<sup>38</sup>

The elementary, conceptual structures correspond to the numerical structures of the cosmos and to the forming powers of the stars. A form as such is understood as the most simple, as numerical singularity. Matter is the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

ability to receive form and is of a dualistic structure. The number three expresses the composition of form and matter, which constitutes the act of becoming. The result of this process, the real composition of form and matter, characterises the number four. The numbers from one to four add up to ten; thus Grosseteste arrives at the Pythagorean theory of the quality of the number four:<sup>39</sup> “The oneness of form, the twoness of matter, the triad of composition, and the four of the composed make up the sum of ten. Therefore ten is the number of the spherical bodies of the world. Even if the sphere of elements must be divided into four, they only partake of the nature of the perishable elements.

Therefore ten is the number of perfect multiplicity, since it contains everything completely and has something perfect in it of form and oneness, of matter and dyad, something like composition and triad, something like composition and the number four. It is inappropriate to go beyond the four and bring the number five into it. Therefore the number ten is completely perfect.”<sup>40</sup>

Grosseteste combines Augustine's deliberations on the nature of light with Dionysius' Neoplatonic speculations on the nature of space, as well as the Pythagorean doctrine of the quality of numbers. It is only a small step from this fantastical doctrine of space to that of Nicholas of Cusa.

## 6. MAGICAL RAYS: AL KHINDI'S († 866) THEORIES OF LIGHT

The medieval Arab philosopher Al Khindi<sup>41</sup> was one of the transmitters of Greek philosophy to the Arab world. It was in this capacity that he also became important for the Medieval Latin world. Through the Latin

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Meyer/Suntrup: *Lexikon der mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen*. Munich 1987. Pietro Bongo (Petrus Bungus): *De numerorum mysteriis*. Ed. Ulrich Ernst. Hildesheim, New York 1983.

<sup>40</sup> Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste l.c. p. 58.

<sup>41</sup> He was probably born at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Al Kufa, where his father was governor. As a young man, Al Khindi went to Al Basra and to Baghdad. There he became a scholar and was supported by the court from 813-847. He fell out of favour in 847 and died in 866. See: *Bibliography of Al Khindi*, ed. Rescher, Nicolas. Pittsburgh 1964. Bäumcker, Clemens: *Witelo. Ein Philosoph und Naturforscher des XIII. Jahrhunderts*. Münster 1908 (BGPM 3). Lindberg, David C.: *Auge und Licht im Mittelalter. Die Entwicklung der Optik von Alkindi bis Kepler*. Frankfurt 1987. Théodore Fahd: *La divination arabe*. Strasbourg 1966. Proclus Arabus. *Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio theologia in arabischer Übersetzung*. Ed. G. Endres. Beirut 1973. My thanks to Stephan Meier-Oeser for his suggestions and advice.

translation of his works, many Neoplatonic theories came to be known by Western philosophers. His philosophy substantiated the combination of astrology, theories of light, and the doctrine of primordial reasons. It contained a theory of spiritualised space, in which no place was without a specific meaning. He offers a theory of rays, which for him are not merely rays of light, but also represent all the qualities of the spirit, and hence the semantics of the world.

Al Khindi's treatise was frequently read in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.<sup>42</sup> Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon knew him, as did Pico della Mirandola, and he was probably known to Albert the Great and his school, as well as to Nicholas of Cusa. He was one of the most important authorities in astrology, and Paracelsus was at least indirectly indebted to his doctrines, if he did not know them directly.

The treatise "De radiis" begins with a short explanation of the traditional Aristotelian- Porphyrian categories, which appear in the following variation: "What, how, how many, in what way acting and suffering, behaving to oneself and to other subjects, to universals and singulars."<sup>43</sup> Al Khindi interprets these categories as means for the ascent from singular and sensual perception to abstract knowledge, the step from the senses to the species. He situates the abstract species among the stars, whose images in the firmament are visible representatives of the species. Below the fixed stars the planets wander; their power is especially apparent and can be investigated, since they are experienced guides of the world's course. Moreover, the senses indubitably show that the constellation of the stars orders the development of things. The seminal reasons and the influential powers are potencies of the stars, but are not realised corporeally. "If you look upwards you see the stars, among which the planets with their peculiarities were especially studied and investigated. Experience teaches that they specifically direct the things of the world. It is undoubtedly credible that the constellation of the stars orders the elements of the world and everything that is composed through them in every place and every time. For there is no substance and no accident which

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the introduction to the edition of "De radiis" in AHLMA 49 (1974) by Françoise Hudry and Marie-Thérèse d'Alverney, esp. pp. 139ff. They refer to the "errores philosophorum" of Giles de Rome, where Al Khindi's errors figure beside those of Aristotle, Averroes, Avicenna and Alghazel. Thomas Aquinas alludes to Al Khindi in the chapters 104 and 105 of his *Summa contra Gentiles*. Thorndike, Lynn: *History of Magic* III, pp. 443-444 and 665-667 and 719 describes his impact on Roger Bacon. Walker, Daniel P.: *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, mentions him; Pico's "Oratio de dignitate hominis" refers to him; he is criticised in Gian Francesco Pico's "De rerum praenotione", book VII, ch. 6 in: *Opera*, Basle 1573, reprint Hildesheim 1969, pp. 649-658.

<sup>43</sup> "Que, quales, quantes, qualiter agentes vel pacientes, qualiter etiam se habentes ad sua vel alia subiecta, sive universalia vel singularia". AHLMA 49 (1974), p. 217.

is not prefigured in heaven in its species, and it cannot be doubted that it is sent through rays from there to the earth."<sup>44</sup>

The *ascensus* of reason, proceeding from individuals through species and tending to the formless One, identifies the categories as forms and species. In this respect, categories are not only forms of knowledge, but they are also the reality of things, due to the necessary likeness of recognizing and recognised. This reality is already defined in the heavens. Moreover, the astrological interpretation of the categories explains the primordial reasons of things astrologically. The starry sky interpreted by astrology is, as it were, the visible sphere of God's prescience of the world.

Al Khindi sees every star as a fountain of rays, each with a particular quality of influence. Each one is unique: "Every star has its own nature and condition, which includes the radiations of all the others. And since every star has its own nature that cannot be transferred to any other one and that is radiated by its ray, the rays of different stars have different natures, as the stars are of different natures. Every star has its own place in the machine of the world, different from every other one. Therefore every star is necessarily separated from every other, but it has relations to all things connected to each other through their place in the world."<sup>45</sup>

So the world is imagined as impregnated by the rays of the stars. Not only are the rays visual, they also transport the qualitative moments of their origins: "Skilful study can also prove that every thing in this world is moved continuously through the movement of the species, through the form which it achieves in this movement placed in the matter, which is subsistent to the form and which is defined through the form."<sup>46</sup>

The moving form in each star, the primordial reason, defines things according to their particular species. Through the different movements and influences of the stars, the different species are formed into individuals: "The difference of things, which appears in the world of the elements at every time, is due to two particular reasons: from the difference of the matter and the different operations of the rays. Among them some produce a major, some a minor difference, and thus they form the things sometimes more, sometimes less different in different times and places."<sup>47</sup>

The fact that the diverse constellations of stars have different effects in the world of elements, that they both help and exclude each other, is 'abs ammonia fact'. For Al Khindi, a "star is a predominant sign that receives its operation and power before all other signs".<sup>48</sup> Each star directs the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 218.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 219.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 220.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 221.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 222.



*hegemonicon* of its individual earthly object, for it is the most important influence of all celestial powers on that thing. The influence of the stars of course has a timely dimension as well. Since the stars change in time and place, knowledge of divine harmony is a condition for the knowledge of earthly change. The history of cosmic rays can be read in the character of every man: "Therefore the one who has the knowledge of divine harmony also has the knowledge of the past, present and future. And if the condition of a man is completely known, he represents the heavenly harmony like a mirror, since every thing in this world is an example of heavenly harmony."<sup>49</sup>

Since man represents the heavenly harmony, the future of things is accessible to human knowledge. The man who knows the stars "acknowledges that everything that is and that will be in the elementary world is caused by the heavenly harmony, and he knows therefore that the things of this world are connected to those of the other world and proceed necessarily from them".<sup>50</sup>

The man who knows he is dependent on the stars can try to influence the future. This is possible with the imagination, with reason and with words: "The accidentals that help to cause movements are the passions of the soul, and we say that imagination and reason achieve a likeness of the world, in that the species of the worldly things are impressed into them through the exercise of the senses. Therefore the spirit of imagination has the same form of rays as the world. From them follows the power to influence the movement of remote things through the rays of imagination, just as the upper and lower world are moved by rays to certain movements."<sup>51</sup> The result is a theory of magical, influential power. The human soul, participating in the macrocosm, can influence the development of things. It reaches this goal through the imagination, reason and words.

In this theory, a word is both the expression of a thing's essence as well as a command. The power of the word has the character of the first command through which everything was called into being; it is a power one obeys. If one can recognise the meaning of a word in sensual experience, if one is able to name the essence of things, and if one partakes of the world-soul, the planets and the images of the stars, then the right word can express the heavenly harmony. Reasons, words, and images have the same ontological root – the seeds of things in the world-soul. The reasons are the species, the words name these species, and the imagination produces the images of these species. The seminal reasons are contained in the world-soul, which has an ethereal character, and the imagination can invoke the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 223.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. pp. 226f.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 230.

images of that soul. The human spirit partakes of this very imaginative world, which allows it to envision fantastic and prophetic images. "The human spirit is of the nature of air, so it easily receives movements by words or otherwise. And therefore when words are uttered, images that are hidden in a holy mirror appear there. And here sometimes words are heard that are not produced by men. From here it derives that with the uttering of different words, outward images are formed in imagination, reason, and memory."<sup>52</sup> It is also because of the spiritual nature of words that spiritual beings more readily obey the power of words than elementary beings do.<sup>53</sup>

The power of words is substantially the same as the power of images. The forms of the celestial seeds have the power to direct the development of their earthly copies; this power co-operates with the rays of the stars. It is the purpose of sidereal symbols, of Zodiac gems and planet symbols, to strengthen a certain sidereal influence: "This is the case since every real figure as well as form that has been impressed into elementary matter produces rays, which provoke movement in other things, as was said previously. And every figure has its own nature and virtue apart from any other, since their forms are different. For instance, some characters have a potency and virtue with regard to fire, some with regard to air, some to the east, some to the west, some to the south, some to midnight, some to height, some to depth, some to the species of man, others to the species of animals, some to herbs and the trees of this species. Some of the characters, if composed with the necessary solemnity, influence the operations of Saturn, others those of other planets, others those of fixed stars. Some concord in effects with Aries, others with other signs; and the whole diversity of these figures works in the virtues and the effects of celestial harmony and gives the rays their virtue to figure out the forms in a diverse manner."<sup>54</sup>

Words correspond to the images. Words only receive their power through prayer, since their semantic power is connected to the forms and images in the divine Sophia, God's original plan of the world. Their power stems from the power of the original divine command of existence, the 'fiat' by which the world emerged. This power is also contained in the power of the magical and rhetorical word, which wants to move; it is the copied power of the act of creation.

According to Al Khindi, man's language partakes of the power of creation. The magic words we utter in prayer are an edifying copy of the original process of creation. They cannot, however, change divine immutability. Man must not imagine an anthropological God. Al Khindi's God is absolutely unmoveable and is not altered by the supplications of men,

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 240.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 242.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 251.

whatever their purposes may be. Prayer only moves physical matter, which was already formed by heavenly movements. When urgent prayers are uttered from a humble human heart, when they are performed with the necessary solemnity, then they effect a movement of matter corresponding to the request, and provide for the harmony of creation.<sup>55</sup> Here the non-Christian, Neoplatonic basis of Al Khindi's notion of God becomes obvious. This God does not even hear the prayers; he is completely reduced to his function as a creator and first cause. He is not a redeemer. The world is conceived as a series of emanations, it partakes of the moved spheres, but it cannot penetrate the sphere of the first creator.

This is also the God of negative theology, and perhaps it was this concurrence of the Arabic philosopher with Dionysius the Areopagite that made his treatise on astrology acceptable to a Christian audience, despite the medieval condemnations of Al Khindi.<sup>56</sup> "God's names are attributed to Him from men, since they have a natural existence in relation to God, not since they define God. Such a naming is impossible for a particular existence. The names are expressive significations of His majesty, showing that He implies more in his nature than we can signify by words. Therefore, those names are the most efficacious which evoke the active peculiarities of the heavenly harmony with respect to His supreme majesty."<sup>57</sup>

## 7. THE WORLD OF ALBERT THE GREAT (1193-1280)

### a) Cosmic Demons

What is the relationship between the spiritual heaven and the moved heavenly spheres, and how are the sub-lunar regions connected with the heavens? Mediating heavenly beings connect the unmoved to the moved. The intellect is the unmoved sphere; it is the realm of numbers, since numbers are orders without movement. Below the numbers, the fifth matter of 'quintessence' is located. This quintessential ether impregnates the spatial essence of the heavens, which turn once a day in perfect movement. The "Liber de causis" demonstrated the necessity of the mediation between unmoved eternity, moving celestial perfection, and mortal existence: "Necessarily there must be substances that touch the eternal substances, which are above time and also touch substances divided by time. With their movement they constitute a connection between the timely beings that are divided by time and the eternal essences that are above time. Through their

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. pp. 246f.

<sup>56</sup> See above fn. 42, p. 282 (6, 5).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 249.

everlasting duration they produce the connection between the essences above time and those that are in time, which are those submitted to becoming and decaying. Concisely, they constitute the connection between the superior beings and the humble ones, so that the latter do not lose the benefits of the former and are not deprived of all beauty and goodness so that duration and stability survive.”<sup>58</sup> This is the metaphysics of the spheres between the intellect and the earth. Their linkage is one of the conditions of astrology: The firmament bears signs that are visible in the signs of the Zodiac fixed to the first sphere, and the planets communicate heavenly power to the earthly creatures.

The “*Liber de causis*” only describes the mediation between eternal and heavenly spheres. But how to imagine the mediation between the planetary and sub-lunar regions, between the constant proportional movement of the stars and the becoming and decaying of earthly existences? The Neoplatonic philosopher Calcidius (4<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>59</sup> translated parts of Plato’s *Timaeus* into Latin and commented on it. With this translation and commentary he made Plato’s philosophy of nature available to a medieval audience. In his commentary he describes the intermediate position of the demons between the continuously moving heaven and the inconstant earth: “Therefore, as the divine and immortal race of beings dwells in the region of heaven and the stars, and the temporal and perishable race, which is liable to passion, inhabits the earth, between these two there must be some intermediate connecting the outermost limits, just as we see in harmony and in the world itself. For as there are intermediates in the elements themselves, which are set between them and join together the body of the whole world in a continuous whole (between fire and earth there are the two intermediate elements of air and water, which being in the middle touch the outermost limits and join these together), thus, as there is an immortal animal which is said to be heavenly, and as likewise there exists another, mortal being liable to passions - our human race - it must be that there is some intermediate race, which partakes both of heavenly and of terrestrial nature, and which is liable to passion.”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Liber de Causis*. Ed. Bardenhewer. Freiburg 1882, § 29, p. 112, the Latin text p. 189. The passage corresponds to § 55 of Proclus’ “*Elementatio Theologiae*”.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. den Boeft, J.: *Calcidius on Fate. His Doctrine and Sources*. Leiden 1970. Winden, J. C. M.: *Calcidius on matter. His Doctrine and Sources*. Leiden 1969. Waszink, Jan Hendrik: *Studien zum Timaioskommentar des Calcidius*. Leiden 1964. Den Boeft, J.: *Calcidius on Demons*. Leiden 1977, pp. 127-136. Switalski, Wladislaus: *Des Calcidius Kommentar zu Plato’s Timaeus*. Münster 1902, BGPM 3. On the context see: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, s.v. “Engel” and “Geister”.

<sup>60</sup> *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*. In *societatem operis coniuncto* P. J. Jensen edidit J. H. Waszink (Plato Latinus, Vol. IV. London and Leiden 1962.) Ch. CXXXI. Trans. den Boeft, Leiden 1977, p. 26.

From this necessity of mediation between heaven and earth, Calcidius infers the existence of demons: “Now all regions of the universe having received (demons as) inhabitants, reciprocal communications are said to be carried on by the powers inhabiting the middle residence of the world, who grant obedience to heaven, and also take care of earthly affairs; these powers are the eternal aerial demons, taken away from our sight and the other senses because their bodies have neither so much fire that they are transparent, nor so much earth that their substance can resist touch, and their whole structure, joined together from pure ether and clear air, has cemented together an insoluble surface. Because of this some people think this region we live in is rightly called *Aides*, because it is *aides*, i.e. obscure.

Now, the notion that there are many demons is also held by Hesiod, for he says there are thrice ten thousand of them and that they are both obeying God and protecting mortal beings. In this he does not make up their number in a fixed sum, but by making use of the full number three, he multiplies it by ten thousand.

So the definition of ‘demon’ will be as follows: a demon is a rational, immortal, sensitive, ethereal living being taking care of men. It is a living being because it is a soul using a body; rational, because it is prudent; immortal, because it does not change one body for another, but always uses the same; sensitive, because it reflects and no choice can be made without enduring desire; it is called ethereal because of its abode or the quality of its body; taking care of men by reason of the will of God, who has given the demons as guards.”<sup>61</sup>

The role of the demons is not always as positive as it appears to be here. Even if Calcidius sees the positive powers of mediation, there are also evil and hellish demons, and he refers to the opinions of other authors who describe evil demons.<sup>62</sup> It is, however, significant that these beings are necessary for the mediation between heaven and earth; this idea persisted in medieval and Renaissance cosmology.

#### b) Christian Cosmology

Under the name of Albertus Magnus, perhaps the most influential philosopher of nature in the Middle Ages,<sup>63</sup> a sermon presenting the

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. ch. CXXXIVf., tr. pp. 34f., p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. ch. CXXXV.

<sup>63</sup> See: Meerseman, O.P. *Introductio ad opera omnia B. Alberti Magni*, Brugge 1931. Grabmann, Martin: *Drei ungedruckte Teile der Summa de creaturis Alberts des Großen*. Aus den Handschriften nachgewiesen und gewürdigt. Leipzig 1919 (= *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland*, vol. 13). Scheeben, Heribert Christian: *Albert der Große. Zur Chronologie seines Lebens*. Leipzig 1931 (= *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland*, vol. 27). Still interesting, especially on the topic of “Averroism”: Bach, Josef: *Des Albertus*

Albertian cosmology is transmitted in the reading of the second day of Christmas. The author summarises his cosmology concisely here; his description entwines the cosmological, the theological and the moral spheres, thus making it clear that heaven is more than just special [“?” am Rand]. a spiritual sphere. The hierarchies of the saints are the archetype of the heavenly hierarchies, both having their moral correspondents,<sup>64</sup> and all together connected to God as their first cause. Metaphysics, theology, moral philosophy, and cosmocosmology join to constitute the spiritual realm of the world.

The sermon proceeds from the reading of the second day of Christmas, on St. Stephen's death by stoning and his final vision: Stephen, “full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God’.” (Acts 7:55f.) Stephen's vision is the prophetic view of the eternal reward of his martyrdom. He is the first in the long series of Christian martyrs. Thus the sermon on the Christian archmartyr is of special importance. Stephen's sermon for the first time presents an entire explanation of the Christian faith, with which Stephen tries to convince his Jewish contemporaries of Jesus' role as a divine prophet. The sermon ends with a vision of the Christian heaven, promised to believers such as the martyr Stephen.

The preacher interprets Stephen's vision as a spiritual cosmology: “The heavens Stephen sees open have to be understood as the orders of the chosen believers. The first order is the one of the children who died immediately after their baptism. The second order is that of the widows and the spouses of the martyrs. The third of the holy virgins. The fourth of the holy confessors, bishops and doctors. The fifth of the holy martyrs. The sixth of the holy prophets. The seventh of the holy patriarchs. The eighth is that of

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Maguns Verhältnis zu der Erkenntnislehre der Griechen, Lateiner, Araber und Juden. Vienna 1881. Repr. Frankfurt 1966. Zimmermann, Albert (ed.): Albert der Große. Seine Zeit, sein Werk, seine Wirkung. *Miscellanea Medievalia* 14. Berlin, New York 1981. De Libera, Alain: *Albert le Grand et la Philosophie*. Paris 1990. Weishepl, James A., (ed.): *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays*. Toronto 1980. Weishepl, James A.: The Axiom ‘Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae’ and its Origins. In: *Albertus Magnus. Doctor Universalis*. Ed. Meyer, Gerbert and Zimmermann, Albert. Mainz 1980, pp. 441-465. Zimmermann, Albert: *Albertus Magnus und der lateinische Averroismus*, Ibid. pp. 465 - 494. Craemer-Ruegenberg, Ingrid: *Albertus Magnus*. Munich 1980.

<sup>64</sup> On Albert's Commentaries on Dionysius (ed. *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, vol. XIV. Paris 1892) see Ruello, Francis: *Les “Noms divins” et les “Raisons” selon Albert le Grand, commentateur du “De divinis nominibus”*, Paris 1963, *Bibliothèque Thomiste* XXXV. Emery, Gilles: *La Trinité Créatrice. Trinité et création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d'Aquin et ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure*. Paris 1995, *Bibliothèque Thomiste* XLVIII. Ch. IV: *Les commentaires d'Albert sur la Hierarchie Céleste et les Noms Divins*.

the holy apostles. The ninth is of the holy angels. Above these orders is the throne of the Holy Virgin, at the right hand of Jesus Christ, whose humanity rests softly in the heaven of heavens of the holy Trinity.”<sup>65</sup>

These nine orders of bliss are typologically connected to the spheres of the physical heavens: “The first heaven is the circle of the moon. This circle prefigures the place of the newborn children who were baptised and died. Just as the moon does not shine itself but receives its light from the sun, so the children did not earn the merits with which they shine in heaven. The light with which they shine is only from the grace of God, whom they followed in their baptism, which Jesus consecrated with his blood. Therefore these children are compared to the moon.”<sup>66</sup>

The second circle of the planets, that of Mercury, is reserved for the widows and orphans. The reason is both etymological and typological: “Mercury is named an attending merchant (mercator curans).<sup>67</sup> Through this heaven the dwellings of widows, spouses, and prisoners are figured. According to a dictum of St. Paul (I. Tim. 5:10), the widows and spouses become the witnesses of the works. Those who are poor and strange [foreign?]foreign are received, the feet of the holy are washed and those who are suffering are comforted. Thus the punished sinners receive forgiveness; the eternal goods of the widows, spouses, and prisoners are collected by this spirit with prudent diligence.”<sup>68</sup> Mercury is responsible for the eternal treasures, for the works of mercy and [?].charity. He cares for widows and orphans. In the course of the ascent through the spheres, the hierarchy of the saints is allegorically connected to the circles of the planets. Venus is the type of the Holy Virgin, while the sun is the sphere of the confessors, bishops, and doctors: “Just as the sun shines solely among the others, so the holy confessors, bishops and doctors miraculously illuminate the world through the light of their good lives and holy doctrines.”<sup>69</sup>

The fifth heaven, that of Mars, is the heaven of the martyrs: “Mars is held to be the god of wars. This designates the choir of the holy martyrs. For they are brave soldiers and excellent fighters.”<sup>70</sup>

The sixth heaven, the one of Jove (Jupiter), whose etymology is given as *jubens pater* (commanding father), is dedicated to the prophets: “For the prophets zealously announce mighty speeches in favour of God, and what

<sup>65</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Sermones.... recogniti per R. A. R. F. Petrum Jammy*, ed. novissima curante P. F. M. Hyppolito a Cruce. Toulouse 1883, p. 348a. Corresponds to the ed. of Borgnet vol. 13, Paris 1891.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 348a.

<sup>67</sup> Isidore, in his *Etymologies* VIII, 45f. has “medius currens” and interprets this rhetorically.

<sup>68</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Sermones*, p. 348b.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 349b.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 350a.

they understood from God, they commanded to be done. Therefore the prophets are called kings and fathers.”<sup>71</sup>

The seventh heaven, that of Saturn, is the highest heaven of the planets, and is reserved for the patriarchs. The etymology of Saturn, the secret of his name, is ‘Sartorum Deus’, the god of the sewers: “With this heaven the choir of the venerable Patriarchs is denoted, who were good sewers, since they sowed the seed of faith and religion into the hearts of their offspring.”<sup>72</sup>

The eighth heaven is the heaven of the signs or of the Zodiac; its twelve animal images, corresponding to the months, are also the types of the apostles: “The single months are denoted by these twelve signs. They are the following: Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, Ares, Taurus and Gemini. This heavenly choir appropriately represents the apostles. With the signs and miracles they performed on earth, they clearly indicated Jesus, the sun of justice, to the infidels.”<sup>73</sup>

This connection is characteristic of Albert’s cosmology. The typological interpretation makes it possible to legitimate astrology with the typology of the apostles, since the signs and miracles, which are attributed to the images of the stars, are spiritually evaluated. Thus astrology receives a tropological character, with the history of salvation and [of?]of nature considered to be of the same type. But the preacher spiritualises the signs of driving out demons, speaking in foreign tongues, drinking poison without ill effect, laying of hands on sick people and healing them. Expelling demons means being disgusted with sin. He who speaks in foreign tongues banishes insults and lewdness from his speech. He who tames snakes bears the persecution of wicked men. He who drinks poison is not enraged by the insults of others. He who heals sick people by the laying on of hands gives an example of good deeds.

The ninth heaven, the firmament, is the heaven above the Zodiac. It is the heaven under which the signs of the stars are fixed. It allegorically prefigures eternal bliss. The relation between the firmament and fixed stars is a copy of the relation between God and his angels: “Just as the stars are fixed, immobile in the firmament, the angels are fixed in God, so that they cannot withdraw from him. Moreover, in so far as the angels accord to God’s holy will, they execute it without fail.”<sup>74</sup>

The sphere of divine might begins with the relationship of the angels to God. This sphere is distinguished from the others theologically, dogmatically and philosophically. At the beginning of his sermon, Albert had explained that the Holy Virgin has her throne above the ninth sphere of

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 350b.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 351a.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 352b.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 352b.



the angels, and that she sits on the right side of the humanity of Jesus, on the right side of the mediator between humanity and the Trinity. This image can be understood philosophically, since it shows divine might mediating between heaven and earth.

Albert finds this might in the Lord's Prayer, "fiat voluntas tua, sicut in coelo et in terra". The will of God is the power of the unmoved mover of the universe, who is located in Albert's tenth heaven: "According to the philosophers the tenth heaven is the Great Firmament that makes all aforementioned circles or heavens move. By this heaven the Holy Trinity is prefigured. God is moved by nothing, but he moves everything that he has created."<sup>75</sup>

In his commentary on the "Liber de causis", i.e. his book "De causis ac processu universitatis", which he himself considered to be the summit of his metaphysics, Albert explains in detail what is only hinted at in the sermon on St. Stephen's vision. He too holds the first cause to be the beginning of all being and of all life.<sup>76</sup> He describes this first cause in four moments: "Namely as first cause, as intelligence, as moveable soul, and nature, in so far as it is nature that marks the beginning of all things and constitutes their essence, their beginning, and their scope".<sup>77</sup> The first cause is described as the source from which everything derives, containing all forms and goals without being dissolved in them. "Therefore He is necessarily the essence of light and the might of virtue and is contained in everything; and therefore, on the contrary, nothing is intermixed with Him as a part of Him."<sup>78</sup>

"Intelligence, the second moment, is the substance understanding itself without receiving anything from the outside. Its first understanding light is

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 352b.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. on the Liber de Causis and Albert context: Imbach, Ruedi and Flüeler, Christoph: Albert der Große und die deutsche Dominikanerschule. Freiburg 1985 (Freiburger Zs. f. Philosophie und Theologie, vol. 32, 1/2). Hertling, Georg von: Albertus Magnus. Beiträge zu seiner Würdigung. Münster 1914 (BGPM 14), ch. 2. Rhoner, Anselm: Das Schöpfungsproblem bei Moses Maimonides, Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin. Münster 1913 (BGPM 11). Gaul, Leopold: Alberts des Großen Verhältnis zu Plato. Münster 1913 (BGPM 12). Hansen, Josef: Zur Frage der anfangslosen und zeitlichen Schöpfung bei Albert dem Großen. In: Studia Albertina. Festschrift Bernhard Geyer zum 70. Geburtstage. Ed. Heinrich Ostländer. Münster 1952, pp. 167-188.

<sup>77</sup> De causis ac processu universitatis in: Albertus magnus. Opera omnia. Ed. Borgnet, vol. 10, p. 436. Cf. Craemer-Ruegenberg, Ingrid: The Priority of Soul as Form and its Proximity to the First Mover. Some Aspects of Albert's Psychology in the First two Books of his Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima. In: Albert The Great. Commemorative Essays. Ed. W. Shahan. Norman, OK. 1980, pp. 49-64. Weishepl, James A.: Albertus Magnus and Universal Hylemorphism. A Note on Thirteenth-Century Augustinianism. Ibid. pp. 239-260. De Libera, Alain: Albert le Grand et la Philosophie. Paris 1990, chap. VI: Psychologie philosophique et théologie de l'intellect.

<sup>78</sup> De causis ac processu universitatis, in: Opera omnia, vol. 10, p. 436.

desired by all moving and all moved beings. Therefore it moves everything without moving itself, just as the desired moves that by which it is desired.”<sup>79</sup> Albert conceives the first divine mover as such an intelligence to which everything is drawn, and in this respect divine intelligence is the highest good of the world. As the desired good, God directs the world to himself and impregnates it with his desired presence. His virtue or power is not only the scope, but also the cause of the world. Divine power becomes the moving soul, effecting the rise of the world. The soul contains the seminal reasons, which have a divine origin. Thus Albert sees God’s power as present in nature, and he names seven moments of the cosmic order: “Scilicet causa prima, intelligentia, anima, natura, forma, coelum et elementa.”<sup>80</sup>

“The first cause is the first of all and the beginning. Through its substantiating power its influence substantiates the things and conserves every being, so that there is nothing without its influence, such as there is no colour without light.”<sup>81</sup>

Intelligence, the second moment of the originating world, is opposed to the first cause. Albert adopts the Neoplatonic argument: “Intelligence is not merely a simple substance. Its invisible substantiality consists in being doubled as a second substance. This is its essence from the beginning. For intelligence is different from being, and this difference is directed to the first cause and is considered to be the other essence. On the other hand, intelligence tends to nothingness since it is nothing in itself. Nonetheless, intelligence is not divided by nothingness.”<sup>82</sup>

The process of nature is the realization of God’s power. It takes place through information, in which intelligence imprints the forms of the cosmic soul into matter. This process is the influx of the divine power as it moves through the forms in the firmament. The result is in the created things, formed by the powers of the intellect, the heavens and the elements: “If someone asks, where does the beginning come from, and where the beginning of all generation in matter, this can be answered easily. The noble splendour of the first cause and of the intelligences and of the souls, which are determined for this or that genus or species, is the beginning of the becoming of everything. A genus is produced as a perfect being by the movement of the heavens, moved from the noble soul and by help of intelligences and substances. And therefore it is obvious that matter has no influence.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 436.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 437.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 437.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 438.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 438.

The heavens are impregnated with divine powers, which co-operate in the process of creation. Intelligence is the first light, which contains the names, i.e. the concepts, of things. The soul is the first movement, which gives formal definitions to things.<sup>84</sup> This means that the soul contains the virtually extended images of the species. In relation to the first cause, intelligence inhabits the second rank, since it reflects and mirrors. The process of becoming is described hylemorphically: The power of the first cause seizes, as it were, the notion of the thing that was known to the intellect. The *anima nobilis* is the realm of transition from notion to movement; with this soul emerges the space of the extended images of the species. Albert describes this world-soul with a certain degree of embarrassment, for while he needs the concept for his explanation of movement, he knows very well that his definition derives from the Averroistic world-soul concept.

This soul is the cause that effects the movement of information through the heavenly spheres down to earth. It is not the unmoved mover, but an effective cause which mediates divine power through the informing spheres and heavens down to the living things, consisting of four animated elements: "The heavens are of corporeal substance which consists only in the power of becoming space (existens in potentia ad ubi solum). According to its nature it is without becoming and decaying; according to its form or to the constellation of stars, it is moved slowly or quickly by the soul. Therefore it mediates the forms, which it receives from the soul diversified through the different constellations down to the becoming and decaying matter. Here the quick and slow motions of the matter are described, the ascendants and descendants, the preventions and the conjunctions, the unequal risings and ceasings."<sup>85</sup>

The moments of divine power and the notions of the intelligence coagulate in the heavenly matter of space. This movement is the life of the ether. Finally the forms are introduced to the sub-lunar, elementary world. "An element is the substance of a linear movement that is not moved from itself but from the generator."<sup>86</sup> This movement from above into matter is the movement of the divine power as it communicates divine life.

Following the "Liber de causis", Albert conceives space as impregnated by divine power, pulsing from divine life. This space is defined as the space of the realization of God's creation through intelligence, soul, and heaven. This path of creation from the notion to extended, moved reality, makes the astrological definition of creation meaningful and confirms the signifying character of the stars. Albert's cosmos, however, is also a cosmos in which divine grace is apparent, and in which the signs of salvation can be

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 438

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. pp. 438f.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 439.

discovered. The models of analogical and cosmological understanding of the events of salvation-history are visible in the cosmos.<sup>87</sup> Besides its analogical meaning, the moral dimension of the cosmos becomes clear. The sun of justice, the sword of faith, and the works of mercy have their types in the cosmos. The plenitude of cosmic meaning is inexhaustible.

### c) The Plenitude of Cosmic Analogy

The analogy between planets and metals is probably of Egyptian origin. It is definitely a constitutive element of all alchemy.<sup>88</sup> The doctrine of planets and metals was an important part of 'physica' literature, the popular practical literature of the Middle Ages.<sup>89</sup> It becomes apparent here to what extent the heavenly physics of qualities was connected with earthly practice. In his great commentary on the "Liber de causis", "De Causis ac processu universitatis", Albert the Great praised the theological consequences of this Neoplatonic metaphysics as the summit of his own natural philosophy and metaphysics. The physics of this spiritualised world had analogy and mediation as its essence.

Albert's metallurgy situates itself in this cosmology of spiritual space. Since he is not quite sure about the character of these theories, he presents the subject, as is his wont, in the form of a book report: "In some alchemical books attributed to Plato, the number or the proportion of numbers is called a metallic form. This proportion implies the power to constitute elements, since everything is produced through the potency of proportion, e.g. heaven and earth. If there are potencies on earth beyond the illuminating and noble ones of the planets, they are darkness, heaviness, and coldness, such as lead.

Therefore the seven genera of metals are named from the seven planets: Saturn is lead, Jove is tin, Mars iron, Sun gold, Venus copper, Mercury quicksilver, and the moon silver. By this it is expressed that the planets acquired different complexions (temperaments). Hermes seems to be the

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Albertus Magnus: *De Laudibus Beatae Mariae Virginis libri XII*. Opp. vol. XXXVI. Ed. Borgnet Paris 1889, lib. I, 3, sap. 3: "Quare Maria dicitur stella".

<sup>88</sup> On Albert and alchemy: Albertus Magnus. *Libellus de Alchimia*. Opp. vol. XXXVII, pp. 545-573. Sturlese, Loris: *Proclo ed Ermete in Germania. Da Alberto Magno a Bertoldo da Moosburg. Per una prospettiva di ricerca sulla culture filosofica tedesca nel secolo delle origini*, pp. 125-150, in: Flasch, Kurt (ed.): *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhard*. Hamburg 1984, pp. 22-33. Meerseman, P. G.: *Introductio in Opera omnia B Alberti Magni O.P.* Brussels 1931, pp. 147f. Thorndike, Lynn: *A History of magical and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, 1923, ch. LIX, pp. 517-592, also vol. 7 and 8 passim. Zambelli, Paola: *The Speculum Astronomiae and its Enigma. Astrology, Theology, and Science in Albertus Magnus and his Contemporaries*. Dordrecht 1992.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Meyer, Heinz: *Bartholomaeus Anglicus "De proprietatibus rerum". Selbstverständnis und Rezeption*. In: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* (1988), pp. 237-274. Id.: *Zum Verhältnis von Enzyklopädie und Allegorese im Mittelalter*. In: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 24 (1990), pp. 290-313.

author of this doctrine, and Plato followed him in this. From him the alchemists seem to have adopted their doctrines affirming that the images that are engraved in precious stones have specific virtues. The seven metals have their form from the seven planets of the lower sphere. Hermes seems to affirm this opinion when he says that the earth is the mother of metals and that heaven is the father. The earth is pregnant with metals in the mountains, the plains, the waters, and in every place.

We understand this opinion in the way that the proportion of principles, the potency of acting or passion, is the disposition for a substantial form. And so it is elsewhere: first the form forms as an active principle; the principles are the first active and working forms of matter, as I have explained in my doctrine of stones.”<sup>90</sup> Albert himself does not offer a clear structural analogy that could be used for alchemical experiments, but he elucidates the antique and Arabic literature as far it is accessible to him. He thus prepared the way for the pseudepigraphy, which was to appear under his name until the seventeenth century.<sup>91</sup>

The allegedly Albertine “*Liber secretorum*” presents a precise connection of images of the stars, planets, diseases, and human organs. It may have been written at the end of the thirteenth century by someone associated with the Albertine school; it definitely contributed substantially to Albert’s fame as magician, astrologer, and alchemist. It was frequently reprinted from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as it was part of the repertoire of cosmic medicine.<sup>92</sup>

The “*Book of Secrets*” is a book of analogies. The rationale of these analogies lies in the idea that the world was created according to a design, which, while hidden as a whole, is discernible in its traces. The concept is one of participation in a design that can only be recognised in reflections and likenesses. The figures of thought in this magical conception are seminal reasons, cosmic anthropology, and spiritualised spaces. It is according to these patterns that cosmic powers and the fertility, health, and disease of nature as well as of mankind can be described. The powers are represented symbolically. As signs of the cosmos they can be associated with organs of the human body. The planets, which are mediators between intelligence and the earth, show their mark on the human body in their dominion over certain organs. The analogy between macro- and microcosm opens up a realm for images and copies, for signs that are only accessible to seers, for references

<sup>90</sup> Albertus Magnus: *Mineralia*. Book 3 tract 1, ch. 6. Albertus Magnus. *Ausgewählte Texte*. Lat. German ed. Albert Fries. Darmstadt 1981, p. 80.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Thorndike. Lynn: *History of Magic Literature*, vol. VII, VIII. New York 1958 passim. A good example of this pseudepigraphy is Maier, Michael: *Symbola aureae mensae*.

<sup>92</sup> I use the English edition. *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*. Ed. Michael R. Best and Frank H. Brightman. On the specific interest in the occult sciences see Shumaker, Wayne: *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance. A Study in Intellectual Patterns*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1972.

that give access to hidden mysteries. This world is impregnated with spirit and meaning; it not only has a physical *horror vacui*, but also a *horror vacui sensus*.

The theory of planets offered by the “Book of Secrets” can be understood as an attempt to list universal correspondences of meaning found in their qualities. The booklet has a clear structure. First the elemental nature of the planets is presented, then their complexion or temperament, then their connection with the day or the night, then their sex and the inclination of the planets to the human race. After this cosmic level follows the medical level, which describes the relation of the planets to the organs of the human body, the associated diseases, the related images of the stars, the influence a planet has on those born under its rule, and finally the day that is ruled by the planet in its first hour.

The result is the following tableau:

*Saturn*. Associated signs: Capricorn and Aquarius. Nature: cold and dry. Complexion: melancholic, an enemy to mankind, especially to men, brings misfortune. Disposition: evil. Parts of the body: right ear, spleen, bladder. Diseases: phthisis, catarrh, palsy, dropsy, quartan ague, consumption, gout, leprosy, morpew, cancer, flux, and trouble with the spleen. His children are of proud heart, haughty, sad, keeping anger upright in counsel, quarrelsome with their wives, malicious, pale and cold. Day: Saturday.<sup>93</sup>

*Jupiter*. Associated signs: Sagittarius and Pisces. Nature: warm and moist. Complexion: sanguine. Friendly to animals and mankind, bringer of fortune. Parts of the body: liver, lungs, ribs, midriff, cartilage, blood, and semen. Diseases: King’s evil, pleurisy, infection of the lungs, apoplexy, high blood pressure, cramps, severe headaches, heart-burn, and other diseases rising of the blood. His children are of notable courage, trustworthy, achieving great exploits, merry, glorious, honest, loving of their wives and children. Day: Thursday.<sup>94</sup>

*Mars*: Associated signs: Aries and Scorpio. Nature: immoderate, hot and dry. Complexion: choleric, masculine, nocturnal. Disposition: evil. Parts of the body: left ear, the gall, the kidneys, and testicles. Diseases: tertian fever, pestilence, and continual ague, ringworm, migraine, rot, premature birth, varicose veins, and all diseases caused by a choleric nature. His children are rough, wild, fierce, invincible, bold, contentious, obscure, easily deceived, redheaded and small-eyed, vandals. Day: Tuesday.<sup>95</sup>

*Sun*. Associated sign: Leo. Nature: hot, dry. Complexion: modest. Sex: male; diurnal. Parts of the body: brain, marrow, sinews, the right eye of a man and the left eye of a woman. Diseases: all sores of the mouth, leakage

<sup>93</sup> The Book of Secrets. Ed. Best, p. 65.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. pp. 66f.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 68.

from the eyes, all hot and dry diseases not deriving from the choleric temperament. Children: trustworthy, lofty, wise, just, courteous, religious, obedient, corpulent, blond, large limbed, graceful. Day: Sunday.<sup>96</sup>

*Venus*: Associated signs: Taurus and Libra. Nature: cold and moist. Complexion: phlegmatic, feminine, night. Disposition: good to mankind. Parts of the body: loins, kidneys, buttocks, belly, flank, and womb. Cold diseases of the liver, the heart, the stomach, and female diseases. Her children are pleasant, merry, given to pleasure, lovely, lecherous, just, inviolable keepers of faith and friendliness, tall, comely, white and fair, dancers, and delighted in music. Day: Friday.

*Mercury* (the ‘joker’ among the planets<sup>97</sup>). Associated signs: Gemini and Virgo. Nature: Convertibility:[?] masculine with masculine, feminine with feminine, hot with hot, cold with cold, moist with moist, dry with dry, good fortune with good fortune, strengthening good aspects. Parts of the body: tongue, memory, cognition, hands and thighs. Diseases: frenzy, madness, melancholy, falling sickness, cough, rheumatism and excessive salivation. His children are stout, wise, apt to learn, modest, secretive, eloquent, small, lean, pale, smooth-haired, hard, and bony-handed.<sup>98</sup>

*Moon*. Associated sign: Cancer. Nature: cold and moist, feminine, night. Conveyor of the virtues of all other planets. Parts of the body: brain, the left eye of a man and the right eye of a woman, in women the genitals, in both men and women the stomach, the belly, and generally the left part of the body. Diseases: shaking palsy, contortion and distortion, infirmities deriving from cold moisture. Children: honest, honourable, inconstant, loving of wet and moist places, sailors and travellers. Day: Monday.<sup>99</sup>

It is surely not possible to substantiate this complex in a philosophical and theological manner. The book rather shows how the institutionalisation of science and knowledge leads to compilations that connect all available sources in order to evaluate their compatibility. The argument for compilations such as this one comes from the realm of perennial philosophy: The divinely revealed science, now scattered, has to be recollected. This is the basis of the entire science. In this process of reconstruction, the figures of the ‘sages’ play a decisive role because they are considered to have insight into the essence of beings. They are accordingly the heroes of pseudepigraphies.

The pseudepigraphy of the “*Liber secretorum*” is based on the conception that this book contains the empirical essentials of Albert’s extensive philosophical explanations and commentaries. Albert the Great is considered to be the crystal around which received wisdom constellates; the

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. pp. 69f.

<sup>97</sup> He is called “*medius currens*” in Isidore’s *Etymologies* VIII, 45 sq.

<sup>98</sup> The Book of Secrets. Ed. Best, pp. 71f.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. pp. 72f.

philosophical background of this concept needs not be rehearsed, since it is self-evident. In the “*Liber secretorum*”, wisdom is collected that can become evident to those who, like the ‘magician’ Albert, are able to see the essentials of nature. The alchemist at the court of Rudolf II in Prague, Michael Maier, who dedicated a long chapter in his “*Symbola aureae mensae*” to Albert, sums it up this way: “Albert is the only one, who really deserved the name ‘the Great’. The genial and pleasant man taught others what he himself had learned from reading, the usage of things, and from his teachers. It is in this way that the teachers should offer their knowledge to their students at the golden table.”<sup>100</sup>

## 8. **GIORGIO VENETO’S (1460-1540) HARMONIA MUNDI**

The chief work of the Venetian Minorite Giorgio Veneto, (Francesco Giorgi, Zorzi in the Venetian dialect) “*De harmonia mundi*”, was first published in 1525 in Venice.<sup>101</sup> It is an impressive example of an emphatic

<sup>100</sup> Maier, Michael: *Symbola aureae mensae*. Frankfurt 1617. Repr. Graz 1971, pp. 259f.

<sup>101</sup> *Francisci Georgii Veneti Minoritae familiae De Harmonia Mundi cantica tres*. Venice 1525. Giorgio Veneto became a favourite target of the critics of Renaissance Neoplatonism. Marin Mersenne criticised him in an appendix to his commentary on Genesis: *Quaestiones Celeberrimae in Genesim*. Paris 1623. Appendix: *Observationes et emendationes ad Franciscum Georgi Problemata*. In hoc opere cabala evertitur, editio vulgata et inquisitores sacrae fidei catholici ab haeticorum calumniis accusati vindicantur. Giorgio (Zorzi) was born in 1460 into a family of Venetian aristocrats. In 1482 he became a member of the “*Fratri Minori dell’ Osservanza*”. Here he devoted himself to studies in Hebrew, biblical exegesis and cabala. He belonged to the wider intellectual circle of Egidio da Viterbo. Because of his success in his order, his noble origin and his fame as a scholar, he was nominated candidate for the office of the Patriarch of Venice in 1504, 1508, 1524. However, he was never elected. As a theologian in diplomatic service, he was involved in the ecclesiastical negotiations with the Royal English commissioners, especially Thomas Cramner, over the divorce of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. Nevertheless, his chief work, “*Harmonia mundi*” was condemned and burned by the Inquisition of 1530. The debates over his condemnation accompanied him until his death in 1540. Cf. Cesare Vasoli: *Intorno a Francesco Giorgio Veneto e all’ ‘armonia del mondo’*. In C. V.: *Profezia e ragione. Studi sulla cultura del Cinquecento e del Seicento*. Naples 1974, pp. 131-403. Cf. Morhof, J. G. *Polyhistor*, T. II, lib. I, cap. I, p. 17 and cap. 3, p. 165. Brucker, Jacob: *Historia Critica Philosophiae*. Leipzig 1743, vol. IV, pp. 376-385 (Periodus III, p. I, T. 2, cap. IV). C. Vasoli: *Testi humanistici su l’ermetismo*. In: *Archivio di Filosofia*. Rome 1955, pp. 79-104. Walker, D. P.: *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*. London 1958, pp. 112-119 (*Studies of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 22).



Pythagorean explanation of the world's divine harmony. In this book, the dynamics of the becoming of the cosmos are decisive. Giorgio wrote a book on the beauties of the world and its order, conceived as a diversification of oneness, as an analogy of numbers, and as an earthly shadow of the heavenly hierarchy, all deriving from the source of a unique deity. This order becomes visible in the beauty of the stars and in their qualities, in metals and stones. Giorgio sees the cosmos as a spiritual space, woven in conceptual harmonies only palely reflected in the visual world. The orders are founded in the process of creation, are expressed in spiritual cosmology, and have their purpose in the eternal bliss of mankind.

The book is arranged into three cantos of eight tones each. Each canto has a *proemium* and an *index tonorum*, where the different elements of creation, its order, and its history are presented. Every tone in turn has its own index.

The indices have the function of a thesis broadsheet. The theses are discussed according to various historical opinions. Thus the complete field of spiritual erudition is presented, and its issues discussed controversially. Giorgio's authorities are the authors of Neoplatonic philosophy, the biblical authors and prophets, the Greek poets (especially Homer), and the Neoplatonic interpretation of Greek philosophers, from the Presocratic philosophers through Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Timaeus of Locri,<sup>102</sup> and the Neopythagoreans – Flavius Josephus, Philo, Plotinus, Proclus, the Book of XXIV philosophers, Hermes, as well as Origen, Boethius, Augustine, and, of course, Dionysius the Areopagite. He is familiar with cabalist sources<sup>103</sup> and medieval philosophers such as Averroes, Albertus Magnus, and Nicholas of Cusa. He also knows, of course, Florentine Neoplatonic Philosophy.<sup>104</sup> A Pythagorean encyclopaedia of music emerges that finds the world arranged by number, weight, and measurement – a harmony of worldly wisdom, creation, and grace.

<sup>102</sup> Timaeus of Locri is the main dialogue partner in Plato's *Timaeus*. The book attributed to him, "On the Nature, the World and the Soul," is a pseudepigraphy of the late first century B.C. or the first century A.D. Ed. Timaeus Locrus. *De natura mundi et animae*. Ed. and trans. by W. Marg. Leiden 1972 (*Philosophia antiqua* 24). Timaios of Locri. *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*. Text, Trans. and Notes by Thomas H. Tobin. Chico, Cal. 1985.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Campanini, Saverio: Francesco Zorzi: Quabbalah Christiana e armonia del mondo. Tesi di Dottorato di Ricerca presentata da Saverio Campanini. Turin 1998. Secret, François: Hermétisme et Kabbale. Naples 1992, esp. pp. 15-65.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Wirszbuski, Chaim: Francesco Giorgio's Commentary on Giovanni Pico's Kabbalistic Theses. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1974) pp. 145-156. Vasoli, Cesare: Masilio Ficino e Francesco Giorgio Veneto. In: Garfagnini, Gian Carlo (ed.): *Masilio Ficino e il ritorno de Platone*. Studi e documenti, Florence 1986. pp. 533-554.

## a) The First Canto

The first canto is the canto of creation. Its tones are:

- "1. On the generator of the world and of what harmony He rejoices in His super-excellent oneness.
2. On the harmony of the world and in what its portrayers concur and dissent.
3. The harmonic number in which the creator descends into the world.
4. The different circles in which the species of things concur.
5. Through what intervals the harmony is impregnated.
6. Through what harmony everything is coherent in man, like in a small instrument.
7. Through what sound everything, including the tiniest beings, accord to the archetype.
8. About the final harmony in which all double-octaves are united in one harmony."<sup>105</sup>

These tones of the world-harmony are then explained one by one. The proem indicates the harmonious meaning of the world at its beginning. Pythagorean music delivers, following Boethius, the arrangement and leading concepts of cosmic harmony. In the proem the 'archimuseus', Orpheus sings about the cosmic creator: "Who arranged in sounding numbers the single beings as well as the entire world; he is the artist who only delivered his work when it contained a perfect harmony according to the right numbers, when the tones united themselves in an octave. This work will be accomplished by the transition through six mediators<sup>106</sup> and will then be recalled by its maker. With the octave the world will finally be accomplished; the world is preconceived in it; in it the world will finally be consummated. The great architect built the entire work of the world in six degrees of His holiness. Moses concealed this under the veil of the six days of creation; on the seventh He rested. If you count the day when He still rested in Himself with the one after creation, it is the eighth day. And therefore the work will be lasting, since it is connected by the bond of eight days. Always the seventh returns to the eighth, which is the same as the beginning and not the same. God's work is conceived in an octave (as we will explain later), and everything is perfected through it. We too can follow the traces of our maker, perfecting our work in an octave, and so return to our beginning.<sup>107</sup> And it is always God who marks the extremes. The first tone sings about Him, since He is the beginning, as well as the last one, since He is the goal. If I see it correctly, the speculative elements of this world and

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<sup>105</sup> De harmonia mundi, fol. I.

<sup>106</sup> The second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh.

<sup>107</sup> On the divine octave, see also ch. VIII, 2: The Venerable Bede.

the supra-mundane one are contained in the procession from the first to the last tone.”<sup>108</sup>

The beginning with the prime tone, the procession through the six tones of the scale, the return to the octave – this description of the harmony of the world corresponds to Philo and Boethius, and is also close to Cusa. In his “*Docta ignorantia*”, Nicholas described the earth as being situated harmoniously in the cosmos, but for him the earth was no longer located at “the centre, neither of the eighth sphere nor of any other. Also the appearance of the six signs above the horizon does not make it probable that the earth stood in the centre of the eighth sphere”.<sup>109</sup> Nicholas no longer conceived of the eighth sphere as spatial, but as a realm beyond distinct space, where, as a result, the centre of the world coincided with its periphery.<sup>110</sup> In Giorgio Veneto’s writings, these dialectical deliberations are reduced again to a simpler Pythagoreanism.<sup>111</sup>

Unlike Cusa, Giorgio conceives the work of the six days as a harmonic pattern. The octave, the return of the first tone in the eighth as both identical and different, constitutes a circular movement that does not eliminate the difference between creator and creation. Through this musical speculation, the world acquires a musical dynamic of an eschatological nature. The accomplishment of the creation of the world in the octave can only be imagined as occurring in time, in the course of which the world strives to regain its prior eternity in God. The world urges towards its eternity, which is like the day before creation, while at the same time presupposing the transition throughout creation and history.

Giorgio’s spiritual cosmology is summarised in the fourth tone of this first canto, “in which several circles of the first species of things concur”. The order consists in the harmony of the primordial spiritual world with the real extra-mental world. Here all the arrangements and designs of spiritual cosmology are assembled: the orders of the stars, of the heavenly hierarchy, of metals and elements, of precious stones and seminal forms, and of numbers and tones. Everything interacts with everything else, and from this mixture a harmony develops, coinciding in divine unity.

Order emerges in the emanation from the unmoved to the moved. The corresponding path of knowledge is the ascent from the moved objects to

<sup>108</sup> *De harmonia mundi*, fol. 1r.

<sup>109</sup> Nicholas of Cusa: *Docta ignorantia* II, 11. Works Gabriele/Dupré, vol. 1, p. 390.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*: *Centrum igitur mundi conincidit cum circumferentia*. Cf. *Liber XXIV Philosophorum*, ed. Hudry, Françoise. Grenoble 1989, p. 89. *Deus est sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique, circumferentia vero nusquam*. cf. above ch. VI, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Cusa is not quoted by name, but was known to Giorgio. Cf. Mahnke, Dietrich: *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt*. Halle 1937, p. 106, who emphasises the close connection between Nicholas and Giorgio. He finds Cusa in a quotation of the *docta ignorantia* II, 9, Op. I 1932, p. 92, line 16-93, line 2 = *De Harmonia mundi cant. 2, ton. 2,1 fol. 203*.

their unmoved cause. This order's perfection lies in the assimilation to the unmoved One. The way from rest to unrest proceeds via the uniform movement of the fixed stars, to the, less uniform, movement of the planets (and the even more chaotic meteors), down to earth. The earth is the location of the irregular movement of all beings.

Proximity to earth and the removal from harmony are both defined by irregular movement. The closer things are to earth, the more intense are their irregular movements.

Both the sun and Venus need one year for the completion of their periods in the Zodiac; Saturn requires more than thirty years. The heaven of the fixed stars, which is above all other heavens, "terminates its course in many thousands of years. Everything receives its movement from this first moved sphere, whose movement stems immediately from the prime mover. Therefore it is unique and simple. The lower spheres are diversified. In many respects the first movement accords to the highest order of the intelligences, which are the Seraphim. When we go through the text we can see what the great Dionysius learned from his teacher St. Paul about the spirit of the Seraphim and then what he wrote down about it. Here, the seraphic spirit, above every vapour, in unchangeable movement and without any pernicious opposition, is the acting exemplar warming the lower spheres. In this process, the power of the heavenly fire, which glows like a purifying fire of the highest heat, is reduced to earthly conditions. This angelic spirit is not veiled, but glows in white colour, inextinguishable, always brilliant, expelling every darkness and obscurity".<sup>112</sup>

It is the task of the seraph to operate as a shining archetype, to effect the emergence of the essences from God, and to purify the real beings by the fire of their ideal images. The seraph represents the dynamic of the archetype as such, and also the intellectual agent of the world soul.

The relation of oneness and separation brings forth the number in which the harmony of creation coincides. This figure of thought is trinitarian and constructs the Trinity as a circular movement:

"You move threefold the nature,  
Connecting the soul, uniting the parts in consonance,  
You return to yourself, as spirit embracing the depths,  
And it is in your image that the heavens are moving."<sup>113</sup>

This first archetype, in which everything coincides, is the harmonic vanishing point of the whole cosmos. It unites the mirroring of nature and of

<sup>112</sup> De harmonia mundi fol. LVr.

<sup>113</sup> "Tu triplicis mediam naturae cuncta moventem  
connectens animam, per consona membra resolvit:  
in semet reditura meat: mentemque profundam  
circuit: atque simul convertit imagine coelorum." (Ibid. fol. LVIr)

revelation, the decimal order of the world of numbers, the heavenly hierarchy and its spheres, the construction of Noah's Ark, and the measurement of Solomon's Temple.

Giorgio's harmony claims that the heavenly hierarchy, numbers, and cosmology agree with each other. Such a system of significations depends upon striking analogies. The arrangements harmonising the universe must appear to be obvious. Giorgio discovers numerous examples of the analogy between heavenly hierarchy, symbolic numbers, and cosmology. This analogy is not founded on a single system, but its harmonies vary in their apparent forms, indicating other harmonies and constituting a structure that tends towards heavenly unity.

Therefore, in the theory of numbers, not only is the decimal valid, but the octave of musical theory also preserves its meaning. The hierarchy of angels, arranged in three heavens, is seen in its cosmic representations. Giorgio recognises a complex system of significations, qualities, and numbers permeating the cosmos.

Giorgio's cosmic order includes the three ultra-mundane heavens of Dionysius' heavenly hierarchy. Three choirs of angels rule these three heavens. The firmament forms the fourth sphere, and the outer planets Saturn, Jupiter and Mars follow below. The Sun, now the eighth sphere, is characterised by the octave and by the return to the origin. In this central position it corresponds to the firmament, which is located between the ultra-mundane and the mundane realms. The three inner planets of Venus, Mercury and the moon are already located above the first octave; they somehow copy the origin of the cosmos. So Mercury corresponds to the archangels, and the moon to the angels, which are the last two groups of Dionysius' hierarchy. Venus, however, is fixed to Jupiter and the sun.

This is Giorgio's order of the universe:

- I. Heavenly hierarchy
  - 1. First heaven: Cherubim
  - 2. Second heaven: Thrones
  - 3. Third heaven: Dominions
- II. Cosmic Hierarchy
  - 4. Heaven: Firmament
- II. a. Outer planets
  - 5. Saturn (as the fifth planet he shares in the five properties of the throne)
  - 6. Jupiter (is influenced by the Dominions and influences Venus)
  - 7. Mars (type of Jesus)
  - 8. Sun (musical octave, analogy to the firmament, central position among the planets, new beginning of light)
- II. b. Inner planets

9. Venus (special connection to the sun and to Jupiter)
10. Mercury (messenger and mediator under the influence of the archangels)
11. Moon (under the influence of the angels)

The angels of the first order permeate the first heaven. They are the Cherubim, and are biblically envisioned by Ezekiel.<sup>114</sup> The thrones of the second heaven have the five attributes of dominion, charity, love, intelligence, and service. They influence the sphere of Saturn, who rules over the fifth heaven. In the ten qualities of the lordships of the third heaven, Giorgio recognises the ten Sephiroth and the predicates of God: "Liberalitas, severitas, iustitia, servitus, dominatio, fortitudo, sanctitudo, charitas, veritas, sum qui sum."<sup>115</sup> Between the lordships and the sphere of Saturn lies the firmament, the fourth sphere. Transgressing the limits of this sphere, the lordships direct Jupiter, the sixth sphere. Mars, who rules the seventh sphere, is characterised by three properties: *virilitas*, *potentia*, and *virtus*. In the number of his sphere and the number of his properties, Mars unites the holy numbers three and seven, and thus is the type of Christ.<sup>116</sup> In its daily movement, the sun represents the type of the circle, the beginning and the return. It is located in the middle of the seven planets. With its number eight, the symbol of the new beginning in the origin, the sun represents the course of the entire world. Venus rules the earthly goods. Because of the powers she receives from the sun and from Jupiter, her children are born leaders, beautiful and elegant. The domain of Venus is beauty, and the actions directed by her are copies of her beautiful soul, which is itself God's image. For Giorgio this divine image in the type of Venus is the meaning of the heavenly reign taught by Dionysius.<sup>117</sup> Thus Venus is the planet of just rule and of the beginning. Mercury is connected with the Archangels, the messengers of the heavenly hierarchy,<sup>118</sup> and the moon represents the power of the lowest class of angels.<sup>119</sup>

This is the heavenly, primordial world, and it has its representatives in the earthly, sub-lunar region. Since the cosmos is the imprinting form of the earth, its powers define the earthly elements and communicate cosmic life to earth. This movement of information begins with the four elements. With their cognitive nature, the planets have the power to impact the sub-lunar world. The moon is particularly connected to the earth,<sup>120</sup> Mercury and

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<sup>114</sup> Cantus I, Ton. IV, cap. III.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p. LXIIIr.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. ch. VIII.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. LXIXv.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. ch. XII.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. ch. XIII.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. ch. XIII.

Saturn are watery planets,<sup>121</sup> the air corresponds to Jupiter and Venus,<sup>122</sup> and fire is connected to the sun and to Mars.<sup>123</sup>

Beyond this correspondence of planets and elements, the hierarchy of earthly life is integrated into the analogy of the heavenly order. The stones have their types in the fixed stars;<sup>124</sup> the metals with their powerful sounds belong to Mars.<sup>125</sup> The plants are the property of Jupiter,<sup>126</sup> and the *zoophytæ*, which are neither animals nor plants, belong to Saturn.<sup>127</sup> The animals are prefigured in the images of the stars; their ability to move is reminiscent of the prime mover.<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, the planets are connected to images and stones, which is why gems have a magical quality. The powers of these forms correspond to sensual impressions.

Saturnal powers are found in black stones, serpentine plants and animals, black men, black bile, and in everything that stinks.<sup>129</sup>

Jupiter rules the air, tin, metals, copper, and moisture. He is therefore the nourisher and multiplier, especially of male beings. He shares the emerald and the sapphire with Venus and Mercury. He is the lord of crystals.<sup>130</sup>

Fire is connected to Mars, and thus he also rules the sharp, acidic and sweet-tasting things, as well as the spicy herbs. His colours are flaming red and violet, and he shares the amethyst with Jupiter.<sup>131</sup>

The sun holds the central position among the planets. It possesses and rules everything. It is superior to all planets and illuminates them. Its element is fire; its stones are chrysolite and topaz (if it has a golden shimmer), hyacinth, ruby, and all stones that are red and gold. The panther-stone (tiger's-eye) corresponds to the sun since it has black, red, and rose-coloured powers; it contains, according to Albert the Great, as many powers as it has colours, and is the victor's stone.<sup>132</sup>

The proprieties of Venus are gentle taste, salves, fine smell, and all colours tending to white. Her stone is beryl, her plants rose and myrtle, her animal the dove.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. ch. XV.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. ch. XVI.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. ch. XVII.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. ch. XVIII.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. ch. XIX.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. ch. XX.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. ch. XXI.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. ch. XXII.

<sup>129</sup> De harmonia mundi, ch. XXV.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. ch. XXVI.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. ch. XXVII.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. ch. XXVIII.

Mercury has no specific element, since he is the one who interferes; he is the helper and the accelerator. He therefore has no pure colours, only mixed ones. He is frequently inclined to those who are ruled by Saturn, to the sages and the ingenious ones. The prudent, the investigators and explorers, and the versatile are mercurial characters. Mercury is the god of the arts, and he supports, in the type of Hermes Trismegistos, philosophy, literature, and the art of focalisation and mystification in figures and characters.<sup>133</sup>

All heavenly, begetting liquids flow together in the Moon, the female Luna. She is the mother of the world. Luna received the forming power from Venus, strength and impulse from Mars, the natural spirit of formation from Jupiter, and the capacity for coincidence and stability from Saturn. From the sun, which contains all powers, the moon receives all its generative force and all its light.<sup>134</sup>

This celestial harmony, in which the stars join with colours, forms, and elements of the sub-lunar world,<sup>135</sup> has its biblical type in Isaiah's theological cosmology: "Thus says the Lord: heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?" (Is. 66:1) Giorgio interprets this prophecy according to St. John's Revelation (Rev. 11:1): "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: Rise, and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there." Here is the legitimation of his investigation into the cosmological harmonies.<sup>136</sup>

In the cosmic order, the ten and the one coincide, as they define the order of numbers. Here Giorgio finds the philosophical proof of St. Paul's statement that "Christ is all in all things" (Col. 1:17; 3:11). As it is found in Pythagorean philosophy, Plato's natural philosophy (7<sup>th</sup> letter), and Ptolemy's astrology, the decimal order expresses the accord of divine unity, divine law, heavenly hierarchy, and natural order. The one and the ten are the essence of harmony.

Giorgio's book is not only an attempt at spiritual cosmology. Similar to Nicholas of Cusa's "Docta ignorantia", Giorgio presents a Christology in the second book of his "De harmonia mundi". His is a Johannine Christology, in which the word, wisdom, and seminal reasons coincide.

#### b) The Second Canto

"1. Christ is the Messiah and God's Wisdom, the Word containing everything 'ratione ideali', and a man encompassing everything below him through his action.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. ch. XXIX.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. ch. XXX.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. ch. XXXI.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. ch. XXXII.



2. Christ is the life and the receptacle that unifies everything and draws everything to him.
3. Christ is the real priest, the true and holy bread that purifies all and pacifies all.<sup>137</sup>
4. Christ is the highest truth and the light that teaches and enlightens all.
5. Christ is begotten in his existence before all times, and as the head of the mystical body he influences everything.
6. Christ is the scope and the complement of all acting; he grants the power of fulfilling.
7. Christ is the king of kings, the highest commander who reigns and moderates all things.
8. Christ is the mediator, through whom everything moves to reach its goal.”

Here the typical Neoplatonic Christology is evident: Christ is very close to the Philonic and Johannine logos and cannot be distinguished from divine wisdom. At the same time, cosmological mediation substitutes redemptive Christology. Reminiscent of Nicholas of Cusa’s writings, Christ has the function of a hermetic and mercurial mediator, and is the type of every life.

Giorgio emphasises that he does not intend to sing a new song (Ps. 96), but only repeat the old about the eternally new works of God who makes everything new in Christ (Rev. 21). In Christ God created a new man after God’s image, according to St. Paul: “By the word and the light is revealed what illuminates all of mankind, since it comes into the world and lights up the spoiled image of God and makes it shine. Everything is renewed in man, as Paul says in his letter to the Colossians: ‘He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers’ - and the soul. ‘He is before all things, and in him all things hold together’ (Col. 1:15), from now into eternity.”<sup>138</sup> Pauline theology is here understood entirely as a Christology of creation. Christ is not only conceived as the beginning word, but also as the animating power of creation. He is the word that gives existence and life. The power of this word substantiates Christ’s position as mediator, as which he is also God’s wisdom.

### c) The Third Canto

“After having finished two cantos, the first showing the accordance of the large and the small world to its Archetype, the second describing the connection of all members to their head, Christ, it remains to begin a new

<sup>137</sup> This chapter alludes to Dionysius’ ecclesiastical hierarchy.

<sup>138</sup> Prooemium secundi cantici fol CLXXXV r

song about the small world for which everything was created, and about its scope, its progress and its status.”<sup>139</sup>

Eschatology, to which the third canto is devoted, has its purpose in humanity, since the world was created for man. This order of creation is conceived as an order of souls. The souls of the angels, the sacred powers, the principles of life, and the holy intelligences are united in man. This unification has a temporal goal – the final reunification of creation and creator. This is the definition of Giorgio's (Origenist) eschatology. It is not the apostasy and fall of creation that makes eschatology necessary, nor is it God's wrath that announces the thunder of the last judgement. Giorgio's goal of creation is the soft and gentle bliss of the individual, who is led by Christ to the glory of the Father. Christ is the archetype of the world and encompasses its perfections. As cosmic man, he communicates his attributes to creation, which has its goal in man, God's image. These are the tones of the third canto:

1. The threefold harmony of the soul, the body, and the virtues.
2. The harmony of the soul through its insight into things.
3. The accordance of man with the holy, heavenly intelligences.
4. The agreement of all things with benevolent man, so that he can command and work with them.
5. The harmony of the soul with the spirit itself and with all other spirits.
6. The sweet unanimity that makes men well disposed towards God.
7. The harmony of body and soul, which will be improved after the resurrection.
8. The sweetest unity and rest granted in eternal bliss.

The proper end of creation is man. Giorgio conceives the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm as the harmonious connection with the psychic virtues of man. The soul represents the eternal order of the heavens. Therefore the heavenly intelligences, the angels, who are indistinguishable from the agent intellect, are beyond becoming and decaying. Man, however, being composed of soul and body, has his end and perfection in eternal bliss. Giorgio has an Origenist concept of eschatology. He does not react with horror to the prophecy of the end, but anticipates the perfect harmony of soul and body in the purified cosmos.

“We will sing perfect and harmonious songs -so God grants- because we will sing in the highest together with the angels; and the choir of the saints will not only resound in language, but we will sing with the spirit, the soul, the body and all members, when we sing the praise of the creator, who is worthy to receive glory and honour in eternity.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Cant. III, fol. 1r.

<sup>140</sup> Cant III, fol 1r.

## 9. AGRIPPA'S (1486-1535) DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS

Agrippa von Nettesheim relied on Ficino's cosmic medicine when he described his design of worlds and elements. He also integrated elements of Francesco Giorgio's "Harmonia Mundi".<sup>141</sup> His cosmos was a space ruled by the archetype: "The archetype contains the elements as ideas of what shall be created. They are distributed as powers in the ideas; in the heavens they exist as forces. In our world they have denser forms."<sup>142</sup> For Agrippa, this archetype also contains the earthly elements of creation: fire, water, earth and air. Following the tradition, Agrippa distinguishes between ethereal air and clumsy, earthly air. Spaces are distinguished not so much by the structure of their souls or their movements, but specifically by the density of their elements. "The elements are not only in the lower world, but also in the heavens, in the stars, in the demons, in the angels, and finally even in the creator and the archetype. In the lower worlds, the elements are dense forms, clumsy matter and material elements; in the heavens, however, they are according to their characteristics and strengths, in a heavenly mode and more excellent than below the moon. For the heavenly earth is without density, the agility of the water and the air without violent flowing; the fire does not injure but illuminates and animates everything with its warmth."<sup>143</sup> So the

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<sup>141</sup> See the excellent preface in V. Perrone Compagni: Cornelius Agrippa. *De Occulta Philosophia libri tres*. Ed. V. Perrone Compagni. Leiden, New York, Cologne 1992 (Studies in the History of Christian thought vol. XLVIII), p. 2 fn 6 and p. 36 fn 76 with related literature. Morley, Henry: *The life of Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim*. 2 vol. London 1856. Prost, A: *Les Sciences et les arts occultes au XVIème siècle: Corneille Agrippa. Sa vie et ses Oeuvres*. Paris 1881/82. Orsier, Joseph: *Henri Cornélis Agrippa. Sa vie et ses oeuvres, d'après sa correspondance*. Paris 1911. Zambelli, Paola: *Cornelio Agrippa. Testi scelti*. In: *Testi umanistici su l'ermetismo*. Rome 1955, pp. 105-162. Id.: "Umanesimo magico, astrologico e raggrupamenti segreti e platonici della Preriforma." In: *Umanesimo et Esoterismo. Atti del V Congresso Internazionale di Studi Umanistici*. Padova 1960, pp. 152-158. Id.: *L'ambigua natura della magia. Filosofi, streghe, riti nel Rinascimento*. Milan 1991. Kuhlow, Hermann F.W.: *Die Imitatio Christi und ihre kosmologische Überfremdung. Die theologischen Grundgedanken des Agrippa von Nettesheim*. Hamburg 1967. Nauert, C. G. Jr.: *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought*. Urbana, Ill. 1965. Müller-Jahnke, Wolfgang: *Astrologisch- magische Theorie und Praxis*. Wiesbaden 1985. Id.: *The Attitude of Agrippa von Nettesheim. Towards Alchemy*. In: *Ambix* 22, 1975, pp. 134-150.

<sup>142</sup> Agrippa: *De occulta philosophia* I, 8, Ed. Perrone Compagni, p. 103.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

planets and the signs of the stars can be characterised by elements sublimated in heaven: Among the stars, Mars and the sun are fiery, Jupiter and Venus airy, Saturn and Mercury watery. The moon attracts the waters in ebb and flow and marks the transition between the heavenly and earthly realms. The inhabitants of the – eighth – sphere between moon and earth are the ghosts of the earthly air, with bodies like steam.

Among the signs of the Zodiac there are also fiery, earthly, airy and watery ones. They direct the sublimated elements in the heavens. This arrangement can connect the twelve signs of the Zodiac to the four elements, so that their rising, flourishing, and decaying are apparent in heaven: “So we find the beginning of the fire in Aries, its progress and growth in Leo, and its end in Sagittarius; the beginning of the earth in Taurus, its progress in Virgo, and its end in Capricorn; the beginning of the air in Gemini, its progress in Libra, and its end in Aquarius; the beginning of the water in Cancer, the middle in Scorpio, and the end in Pisces.”<sup>144</sup>

This table of analogies spiritualises the elements and characterises them as being prefigured in heaven. Agrippa is convinced that every body comes from a connection between the planets, the heavenly powers and the sublime elements. This sublime structure of the elements can also be found in demons and angels. Agrippa distinguishes between spirits of fire, earth, water and air. This elemental structure reaches from the deepest hell to the highest heavens. The four rivers of hell represent the four elements: Phlegethon is fiery, Cocytus airy, Styx watery, and Acheron earthly. Agrippa offers an allegorical doctrine of the elements for the heavenly beings: The immutability of the essence represents the earthly power on which God's throne stands. Clemency and piety are the chastening powers of water, which is why the Psalmist calls them water when mentions the heavens: “Thou who reignst the waters above them.” The heavens contain the subtle air of the spirit and love that is mirrored by fire; this is why the Holy Scripture calls them “wings of the winds”, and a Psalmist sings of them: “Thou who makest thine servants to urging flames of fire. Among the choir of angels, the Seraphim are fiery, the Dominions and Powers airy.”<sup>145</sup> Even in the Logos of creation, in Christ, spiritual elements can be found.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 102.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. The critical edition gives the parallels to Giorgio's “*Harmonia Mundi*”, Cant. I:3, 16ff., pp. 53r-54r; I:4, 1, p. 68r, I:4, 15, p. 73r.

This is a rather heterodox theology, mixing together Christology, creation theology, and Neoplatonism: “Even from the archetype, the creator of all beings, we read: The earth opens itself and germinates the saviour. He is also called a fountain of living water that purifies and renews; moreover he is a living breath, and, following the witness of Paul and Moses, he is a ‘consuming fire’.”<sup>146</sup>

In this boundary position between Christology and the theology of nature lies what is dogmatically the most difficult connection between Neoplatonism and Christianity. If nature is to be interpreted as God’s emanation and is identified with Christ, speculation about spiritual spaces would abandon the dogmatic framework of the Church. This became especially clear after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), when the dogmatic position of the Catholic Church was strengthened, and after 1580, when the Lutheran authorities enforced the “Konkordienbuch”.

The intensity of the tension between orthodox and Neoplatonic positions was also palpable in the debates on ‘enthusiastic theology’ in the Protestant realm in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>147</sup> In the Catholic camp, the dogmatic difficulties regarding spiritualised spaces resulted in Marin Mersenne and Pierre Gassendi rejecting Neoplatonism and favouring a mechanical natural philosophy. Gassendi, in his pamphlet against Fludd, laid out the reason for this preference: Since the natural philosophy of spiritual spaces could not provide a convincing Christology that distinguished clearly between the creation of the divine Logos and the historical person of Jesus, it was more appropriate, also for the sake of the theology of ecclesiastical sacraments, to interpret nature as mechanical and spaces as void.<sup>148</sup>

## 10. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE SPIRIT: NICHOLAS OF CUSA’S CONCEPTIONS OF SPACE

Since God is everywhere, he is also in every space. Theologically, the Neoplatonic world-soul is always interpreted as God’s omnipresence. This omnipresence, however, differs from realm to realm, indicating the

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. pp. 102f.

<sup>147</sup> See esp. Colberg, Ehrenfried David: *Hermetisch-Platonisches Christentum*, Frankfurt 1690 and, from the other side: Gottfried Arnold: *Unpartheiische Kirchen und Ketzergeschichte*. Leipzig 1700.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. *Examen Roberti Fluddii Medici*. In: Gassendi; *Opera Omnia*. Lyons 1658, vol. III, pp. 216-268; esp. p. 235.

ambiguity in the concept of divine omnipresence. It can consist in the presence of divine power in space, suggested for instance by the metaphysics of light. It can, as in the Neoplatonic version, mean the presence of the first cause in all subsequent multiplications of the world-soul. It can be the divine spark in the human soul, as Meister Eckhard emphasised. It can also be Christ in us, as taught by the Neoplatonic Christology of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Despite the multiplicity of the concepts of emanation and participation that characterise the spiritual imagination of space, its constitution is determined according to mathematical structures. Nicholas of Cusa characterised this structure of space with his doctrine of numbers, as laid out in "De coniecturis".

Space has four dimensions: 1. point, 2. line, 3. plane, and 4. cube. To unfold this theory, Cusa proceeds from Pythagorean and Platonic theorems and explains them with numbers. The first is the point, the second the ray, the third the square, the fourth the body. "From the number, a first is seized, for it is the simplest; the second is a root, the third is the square, the fourth is the solid."<sup>149</sup> This geometrical theory of space is explained with the respective numbers: "So the spirit sees in the beginning the number of simple unity, the unity of ten, which is the root of the others, then a hundred which is the square of ten, and finally the unity of a thousand, which is the cube of ten."<sup>150</sup>

Cusa interprets this mathematical theory of space theologically and philosophically. The unique God is also represented by the number ten, the root of all numbers. Ten corresponds geometrically to a line, from which the plane emerges, and finally the cube. These three dimensions are interpreted in two ways, first as purely geometrical, second as sensual corporeality. In the numbers and imaginative spaces of geometry, the principle of the universe unfolds from the uncounted One into the dimensions. Nicholas summarises his theory as follows: He "calls the highest and simplest spirit God; the second, the root that has no earlier root, he calls intelligence; the third, the square contraction of intelligence, he names soul; the last, which is solid and unfolded, he conjectures to be corporeality". This entire space is divinely permeated: "[I]n God it is God, in the intelligence intelligence, in the soul soul, and in the body body; and this means nothing else but that the spirit embraces the divine, intelligent, psychic, and corporeal. It is divine since it is the truth, it is intellectual, since it is true, it is psychical since it is similar to truth, and it is corporeal, since the similitude of truth disappears and confusion enters".<sup>151</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Nicholas of Cusa: *De Coniecturis* I, 6. Werke, Gabriel/Dupré, vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 14f.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 16f.

The spirit (*spiritus*) mediates the passage from intelligence (the second dimension) to corporeality (the fourth dimension). Cusa sees the soul, the third dimension, as the region to which the spirit communicates the truth of the intellect and through which the spirit “descends into corporeality, since it is the instrument of the intellect and therefore a principle and an instrumental root of the bodies”.<sup>152</sup> This intellectual signature of things is apparent in their sensual indicators: “It is not difficult to find signs in them, because their form has been imprinted in them by the spirit, just as a seal stamps wax.”<sup>153</sup>

Through the spirit that connects intellect, soul and body, the complete cognition of space is accessible to mankind, and the human mind can recognise the different grades of the spatial compression: “The intellect is of so fine a nature that the soul recognises the sphere in one indivisible centre. When the intellect is contracted into reason, it recognises the sphere as a being in which all lines from the centre to the periphery are of equal length. If the sphere is seen in the imagination, it is imagined as round and corporeal. The visible sense cannot seize the sphere completely but only partially; therefore reason puts the separate parts together.”<sup>154</sup>

The human soul accompanies the emergence of space; therefore its levels - intellect, reason, fantasy, and sensuality - correspond to the four dimensions: “Intellectual cognition is related to the different cognitions as a body to a plane, line, and point; in its subtlety however as a point to a line, plane, and body. As a point it encompasses all in subtlety and perfection. Rational cognition is more contracted than intellectual cognition; it is more perfect than the imagination, and the relationship of both corresponds to that of the line to the plane. The imagination is even more contracted and is like a rough surface compared to a line. Sensual cognition is individually contracted and imperfect; it is individualised like a point and rough like a body.”<sup>155</sup> Cusa combines the theory of the emergence of space and its unfolding in material bodies with numerical mathematics, geometry and psychology. His space is spiritual, but without ghosts and demons. It is the space of a theologian and mathematician who seems to be cautious in regard to the philosophy of nature.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>154</sup> De coniecturis II, XVI, Ibid. p. 190.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

## 11. GIORDANO BRUNO'S (1548-1600) INFINITE SPACE

Nicholas of Cusa described space using the mathematical dimensions of pure extension. He also emphasised that the concept of infinite space is beyond fantasy and reason, and that only the intellect can conceive the coincidence of point and space. In his theory of the relationship between light and matter, which he had illustrated with his *figura P(yramidalis)*, he had described matter as the receptacle opposed to light, spirit, and form. Matter was the *potentia passiva*, in which the spiritual potencies were ultimately realised. In this respect, matter could not be distinguished from space.

Bruno adopted these arguments in his rather conservative description of space as the passive side of divine power. If God is conceived as infinite spiritual power, there is no way of delimiting his might. Even though God's power is spiritual, it realises itself in the creation of the world, and permeates it. Space is consequently nothing but the passive potency of divine power. If this power is infinite, why is it satisfied with limited space and one world?

In the dialogue "Del infinito universo e mundi", the decisive argument identifies space with 'Platonic matter'. Filoteo argues: "If the space which is equal to the size of this world, and which is called 'matter' by the Platonists, contains this world, it would be possible that other worlds could dwell in that very space and in infinite other spaces."<sup>156</sup> This is initially a thought experiment. The space that emerged along with creation is emptied of all substantial forms, and remains, as it were, naked. As such a void, it can be interpreted as pure passive potency.

Filoteo's argument proceeds from divine omnipotence. The theological question is whether God's omnipotence can be limited or not. It is a question that answers itself.<sup>157</sup> But it has remarkable consequences: If God's omnipotence is unlimited, the space corresponding to that omnipotence is unlimited, too. This argument depends on the presupposition that space is

<sup>156</sup> Opere Italiane di Giordano Bruno. Testi critici e nota filologica di Giovanni Aquilecchia. Introduzione e coordinamento Generale di Nuccio Ordine, vol. 2, Turin 2002, p. 39. On Bruno's theory of space see: Michel, Paul Henri: La Cosmologie de Giordano Bruno. Paris 1962, pp. 165-191. Blumenberg, Hans: Die Legitimität der Neuzeit. Frankfurt 1966. Part III: Cusaner und Nolaner. Blum, Paul Richard: Giordano Bruno. Munich 1999, pp. 44-73.

<sup>157</sup> Origen, incidentally, argued for such a limitation; this was one of the reasons for his condemnation. Cf. ch. VII, 3.



the passive potency of divine omnipotence, which, in turn, cannot be limited for theological reasons. Space is the first differentiation from the unfathomable One, and is the receptacle in which divine might can realise itself. Filoteo/Bruno clearly represents the theological argument for the infinity of space: “I do not require an infinite space - and nature does not have infinite space - because of the dignity of dimension or corporeal mass, but because of the dignity of the corporeal species and natures, since the infinite excellence represents itself incomparably better in infinite than in finite beings. Therefore an infinite mirror with infinite worlds is necessary for the inaccessible countenance. If God’s incorporeal excellence unfolds itself in innumerable grades of corporeal perfection, there must be innumerable individuals. Together those are the great animal to which the earth also belongs, our great mother who bore us, nourished us, and will finally take us up. An infinite space is necessary to receive innumerable worlds. Therefore it is good that there are (and can be) innumerable worlds similar to this world. They are possible, they can become real, and they are as good as this world is.”<sup>158</sup> Infinite space is the mirror of the infinite deity. It is, however, secondary in relation to the unfathomable One. Space is the first emanation of the unfathomable One. It has a Christological function, since there is no divine separation prior to space. The first emanation, space, has only one definition, namely that it is secondary in relation to the unfathomable One. In all other predicates it corresponds to the One, and can therefore not be limited.

Bruno’s emphasis on the infinity of possible worlds represents an apotheosis of the passive potency of space, a spiritualization of space as divine mirror. Thus he intends the opposite of what Lucretius intended. By proposing the idea of innumerable worlds, Lucretius wanted to minimise physics and metaphysics in order to strengthen the position of practical philosophy. Bruno considers the present world to be one of innumerable possible worlds deriving from divine omnipotence. His goal is a higher valuation of negative theology and cosmology – the opposite of the devaluation of metaphysics.

As God’s first mirror, space shows the whole plenitude of divine glory. It is space that reveals the divine order; space that contains innumerable, individual worlds. These heavens announce the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

In his poem “*De immenso et innumerabilis*”, Bruno praised this space:

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<sup>158</sup> *De l’infinito*, *Opere italiane*, II, pp. 42f.

"If space and space were not distinct within space  
Fate would admit the unequal  
And the void would receive space without end.  
But why does the eternal power of cohesion exist,  
And the deed of the one who is not recognised,  
If eternal acts and power do not differ?  
Do you want to deny the power of the Gods,  
Who are mighty in nature and inhabit the things?  
Nature is the hand of the Almighty,  
Power, action, reason, word, sound, order, and will;  
He who hinders the course of nature is  
Without heart, insane, a scourge, impious and without law.  
Nature is the fearless servant of the highest  
And contains the elements of the just laws."<sup>159</sup>

The illuminating globe of Robert Grosseteste was the appropriate model for the pre-Copernican world. It was finite, and showed how light was reflected from the daily rotating firmament. In Bruno's infinite space of divine power, there is no longer any possibility of limiting space, and the stars are accordingly given a new arrangement. Before, they were lights fixed to the firmament, or planets. With Bruno they become suns and planets wandering through space:

"If you imagine innumerable suns  
And around them many planets  
You will not achieve a greater number.  
Innumerable are the suns and also the number of planets,  
Innumerable as the similarity of the monads and dyads and triads.  
No-one should dare to say that, measured in yards,  
The measurement of the infinite is larger than in steps or miles.  
Use neither number nor numbers, neither border nor borders.  
Here, where there is no place for numbers or borders  
You cannot add one number to any other."<sup>160</sup>

In Bruno's work, the dialectical consequence of the radicalism of negative theology becomes apparent. The more one emphasises the impossibility of predicating the unfathomable One, the more God must become visible in the cosmos. The cosmos becomes his substitute and a second God, in that it is God's first and only revelation, and all other revelations are only possible because of this first one. Thus all subsequent

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<sup>159</sup> Opp. Latina I, p. 234.

<sup>160</sup> Opp. Latina I, p. 216.

revelations only have the character of finitude; they are reduced, provincial particularities. Bruno's cosmos speculates on the unfathomable One; it therefore has neither temporal nor spatial borders. Bruno's negative theology of the One does not even characterise God as willing or recognizing. God's world does not know him, and God does not know his world. This world is no longer a whole; it has no beginning, middle, or end.

## C. THEOLOGY OF TIME

## THE RETURN OF TIME

The invention of world history depends on revelation. Through revelation the entire world becomes a sign. The condition of its becoming a sign is that it hides something that is not yet apparent. This hidden thing is expected to eventually become visible, but for now is still concealed. Thus the process of revelation and the process of time have not yet come to an end. It is essential for every sign to hint at something that will become present in the future. Signs mark future phenomena. In this sense, the world too is a sign. It is the sign of its own future, which at some time will be revealed. As sign, the world receives temporality, and hence direction and meaning.

The decisive moment granting meaning to the world lies in the idea that the world is a whole, with a beginning, a middle, and especially an end. Only the end of the world allows for the privileged point of view from which its history can be seen as a whole. This end marks the horizon of its hermeneutics. Only as a whole can the world be completely interpreted with respect both to its beginning and to its internal quality of natural and moral development.

The beginning of the world is characterised by the relationship between God and his creation. This is perennial philosophy's fantastic and pious insight into the meaning of the world. This meaning can only be verified by the experience of the end of the world. It is then that it will become evident that the creator of the world is also the moral ruler of its history. This presupposition alone transforms the natural time of becoming and vanishing into the time of world history, grounded in the messianic tension that expects the end of the world.

The vision of the prophet Isaiah (6th century B.C.),<sup>1</sup> who, in the suffering of Babylonian exile, recognised his Jewish God as the eternal One who "created the ends of the earth" (Is. 40:28), cannot be overestimated. Isaiah saw his God not only as the creator of the cosmos but also as the ruler of history, in which his glory was to be demonstrated. This recognition allowed him to discover a gleam of hope in the suffering of his oppressed people. It was that very hope that changed natural time into history. It was to be

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<sup>1</sup> See Wellhausen, Julius: *Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte Israels*. Berlin 1883, ch. VIII, 4.

revealed to the believers what 'now still is hidden' to most men and only known to the prophets. From this tension between inner revelation and outward expectation, historical time emerges. If the inner revelation of Scripture, which now is still the inner property of believers, becomes apparent to the world, the history of the world will be consummated. This double revelation - first in Scripture, then in the world - shows history to be the 'revealed' process of God's glory.

Without the expectation of the final revelation of God's glory, time loses its tension and thus its historical specificity. Without the tension of the finitude of time, historical hermeneutics and interpretation would be impossible, and only natural time would remain, as the indifferent, eternal process of becoming and vanishing.

The fantastic recognition of world history is defined entirely by the belief that historical events have an inner meaning. This meaning is revealed to those who believe in the revelation of the Scriptures. For believers, prophetic revelation is the measure of interpretation of events. If the possibility of surveying the world as a whole derives from the cognition of its end, then, hermeneutically, world history can only be written if the world is finite. In this respect, world history is part of perennial philosophy, for it depends on theological presuppositions regarding the creation and finitude of the world.

World history conceived as a finite whole implies the possibility of it being subdivided into different periods. This is only possible in accordance with revelation and prophecy. How else would it be possible to survey something, which, like world history, still lacks an actual end? From what other point of view could world history be viewed, if not from its end, which is only accessible by prophetic revelation?

The periods constituting world history emerge from a prophetic typology of revelation. Prophecy always works typologically, for it needs to recognise the types, i.e. the signs, of coming events in the present age. The understanding of the meaning of these signs is revealed to the prophets through special insight. As soon as prophetic revelations become canonical in the religious tradition and thus publicly known, they can be adopted by everyone as spiritual models. Insofar as prophetic models have been accepted by the public, they become part of the public interpretation of the spiritual world and, particularly, of world history.

This is why the concept of world history depends on revelation. The epochs obtain their specificity in the light of their future revealed meanings. The dogmatic models of various religions, which interpret prophetic revelations rationally for the public, open up world history and structure its course.

After Isaiah had recognised world history as an anticipation of God's final revelation, St. Paul described it with his vision of Christology. For him,

the Messiah had appeared, and yet history had not come to an end. St. Paul divided world history into a period of law and a period of grace, without however eliminating history's messianic tension, for he still expected the second coming of Christ. Joachim of Fiore's speculations on world history also derived from theological thinking. Saint Paul's dogma centred in his Christology, and he divided the world into two periods: one before and one after Christ. Joachim's starting point is trinitarian theology. His coming reign of the Spirit claims a third period for the third divine person. This approaching new epoch dramatically delegitimises presently existing institutions. The historical power of Saint Paul's and Joachim's concepts of world history derives from their theological structure. Both Saint Paul and Joachim construct their histories according to their theology. Saint Paul's history has its summit in Christ and thus dramatically points to the rupture in history. Joachim aligns God's threefold form with the form of history. He dramatises the unfulfilment of history, for the time of God's third person is yet to come. If God is the form of history, what power of transformation could be imagined to be mightier than the Almighty, who creates his own time in history?

The interpretive authority of Daniel's world history of the 'four reigns' clearly has less symbolic power. It nevertheless has been impressive historically. It contains a theology which is connected to concrete political institutions, and which defines their legitimacy both positively and negatively. The teaching of the six ages of the world, however, matching the history of the world to the six days of creation, eliminates much of the eschatological tension from world history. Origen's doctrine of the eternal return reappears as the complete fusion of historical and natural time. The messianic tension and the time of becoming and vanishing have become indistinguishable. Time and history are identical: All history is a great chronology of the eternal return.

## **1. APOCALYPTIC TIME**

### **a) The Meaning of the End**

A whole has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The more infinite a universe – if that is at all conceivable – the less it can be thought of as created. An endless universe is without goal and without time. In such an endless universe, time and space are indifferent, since the becoming and ending of forms are negligible quantities compared to the infinite. Nietzsche saw the consequences of this indifferent eternity, and hence claimed that values and orders had to be created and imposed by men, since it was

impossible to find them in a meaningless universe. He was right: Validity and order can only be found in a finite world, defined by a temporal and spatial beginning and end.

The world, with its beginning and end, is, according to this definition, contingent. This contingency consists in the imaginability of the non-existence of this world; and in the tradition of *philosophia perennis*, this has been specified as the creation and the end of the world. If it is by the force of the divine 'fiat' that the world was created and is upheld, the duration of the world and its potential end is determined by the power of the 'verbum fiat'.

The creation of the world and its end are thus intertwined. This is especially true when the time of the world is the time of its history. History is not the indifferently returning time of measurement; history is time with the implication of meaning. In what does this implication of meaning consist? Every meaning derives from the presupposition that all events have the character of signs, that they indicate their origin and their future, and that they have the character of time tending towards a goal and an end. Events are always considered to be signs of their historical background, thus they show the beginning, middle and end of their periods. In this respect, everything that has history also has meaning, this is the end tends towards which it tends.

This temporal meaning is true, in a banal way, for a blossom, which refers to its fruit and its seed. It is situated in a meaningful, natural relationship. Temporal meaning is true for political history too, where events do not exist in isolation but receive their meaning and direction from the goals of the active participants and from the 'trend of the times'. Its finitude presupposed, the entire world has a valid temporal meaning, too. The world receives its meaning and direction through the completion and perfection of its hope.

But what does this completion mean? The notion contains a seemingly fundamental dialectic. On the one hand, completion means perfection. If something achieves what it is supposed to achieve, it finally becomes perfect and complete. With this perfect completion, the perfect thing loses its historical direction; it is finished and exhausted. This is the historical flipside of perfection. An increase in quality has become impossible, thus completion always means an ending.

This dialectical meaning of completion as the perfection and the end of all things is the hallmark of the apocalypse, or the history of the world's completion. The dilemma of the end to come can be conceived of both as perfection and menace. The meaning of time in the present lies in the presupposition that the direction of the present is known. How can it be known? Only by regarding the events of the present as constituting signs of the future.



The future is the time in which the present is completed and has come to its end. Only the future reveals the complete meaning of the present and thus the meaning and direction of time. This direction is not made, but rather found. Under the presupposition of its finitude, the end and the goal of the world reveal its completeness.

This is why the imputation of meaning to the present implies a tension between present and future. The fact that the present has a future is rather incontestable. What the future contains and where the present is tending can only however be conjectured in the present. If the present develops in the wrong direction, it loses its future and thus its meaning. If the present is prepared for 'the coming', i.e. the approaching, events, if these events are really anticipated, present historical time will have achieved its completion and thus received its meaning.

This is one of the essential meanings of the apocalypse: The judge of the apocalypse determines which direction of time was the right one. For believers, the final judgment holds the monopoly of meaning in history.<sup>2</sup>

The beginning is entwined with the future, and can only become meaningful if it is capable of receiving its future. Thus the beginning receives meaning and judgement through its end. Meaning is the internal straining after becoming, and the final judgement judges the success of this development. The developmental direction of every thing was prefigured in its creation according to the divine plan. Judging the achievement of everyone's perfection is the appropriate task of the apocalyptic judgement.

The creation of mankind after God's image is the peak of the creation account in Genesis. Since man was created in God's image, 'spiritual', 'inner' man indicates the aim of life and points out the meaning of personal existence. The difference between inner spiritual life and its outward fulfilment constitutes the history of everyone's life. The aim of everyone's life is the assimilation of the inner image with the outward existence. The end is interwoven with the beginning, making visible the elementary patterns that give meaning to all of history.

#### b) Yearning as a Formal Structure of Meaningful Time

Because it is unchanged, the beginning is not yet time. Change is the alienation from originary oneness. In the tension between the oneness that was, and the difference that is now, time appears. This is the process of differentiation from the beginning. Thus time is not only a pattern of order in the development of things, but is conceived as having an internal direction. This direction becomes visible because the becoming different from the oneness is understood to be the memory of that oneness through time. The

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Löwith, Karl: *Meaning in History. The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*. Chicago 1949.

memory of oneness is always present, but can never be regained. This tension is essential for all time. But the memory of oneness, conserved as its image, constitutes the yearning to regain the lost oneness in the future. Thus the future becomes the inner image of oneness; the hope for final unity becomes the meaning of time; and the completion of time has its end in oneness. The yearning of time for its end is the tension in difference, which remembers its oneness and is nonetheless unable to stop its permanent course of differentiation. The time of yearning is not real, occurring time, but only the moment of an eternal process, returning to itself and constantly becoming different again. It is the possibility of imagining the return of the end in the beginning - not as the end as such, but as the beginning of the permanent process of eternal happiness and completeness, without losing the moment of yearning. It is the yearning of love, the sad and yet happy melancholy no one wants to miss.

Such a future is not an end but an eternity. Origen conceived the end as such a coming eternity when he contemplated his idea of *Apokatastasis Panton*, the resurrection of all things.

#### c) The 'Essence' of Natural Development

The concept of yearning time transforms time into eternity by conceiving it as a threefold self-production of universal life. It considers only the formal structure of separation from oneness into time and its yearning. The question of whether the direction of time, its meaning, is the right one, is always already answered. This concept of time has its direction within itself, as its tendency towards the *regaining* of the beginning. This time is absolutely formal in its triadic constitution. It is not even capable of going towards a wrong future, for time is defined only as the separation from, and the return to, oneness.

Such a formal concept of time is unable to answer the question of whether the direction of a particular development could be wrong. This question, however, is quite complicated. In the formal, threefold functioning of time, separation is also always the beginning of evil. This formal description of time and its yearning for oneness is insufficient for a concept of time, not as a reflection of eternity, but as the time of the 'real', extending and developing world. If time is to have meaning, there has to be a way to describe how *something* is possible, not only how oneness and separation in time constitute its yearning tension.

A thing's essence, its quality, can formally be conceived as its unity. But a thing's existence is more than the formal unity of its essence. In the course of its existence, the possibilities of a thing unfold, and its perfection can either be achieved or missed. Mistaken developments can only be judged to be wrong when it is clear what the correct process should have been. This

difference between meaningful and meaningless processes can only occur in contingent reality. In God's ideas, the notions of things are always fixed. However, when things have become real outside God's ideas, their development towards their inner goal is conceivable. This goal cannot be achieved at once, but only in the course of time. In this time of contingency, however, it is also possible that the goal is not reached. In this respect, the time of contingency is the time of sin as well. Sin presupposes free will and responsibility. The freedom of man is one element of being the free God's absolutely free image. This freedom is the prerequisite for sin, since sin is the failure to attain the inner image in the process of life. The judgement of this failure, and thus the judgement of sin, is one meaning of the apocalypse - that of the punishment and restitution of this world.

#### d) The Meaning of Revelation

In revealed religions, the goal of inner development, and thus the meaning of life, are presupposed. Hence the meaning of life is self-evident in these religions, namely the acceptance of this very revelation. According to the various dogmatic stances of the religions, the doctrinal truths or the ritual laws can become the measure of reaching or failing the goal of the believer's life. As failures they can be punished, for the agreement to, or rejection of, these standards comes from the free will.

If one compares the inner image of a natural development as it is described by the theology of creation, with the standards of scriptural revelation – whether it be Jewish, Christian or Muslim - there emerges a remarkable tension. The inner image of a development, its end and goal, is natural; it is patterned after the becoming and perishing of living beings. The claims of the positive religions, however, superimpose the natural aims with their demands of faith and ritual obedience. New criteria for religious meaning emerge. Instead of a natural development according to the inner image, participation in a religious community and a life conforming to revelation and religious law become the conditions for a meaningful existence. This restricts the definition of a 'meaningful' and 'proper' life. Only those who belong to the right religious community and fulfil their religious duties will find a gracious judge.

This twofold standard of religious obedience and natural inner image effects a great insecurity in judging one's own life. Every person can be viewed as responsible for the achievement of his personal goal, and it is also possible to freely and responsibly fulfil the demands of one's religious community. But one cannot be considered responsible for one's membership in a particular religious community. This is especially the case if one lives at a spatial or temporal distance from the 'true' religion, thus being unable to know anything about the truth, which is nonetheless absolutely necessary for

salvation. This is why membership in a religious community is the most critical point in the doctrine of the Last Judgement. For this reason, in the philosophical tradition of perennial philosophy, a 'prisca theologia' was conceived in order to judge the 'pious heathens' according to a standard of natural religion that accords with revelation.

The doctrine of the Last Judgement reaches its peak in Saint Paul's theology of God's justice. In this theology, the standard of justice is attributed entirely to God's grace. Neither natural nor religious laws are relevant, since salvation depends only on having the right faith. This faith, however, is a gift of God's grace. Thus God's Last Judgement is completely removed from any earthly scale of religion and justice. This is precisely the situation described in St. John's Revelation.

The last sentence of the Apostle's Creed formulates the official prophecy of the apocalypse: "He will return in glory to judge the quick and the dead and there will be no end of his reign." But what will be the criteria of his final judgement?

The end, insofar as it is the fulfilment of everyone's inner essence, is reached by every person, and each is judged according to his responsibility. This is the end of the natural time of living beings. Their development will be judged by the judge of the world.

The positive revelations both converge and conflict in their various claims regarding internal, natural developments. In case of conflict, positive revelation takes priority over natural revelation. Religious membership and obedience are superior to natural ends. If faith itself is considered to be grace, even the criteria of religion and obedience are removed from the realm of human freedom. Judgement then consists - for the believer - only in God's grace, which he encounters with fear and trembling.

#### e) Typology of Visions

How is it possible to speak about the future with the awareness of its uncertainty? The narrative of the future takes on the form of prophecy, which fantastically presents the image of coming events. For this task, the seer disposes only of the notions and images that he has from the treasure of past experience. These images and notions have to be extrapolated, that is, their meanings must be extended beyond the present realm of experience into an uncertain future that is no longer part of experience, but of fantasy.

Crucial for accounts of the future in revealed monotheistic religions is the presupposition that God foresees the course of the world and interprets it in his positive revelation. Thus his revelation, written down in the Holy Scriptures, claims to have a monopoly on interpreting the world, and thereby constitutes a monopolistic theology of history. The method for the fulfilment of this claim is provided by the books of revelation in the form of an inner

typological order. The figures and images in the different accounts of revelation are types, that is, unchanging patterns that interpret each other.

This thinking in typological images makes it possible to interpret, for example, Isaiah's vision of "God's suffering servant" (Is. 52:13-53:12) as the type of the people of Israel. At the same time, from the perspective of the New Testament, it is the type of Christ. This monopolistic claim of biblical interpretation fails without typology. The images of typology demonstrate God's power throughout the history of salvation.

The visions of the future of the revealed religions therefore have to refer to the biblical repertoire of images. They must regard revelation as a set of types and images, whose semantics have not yet been exhausted. The signs of biblical imagery contain meanings that will become evident in the future. This repertoire, which can now only be seen "through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12), will be experienced in heavenly glory without the veil of earthly uncertainty. Visions do not simply translate past experiences, but the prophets transform these experiences into typological images according to revelation, so as to recognise their future meaning. Through its biblical imagery, St. John's apocalyptic Revelation is able to interpret the symbols of the Old and New Testaments as types of future woe and glory.

## 2. ST. JOHN'S REVELATION AS THE TYPE OF THE WORLD'S END

The biblical Apocalypse of St. John is an example of the misery the young Christian Church faced in its persecution. The vision's celestial glory implores, following Jewish tradition, the lord of the cosmos, who is interpreted as Christ, the Kosmokrator, who will appear in all his glory.<sup>3</sup> He will appear as the lord of the world's history and will not only redeem his chosen people from suffering, but also reveal them as chosen in God's glory. In Revelation's initial vision, the Kosmokrator appears as a cosmic man in the midst of seven shining planets: "And his head and his hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters." (Rev. 1:14) A sharp, two-edged sword protrudes from his mouth as a symbol of judgement. This cosmic man is the resurrected Christ, who by his attributes is shown to be the lord of the heavens and the earth.

With the Christian interpretation of the end of the world a problem arises: The lord who is to come at the end has already redeemed this world, but that

<sup>3</sup> On St. John's Apocalypse cf. TRE Vol. 3, p. 174-189; Strobe, August: Apokalypse des Johannes, including a bibliography.

redemption is not yet visible. The promise hinted at in his resurrection and assumption still lacks complete fulfilment. One has to believe in the signs of the coming glory in order to become a future participant in this glory.

Under these conditions, the argument of the Apocalypse of the New Testament is quite complicated: The God of a suppressed community, who nevertheless claims to rule the world, is to judge the world according to the laws of this congregation's revelation. This court has no justice, no restitution; it is unpredictable.

The 'world' stands against the community of faith. The vision of judgement thus can only see the cup of God's wrath poured over the failed course of this world. The annihilation of the 'old world' is the punishment for its failed course, for its "darkness has not comprehended the light", (John 1:5) but has rather worked against revelation.

The symbolic realm of Saint John's apocalyptic vision is divided into two worlds, the world of celestial glory and the world of cosmic and earthly troubles.<sup>4</sup> Celestial glory is the realm of the Kosmokrator (from Isaiah), the Father, the lamb with the book of seven seals, the four apocalyptic animals (from Ezekiel), the seven choirs of angels (also from Ezekiel), the twenty-four elders, symbolizing the tribes of Israel and the tribes of the New Testament's apostles, which are the crowd of the 144,000 no one can count.

It is clear that the symbols of seven and twelve represent the celestial order. These numbers correspond to the cosmology of the seven planets and the twelve tribes of Israel in the history of salvation. Numbers play an important role in apocalyptic thought, which draws its visionary order partly from the symbolic power of numbers.

From the world of celestial glory, powers are sent out in waves. These powers, themselves of ambiguous nature, are committed to the destruction of the false world. They too are arranged according to numbers: seven seals are opened, four apocalyptic riders<sup>5</sup> appear, the seventh seal contains seven plagues represented by seven trumpets. The seventh trumpet turns out to be the symbol of reconciliation, for the angel of the seventh trumpet has the character of cosmic reconciliation. Raining clouds, a pillar of fire (quoting from Exodus 13:21), and a rainbow (Gen. 9:13) are his attributes. The cup of anger that will annihilate the world has not yet been poured out. Through this angel, the glories of heaven are made visible again. The seven plagues preserved in the seven vials are "full of the wrath of God who liveth for ever and ever" (Rev. 15:7); they are to destroy the earth (Rev. 16) but save the

<sup>4</sup> On the connection between the Apocalypse and cosmology s. Boll, Franz: *Aus der Offenbarung Johannis. Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse*. Leipzig 1914. Bousset, Wilhelm: *Die Apokalypse des Johannes*. Göttingen 1906.

<sup>5</sup> According to the revelation of the four winds in the revelation of Enoch; cf. Kautzsch, [Vorname?]: Enoch, cf. Kautzsch E.: *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, vol. 2. Tübingen 1900, p. 260.

just. These groups of seven horrors represent the terrific power of the universe "coming from above", destroying the sevenfold order of the universe. Through the sixth seal the cosmos is destroyed and heaven is rolled in: "And the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place." (Rev. 6:13) The celestial terror is realised in groups of seven and four: four winds, four apocalyptic riders destroying the earth.

Divine, punishing judgement falls on a world already shaken by the battle between good and evil, in which evil gets the upper hand. Michael's victory expelled the dragon from heaven; now it fights with the apocalyptic wife, who is "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of seven stars". (Rev. 12:1)<sup>6</sup> She is pregnant, "cries travailing in birth and is in pain to be delivered" (Rev. 12:2). She is persecuted by the dragon, receives eagles' wings and flees into the desert, where she is safe from the dragon. Here she hides her child, the future redeemer. On earth the dragon gets the upper hand, in the form of apocalyptic monsters it subjugates the world, and triumphs as the Great Whore of Babylon. Only the battle between 'God's Word' and the 'Beast' and its prophets ends the reign of evil. The Beast and its prophets are thrown into a "pool of fire burning with brim-stone" (Rev. 19:20). After the thousand-year reign, in which some of the good will be resurrected and reign together with Christ, the devil will be defeated again in the final battle between Gog and Magog: "The devil, who seduced them, was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where both the beast, and the false prophet, will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:9f.) After this, all the dead will be resurrected, and a new heaven and earth will appear. The celestial Jerusalem will descend from heaven to earth, "and he that sat on the throne, said: Behold, I make all things new".

St. John's Revelation is hard to bear theologically. God's justice is not to be seen in it, only his divine glory as confronted with a cosmic punishment of the whole world. It is difficult to see how this vision of the cosmic annihilation of the evil world could be harmonised with the account of creation. Yet the impressive images of Revelation have been extraordinarily effective. The western concept of world-time is determined by the historical imagination of the apocalypse, and the coming celestial Jerusalem, the approaching future as the end, is the *finis mundi* and the definition of time.

The *cantus firmus* of this apocalyptic finitude of the world probably originates from Thomas de Celano, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Italian monk. His rather apocalyptic poem was sung at all Roman Catholic funeral masses until 1970 and the second Vatican Council.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This woman can easily be recognised as also representing primordial Wisdom.

“Day of wrath! That mighty day!  
Earth in flames shall melt away;  
David so and Sibyl say.

Trembling shall be there how  
great!  
When the Judge is at the gate,  
All things strict to separate.

Now the trumpet’s boding tone,  
Through sepulchral regions  
strewn,  
Urgeth all before the throne.

When shall Death and Nature  
quake,  
When Creation shall awake,  
Answer to her Judge to make.

Forth the written book is brought,  
In which is the total fraught,  
When the world is set at naught  
O just Lord of last redress,  
With Thy free remission bless,  
Ere that day of righteousness.

Lo, I mourn mine utter blame,  
Reddens all my face with shame  
Spare Thy suppliant, by Thy  
Name.

Who didst pity Mary’s grief,  
And didst hearken to the thief,  
E’en to me Thou’st given relief.

Nothing worth are prayers of  
mine:

But, Thou Good One, be benign,  
When the Judge shall therefore  
sit,

Every secret shall be quit:  
Unavenged remain no whit

What shall I then say, - impure!  
Whom for advocate procure,  
While the just is scarcely sure?

King, of boundless majesty,  
Who dost save the saved free,  
Well of mercy! Save Thou me.

Recollect good Lord I pray,  
I was one that causes Thy way,  
Nor condemn me in that day.

Seeking me, Thou stat’st  
o’erspent, -  
Cross of ransom underwent,  
Not for naught such toil was lent.  
Nor in endless fire confine.

Place among the sheep decide,  
From the goats my soul divide,  
In the right-hand part to bide.

When th’accurst confuted rest,  
To those bitter flamings prest,  
Summon me with all the blest.

Suppliant, prone, my prayer I  
spend,  
To the dust my heart I bend;  
Take thou care of my last end.

Oh that lamentable day,  
When from ashes hastes away  
To be judged a man undone,

Therefore, O God, spare the one.  
Give, O Jesus, unto them,  
Gracious Lord, Thy requiem.”



This theology of terror, while liturgically and poetically enduring, was nonetheless hard to bear theologically. It was impossible to explain why the world, which was created by God's exuberant love, and had been redeemed by his son, should now be destroyed by that same God, who had changed into a God of threat and terror. Thus it seemed only logical that a conflict of interpretation should arise between the theology of creation and redemption on the one hand, and the theology of apocalyptic punishment and destruction on the other.

### 3. ORIGENISM

#### a) Freedom, Resurrection and the Inner Image: Origen's Christian Platonism

Origen was the author of the most effective argument against the punishing terror of God's wrath as recounted in St. John's Apocalypse. With his doctrine of '*Apokatastasis Panton*', the resurrection of all beings (a quote from St. Peter in Acts 3:21), he integrates the conditions of spirituality, i.e. the primordial creation and the goodness of all beings, into the course of world time. Thus the world's end in terror is transformed into a concept of eternity in which earthly time participates. This eternal time appears as a recurrence of all beings; hence the whole world's history becomes a cyclical return of cosmic periods.<sup>8</sup> St. Jerome described Origen's doctrine as follows: "Origen not only presupposed a connection from beginning to end but also from end to beginning. From the end emerged a beginning and from the beginning an end. Thus all things change, so that the one who is now man can become a demon in another world; the one who is a demon could, if he behaves negligently, be bound to a more dense body so that he becomes a man. Thus an archangel can become a devil and a devil an archangel again."<sup>9</sup>

How can this train of thought be explained?

1. Origen presupposes his own particular theology of creation. In it he imagines the first step to be the creation of a primordial world of spirits, who

<sup>7</sup> Woolsey, Melancthon: *Dies Irae. The great Dirge of Thomas de Celano*. Latin and Engl. trans. Chicago, New York 1898, pp. 38-42.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Chadwick, Henry: *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*. Oxford 1966. Ch. 4: The Perennial Issue. Crouzel, Henri: *L'apokatastase chez Origène*. In: *Origeniana quarta*. Ed. Lothar Lies. Innsbruck 1987, pp. 282-290. Id.: *Les fins dernières selon Origène*. Aldershot (GB) and Brookfield, Vernon (USA)[?] 1990. Dorival, Gilles: *Origène et la resurrection de la chair*. In: *Origeniana quarta*, pp. 292-321. Heinemann, Peter: *Erwähltes Schicksal. Präexistenz der Seele und Christlicher Glaube im Denkmodell des Origenes*. Tübingen 1988, pp. 221-246: *Der Heimweg in das gute Land*. Tzamalikos, P.: *The Concept of Time in Origen*. Bern 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Ep. 124, 3, p. 98, 18-23, Cf. Origenes, *Peri Archon* ed. Görgemanns/Kapp. p. 216 ff.

are good because they are created by God. The goodness of the spirits consists in their free will. This free will is their nature, since they are created in God's image. This holds for both demons and men. The theory of freedom is important for two reasons. Only under the condition of a free will can mankind be considered responsible, and the Last Judgement meaningful.

2. As God can only be conceived of as good, the entrance of evil in the world can only be explained by positing the free will of created beings. This includes a certain dialectic of freedom, where man's freedom as the image of a free God enables him to apostatise from his creator and lord. Origen considers this dialectic: "Since the teaching of the church includes the doctrine of the righteous judgement of God, a doctrine which, if believed to be true, summons its hearers to live a good life and by every means to avoid sin -for it assumes that they acknowledge the deeds worthy of praise or of blame lie within our own power - let us now discuss separately a few points on the subject of the free will, a problem of the utmost possible urgency."<sup>10</sup>

In the course of this investigation, Origen develops his psychology, which, compared with that of his Neoplatonic contemporaries, is *individualistic* and *personalistic*. For the Christian philosopher, this personalisation was necessary in order to think freedom and reason together. Through it Origen was able to establish a personal, rational responsibility. For him, the soul is no longer the cosmic space of divine will realizing divine thoughts in the world; it is no longer the life of the spheres. Rather the soul, bound to the free will of man, becomes an attribute of man's individuality. With this combination of rationality and free will in the individual person, Origen becomes the first thinker to define Christian personality. He thereby establishes the notion of a responsible, rational person capable of being redeemed. This notion of personality will determine the subsequent western theological and moral tradition.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time - confirming the findings of this book's chapter on "Cosmic Anthropology" - Origen removes the psychological qualities from the cosmos and theorises the soul as the internal essence of every person. This internalisation founds the remarkable ambiguity that the concept of the soul has had in the tradition following Origen. On the one hand, a soul is strictly individual and opens up an inner space where the soul's experiences can be richly lived. On the other hand, the concept of soul still continues to denote the world's natural cosmic life. This semantic oscillation will accompany the medieval and modern debate regarding the individuality or cosmicality of the soul, a debate referred to as the 'Averroistic dispute'.

<sup>10</sup> Origen on First Principles. Being Koetschau's Text of the *De Principiis* Translated into English, Together with an Introduction and Notes by George William Butterworth. London 1936, p.157 (III, 1,1).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Sfameni Gasparo, Giulia: *Origene. Studi di Antropologia e di Storia della Tradizione*. Rome 1984.

What does the concept of soul mean, according to Origen? Following the Aristotelian tradition, he sees it as a substance “possessing imagination and desire”.<sup>12</sup> This capacity is also attributed to animals; imagination and desire is essential for an animal’s soul. “The rational animal, however, has something besides his imaginative nature, namely reason, which judges the images. Some it rejects, others it approves of, the object being that the creature may be guided in accordance with these latter images. So it happens that, since there are in the nature of reason possibilities of contemplating good and evil, by following out which and contemplating them both we are led to choose good and avoid evil, we are worthy of praise when we devote ourselves to the practice of good, and of blame when we act in the opposite way.”<sup>13</sup>

It is decisive – in fact essential – for every rational being to be able to recognise and choose the true and the good. The character of choice is a particular achievement of mankind, “*autexousia*”<sup>14</sup>, the ability to choose freely as the essence of every individual person. Origen conceives this as man’s ability to decide for God. This essential decision requires that the soul has not become “hardened”<sup>15</sup> and that the heart is not of stone but of flesh (Cf. Ezekiel 11:19,20). This vivacity of the heart consists in the ability of every person to take responsibility for his acceptance of God’s grace. Here the dialectic of freedom becomes apparent: Freedom does not consist in doing anything, but rather in the capacity to recognise the good and the beautiful and to follow it. The beautiful good is the final cause, and is pursued by individual acts. This inner practice presupposes man’s susceptibility to the final causes and also requires a sensibility for recognizing the beautiful and the good. In this recognition lies the individual’s vivid sensibility, his liberty of passive power, which is conceived as the capacity of assimilation to God’s grace. Thus every person is able to receive his own spiritual personality, just as plants receive the rays of the sun and assimilate rain and minerals.

This capacity of every individual to assimilate is permanently endangered by the possibility of its destruction as a result of a hardening of the heart, i.e. because of self-satisfaction and an inability to perceive spiritually. The life of spiritual assimilation lies in its conscious capacity to perceive divine grace. This is the weakness of which St. Paul himself boasts (2 Cor. 11:30). In the hardening against divine grace lies the guilt of all evil individuals; this is of course true for the devil as well: “The man who is not aware of his own weakness and of divine grace, even if he receives a benefit before he has

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<sup>12</sup> On First Principles, p. 120 (II, 8, 1).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 160 (III,1, 3).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 162 (III,1, 5).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 167 (III,1, 7); cf. Exod. IV, 21, VII, 3: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.”

experience of himself or condemned himself, will think that what is supplied to him by the grace of heaven is due to his own good works. This produces conceit and pride, and will prove a cause of his downfall, as we believe happened in the case of the devil, who attributed to himself the privileges which he enjoyed when he lived blamelessly. 'For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'"<sup>16</sup> (Luke 14:11, 18:14).

Origen's theory of the restitution of all being applies especially to all free rational beings. Originally, the entire spiritual creation was good. The essence of rational beings was their freedom, for they were created to be free, being the image of God's freedom. Thus they were responsible for their own fall, having hardened themselves against God's grace. This was also true for the angels, the highest of all created spiritual beings. Hence their fall and their restitution - including the dogmatically disputed restitution of the devil into his former function - are an essential part of Origen's theory of *apokatastasis*. In their nature, angels, like any other beings outside God, were created as primordial forms of the first creation. They share rationality with mankind, whose essence lies in the connection between spirit and body. Both angels and men will be redeemed in the *restitutio ad integrum*. Otherwise, if the fallen angels were not to be redeemed, redemption and restitution would be incomplete. Thus evil, i.e. apostasy from God's grace, applies to the primordial world as well as to the extramental one; both worlds have to be restituted to God's original plan of the whole world. The fallen angels have to regain their angelic nature, and mankind has to be restored to its paradisiacal state.

The 'redemption of the devil' is the condition for the world's final healing. How could the world be healed completely while God's antipode still persisted in his wickedness? "It is on this account, moreover, that the last enemy, who is called the death, is said to be destroyed; in order, namely, that there may be no longer any sadness when there is no death, nor diversity when there is no enemy. For the destruction of the last enemy must be understood in this way, not that its substance which was made by God shall perish, but that the hostile purpose and will which proceeded not from God but from itself will come to an end. It will be destroyed, therefore, not in the sense of ceasing to exist, but of being no longer an enemy and no longer death."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. III, 1, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 250f. Editor's note: "Origen's reference here is to the devil, though it is concealed by Rufinus. See Theophylus Alex. Ep. pasch. Gr. Fr. 16 (in *Doctrina patrum* ed. Diekamp (Münster, 1907), p. 180, 12: 'He has dared to pay great honour to the devil, saying that when he is freed from all sin he will be restored to his ancient rank, and that the kingdom of Christ will come to an end and that Jesus will then together with the devil be reigned over by God'" (Ibid. p. 251), Cf. Migne, PL 22, col. 779 and Origenes Vier Bücher von

This transition into eternity will not happen suddenly, but by degrees. The sequence is conceived as a gradual process of restitution, as a process of assimilation to the divine plan of creation, with its goal in eternity; “for from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36): “Into this condition, therefore, we must suppose that the entire substance of this body of ours will develop at the time when all things are restored and become one and when ‘God shall be all in all’ (1 Cor. 15:28). We must not think, however, that it will happen all of a sudden, but gradually and by degrees, during the elapse of infinite and immeasurable ages, seeing that the improvement and correction will be realised slowly and separately in each individual person. Some will take the lead and hasten with swifter speed to the highest goal; others will follow them to a close interval, while others will be left far behind; and so the process will go on through the innumerable ranks of those who are making progress and becoming reconciled to God from their state of enmity, until it reaches even to the last enemy, who is called death, in order to that he, too, may be destroyed and remain an enemy no longer.”<sup>18</sup>

This is the text from which the ‘Origenistic dispute’ arose, flaring up again and again in the course of church history. The debate centred on the question of the complete restitution of all, and thus the reconciliation of the devil.<sup>19</sup>

In his discussion of the “*De principiis*”, St. Jerome denounced Origen for teaching the doctrine of the restitution of all; the translation of “*De principiis*” by Rufinus speaks of the gradual reconciliation of all things to their spiritual essence according to God’s will. Following Origen’s historical logic, the state in which God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28) coincides with final eternity. Then God will have finished his creation and the world will have regained its originally conceived holy status.

How can this state be imagined? As a spiritual and divine order. In this order, neither individuality nor the independence of beings will vanish. All individuals - good<sup>20</sup> and formerly evil angels, humans, and all other living beings - will endure in their individuality, but will have reached perfection. The integral state of all individuals - and Origen considers mainly human beings - will be restituted, including their bodies. Origen leaves undecided whether it will be a merely spiritual or a spiritualised, material body: “The whole argument, then, comes to this, that God has created two universal natures, a visible, that is, a bodily one, and an invisible one, which is

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den Prinzipien. Ed. and tr. by Herwig Görgemanns und Heinrich Kapp. Darmstadt 1985, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Origen on Principles, lc, p.251f. (III,6,6).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Görgemanns/Kapp, ed. Origenes: Von den Prinzipien. Einleitung, pp. 32 f.; additional literature Ibid. pp. 55-57.

<sup>20</sup> Good angels had to be created to take the place of the fallen ones.

incorporeal. These two natures each undergo their own different changes. The invisible, which is also the rational nature, is changed through the action of the mind and will by reason of the fact that it has been endowed with freedom and choice; and as a result of this it is found existing sometimes in the good and sometimes in its opposite. The bodily nature, however, admits of a change in substance, so that God the Artificer of all things, in whatever work of design or construction or restoration he may wish to engage, has at hand the service of his material for all purposes, and can transform and transfer it into whatever forms and species he desires, as the merits of things demand.”<sup>21</sup>

If corporeality can be spiritualised in eternal life, it becomes apparent that spirituality contains something like a potential corporeality that is the source of the extramental creation of matter. The new body will be the one that was originally conceived and created in God’s mind. The gradual process of ascending to perfection is hence the spiritualization of corporeality, which comes about through the assimilation of the origin to the divine truth: “This, then, is how we must suppose that events happen in the consummation and restitution of all things, namely, the souls, advancing and ascending little by little in due measure and order, first attain to that other earth and the instruction that is in it, and are there prepared for those better precepts to which nothing can ever be added. For in the place of ‘stewards’ and ‘governors’ (Gal. 4:2) Christ the Lord, who is King of all, will himself take over the kingdom; that is, he himself will instruct those who are able to receive him in his character of wisdom, after their preliminary training in the holy virtues, and will reign in them until such time as he subjects them to the Father who subjects all things to him (1 Cor. 15:27); or in other words, when they have been rendered capable of receiving God, then God will be to them ‘all in all’ (1 Cor. 15:28). It follows of necessity that then even their bodily nature will assume that supreme condition to which nothing can ever be added.”<sup>22</sup>

If the reconciliation of creation is at the same time the restitution of the original order of things, what then is the meaning of punishment and judgement? Freedom is interpreted as the ability to become guilty. Sin, the selfish hardening of the heart against God’s grace, is the cause of guilt. Origen employs the concepts of internalisation and spiritualization to make punishment harmonise with the concept of restitution.

The individual soul, being hardened by sin, becomes so conscious of its state in the purifying process of punishment, that it recognises the qualms of conscience themselves as punishment. “I think that just as in the body an abundance of eatables or food that disagrees with us either by its quality or

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<sup>21</sup> Origen on Principles I, p. 253 (III, 6, 7).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 254 (III, 6, 9).

by its quantity gives rise for fevers differing in kind and duration according to the degree in which the combination of noxious elements supplies material and fuel for them -the quality of which material, made up of the diverse noxious elements, being the cause which renders the attack sharper and more protracted - so when the soul has gathered within itself a multitude of evil deeds and an abundance of sins, at the requisite time the whole mass of evil boils up into punishment, and is kindled into penalties; at which time also the mind or conscience, bringing to memory through divine power all things the signs and forms of which it had impressed upon itself at the moment of sinning, will see exposed before its eyes a kind of history of its evil deeds, of every foul and disgraceful act and all unholy conduct. Then the conscience is harassed and pricked by its own stings, and becomes an accuser and witness against itself.

This, I think, was what the apostle Paul felt when he said, 'Their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them, in the day, when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ' (Rom. 2:15f.). From which we understand that in the very essence of the soul certain torments are produced from the harmful desires themselves that lead us to sin."<sup>23</sup>

Origen's decisive achievement consists in transforming the Neoplatonic and Stoic theory of the soul into a personal psychology. While God's ideal order has been preserved in creation, and the primordial patterns are still the measure of God's external creation, the same train of thought interprets the soul as the agent of responsibility, marking a decisive turning point in the history of the will.

When the will recognises and acts, the concepts of cognition and action are no longer separate. Hence cognition becomes an inner act, in that the structure of finally directed acting has been internalised to become a process of the free will. The will sets its goal and acts accordingly. The definition 'omne agens agit propter finem', formerly an outward moment of acting, has become an inward moment of decision. With Origen, even contemplative acts become moments of inner practice depending on the will.

This process of internalisation corresponds to the process of internalising sin and of emphasising conscience. Turning inwards consists in the contemplation of one's spiritual actions in accordance, or disaccord, with the standards of conscience.

Precisely this internalisation makes it possible to conceive of the restitution of all things as a gradual spiritualization. In the final unfolding of the world, the spiritual order corresponding to God's original plan of creation will appear. Thus it is God's wisdom appearing in the order of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.142 (II, 10, 4).

spiritual world, in which the eternal God wants his free creatures to participate.

b) Eriugena's Resurrection

In the Middle Ages, no one engaged with Origen's doctrine of the restitution of all things as persistently and effectively as John Scotus Eriugena, the Irish scholar at the Franconian court. His work was also intended to describe systematically the restitution of all things. The logic of his eternal process, 'creans non creatum, creans creatum, non creans creatum, and non creans non creatum,' made it possible to interpret the last position of this arrangement, 'non creans non creatum,' as the restitution of all and the final return of creation to God. Eriugena quotes Gregory of Nyssa, the author of the "Sermon on the Creation of Man", affirming "that our nature always moves, as is assumed by all divine philosophers, and that the world intends nothing else but its highest good, from which all motion begins and to which it will return as to its acknowledged purpose".<sup>24</sup>

According to this internal orientation of every development, Eriugena is also able to adopt Origen's theory of free, inner acting. For him, evil is a rational being's deviation from an acknowledged, proper aim. "This movement is not incongruously denoted by the word 'perverse'".

Through his combination of Gregory's and Origen's perspectives, Eriugena reinforces the spiritual anthropology of human freedom as being the image of God's freedom. The author of "The Oration of the Image", as Eriugena calls the "Oratio de creatione hominis", had interpreted man's cosmological position to be the earthly image of God's freedom. This could very well be connected with Origen's concept of *autexousia*. Eriugena, however, emphasises that the cognition of good and evil is part of natural philosophy, since for him, even more than for Origen, nature shows God's beauty and goodness. "I say that the species of all visible and invisible things are *theophania*, the order and beauty of which show that God exists, and hence it is not discovered, what he is, but solely that he is; for God's own nature is not predicated nor recognised, since he surpasses every cognition, being an inaccessible light."<sup>25</sup>

Eriugena's "De divisione naturae" is not so much a Christian Neoplatonist anthropology, but rather a cosmology. Thus the doctrine of universal restitution receives the character of the return of all things to their seminal reasons. These seminal reasons are recognised as the divine words, i.e. "the unchangeable reasons of things, founded in God's wisdom, through

<sup>24</sup> MPL 122, 918, d.f. (Trans. Shelden/Williams/O'Meara.)

<sup>25</sup> MPL 122, 919, c.



which all things visible and invisible have been created and into which heaven and earth will be transformed".<sup>26</sup>

Whereas all things will be restituted by a natural process, i.e. directed by their internal divine word and image, the wickedness of rational beings (including both angels and men) derives from their free will and is recognised as false. But human nature, too, will be restituted according to its inner divine image: "since the irrational motion, which is the cause and the plenitude of all evil, is circumscribed by the amplitude of the goodness, thus, human nature will be moved according to its implanted virtues, so that nature will reerect itself as it strains for its cause. When it returns to paradise, i.e. to the joys of the natural virtues which have been lost by sin, and when it desires the food of the tree of life, i.e. the contemplation of the divine word according to which it has been created, it hurries to regain its dignity. But since what it desires and wants (may it move rightly or wrongly) is infinite and incomprehensible for every creation and nevertheless always desired and always the aim of motion, the soul always desires and finds something in a miraculous manner and does not find it, since it cannot be found. It finds it by theophany, but not by contemplation of the divine nature as such".<sup>27</sup>

Nature carries this image, "wunderselig",<sup>28</sup> at the core of her heart, and man participates in it. He takes part in the world created out of the seminal reasons by the divine word. The identity of origin and goal applies both to natural and human development. Eriugena stresses this analogy and thus lays the groundwork for the piety of nature, which relies on the theology of the image.

Eriugena takes on Origen's dogmatic difficulties with his theology. He now has to explain the restitution of evil and thus the salvation of the devil, and, consequently, he has to spiritualise the punishment of the Last Judgement. Eriugena uses Origenistic arguments to address Origenistic difficulties. Death and evil are identified and both will ultimately vanish: "When every evil has ended, what evil being shall endure? For every evil being is evil by wickedness. And the wickedness will perish together with the evil, since the effect will perish with the cause by necessity. This is the case with life and death. If death is devoured by life like evil by goodness and like earthly life by eternal beatitude, who shall be tortured by death and misery when nothing is left except eternal life and beatitude? If someone were to declare that one part of human nature would return to God and another one would endure suffering as punishment, what intricacies and

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<sup>26</sup> MPL 122, 887, c.

<sup>27</sup> MPL 122, 919, b.c.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Josef von Eichendorff's poem: "Dein Bildnis, wunderselig, trag ich im Herzensgrund..."

contradictions would follow these assumptions? You would have to concede that the divine word had not captured human nature as a whole but rather parts of it, and that it was therefore unable to redeem mankind completely, and hence did not redeem it. This would be absurd to believe.”<sup>29</sup>

Eriugena’s Origenism has shifted from Origen himself in a remarkable manner. It is more Neoplatonic and less focused on personality. Notions like death and evil are understood as quasi-hypostatical beings, the essences of which, whatever they may have consisted in, will be abolished. Evil evaporates, as it were, or vanishes when faced with divine eternity. Thus Eriugena does not consider the guilt and sin of the individual, nor even the guilt of the angel Lucifer. For him God’s image in mankind prevails, finally becoming realised as the restitution of all beings.

Eriugena quotes Origen extensively and affirmatively. He also claims that Origen, concerning the resurrection of evil spirits, “undoubtedly declared, that in them the substance that God has created will endure eternally, that their wickedness, however, will disappear in eternity. So their names as demons, devil, and last enemy do not denote their nature, but their wicked will”.<sup>30</sup> The dynamic of the good can be said to have been naturalised in this train of thought. The will is not interpreted as the decision-making apparatus of the individual, but rather as the wrong direction taken by the evil spirits. Eriugena quotes Dionysius’ “*De divinis nominibus*”: The wicked spirits “are not completely remote from the good, in that they are, and live, and understand; and they own a certain appetite for motion. They are called wicked insofar as they are infirm in their natural actions. Therefore, evil is to them failure and depravation from what is convenient to them, as well as imperfection and inability, misdoing and demolition”.<sup>31</sup>

Thus it becomes apparent that, according to Eriugena, evil does not lie in the nature of things, nor really in the will, but rather has the character of depravation. And this depraved character can be restored. For Eriugena, the original meaning of judgement and guilt is largely suspended; in any case, he no longer sees a place for the expiation of sins. He adopts Origen’s image of the sickness of the soul, but he characteristically alters it with the symbols of his natural philosophy. For him it is not the personal conscience that gnaws; the conscience rather is like the natural process of putrefaction and burning; it is the inner fever showing the evil rational being’s impotence. Eriugena conjectures that “the worst pains of evil men and angels before and after the Last Judgement consist in the wish to commit evil but being unable to fulfil it”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> MPL 122, 922, a.

<sup>30</sup> MPL 122, 931, a, V, 27.

<sup>31</sup> MPL 122, 932, b, V, 27.

<sup>32</sup> MPL 122, 936, b, V, 29.

Eriugena conceives of spiritual punishment as a putrefaction of the soul, as the inability of the conscience to achieve its inner image, for its selfish opposition to God's will is stronger than the obedience to its inner nature. He quotes St. Ambrose's commentary on St. Luke 13:28 ("There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out."): "Therefore there will be no corporeal gnashing of teeth, nor a real sensual eternal fire, nor a corporeal worm. This must, however, be understood like this: such as fever and worms originate from eating to much crude flesh, so it happens that one does not boil away one's sins by sobriety and abstinence, but rather mixes faults with faults as if collecting old and new sins, so that he burns in his own fire and is consumed by his own worms."<sup>33</sup>

Eriugena imagines that in eternal punishment, the wicked parts of men will be destroyed through the remembrance of their sins. He adopts the internalisation of punishment, which Origen had proposed as an interpretation of hell: "Where will Judas, our Lord's betrayer be tortured? Where else but in his polluted conscience, having betrayed the Lord. Which punishment is he suffering? The ever-burning regrets which came too late and thus are useless. What suffers the rich man in hell? Is it not the lack of splendid banquets, which he had in this life? By which flame is the impure king Herod consumed, if not by his furor, in which he was inflamed to murder innocents?"<sup>34</sup>

Eriugena does not investigate the question of freedom. For him, freedom is implied in every responsible man's ability to fail his inner image. This derives from his naturalistic interpretation of theological anthropology as the development of man's original seminal reasons, and his reinforcement of the Neoplatonic idea of the cosmological structure of the soul. Thus, when he describes biblical sinners, he does not consider the problem of freedom to be connected with God's plan of creation. The punishment of the wicked is only the memory of their sins, which will endure a long time: "Thus the irrational perversion of the will from its rational nature will be punished, whereas the original nature itself always remains good, healthy, integral, unwounded, incorruptible and impassable, participating itself in the unchangeable good. There, it is deified in the glory and the happiness of the elect. It will be restored completely, including for the reprobates, whose substance will not be annihilated; i.e. the goodness, by which they were attracted since their creation, will not be abolished. Nature rejoices in the contemplation of the truth by those who have reached beatitude; it rejoices at the substantial conservation of those who are suffering for salvation because of their sins. Through the vocation by the redeemer's and mediator's grace,

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<sup>33</sup> MPL 122, 936, d. V. 29.

<sup>34</sup> MPL 122, 937, b. V, 29.

it will return into its prior state of creation as being complete in all, perfect, similar to its creator, purged of the filth of all vices, by which the mortal flesh has been deformed as if by leprosy and thus outwards has been suffering. And so you can understand that in the nature of things, after the consummation of the sensual world, no illness, no death-inferring corruption, no misery bringing fragility into this material life, will remain. Then all things visible and invisible will rest quietly in their reasons; only the illicit will of the wicked men and angels will be tortured by the wounds of their sins in their memory and conscience; whereas nothing can be found of what they wished for and imagined to be their future.”<sup>35</sup>

This substantial abolition of the power of evil coincides with the spiritualization of corporeality. This idea further increases the tendency to interpret Origen’s theology as a natural philosophy. “Our deathly bodies will not only be transformed into spiritual ones, but also into our souls, for there is a natural necessity for it; in the same way that the rational soul has been made according to God’s image, the body must return to its image, from which it was made as its cause. This is the soul, which is the medium to God, who is the unique cause. Thus the heavenly body will be free from every earthly heaviness and corporeality.”<sup>36</sup>

Eriugena reduced the emphasis Origen placed on personal redemption and the eternal bliss of free spiritual beings, who were characterised by the ability to make free decisions. Redemption, for him, is seen instead to be like the natural process of growing: All things tend to unfold their seminal reasons, just as they aim to become perfect. Neither the end, nor the question of temporality is important for him. Origen’s image of revolving periods in eternity is transformed into a process of natural redemption. Redemption, eternal happiness, and salvation are described merely as the return of things to their origin in the divine seminal reasons. Apocalypse has been tamed into a natural process; completion occurs without having an end.

### c) Pico’s Apology of Origen

For Renaissance theologians and philosophers, Origen was a *persona non grata* only concerning his doctrine of the *Apokatastasis panton*. In biblical exegesis, on the other hand, his fourfold meaning of the Holy Scriptures was adopted. In devotional literature, his interpretation of the Song of Songs remained canonical.<sup>37</sup> Being an apologetic and pious author, he was widely accepted. Nevertheless, the question that caused Origen’s condemnation in 553 was still to be a vexation for Pico. The Florentine philosopher wrote in

<sup>35</sup> MPL 122, 944, b,c. V, 31.

<sup>36</sup> MPL 122, 952, d. V, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Lubac, Henri de: *Exegèse médiévale*. Paris 1959-64, esp. vol. II, 1, passim.

his famous “Conclusiones” of 1489: “It is more reasonable that Origen is saved than that he is damned.”<sup>38</sup>

Pico defended this statement against the reproaches of the Inquisition, perhaps without himself even being entirely familiar with the incriminating passages of Origen’s “De principiis” concerning the devil’s damnation, the *apokatastasis* and the subordination of the Son under the Father.<sup>39</sup> He presumed that Origen was orthodox and that he was falsely accused of doctrines that he had at least not intended to teach. He made the comment that if Origen had committed errors, he had regretted them. Besides, much foreign content had been forged into his texts; Origen had already complained of this during his lifetime. Pico was convinced “that both heresies did not originate from Origen’s spirit, which becomes obvious from the testimony of many who merit our faith. We think that his thoughts were catholic concerning the principal opinions, too, in which he is said to be erroneous. The first concerns the doctrine of the Trinity, namely that he thought the Son to be less than the Father and the Spirit even less than the Son. The second concerns the salvation of the devil: that his punishment and his binding to hell was not eternal, but that he was liberated from it at some time. Many theses ascribed to Origen seem to depend on these heresies, e.g. that Christ has to be crucified again in a higher sphere for the redemption of the demons. Or that everything has to be restored into one. And that the devil can regret and the punishment of the damned is not eternal. There seems to be evidence that those two heresies did not originate from Origen’s mind”.<sup>40</sup>

Pico also emphasises Origen’s spiritualism, but does not judge it to be dogmatically offensive. “All consent that Origen seems to have shared the opinion that there were spiritual living beings in heaven before bodies were created.”<sup>41</sup>

The existence of primordial worlds is a criterion of spiritualism. If these primordial worlds are considered to have been divinely preconceived, and subsequently realised, it necessarily follows that they be restituted in eschatology. It is precisely on this point that Origen is important, and why it is difficult to bring the great church father into accord with orthodox dogma. This is why the theology of spirituality, even if it is open to eschatological questions, is incongruous with the apocalyptic horrors of St. John’s Revelation. In the spectrum of apocalyptic theories, the spiritualistic theologians constitute the group that combines the theories of creation with

<sup>38</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Opera, p. 95, Nr. 29.

<sup>39</sup> For the dogmatic question cf. Marcus, Wolfgang: Der Subordinatianismus als historiologisches Phänomen. Munich 1963.

<sup>40</sup> Pico: Apologia, Opera, p. 207.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 210.

those of the Last Things. For them, the End Times are always “rose and lily times”, as Jakob Böhme later referred to them.<sup>42</sup>

During the Middle Ages, Origen’s works were, as a whole, hardly accessible. The situation changed at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In 1512, Jacques Merlin edited Origen’s works, and they were to be reprinted seven times between then and 1536. In 1537, Erasmus’ edition of Origen appeared; by 1571 it had been reprinted four times.<sup>43</sup> Of course the half-hearted condemnation of Origen kept the orthodox theologians from drawing the consequences of his spiritualism. As D.P. Walker has shown, it took until the 18<sup>th</sup> century until hell lost its credibility as the place of damnation and eternal punishment.<sup>44</sup>

d) The Unification of All Religions. Guillaume Postel’s (1510-1581) Synergetic *Apokatastasis*

The philologist, mystic, and eschatologist Guillaume Postel is one of the most interesting 16<sup>th</sup> century intellectual figures. He was a gifted scholar, knew Hebrew and Arabic, translated both the book Bahir and the Sohar (neither were published)<sup>45</sup>, published the book Yezirah in a Latin translation with a comprehensive commentary,<sup>46</sup> wrote grammars of the Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic languages, was a prophet of the “Universalis Concordia” and, as a heterodox Origenist, wrote a “*Panthenosia*” (all-embracing theory).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Dietze, Walter: Quirinus Kuhlmann. Berlin 1963, p. 414.

<sup>43</sup> Lit.: Giusso, Lorenzo: Origene e il Rinascimento. Rome 1957. D. P. Walker: “Origène en France au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle in: Courant religieux et humanisme à la fin du XVe siècle et au début de XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Paris 1959. Id.: The Ancient Theology. Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century. London 1972. Godin, André: Une lecture sélective d’Origène à la Renaissance: Erasme et le Peri Archôn. In: Origeniana, Ed. Crouzel, Lomiento, Rius-Camps. Bari 1975 pp. 83-95. Schär, Max: Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus. Baseler Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus 140. Basle, Stuttgart 1979: p. 10. Godin, André: Érasme lecteur d’Origène. Geneva 1982.

<sup>44</sup> D. P. Walker: The Decline of Hell. Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment. Chicago 1964. The most influential late 18<sup>th</sup> century author on this question, not mentioned in Walker’s study, is Johann August Eberhard, with his “Neue Apologie des Sokrates”. 2 vols. Berlin 1776-78.

<sup>45</sup> There is a recent edition of Postel’s translation of the “Sefer ha Bahir” in François Secret: Postelliana Nieuwkoop 1981, pp. 21-112.

<sup>46</sup> Reprint ed. by Wolf Peter Klein. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt 1994.

<sup>47</sup> See Secret, François, Bibliographie des manuscrits de Guillaume Postel. Geneva 1970. Weil, Georges: De Guilelmi Posteli vita et indole. Paris 1892. Reprint Geneva 1969. Idem, traduite du latin et mise à jours par François Secret. Milan 1987. Kvacala, Jan: Wilhelm Postel. Seine Geistesart und seine Reformgedanken. Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte 9, 1912, pp. 285-330, vol. 11, 1914, pp. 200-227, vol. 15, 1918, pp. 157-203. Bowsma, William: Concordia mundi. The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel. Cambridge, Mass. 1957. Gilly, Carlos: Spanien und der Basler Buchdruck bis 1600. Ein Querschnitt durch die spanische Geistesgeschichte aus der Sicht einer europäischen Buchdruckerstadt bis 1600. Basle, Frankfurt a. M. 1985. Klein, Wolf-Peter: Im Anfang war das Wort. Theorie- und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Elemente frühneuzeitlichen Sprachbewußtseins. Berlin 1992. pp. 249-263. Kunz, Marion: Guillaume Postel, Prophet of the Restitution of

Postel embraced Origen's conclusions of the *Apokatastasis panton* and took them seriously. At the same time he emphasised the Neoplatonic subordination of the Son to the Father.<sup>48</sup>

His treatise concerning the restitution of all things is entitled "*Panthenosia*, or the Unification of all differing views about the eternal truths and its various appearances which arose not only among the unfaithful of today, and those who are called Jewish, heretic, and Catholic, but have been working among the members of the particular and the common church since the admission of sin as the darkening of the intellect. Author Elias Pandecheos. The penultimate noise of the trumpet. One will be the judge, who will grant something better". In this 1547 treatise,<sup>49</sup> Postel succinctly presented the theory of the first Adam's creation as the model of extramental creation, the fall of the first parents, and the restitution of all things. He specified how he conceived of the theological necessity of this restitution: "Since the complete earth was created from the first procreating man, there is no doubt that this perfect and holy being would rule the universe, and that it was created and founded with such a perfection, that it was equal in power,

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All Things. His Life and Thought, The Hague, Boston, London 1981. Guillaume Postel, 1581-1981: Actes du Colloque International d'Avranches 5. Sept. 1981. Paris 1985. Postel, Claude: Les Écrits de Guillaume Postel, publiés en France et leurs Éditeurs. 1538-1579. Geneva 1992. Hartmut Bobzin: Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation. Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa. Beirut 1995 (Beiruter Texte und Studien 42). Postel is treated in detail in Chapter V "Postel und seine Excussio alcorani".

The most important works by Postel: *De Originibus seu de Hebraicae linguae et gentis antiquitate, deque varium linguarum affinitate*, Liber. Paris 1538. *Grammatica Arabica*. Paris s.d. *De Orbis terrae concordia libri IV* (s.d., s.l.) (1545). ΠΑΝΘΕΝΩΣΙΑ *Compositio Omnium Dissidiorum circa aeternam ueritatem* (s.l., s.d.) (1547). *Abrahami Patriarchae Liber Iezirah, siue Formationis mundi, Patribus quidem Abrahami tempora praecedentibus reuelatus*. Paris 1552. *Restitutio Rerum omnium conditarum, per manum Eliae profetae terribilis, ut fiat in toto mundo conuersio perfecta, et maxime inter Iudaeos. Interprete ex Hebraeis G. Postello*. s.l.s.d.

*Liber de cavisis seu de principiis et originibus Naturae vtriusque...* Authore G. Postello Paris, 1552.

*Absconditorum a constitutione mundi Clavis* (s.l., s.d.). *Le Trésor des prophéties de l'univers*. Manuscrit publié avec une introduction et des notes par François Secret. The Hague, 1969; Martinus Nijhoff. Guillaume Postel: *Apologies et Rétractions*. Manuscrits inédits publiés avec une introduction par François Secret. Nieuwkoop 1972. *Postelliana*, ed. François Secret. (Traduction du *Sefer-ha-Bahir*. Apologie à G. Lindan, De la restitution de la vérité démonstrative des temps courants. Aphorismes pour servir d'appendice au *De orbis terrae concordia*. De magia orientali. Catastrophes veritatis et victoriae aethernae[?] de praesentis mundi immutatione. Qu'est ce que l'image de Dieu à laquelle l'homme est créé, formé et fait?) Nieuwkoop 1981. (= *Bibliotheca Humanistica et Reformatorica* Vol. XXXIII).

<sup>48</sup> On this question he touches on the Neoplatonic origin of antitrinitarian theology, esp. in Servet. Cf. Gilly, Carlos: *Spanien und der Basler Buchdruck bis 1600*. Basle 1985.

<sup>49</sup> Jan Kwacala briefly refers to the *Panthenosia*: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 9, 1912, pp. 319-322.

wisdom and love to all beings, through which God wanted to give and distribute messages.”<sup>50</sup>

This angelic and cosmic nature of man is considered by Postel to be the image of nature before the Adamic fall, which will be restituted at the end of the time: “Since cloudy darkness entered the human mind through the injustice of sin, and since God remains the same as He was and cannot be deceived, it is necessary that He will endow the new world with the gifts of that first man who got lost in sin. This light will shine to all of mankind and will communicate the father’s glory to his sons.”<sup>51</sup>

This text describes the mission of Postel’s life, his Christological mission to awaken Christ’s redeeming spirit in mankind. Postel sees this mighty spirit acting in creation and in the life of nature even after the fall, so “that the world learns to experience Jesus through its laws, to find in him the sole and omnipresent salvation of the world, to acknowledge what it found, and to worship and love what it acknowledged. He is namely the end of the universe”.<sup>52</sup> This looks like a complete Origenistic program for the history of salvation, reinforced by the identification of the Word of creation with the corporeal Jesus. But appearances can be deceiving. For Postel, Christ is the Father’s creating Word, but this Word is subordinated to the Father, and this subordinated hypostasis is not identified with the historical Jesus, the crucified redeemer. The Word of creation is the one to which creation will finally return. This urge to come back, a sort of cosmological homesickness, is especially apparent in mankind, since man, as a microcosm, takes part in a special way in the original cosmic Adam. Thus, for Postel, the eschatological restitution of creation and the restitution of mankind are interwoven. Postel lets this ambivalence stand, for he sees man in his spiritual, typological identity with the cosmic Adam, God’s first word, in whom he acknowledges the true Christ.

That is why, for him, the crucial question for every Origen critic, as to whether the devil takes part in the *restitutio ad integrum*, is not very essential. For him, it is quite self-evident that man, who at his core is spiritual, will be redeemed from his sins, insofar as they are caused by the devil. This is true for all sins, except for the hardening of the heart. According to the restitution of all, “God the just cannot condemn someone to suffering eternal torture, for he will priorly abolish the sin which was caused by the devil, just as he will not remember the sins of human nature, referring to the Scripture” (Ps. 130:3).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Panthenosia, o. O., 1547, p. 3.

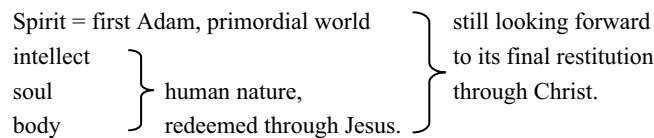
<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 30: “Tamen fieri nullo modo potest, ut iuste condemnare nullum ad poenas aeternas Deus possit, nisi omnino prius praeterita & diabolo procurata peccata aboleat, ita ut ad literam peccatorem naturae humanae non recordetur amplius, sicut promisit.”



For Postel it seems evident in this logic of restitution that men, whom he considers to be primordial beings, will become angelic in their redeemed state. Here Postel distinguishes between Jesus and Christ. For him, Jesus is the fourth hypostasis, who has redeemed the three subordinated souls – the body, the personal soul, and the world’s soul. But the highest part of the fourfold soul, the mind, has not been redeemed. This process is still taking place in the world’s innermost heart and will be fulfilled in a *restitutio ad integrum*. In this regard, the historical Jesus is only the typological representation of a particular redemption in which only Christians participate, but has not yet been completed in the world’s *restitutio ad integrum*. God’s remaining work is the fulfilling of his promise, which lies hidden in nature and mankind. God’s work must consist in our eternal recreation, as he recreated the angels after the fall of Lucifer: “For he wants his will to be equally respected in heaven and in the order of angels, and this also applies to the earth and the human order. Hence Christ suffered in fourfold immortality (i.e. restitution): in his spirit and intellect since the beginning of the world, but temporally in his soul and body. Thus, through those four punishments we are thrice united with him and redeemed from our sins. But in the fourth death we all will remain unchangeable. After the fourth death, which will be committed cruelly by the Antichrist, both those who will resurrect to eternal bliss and those who will not will be awakened in one moment and the just will pass over into their eternal life, the damned into their eternal sadness. Christianity could not get to this point, as long as it serves Jesuism.”<sup>54</sup> Jesuism is only the incomplete redemption of the lower parts of the whole cosmic man, namely body, soul, and intellect. The spirit remains unredeemed (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1.* Scheme of the cosmic soul according to Postel

Postel posits a particularly radical form of theological synergism: The last redemption, which really and finally redeems through the spirit, is the fulfilment of the promise to every single man already redeemed in his mind,

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 31f.

soul and body. Only the redemption of the spirit - the spirit of the first primordial revelation - is still lacking. In this respect, creation, according to St. Paul (Rom. 8:22), looks forward to its final redemption. This mission is the internal, seminal drive and movement in man's nature, which will finally be unfolded and perfected. This task requires man's willingness to engage himself in it, and this is why Guillaume Postel recognises but one sin: the hardening of one's heart.

Postel considers the possibility of human assistance in God's grace to be part of his speculative philology, whose purpose is the unification of all religions through the correct knowledge of their specific scriptures and doctrines. The unity of the *restitutio ad integrum* is a spiritual one, which means that it consists in the unity of the primordial revelation of the spirit. This unification of religions is the condition for the *restitutio ad integrum* and, at the same time, performs it. The establishment of the original unity of revelation is itself the restitution of the decisive period of world history, the restitution of the primordial world's original revelation in the cosmic Adam. Redeemed by the ectype of his archetype, mankind participates by analogy in this spiritual unity.

Obviously Postel wants to achieve this restitution of the powerful Adamic wisdom through a new interpretation of Christianity. For him, Christianity transcends the revelation of the historical Jesus. Hence he spiritualises Christology, interpreting it as the desire for perfection in every thing, and especially as being identical with man's good will. According to his Christology, the world will be lead to spiritual perfection, where free will and knowledge coincide. This is why, for Postel, the final redemption is in the first place a redemption from religious difference. The suspension of religious differences depends for him on the recognition of true Christology, which, far beyond 'Jesuitism', is a Christology of the good will.

Hence, for the cosmic and conciliatory synergist Guillaume Postel, only one sin is inexcusable: obstinacy: "Obstinacy can only be found in someone who commits a serious crime, not from weakness, but solely from arbitrary will."<sup>55</sup> This is the sin against the Holy Spirit, which Postel imputes to the 'Jesuans'. In his opinion, they are merely following ceremonies without being truly pious, thus blocking their ears to salvation. This is why he sees it as his mission to fulfil redemption by accepting divine grace. This will appear as the reconciliation and unification of all religions. Postel anticipates redemption from a sort of encyclopaedia of religions, harmonizing the crucial items of the monotheistic religions: "It is an inexhaustible work to bring up all the reasons that legitimate an excuse and that give reasonable permits for the heresies of Ishmaelite and Jews, or into whatever groups you

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<sup>55</sup> "Obstinatio equidem in nullo esse potest, nisi qui sincere gravitatem sceleris respicit, & sine ulla infirmitate solaque libidine in illud fertur." (Ibid. p. 33).

divide the well known pernicious errors. Therefore it is necessary to divide the main field of the doctrines into classes and loci. Thus it becomes possible to investigate the false, the gracious, the suitable and the antagonistic, a work that hence has been done only separately concerning the most important subjects. Thus we will see: God; the mediator; the angels; the soul and its parts; the subjects of the New Testament; the primacy of St. Peter, the councils and the *postestas clavis*; the sacraments; the state of saints and of prayers; the Last Judgement; the resurrection; the instauration of eternal life; the perfect reign of the saviour; and, the most important doctrines of Muslims and Jews, and what they effect against us.”<sup>56</sup>

In the peculiar twilight of Postel’s spiritualism, scientific projects and the history of salvation flow together. With his conciliatory encyclopaedia, Postel tries to accomplish the salvation Jesus had left unfinished. It is the goal of a millenarian scientific project. The speculative philology put forth by Postel takes on the Christological role of the mediator between God and mankind. By virtue of its conciliatory nature, philology is to achieve the reconciliation of the great religions and thus fulfil the perfection of spiritual man. Knowledge of God’s glory is accessible to the learned philologist who is trained in Hebrew, the language of God, and in the cabala. This knowledge has to be transformed into conciliatory practice.

Through the philology of God’s word, Postel’s learned Origenism has insight into eternity. He takes part in the primordial world of the first creation, which makes earthly reality transparent against its spiritual background. Even in this state of restitution, God and his creatures clearly persist as separate individuals. Postel needs this idea, since his Christology of every individual’s good will must also allow for the freedom to commit evil. Thus Postel acknowledges a spiritual hell, which is defined as the separation of the fallen spirits from God. “It is sure and it must be, that justice is eternal and also that which is subjected to justice. So there must be a hell as a place of punishment for those who sinned after the *restitutio in integrum*, for they alone can commit sins against the Holy Spirit. Those are the only ones who tear themselves from Christ’s hand. This is the eternal punishment.”<sup>57</sup>

This justification of hell can be interpreted as typologically describing the timeless fall of the angels as well as the separation of the wicked souls in eternity. For Postel there remains the danger of a fall even in eternity where men are transfigured into angels. He is evidently trying to preserve the freedom of spiritual men. He postulates the assumption into heaven for all earthly men of good will, and this also holds for Judas, Christ’s traitor. “Christ would be really impious if he did not allow the poor man Judas to

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 33f.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 23f.

become reborn from the damned seed, and if he would eternally remind him, even after his great damnation, of the goal which Judas himself remembers having failed. This would be far from Christ's compassion."<sup>58</sup>

The example of Judas makes it particularly clear that Postel sees through the earthly existence of men to their eternal goal, which is their primordial existence and their inner inclination to the perfect and the good. As a consequence of this spiritualization, the fall can also take place for spiritual beings. Their restitution to their original state can only be performed through Christ, who represents the primordial creating Word. This performance of restitution, for Postel as for Origen, has a temporal rhythm depending on the subject of restitution: "Since after the fall there was not one people that did not know that mankind raged like a wild beast, it happened with God's permission that the human world progressed in a scattered way as concerned the most essential matters, whereas the entirety of nature, not one thing sooner than another, is united by the bond of unity and connection. Thus, once the scatteredness was recognised, the later unity occurs, the more worthy it is."<sup>59</sup>

It is Postel's mission to unite all religions through his Christology of creation. He proceeds typologically: The biblical Christ refers to the Word of creation, which is his real essence. This indicates his ability to unite all peoples, nations, sinners, and saints: "So much was he pleased to connect all, that he, when he left his church imbued with his blood, did not divorce marriages between Christians, Jews, and even pagans, if they had been entered into before. This unity was carried out by St. Paul, too, who preferred to eat with sinners than with the righteous, following our Lord's example, because of the 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28). This is God's first intention, to unite all. This can be seen in St. John's scriptures, in the fourth Gospel as well as in his letters and his Revelation, in which the heretics of his time are collected into one net, only according to their names. Yet the labour of justice must not be diminished: just as compassion unites, justice disperses, as long as it works. But after such a dispersement of about 1200 years and the separation of all the members, God allows - and this is an act of necessity - all members to return to unity. Nobody will be refused, and all those of good will will live in eternal bliss."<sup>60</sup>

For Postel, the speculative philologist, this final bliss of the unity of religions consists in the reconciliation of all monotheistic religions, especially in the uniting of Christians and Muslims. This unification is a process that will reconstitute the post-lapsarian diffusion by reuniting mankind in the type of the primordial Adam: "With unity begins the law of nature, of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 4f.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 6f.

scripture, and of grace, and it brings dispersement to an end. From Adam stem the sons of God and the sons of the world. From Moses the Sadducees, the Scribes, the Essenians and the Zealots. From one Christ stem uncountable sects, who provoke conflicts either by preferring themselves to others or by further schism. But God is not a God of division but of peace. The founder of salvation commanded his servants [probably the angels] to unite and to serve his flock at the place of Adam [paradise]. Therefore it is necessary that the one who wants to take care of the flock abolish the errors dividing his sons, and that he completely nourish, care and unite his flock.”<sup>61</sup>

This unification corresponds to a Christological process in natural theology. As a fifth unity, the cosmic Christ includes the four unities of the cosmic soul, which correspond to the cosmic Adam. This ‘instauration’ of the world through the cosmic Christ is the restitution prepared for by the unification of all religions. For Postel, this is the fulfilment of revelation as well as the prerequisite for the final restitution. This process of restitution is performed linguistically, as a natural theology, and as a cosmic psychology. Language and spirit interweave in the restitution of the primordial period of the world: “Christ’s quaternity (being in the power of the fifth immortality,<sup>62</sup> just as Christ only saved us from death by violence), has descended through four eras and thereby restituted us. At first his spirit (*spiritus*) touched the spirit (*spiritus*) in the law of nature, then the spirit (*spiritus*) touched the World-Soul (*mens mundi*); finally this soul (*mens*) touched our spirit (*spiritus*) in the written law. From here Christ’s spirit (*spiritus*) will touch our human soul (*anima*), which was sent out in fiery tongues.<sup>63</sup> His mind (*mens*) will touch the cosmic soul (*mens*); his soul (*anima*) will touch our spirit (*spiritus*). In the last era things correspond to their state before original sin, in which the Holy Spirit (*spiritus*) is connected to the flesh, the cosmic soul (*mens*), and man’s soul (*anima*); and man’s soul (*anima*) will be connected with the World-Soul (*mens mundi*) and the body with the spirit (*spiritus*), as it was before the fall.”<sup>64</sup>

#### e) Johann Wilhelm Petersen’s (1647-1727) Cosmic Redemption

“*Mysterion Apokatastaseos Pantos*, that is the secret of the restitution of all things, where, in a dialogue between Philaletes and Agathophilus, it is

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> On the cabala of the five cf. Chap. III. 5 a.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Acta 2, 3. History of Pentecost.

<sup>64</sup> “Super nos per quatuor aetates descendens Christi quaternio (quod vi divinitatis in eo quintae subsistit immortalitate, ita ut Christus nos nisi violentia a morte curiebatur) nos restituit. Primo spiritus spiritum tetegit in lege naturae, deinde spiritus mentem, et mens eius spiritum nostrum in lege scripta. Inde Spiritus Christi animam nostram, qui ob id in linguis igneis missus est: mens autem mentem, et anima eius spiritum nostrum. Postrema autem aetate reponentur res ut erant ante peccatum, posito spiritu cum carne, mente cum anima, anima cum mente, et corpore cum spiritu ut erat ante peccatum.” (p. 106).

described how evil and sin, which have no eternal root but originated in time, will be terminated and completely abolished; whereas God's creatures, who, according to his will, have their essence and their specific order, will be liberated and rescued from their sins and their sins' punishment after the elapse of the foreseen periods of divine economy and after the exercise of divine judgement, and due to God's eternal resolution, through JESUS CHRIST, the restorer of all things, for the exaltation and praise of His glorious name, so that the good will last, and God be all in all; revealed through a witness of God and his truth.

Rev. 21:4,5,6.

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new'. Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end'.

Printed in Phamphilia, and to be found at the home of the author at that very place in the Year of Christ 1701."<sup>65</sup>

The title of Johann Wilhelm Petersen's (1649-1724) principal work shows the principal themes of Origenism down to the last detail. No wonder, then, that the pietistic superintendent of Lübeck and follower of Johann Arndt in Lüneburg was expelled from his official position in the church in 1692. Petersen's doctrine of *apokatastasis* included three crucial elements:

1. the doctrine of the primordial world
2. the doctrine of the fall of the angels and of the primordial Adam
3. the doctrine of the restitution of the world which will take place through God's universal and final presence in all things

Petersen lost his ministry in Lüneburg because of his Origenism. He accepted this loss and established, along with his wife Eleonore von und zu Merlau, a Philadelphian community that joined the English Philadelphian

<sup>65</sup> ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΑΠΟΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ, Das ist das Geheimnis der Wiederbringung aller Dinge/ Darinnen in einer Unterredung zwischen PHILALETUM und AGATHOPHILUM gelehret wird, / Wie das Böse und die Sünde / Die kein Ewige Wurzel hat, sondern in der Zeit geurständet ist / wiederum gänzlich sollte aufgehoben / und vernichtet; hergegen die Creaturen Gottes / Die nach seinem Willen das Wesen haben / doch eine jegliche ihre Ordnung / von der Sünde / und Strafe der Sünden / nach Verfliessung in der göttlichen Oeconomie darzu bestimmten Perioden, und nach Außübung der Gerechtigkeit / Krafft des ewigen RATH-Schlusses Gottes / durch JESUM CHRISTUM, Den Wiederbringer aller Dinge / zum Lobe und Preiß seines herrlichen Namens / sollen befreyet und errettet werden / auff daß da bleibe Das Gute / und Gott sey Alles in Allen / Geoffenbahret durch Einen Zeugen Gottes und seiner Wahrheit. Rev. XXI, V, 4, 5, 6. Der auf dem Stuhle saß / sprach: Siehe! Ich machs Alles neu. Und Er sprach zu mir: Schreibe / denn diese Worte sind wahrhaftig und gewiß. Und Er sprach zu mir: Es ist geschehen / Ich bin das A und das O, der Anfang / und das Ende. Gedruckt zu Pamphilia / und daselbst bey dem Autore zufinden / im Jahre Christi 1701

society around Jane Lead and John Pordage.<sup>66</sup> In his extensive religious study, Petersen tried to restore Origenism as the genuine Christian doctrine, and to delineate its historical development. His foreword begins: "There have been some in various times, who recognised *apokatastasis panton*, as it is called by St. Peter in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 3:21). In it they experienced God's hidden wisdom and compassion for all his creatures. Among the church fathers, Origen and the Fathers of Compassion, as St. Augustine called them, were especially prominent. They taught that all things, since they have their essence from God's will, after the nullification and eradication of sin, would be restored into goodness by Jesus Christ, the restorer of all, and they will be glorified for the praise of his name. But the universal announcement of these eternal truths has not yet happened, even though in these days a sound has gone out which will penetrate the whole world and should no longer be hindered."<sup>67</sup>

One can question whether Petersen really succeeded in showing a continuous Origenism in the course of church history. In actuality his book is, to a greater extent than even Gottfried Arnold's "Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie" (1700), a collection of quotes from rare treatises, presented in a lengthy dialogue between Philaetes and Agathophilos. The title, however, provides some leads for an approach to this rather immense abundance of material. Reading it [the title or the book?], the book, it becomes increasingly clear that Peterson is in fact only collecting eschatological literature. He does not explain what the restitution of the primordial order could really mean. He is rather interested in the chiliastic process of this restitution. Petersen interprets the doctrine of the thousand-year reign in St. John's Revelation as the period in which the final perfection of mankind will occur in the course of eternal aeons.

#### 1. Economy of Salvation

The logical order of Origenism is the sequence of the primordial world, the fall, and the final restitution. Petersen discovers this order as early as in St. Paul's doctrines. Peterson can be distinguished from other Origenists in that his Christology is primarily a doctrine of redemption, and not so much a doctrine of creation. Thus Peterson is an Origenist as well as a Lutheran follower of St. Paul. He translates 1 Cor. 15:21 as follows: "By one man came death, and by one man also comes the resurrection of the dead. For just

<sup>66</sup> On the historical context see Walker, D. P.: The Decline of Hell. London 1964. For Petersen's biography: Matthias, Markus: Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonore Petersen. Eine Biographie bis zur Amtsenthebung Petersens im Jahr 1692. Göttingen 1993. The autobiography of both: Johanna Eleonore and Wilhelm Petersen: Lebensbeschreibung Johannis Wilhelmi Petersen. s.l., 1719. Leben Frauen Johanna Eleonora Petersen, gebührner von und zu Merlau. s.l., 1719.

<sup>67</sup> Foreword, no pagination.

as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the First, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father. The last enemy to be held up (the 'katechon') is death. For he has put all things in subjection under his feet."<sup>68</sup>

At first, Petersen is quite orthodox in his typological interpretation of this biblical text. The type of Adam, who is fallen, is connected with the type of Christ, who redeems. But then he interprets the text as a statement about the double reappearance of the Lord, prophesied in St John's Revelation: First the Lord will come and establish his reign in which the devil will be bound for a thousand years, at the end of which this kingdom will be given over to the Father. For Petersen this makes it clear that: "The series and the economy of all things are included in St. Paul's words. You find the first man, Adam, who had been seduced by the serpent, the seducer by whose envy death has come into the world. You find the redeemer, the other man, the Lord of the heavens, Jesus Christ, who has come to take away the works of the devil, sin, and the death deriving from sin, and to destroy them. This is the *taxis*, or the order of restitution."<sup>69</sup>

Petersen proceeds from the state of fallen man, and generally does not speculate about his prelapsarian situation. He himself lives in hope of perfection, although he has not yet reached it and is therefore unable to describe it. Unlike Postel, he is not a visionary. In the title of his book "*Apokatastasis Panton*", he only gives a formal description of the primordial world, namely that "God's creatures have their essence according to his will, with everyone in his specific order".

Peterson presupposes the doctrine that all created beings have their essence in God's thoughts and their existence in his will. He makes use of this concept in his theory of resurrection. Only if creation was performed by the same Word, which also was made flesh, can the whole world be redeemed by Christ. His starting point is thus St. John's Gospel, and he emphasises: "Not only the earth on which men live belongs to the concept of the world, but also the whole universe, where sin and the misery following sin can be found. So I must take the word 'world' in the broadest sense, in honour of the great redeemer and physician, and believe that this physician has come to heal the injury which came through sin, and finally will withdraw and totally abolish illness and evil, which is sin."<sup>70</sup> This cosmic redemption, guaranteed by St. John's Gospel, is possible if Christ can be interpreted as a figure of cosmic dimension, by means of a typological parallelism between Adam and Christ. For redemption is only imaginable if

<sup>68</sup> *Apokatastasis panton*, 1701, I, p. 19, Gespräch von der Wiederbringung aller Dinge.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* p. 125.



Christ corresponds exactly to Adam. To understand this “*oeconomia Dei*”,<sup>71</sup> Petersen refers to the cabalistic motif of Adam Kadmon.<sup>72</sup> Answering the question as to whether the Jews had any knowledge of Christ, “when they heard the discussion on Adam Kadmon and on the Messiah’s soul”, Petersen quotes from Johann Georg Wachter’s pamphlet “*Spinozismus im Jüdenthumb*”, which in turn quotes Herrera’s “*Porta lucis*” from Knorr von Rosenroths “*Cabbala denudata*”.<sup>73</sup>

“1. In the beginning there was an infinite light, which filled all. 2. Because of its mighty splendour it was impossible for a world to emerge. 3. Thus the infinite had to contract its presence to make a dark space in its belly for the coming worlds. 4. This making of space emerged through the withdrawal of light from a certain centre. 5. The divine light stood beyond the space and surrounded it, but withdrew its rays. 6. Whereas the light alone was withdrawn, there was still divine essence in the space. 7. This divine essence was a dark matter, an extinguished coal, or the light-lacking part of the divine essence, but nevertheless a perfect spiritual substance or expansion, neither non-essence nor bare deficiency. 8. Into this gloomy expansion the departing divine light stamped footprints to become the spheres of the coming worlds. 9. These footprints were distinct receptacles for receiving the light and the power of the infinite from the concave outside. 10. If the light of the En-soph (unground) had fallen from all sides of the concave into the receptacles, the difference between the infinite and the finite would have vanished. So the En-soph needed a line to fill the receptacles according to their measure. 11. Hence this line represented a channel. 12. From this channel emerged the ten numerations or spiritual sources. 13 Those are all *circuli homoconcentrici*, circles from one centre, which contain each other, like the *sphaerae secariae*, the skin of onions. 14. The whole figure is called Adam Kadmon, or the first man. By this figure it becomes clear and obvious that Adam Kadmon is not a real creation, but only a modification of the divine substance, which likes to separate and to mix its parts.”<sup>74</sup>

Petersen has no difficulty in identifying this Adam Kadmon with the cosmic Christ, who is God’s creating Word. Thus the Adamic typology of the world’s Adam and Christ is established. As justification, Peterson quotes Guillaume Postel’s “*Clavis absconditorum a constitutione mundi*”: “Since it is impossible that the finite comprehends the infinite, it was necessary, when

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> In this context he tells of the debate between Johann Peter Speeth, who converted to Judaism and had been refuted “von einem Arianer, Herr Johann Georg Wachter” (p. 134).

<sup>73</sup> On Wachter see “Johann Georg Wachter: Der Spinozismus im Jüdenthumb (1699).” Ed. by Winfried Schröder, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt, 1995. On Herrera see chapter 4, 15 on Cosmic Anthropology; p 192.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 134. Cf. illustration of the Adam Kadmon, Chap. 4. 15.

God founded all, that He accommodate himself to the capacity of angels and to our capacity, and the infinite made Himself finite, to be understood and praised, so that He does not renounce our prayers, if we call Him 'light of glory' or by any other name. This was achieved by Christ Jesus, through whom all things are created. Since the fall, which God foresaw, it is Christ the soul, who has been crucified from the beginning of the world, who carries out our desired salvation."<sup>75</sup>

## 2. Redemption

Cosmic Christology, which Petersen finds in Herrera's and Postel's cabala, is the condition for his conception of *Apokatastasis Panton*. It was the fall of the cosmos that made this redemption necessary. Since the world in its spirituality and materiality was created by the Word, clearly the devil and fallen earthly man could be redeemed by the cosmic Christ, who has his earthly representation in his death on the cross.

*Apokatastasis*, resurrection, and redemption are closely identified in Petersen's theology. For him it is decisive that redemption is performed by Christ, God's second person, who is at the same time the cosmic and earthly redeemer. The analogy by which cosmic Adam refers to the heavenly Christ, and earthly Adam refers to Christ made flesh, makes the divine economy explicit. This was the logic Petersen found in St. Paul's letters, that "in Adam all die, in Christ all receive life". Cosmic redemption can only be comprehended if microcosm and macrocosm correspond with each other. It does not matter "whether Christ has received the angels' or any other creature's nature, but only through man's nature does he bring all together. For man is a microcosm, or a little world, and takes part in all creatures. That is why you can truly say that Christ suffered in all natures and included them into his suffering. The true reason of this is that all beings, whom God once created by his will, have been ruined by sin and have been corrupted by damnation. They will be redeemed from damnation, misery, and ruin by Christ Jesus and will be restored into their prior state of glory."<sup>76</sup>

Of course this resurrection of all beings also holds for the devil. Petersen's logic defending this resurrection is quite Origenist. Petersen had always emphasised that the existence of creatures depended primarily on God's will and only secondarily on their essence. There is a good reason for this emphasis: The freedom of God's will is mirrored by the image of his creatures. Their freedom is the precondition for their capacity to sin and to become guilty. This doctrine also applies to the fallen angels, the devils. They are responsible for their own wickedness, which does not correspond to their divine image. They can therefore be redeemed from their guilt and

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 136.

<sup>76</sup> Vol. 1, p. 114.

returned to their image: “The diabolic part of the fallen angels will never be restituted in eternity, nor will the old man [i.e. St. Paul’s old Adam]. All that has its essence through God’s will will be restituted after it was ruined. Thus neither sin nor evil, neither the old man nor the devil as the devil, have their essence by God’s will. Therefore they will not be restituted, but evil, sin and the old man must be abolished and completely cancelled out. The diabolic nature in the fallen angels will also be cancelled and completely abolished. In this abolition the angel will be saved and will arrive at his original form and dignity.”<sup>77</sup>

### 3. Restitution

The redemption of the world through Christ is the prerequisite for his final return. How should this return be imagined? Three moments make up Petersen’s *Apokatatasis*:

- It will take place after the apocalyptic millennium.
- Beyond the millennium there will be an eternal restitution of things in aeons.
- That which appears in these eternities is proclaimed in the eternal Gospel.

St. John’s Revelation speaks of a double resurrection. First the just will be resurrected, and together with Christ they will rule for a thousand years. After this thousand-year reign, the Final Judgement will take place. Petersen interprets this prophetic story with the parable of the foolish and wise bridesmaids (Matt. 25:1-13), five of whom are without oil in their lamps, while the other five await the Messiah with burning lamps.

The five wise bridesmaids are invited to the wedding banquet of the lamb and participate in the thousand-year reign. According to Petersen’s interpretation, “ergo, from the fact that the five foolish bridesmaids did not join the wedding of the lamb by the first invitation, but were excluded, there is no consequence but that they are thrown into the pool of fire. Rather they will belong among those whom the Holy Revelation (25:5) indicates: the others will not come to life until the thousand years are ended”.<sup>78</sup>

For Petersen, both the thousand years of death and the thousand years of separation from God, which are not further explained, are part of the divine economy. Since only faith leads to eternal bliss, some of the believers are pre-elected to take part in the thousand-year reign.

Divine justice, for Petersen, extends beyond the thousand-year reign. With his millenarian doctrine, Petersen arrives at a compromise between the Lutheran doctrine of salvation through faith alone and the philosophical

<sup>77</sup> Vol. III: Eine kurtz Bekänntnis der Lehre von der Wiederbringung aller Dinge / aus dem Worte Gottes in Frag und Antwort vorgestellt. p. 145.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

demand for a just judge, who grants everyone what is his due. Those who have received faith by grace will be resurrected for the thousand-year reign. Those who suffer from a separation from God have the opportunity of developing towards God. The apocalyptic thousand years is Origenistically interpreted as symbolizing aeons and eternities. Petersen the theologian “has looked through God’s universal economy in its length, width, and breadth, its height and depth, who has seen how all creatures will be rescued and liberated from their sin and misery to the praise of the Almighty, after revolutions of many subsequent aeons and eternities, namely in and through Christ Jesus, the universal physician and restitutor, through whom all is created, and through whom and towards whom all beings will be redeemed”.<sup>79</sup>

It is clear that the doctrine of cosmic Christology is always connected to the idea of seminal reasons. When every being tends to the end, which is planted in him as his image, when the cosmic Christ is the image and goal of creation, the cosmos itself in its inner life is moved to its end by its seminal reasons. For Peterson, that is the real meaning of St. Paul’s phrase (1 Cor. 15:28), quoted in the title of his “*Apokatastasis panton*”: “God will become all in all”.

Petersen’s doctrine of “*Apokatastasis panton*” is at the same time a theology of the abundance of God’s glory. This precisely is the content of his “Eternal Evangel”,<sup>80</sup>

“Which goes out for witness,  
And the miracles of the Last times,  
The Eternal Evangel,  
In the restitution of all creatures, and  
Conceives and explores in it  
The width and the breadth  
The height and the depth of God’s love,  
Which announces death and annihilation  
To death and the thorn of death,  
And to the one who has death’s power,  
And to the man of sins,  
And all that comes from death and sins.”<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

<sup>80</sup> Petersen is familiar with the Joachimite teaching of the Eternal Evangel: “The matter is worth carefully investigating from Church history/ where I find so much/ that the things/ from the eternal Evangel/ which were brought forth in the XIIth and XIIIth Seculo/ of Henrico de Herfordia, although often very corrupted/ were taught in the writings of the Abbatis Joachimi/ and were claimed / and for this reason this abbot of Calabria has to be held as the author/ until something else is proven with clear evidence.” 71, p. 52.

<sup>81</sup> Foreword, no pagination. “die herausgehet zum Zeugnis

God's final glory will only appear after his second apocalyptic coming, after the thousand-year reign, when the Lord will judge with his book. The Origenistic theologian Petersen preached that this last judgement will finish "the general circle - wheel, which is created by God's eternal Son, and which is also the primary inheritance ordered to Him".<sup>82</sup> For the preacher of the eternal gospel, the arrival of this eternal last day must be praised and prayed for. It seems that Petersen associates the "circle-wheel of eternity" with a cycle of revolutions in eternity, revolving from one eternal bliss to the next. For him, this *restitutio ad integrum* is not a fixed end, but rather "a birth from one clarity to the next", a process of constantly fulfilling revelation, unifying time and eternity. In the hymnal text, in which he prays for the coming of the final restitution, Peterson employs the entire repertoire of spiritualist theory: the seals of St. John's Revelation, the eternal divine image lost by sin, the Old and the New Adam, God's predication as the essence of power, Christ as the eternal life of nature in which God is all in all, the economy of salvation, and the Lord's self-contemplation in his Sophia:

"O this will be a day of joy and of great miracles, when all the creatures in heaven and on earth and in the depths praise the Lord, the creator of all things, and when God will be all in all: Along with his children, the loving, tender God shall open the wonderful seal of truth and give us the power to restitute our lost image through the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Thus we shall mightily witness the remaining creation and restitution; for we, being part of the present economy, really felt the power of the restitution in Christ Jesus, and we saw with us the face of the noble Sophia and the new birth from one clarity to the next."<sup>83</sup>

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Und die Wunder der letzten Zeit/  
 Das ewige Evangelium/  
 In der Wiederbringung aller Creaturen/ und darinnen  
 Die Weite und die Breite/  
 Die Höhe und die Tiefe der Liebe Gottes  
 Begreifet/ und ergründet/  
 Dem Tode/ und dem Stachel des Todes/  
 Und dem/ der Todes Gewalt hat/  
 Wie auch dem Menschen der Sünden/  
 Und allem/ was aus dem Tode und der Sünden kommt/  
 Den Tod und die Vernichtung ankündigt.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. "einige A und O / oder allgemeins Circkel- Rad / aber durch den ewigen Sohn Gottes gemachten/ und zu dessen Haupt = Erbtheil verordneten Ewigkeiten."

<sup>83</sup> Vol. III, p. 176.

## **EPOCHS AND ERAS**

### **1. THE TURNING OF HISTORY IN CHRIST: ST. PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF HISTORY**

The beginning of St. John's Gospel established the 'plenitude of times'. With the incarnation of Christ, "the word was made flesh"; this was the fulfilment of time. For St. John, the times were fulfilled in Christ's earthly life, which was God's accommodation to the world. In this text, St. John does not distinguish between Christ's incarnation and his death; mankind's redemption is entwined both in Christ's birth and in his death. God's accommodation - his birth, death and resurrection - are united in the type of Christ, "but the darkness has not overcome it".

This Christological type, in which the resurrected Christ is hidden from the world and apparent to his believers, characterises Christian concepts of time. Christ is concealed from the world, which is his epiphany as predicted in the Acts of the Apostles and entreated in St. John's Apocalypse. That he "will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Act. 1:11) and that "there will be no end of his reign", expresses the striving after Christ's return which makes up Christian time and thus coincides with Jewish messianic hope.

The inner tension of this time of expectation consists in the fact that Christ has already redeemed mankind, but has not yet revealed his glory. This concealed redemption can only be understood as an inner redemption, preceding a final outer redemption. This outer redemption itself has a twofold dimension: It can be understood as a revelation in the course of earthly life or, after death, in eternal life. This tension marks Christian concepts of time, for Christ's expected return in time or in eternity is the aim and end of all time. The tension between inner redemption and the outer expectation of God's coming glory defines the Christian concept of time. St. Paul formulated this tension in time for the Christian world in a two-fold way:

First he divided world history into a Jewish and a Christian era. Through his dialectic of Law and Gospel, through his typology of Adam and Christ,

he both connected and divided Christian and Jewish time. This dialectic is one of the themes of St. Paul's theology in his letter to the Romans.

Secondly, St. Paul intensified the tension of earthly time by emphasizing the expectation of eternal life. Thus he situated the Christian's earthly life in a tension that can only be released by Christ's return. This is the subject of St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

#### a) The Turning Point of Time

The structure of time in St. Paul's letter to the Romans is characterised by his concepts of natural law, Jewish ritual law, and the Gospel. For him, natural law is founded in the creation of the world, and obliges all of mankind, Jews as well as Gentiles (Rom. 1:19,20): "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and Deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made." This natural perception of the creation and its creator - from which, according to St. Paul, the Greeks had fallen away into immorality - is attributed to all mankind. God's natural law can be recognised in man's moral conscience (Rom. 2:14-16): "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus."

How can this law be understood? It is written in all men's hearts, so that they can justify themselves, according to their conscience, before the throne of the divine judge, who looks into the hearts and not on outward deeds. The conscience (*syneidesis*), therefore, is the place of inner justification, and an anticipation of divine judgement. Thus the final judgement, the end of God's concealment, is anticipated by man's conscience. The conscience is always aware of the heart's tension and lack of perfection in earthly times until the final judge arrives.

St. Paul's doctrine of the universal law as infused into men's hearts since their creation has one decisive advantage for perennial philosophy: It guarantees the continuity of natural law throughout all time. Those who do not succumb to the moral vices of the Greeks, and hence accept the law of nature, are considered by St. Paul to participate in natural truth. They only lack the gospel of their saviour Christ Jesus.

St. Paul sees Jewish ritual law against the backdrop of this law of nature. By their ritual law "the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2). St. Paul adapts ritual law to the law written in the hearts of mankind. Outward obedience therefore is devalued, whereas inward obedience is

appreciated (Rom. 2:27f.): "Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal."

With the law's demand for internalisation, Jews and Gentiles are brought closer together, as the inner force of conscience comes to prevail over outward rites and acts. St. Paul interprets this prioritisation as the Holy Spirit's power helping us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit helps us to acknowledge the law of nature and grants us the power of faith. With this process of internalisation, St. Paul emphasises the historical events concerning Jesus of Nazareth as the decisive turning point of all time. Only if the internal witness of truth - that is, faith - absolutely prevails over every external experience, can the decisive event of St. Paul's theology, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, be understood at all. The mere fact that someone was crucified is no ground for faith, and Christ's resurrection can be doubted. Only the faithful interpretation of these facts makes faith believable. Only through interpretation do the cross and the resurrection become the culminating point of the world's entire history, spanning all time from the creation to the final judgement.

A decisive criterion of all philosophical historiography becomes clear in St. Paul's interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection: Only an event's character as referent to a larger framework of historical meaning makes it significant and marks its rank. St. Paul shows this in his interpretation of Christ as the New Adam. In Adam sin and death are united typologically. Christ, Adam's anti-type, is the type of life and salvation. He becomes the turning point of the concealed but true and internal history of salvation. St. Paul relies on the evidence of biblical typology to support his interpretation. The Old and New Testaments are related to each other as type and anti-type, so that what is predicted and concealed as a type in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament's anti-type. Thus the era of death, sin, and promise is succeeded by the age of inner immortality, grace, and fulfilment. The outward appearance of God's glory, however, still awaits Christ's return.

This entwinement of promise and fulfilment applies to both Jews and Gentiles who lived under the law, both natural and ritual, and became guilty by violating these laws. Since St. Paul's new gospel of Christ suspends the old law and is valid for both Jews and Gentiles, the new faith is necessary for everyone's salvation. "But now the righteousness of God has been manifest apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For



there is no distinction; since all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:21f.)

Redemption by Christ, which is only revealed to the believers, is supported by biblical typology: “Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come” (Rom. 5:14). From the tree of paradise came death; from the tree of the cross emerged life. Through these typological connections the law and the gospel are related. The gospel emerges and abolishes the law, for the law died with Christ. St. Paul’s Christology demonstrates the logic of conversion contained in all historic ruptures. This logic is as simple as it is inescapable. What came before conditioned the turn, but is abolished in the course of this turn. “Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead.” (Rom. 7:4)

The typological confirmation of Christ’s role as redeemer is included in the inner event of conversion to a belief in Christ. This conversion shows the internalised effect of faith and thus the primacy of the inner life (Rom. 7:6): “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.” Here the Spirit is given the role of replacing the old law, the code. The new inner, spiritual message succeeds the old outward, corporeal law.

The entwinement of faith, inner conversion, and Christological redemption is decisive for the rupture in history. Christ is considered by his believers to be the turning point of all history. The turn consists in the belief that he “defeated death and sin” by rising from the dead. His immortality is the mark of the new era for believers, but still remains an element of their inner faith. The victory over death is still only apparent to believers. Still they hope to participate in the type of the new immortality represented by the resurrected Christ. They hope that their immortality will become outwardly apparent when the Lord returns soon for his Last Judgement. Whoever has turned with Christ from the law to the gospel and is thereby filled with the Holy Spirit, has died to death and sin, and hence takes part in Christ’s resurrection (Rom. 6:8-10): “But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has domination over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

The inner certainty of faith, the typological entwinement of conversion, redemption, and the turning of time, comes from the Spirit, who helps us in our weakness. The inner conversion typologically prepares the hope for

immortality, for it occurs according to the example of Christ. His example nourishes the hope of his believers for their resurrection, too. In the type of Christ, suffering, resurrection, and the expectation of divine glory are interwoven.

b) Immortality

The typological entwinement of suffering and resurrection is an essential idea not only for every believer, but also for history as a whole. Resurrection was already the pre-appearance of divine glory. The final appearance of divine glory will occur in three steps:

1. Divine glory is inner glory, according to the typology of the risen Christ, whose glory was only revealed to a few believers.
2. The type of the resurrected Christ grants hope for immortality.
3. Christ is the concealed mark of outward time and history, in which God's glory has not yet been revealed.

St. Paul sees the sufferings of his age in light of his Christological typology; he conceives suffering and glory as being bound together. Thus he expects the glorification of his Christian community (Rom. 8:18): "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God."

Hence inner redemption is moved into the dimension of world history. The typology of suffering and redemption leads to a remarkable demand on world history: The typology of suffering and glory, which has been realised in Christ as the central, inner event of salvation, has to be outwardly realised. The fulfilment of the New Testament is still to come; the visual glorification of the believers is still awaited.

This is the situation of St. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, which contains a twofold promise of return: the immortality of the dead and the return of the Lord with trumpets. So it becomes clear that history turns with Christ. The inner splendour of God's glory is the dawn of the expected outward appearance of the Lord.

In his letter to the Thessalonians, the oldest letter of the New Testament, St. Paul for the first time describes this logic of the end. The expected return of the Lord can be imagined, but the event can only be experienced when it actually happens in an individual's death or with the end of the world. Apart from the disappointment of the Christians' expectation that the Lord was to return in the very near future, the question arose for the first time with the Thessalonians as to what happened to the members of their community who died before Christ's return. Here the question of the end became explicit. The Christians now had to define their expectations of their own salvation. With the presupposition that God was the creator of heaven and earth, that

he sent his Son into the world, and that he will return in glory, the world could be thought of as a created whole with an historical beginning in creation, a middle in Christ, and an end in the Final Judgement. But as the end had not yet occurred, the typological texture of inner conversion, the anticipation of glory, and an outward confirmation, was torn. Hence the early Christians had to differentiate between individual death and the return of the Lord. St. Paul therefore designated a future time of the New Testament for the Christian community to expect the Lord. This essentially temporalises his typological concept of the history of salvation. In order to strengthen the hope of his community in its expectation of the return of the Lord, St. Paul postulates the soul's immortality after corporeal death. In this personal immortality, which typologically reflects Christ's life between his death and his resurrection, the dead expect the return of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:14-18): "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

This vision makes a claim for the assumption of the believers according to the assumption of Christ (Acts 1:9). It thus is a reminder of the unfinished history of the present. Here it becomes clear what St. Paul had in mind when he wrote, in the Letter to the Romans, that nature still waited with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). The inner redemption of the believers demands the outward appearance of this redemption. The end of time will have arrived when redemption is fulfilled and perfected, however this promised end cannot be calculated. "But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." (1 Thess. 5:1,2)

With St. Paul's separation of the Old and New Testaments (1 Cor. 11:25), world history was divided in two parts. However, the New Testament too expects its fulfilment. The dynamic of time and the conception of an entire world history cannot be immobilised in the inner perfection of individual souls. The New Testament, too, waits with eager longing for the third and final appearance of the Lord of creation and redemption. The New Testament longs for its end in the appearance of divine glory.

## 2. SEX AETATES MUNDI. BEDE'S (673-735) WORLD-TIMES

That the world was structured according to the number seven was evident. In six days God had created the world, on the seventh day he rested from the work he had done (Gen. 2:2.). There were seven planets, of which the sun was the most prominent. According to ancient tradition, life proceeded in a rhythm of seven years.<sup>1</sup> Seven days made up a week. And St. John's Apocalypse broke the end times down into series of sevens: Seven letters to the seven churches in Asia, seven seals, seven angels, seven cups of wrath. It seemed natural to see the entire world ordered according to the scheme of seven, including world history.

Ordering world history was all the more necessary since, in the course of church history, the Lord had not yet returned. Hence there was a growing necessity of establishing a particular period for the time from Christ's earthly existence until his final return. It seemed to make sense to draw a parallel between the seventh epoch, the Sabbath of the book of Genesis, and the eternal time after God's final return, whether or not this was understood as the millennium or the time after the Final Judgement.

In any case there remained six periods for world history. The Venerable Bede, the Western teacher of the chronology of the world and the stars, added a chapter XVI, "Chronicon sive de sex huius saeculi aetatibus", to his masterpiece "De temporum ratione".<sup>2</sup> He adopted this structuring of the ages primarily from Isidore of Seville (d. 636)<sup>3</sup>, who, for his part, had combined St. Augustine's concept of the six ages of the world with St. Jerome's

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ch. V, 2.

<sup>2</sup> PL 90, col. 520ff. On the connection with Irish tradition see Tristram, Hildegard L. C.: *Sex aetates mundi. Die Weltchronik bei den Angelsachsen und Iren.* Heidelberg 1985. On medieval chronology see Borst, Arno: *Astrolab und Klostergeschichte an der Jahrtausendwende.* Heidelberg 1985. Id.: *Computus. Zeit und Zahl in der Geschichte Europas.* Berlin 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Chronicon*, PL 83, col. 1017ff.; *Chronica maiora et minora.* Ed. Th. Mommsen. In: *MGH SS AA* (= *Auctores antiquissimi*) 11, 1894, pp. 394-481. *Etymologicarum sive originum libri XX.* Ed. W. M. Lindsay. 2 Vol. Oxford 1911. On Isidore as historian see von den Brincken, Anna Dorothee: *Studien zur lateinischen Weltchronik bis in das Zeitalter Ottos von Freising.* Düsseldorf 1957. Häusler, Martin: *Das Ende der Geschichte.* Cologne, Vienna, pp. 24f. Bassett, Paul Merrit: *The Use of history in the Chronicon of Isidore of Seville.* In: *History and Theory* 15, 1976, pp. 278 -292. Borst, Arno: *Das Bild der Geschichte in der Enzyklopädie Isidors von Sevilla.* In: *Deutsches Archiv zur Erforschung des Mittelalters* 22, 1966, pp. 1-62. Hillgarth, J. N.: *Historiography in Visigothic Spain.* In: *Settimane di studio de centro Italiano di studi sull' alto medioevo* 17, 1970.

chronology.<sup>4</sup> In the fifth book of his encyclopaedia “*Etymologicorum sive originorum libri XX*”, where he wrote “On laws and times”, Isidore put forth this definition: “Age is properly used in two ways, either of man as childhood, youth and old age; or of the world, the first age of which is from Adam to Noah; the second from Noah to Abraham; the third from Abraham to David; the fourth from David to the transmigration of Judea into Babylon; the fifth from then to the advent of the *savoir* in the flesh; the sixth, which takes place nowadays and will be finished together with the world.”<sup>5</sup> The genealogical lists he presents are to guarantee the continuity of world history - this is the genre characteristic of universal chronicles.<sup>6</sup>

Bede adopted Isidore’s classification and situated his world chronicle within a cosmological context.<sup>7</sup> The “*Chronica maiora seu de sex aetatibus mundi una cum septima et octava aetate*” is itself part of Bede’s “*De temporum ratione*” (ch. LVI -LXXI).<sup>8</sup> The “*chronica*” was also transmitted separately, and deeply influenced the medieval and early modern structuring of world-time.<sup>9</sup>

“About the six ages of the world and about the seventh and the eighth in which the heavenly life emerges we already treated in comparison with the first week of the world’s creation, when we dealt with the beauties of the world. Now we will treat the matter in more detail comparing the ages with the age of man, who, by the Greek philosophers, is usually called *microcosm*, i.e. small world.”<sup>10</sup> These six ages structure Judeo-Christian

<sup>4</sup> Augustine mentions six ages of the world in: *De Trin.* 4,4,7 (C C 50, 169f.); *Quaest. in Hept.* 7, 49, 26 (C C 33, 372); *de cat. rud.* 22, 39 (C C 46, 163f.); *Tract. in John* 15:9 (C C 36, 153f.), he speaks about seven ages of the world: *De cat. rud.* 17, 28 (C C 46, 152f.); *Sermo* 125, 4 (PL 38, 691f.); *En. in Psalm* 92:1 (C C 39, 1291); *Contra Faustum* 12,8 (CSEL 25, 1.336); *De div. quaest.* 58, 2 (C C 44 A. 106f.). The most elaborate passage is *De gen. c. Man.* 1,23 f. (PL 34, 190 ff). On the eighth age cf.: *De civ. Dei* 22,30 (C C 48, 865 f.) and *Sermo* 259, 2 (PL 38, 1197 f.). cf. Haeusler, Martin: *Das Ende der Geschichte* l.c.196.

<sup>5</sup> Isidore: *Etymologiae* V, 23, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Krüger, Karl Heinrich: *Die Universalchroniken*. Turnhout 1976 (= *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental* 16).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Brown, George Hardin: *Beda the Venerable*. Boston 1987, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Ed. Charles. W. Jones CC 123 B, pp. 461-544. “*De temporum ratione liber*” is a later, more elaborated version of Bede’s “*De temporibus*”. In this shorter version the chapters XVII-XXI are on the six ages of the world. CC 123 C pp. 601-611; On the relationship between the versions see Th. Mommsen’s Bede edition in: *MGH SS AA (Auctores antiquissimi)* 13, 1898, pp. 247-327 and the preface of “*Bedae Opera de Temporibus*”. Ed. Charles W. Jones. Cambridge, Mass. 1943, pp. 130-167: The composition of the opera de temporibus.

<sup>9</sup> Borst, Arno: *Das Bild der Geschichte in der Enzyklopädie Isidors von Sevilla*. In: *Deutsches Archiv zur Erforschung des Mittelalters* 22. 1966, pp. 1-62. Hermannus Contractus, Hermann der Lahme (1013-1054) wrote a world chronicle, which is always transmitted along with Bede’s. See Schmale, Franz-Josef: *Die Reichenauer Weltchronik*. In: Helmut Maurer (ed.): *Die Abtei Reichenau*. Sigmaringen 1974, pp. 125-158.

<sup>10</sup> CC 123, p. 463.

universal history. The first five ages are Jewish, the sixth is the age of the church, and is concluded by the Apocalypse. Bede divides this age of Apocalypse into two parts: Apocalypse and millennium (7), and Final Judgement (8). Here, in Bede's book, the Judeo-Christian chronology achieves general acceptance. As in Isidore (and in contrast to Eusebius' Chronology, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine's "De civitate dei", all of which he makes use of), there are no longer any competing chronologies or genealogical lists in Bede. The context of Judeo-Christian world history dominates the entire cultural field. Only biblical history is valid, and is the measure of all other histories. This monopolistic theology coincides with St. Paul's internalisation of history. In Bede, too, all political history is integrated into a biblical framework. The history of the events of faith is considered to be more essential than political history. This monopolization of the history of faith and salvation is characteristic of Isidore and Bede. Unlike St. Jerome or St. Augustine, they no longer consider whether biblical chronology competes with pagan chronology. The Christian basis of chronology is established in the Middle Ages.

Bede's division of epochs in world history became plausible for two reasons: He uses the symbolic number seven, and he takes into account the fact that the Lord's return is still expected, and that, in the meantime, a new era is being consummated.

Bede works out his six ages following the scheme of Isidore's "Etymologiae":

1. The first age lasts from Adam to Noah; later it will be called "antediluvian". "From the Hebrew Bible it comprises 1656 Years, according to the Septuagint 2217; according to the statement of both, 10 generations." Bede excuses the uncertainty in his accounts as follows: "This age disappeared with the flood, just as the first age of every man usually is forgotten. Is anyone really able to remember his infancy?"<sup>11</sup> This first age is the one of birth, when God accomplished his work of six days, and when the ten generations from Adam to Noah lived. The flood took place in the year 2242 according to the Septuagint, in the year 1656 according to the Jewish Bible.

2. The second age is the period from Noah to Abraham, also making up ten generations. "This was the childhood of God's people, so to speak". It was in this period that the Hebrew language arose, according to Bede. "For in childhood man usually learns to speak."<sup>12</sup> This era begins with the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the second month after the flood, which Bede relates to the sacrament of baptism. It extends from the year 2244 (Septuagint), or 1658 (Hebrew tradition), to Terah, Abraham's father.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

3. With Abraham's birth (Septuag. 3389/Hebr. Bible 2023) the third period begins, lasting until David. It encompasses fourteen, that is 2 x 7 generations, and corresponds to the adolescence of mankind. "Therefore St. Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham, who was constituted as the father of peoples, when he received a mutated name."<sup>13</sup> This third period begins with Abraham, according to the Hebrews in the year 2023, according to the Septuagint in 3389, and ends after fourteen generations with Saul (Hebr. 2890; Septuag. 4226).

4. The fourth period, from 2950 according to the Hebrew chronology, and from 4266 according to the Septuagint, starts with the kingdom of David. It marks, for Bede, the time of the adult Jewish people. And with David the typology of Christ becomes apparent. In this fourth era, not only does the Jewish kingdom begin, but also the reign of Christ, for David is promised that the fruit of his loins will surpass him.<sup>14</sup> With this typology the pattern of "translatio imperii" is extended. It will later play an important role in the conceptual continuity of antique and Christian history. The reign rising with David is contained, however, in the fourth period of the world, for this period comes to an end with the Babylonian captivity of God's people. In the year 3363 (Hebr.) or 4711 (Septuag.) the king Zedekiah was born. His reign ends when the Jews are deported to Babylon.

5. The fifth era begins with the Babylonian captivity and lasts until the birth of Christ. Like the preceding eras, this period includes fourteen generations. According to Bede, Israel is now senile and exhausted, and the Hebrew people suffer from numerous diseases.<sup>15</sup> This era begins in 3337 / 4725 and ends in 3962. Thus, approximately 4000 years have passed since the world's creation. Within this framework, Bede is able to introduce pagan history into his world history of revelation, and incorporates Greek and Roman history in his fourth and fifth eras of world history.

6. The sixth period, the era when the course of time moves to its summit, in order to finally end in the Sabbath of the seventh day, begins with Christ's birth. "In the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of the reign of Caesar Augustus, 27 years after the deaths of Cleopatra and Antony, when Egypt was made a province, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the 193<sup>rd</sup> Olympiad, in the year 752 from the foundation of Rome, when the world's people were calmed by force and the Caesar made peace

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. With the introduction of circumcision, Abraham received a new name; he was no longer called Abram, but Abraham, father of a multitude. Gen. 17:5.

<sup>14</sup> C. C. 123, p. 475: "Quarta mundi aetas, non solum inchoato gentis Judae imperio, sed et cum innouata promissione, quae patribus olim data est, imperii Christiani sunt exordium, jurante Domino David veritate, de fructus ventris ejus sedere super sedem ejus."

<sup>15</sup> CC123 B. p. 464: "Quinta quasi senilis aetas, a transmigratione Babylonis usque in adventum Domini Salvatoris in carnem, generationibus et ipsa XIII, porro annis DLXXXIII extenta. In qua, ut gravi senectute fessa, malis crebrioribus plebs Hebraea quassatur."

according to God's order, then Christ Jesus, God's son, sanctified the 6<sup>th</sup> period with his advent."<sup>16</sup>

This sixth period is distinguished from all preceding ones. It is the last earthly period; a series of generations is not identified. It will only be concluded with the return of the Lord. "In the 6<sup>th</sup> period, which is occurring nowadays, there is no secure series of generations or times. When this era perishes, the whole world will die. Those who will survive those laborious and painful times and happily defeat death will be admitted to the 7<sup>th</sup> era, the period of the eternal Sabbath. Here they will await the 8<sup>th</sup>, the era of resurrection, in which they will reign together with God."<sup>17</sup>

Following St. John's Apocalypse precisely, Bede divides the future ages into a millenarian era and a Final Judgement. Writing in the year 729, he does not speculate about the ending point of the sixth era. He even rejects the idea that the world is to last for six thousand years before the thousand-year final reign begins. He refuses the analogy of the six days of creation and the millennia of world history: "What is even worse - some hope, concerning the 7<sup>th</sup> day when God rested from his labour, that after 6000 years of labour and pains in this earthly life they could reign together with Christ happily and with much beatitude in their eternal lives."<sup>18</sup>

Bede does not however turn absolutely against the concept of millennium. He is only irked by a mechanical typology of numbers and by the frivolous reckoning of God's final return. According to him, it is appropriate for Christians to wait quietly for God's return. There are only two indicators of Christ's proximate coming, namely "when the Jews believe in Christ, and the reign and the persecution of the Antichrist. Three half-years before that event the church will be strengthened in her faith. In order that the world will not be surprised and unprepared for this persecution, the two prophets Enoch and Elias will rise. They will convert the Jewish people to the grace of faith, tame that crowd, and lead it into the company of the elected and invincible."<sup>19</sup> Bede identifies these two prophets with the two prophets in St. John's Apocalypse (Rev. 11:3-13)<sup>20</sup> who preach for 1260 days as the witnesses of the true God.

<sup>16</sup> CC 123b, p. 495.

<sup>17</sup> CC 123b, p. 464.

<sup>18</sup> CC 123b, p. 536.

<sup>19</sup> CC 123b, p. 538. "Sed ne haec improvisa ueniens omnes passim quos inparatos inuenerit, involverat, Enoch et Heliam maximos prophetas et doctores ante hujus exortum uenturos in mundum, qui Israheliticam plebem ad fidei convertant gratiam, atque ad pressuram tanti turbinis in partem electorum insuperabilem reddant."

<sup>20</sup> These two prophets are killed and their bodies are left laying for three and a half days - "But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up to their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up hither!' And in the sight of their foes they went up in heaven in a cloud." (Rev. 11:11f.) Bede seems to read this passage as "three half



Then the Antichrist appears. Bede keeps silent about the thousand-year reign to follow immediately after the rule of the Antichrist. But he sees the day of the Last Judgement, which comes like a thief in the night, as the advent of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1f.). The new heaven and the new earth become visible after a fire purifies the world. “When a great strong fire covers the surface of the world and the resuscitated unjust cannot conceal themselves from the sublime, it is set that they expect their sentence from their judge when they are still on earth, surrounded by fire. Who dares to predict whether those who are not purified are burnt or condemned to eternal fire?”<sup>21</sup>

Only at the end of the apocalyptic seventh period will the glory of the Lord finally appear in the eighth era. Here, beyond the six typological days of creation and the apocalyptic period, the heavenly Sabbath will be fulfilled. Bede justifies this eighth period typologically with Christ’s resurrection. The day of resurrection is the eighth day of creation, the day when Christ descended to the dead to redeem them, and then arose himself. “The Prophets said of the mystery of resurrection, that the 8<sup>th</sup> day truly will be called singular and great. For the 8<sup>th</sup> day follows after all the days of the preceding period; thus after the 7 of the Sabbath follows the 8 which is itself the 1 following the 7. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the whole history (*totius saeculi*) was the 1<sup>st</sup>, meaning that it did not have 7 precedents to whom it was the 8<sup>th</sup>, and thus singularly was the first, thus the 8<sup>th</sup> day is not only uniquely great but also the day of the future resurrection. For after the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the Sabbath, closely follows the 8<sup>th</sup> day, which has no following days to which it could be the first, but it remains forever in the celestial light. This day was seen in the prophet’s vision when he said: ‘One day in your halls goes beyond a thousand other days’. So when we read the 8 in the scripture, we know mystically that it has to be understood as both day and eternity; for the Lord, too, rose up from the dead on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, i.e. after the 7<sup>th</sup>, the Sabbath. Hence we will not only resurrect after the days of that volatile 7<sup>th</sup> period, but also, after the often-mentioned 7<sup>th</sup>, on one and the same day in the 8<sup>th</sup> period. And this day of life lasted, lasts, and will last for ever.”<sup>22</sup>

Hence, after the seventh period of the world, eternity will follow. This new eighth day of rest, introduced by Christ, replaces the Sabbath. This eighth day is the Christian Sunday and prefigures eternal happiness: “And this is the 8<sup>th</sup> age which the believers shall always love and long for, and in which Christ will lead the souls, given incorruptible bodies, to the perception of their heavenly king and to the contemplation of his divine majesty.”<sup>23</sup>

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days”... On the history of the two prophets Enoch and Elijah cf. Malvenda, Thomas: *De Antichristo libri XII*. Rome 1604.

<sup>21</sup> CC 123b, p. 451.

<sup>22</sup> CC 123b, pp. 543f.

<sup>23</sup> CC 123b, p. 542.

### 3. JOACHIM OF FIORE'S (1132-1202) TYPOLOGY OF THE COMING TIME

#### a) Topics of Political Apocalypticism

The story of the famous Calabrian abbot is an example of pseudepigraphical efficacy. The wealth of writings and dicta falsely attributed to him widely surpasses the corpus of his actual writings.<sup>24</sup> This fact speaks for the concealed intellectual power of his ideas. They must have had a considerable historical potential, even if their power was still hidden at the beginning of Joachim's career. Joachim is *the* example of political theology. The political efficacy of Joachim's ideas makes it clear that theological imagination and desire, such as the desire for a 'spiritual reign', cannot be measured against a political 'realism' of any kind. The measuring stick of political theology is desire. The space of this desire is a fantastical interiority; the imagination creates its own inner world. In this fantastical world, political redemption is already visible to the enlightened, and their internally evident ideas long for outward political realization. The ideas of the enlightened are plausible not for pragmatic reasons, but only because they represent a common desire. This is true especially because the inner worlds of desire and pious fantasy are not restricted by the external limits of reality.

The imagination outlines its aim, and this aim determines political action. But the imaginary goal has to be internally plausible. Not every fantasy is plausible. Here, too, political theology does not deal with pragmatic questions, but rather with questions of the inner evidence and plausibility of imagination. The force of evidence depends on the specific typology used in political rhetoric. Thus the extraordinary effectiveness of Joachim's political spirituality lies in his variation of the type of Christian redemption (Rom. 8:16f.): "When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." This type of redemption, the combination of suffering and glory, was implied in St. Paul's

<sup>24</sup> See Russo, Francesco: *Bibliographia Giochimita*. Florence 1944. According to Grundmann, Herbert: *Kirchenfreiheit und Kaisermacht um 1190 in der Sicht Joachims von Fiore*. *Gesammelte Aufsätze II*, *Schriften MGH* 25, 2, p. 364 "überaus fehlerhaft" ("extremely incorrect"). Cf. Hirsch-Reich, Beatrice: *Eine Bibliographie über Joachim von Fiore und dessen Nachwirkung*. *Bibliographie und Ergänzung. Recherches de Théol. ancienne et médiévale* 24, 1954, pp. 27-49. Reeves, Marjorie: *Prophecy in the Late Middle-Ages*, pp. 518ff. Oxford 1969. Grundmann, Herbert: *Ausgewählte Aufsätze*. Vol. 2, *Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. Vol. 25. 2 Stuttgart 1977.

entwinement of Christ's death and resurrection. It was repeated typologically in St. John's Apocalypse, which joined the suffering of the young Church to the vision of the divine return in glory. For Joachim and his movement, this basic figure of suffering and coming glory was repeated in the contemporary church. The suffering of the church in the present will be brought to an end by a spiritual reign.

The historical type of suffering and glory started from a situation of suffering. In the apocalyptic version of this figure, suffering is intensified to the point of being unbearable so as to legitimise the highest glory in the future. This conception depended on the figure of the Antichrist.<sup>25</sup> The expectation that the Lord was to return soon was also based on the logic of inner Christology. The "Christ in us", the image of our perfection, presses forward to an outward realization.

Joachim varied this concept of the Christological apocalypse in a twofold way:

1. He replaced the inner image of Christ, who, according to St. Paul, reigned in the End Times, with the image of the Trinity.
2. He applied this trinitarian theology to the whole course of history and thus ascribed a period of world history to every divine person: The Old Testament was the time of God the Father; the New Testament was the period of Christ; the thousand-year reign of the Apocalypse was the period of the Spirit to come.

This historical speculation did not alter Bede's and Isidore's concept of six periods of world history. With Joachim it became critical how earthly time was to be accomplished. This final accomplishment was to take place with the emergence of a spiritual reign. For the medieval imagination, the spiritual reign was characterised by the two powers, which, for Joachim and his followers, symbolised power in general, i.e. the Pope and the emperor. In this framework of political symbolism, the typological apocalypse of the Calabrian abbot looks like this: After the Antichrist's reign, the new vicar of the Lord will appear. He incorporates the apocalyptic reign of the thousand years (Rev. 20). His spiritual power is represented by either the spiritual or the earthly sword. The spiritual sword is the Pope; here the Joachimite

<sup>25</sup> Rauh, Horst Dieter: *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: Von Tyconius bis zum deutschen Symbolismus* Münster <sup>2</sup>1979. BGPM, Neue Folge vol. 9. Haeusler, Martin: *Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronistik*. Cologne, Vienna 1980, Ch. 9: *Das Bild des Antichristen im Mittelalter*. McGinn, Bernhard, (ed.): *Apocalyptic Spirituality. Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier*. New York 1979. Id. (ed.): *Joachim of Fiore, The Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola*. New York 1979. Id.: *Antichrist. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*. St. Francisco 1994, esp. chap. 5-8. Id.: *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Visions in the Middle Age*. New York 1979.

movement expects an "angelic pope".<sup>26</sup> This is the apocalyptic option of the Franciscan ministers.<sup>27</sup> The earthly sword is represented by the emperor or, competing with him, by the French king. The emperor - *rex romanorum* - stands in the continuity of Christian emperors since Constantine. He safeguards the church's charge of spiritual salvation and is symbolised by the eagle. The eagle follows in the tradition of the Roman eagle, but also has an apocalyptic significance: it is the symbol of the cosmic Madonna, the type of St. Mary who is "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1). This Madonna of the Aureole will trample down the dragon's head and flee into the desert of Egypt to escape the dragon's persecutions. On this flight she is "given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. 12:14). Here she rests "in the shadow of His wings" (Ps. 57:1). The Madonna of the Aureole and the eagle are thus symbols of the emperor's universal reign.

The French king is the counterpart of the emperor in their symbolic competition for spiritual dominion. He is the king of the lily. The lily-king could invoke the Song of Songs. He could interpret himself "as a lily among brambles" (Songs 2:2), appearing in tender beauty against the gloomy background of the Antichrist. Thus the French king also situated himself in Marian typology, for it was St. Mary who was traditionally identified as a lily among brambles.<sup>28</sup>

The symbols woven together in Joachimite theology exerted a considerable disruptive force. The prophetic symbols instituted a field of political theology in which only one institution could ever claim legitimate rule. He who was not integrated into the legitimate rule automatically took on the role of the Antichrist. If there was a false pope, the emperor or the French king became the defenders of the true spiritual reign. If there was an angelic pope, the emperor and the king became Antichrists. The angelic pope could also collaborate with the French king, who had appointed the true angelic pope. The same right was claimed from the German side, the

<sup>26</sup> S. Töpfer, Bernhard: Das kommende Reich des Friedens. Zur Entwicklung chiliastischer Zukunftshoffnungen im Hochmittelalter. Berlin 1964, esp. pp. 154-210: Friedenskaiser und Engelspapst.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Miethke, Jochen: Ockams Weg zur Sozialphilosophie. Berlin 1969. Benz, Ernst: Ecclesia spiritualis, Stuttgart 1934. Reeves, Marjorie: Prophecy in the Late Middle Ages, Oxford 1969. Grundmann, Herbert: Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter. Untersuchung über die geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und über die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik. Hildesheim 1961.

<sup>28</sup> On the political symbols of the eagle and the lily see Kampers, Franz: Kaiserprophetien und Kaisersagen im Mittelalter. Munich 1895, p. 122.

side of the Empire. Dante's universalistic political theology and Petrarch's imperial hopes were based on these spiritual claims of the Empire.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the Joachimite movement opened up a field of typological apocalypse, which made it possible to interpret occidental spirituality politically. This symbolism established the dramatic spiritual force of the idea of a coming third reign.

#### b) Joachim's Spiritual Typology of the Two Testaments<sup>30</sup>

The entire thinking of the Joachimite movement is characterised by typology. This typology is based on the Bible and was used by Joachim himself in his "Liber concordiae Novi et Veteris Testamenti", in his "Psalterium decem chordarum", and in his "Expositio in Apocalypsin". The prophetic dimensions of this typology then developed in the writings arising from his movement: "Vaticinium Sibyllae Erithrae"(1251-1254), "De oneribus prophetarum" (1251-1254), "Expositio Abbatis Joachimi super Sibillis et Merlino" (1254), and "Prophetia Abbatis Joachimi Ordinis Cisterciensis transmissa Henrico Imperatori Allemanniae de tribus statibus sanctae ecclesiae"(1250-1260).<sup>31</sup>

Joachim himself characterised the connection between the Old and New Testaments as follows: "We have to construct an altar together with Elijah. The earth must be beneath so that the water can be located above. We expect a fire from heaven that consumes both earth and water. We expect the spirit of insight for it evacuates and consumes the earthly surface of the letters, which are made of earth and speak about the earth, and it sips and changes the doctrine of the gospel. For the water the priest Nehemiah<sup>32</sup> placed on the altar was changed into fire, and the water of the pitchers at the wedding of Cana was transformed into wine. And why? So that the flesh which is mixed

<sup>29</sup> On the prophecies for and against the empire see Bezold, Friedrich von: Zur deutschen Kaisersage. In: Sitzungsberichte der bayr. Akad. d. Wiss. 1884, pp. 560ff. Preuß, Hans: Die Vorstellung vom Antichrist im späten Mittelalter, bei Luther und in der konfessionellen Polemik. Leipzig 1906. Löffler, Klaus: Der Engelspapst. In: Deutsche Rundschau 190 (1922). Stadelmann, Rudolf: Vom Geist des ausgehenden Mittelalters. DVJ Buchreihe vol. 15, Halle 1929, pp. 59-66. Grundmann, Herbert: Die Papstprophetien des Mittelalters. In: Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 19, 1929, pp. 77ff. Dante und Joachim von Fiore. Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch 14, 1932. pp. 210-256. Peuckert, Will Erich: Die große Wende. Luther und das apokalyptische Saeculum. Hamburg 1948. Kurze, Dietrich: Johannes Lichtenberger (d. 1503). Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Prophetie und Astrologie. Lübeck and Hamburg 1960. Reeves, Marjorie und Hirsch-Reich, Beatrice: The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore. Oxford 1972, pp. 316-329: Joachim's Figurae and Dante's Symbolism. McGinn, Bernhard: The Calabrian Abbot Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought. New York, London 1985, Joachim, the Symbolist. pp. 101-123.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lubac, Henri de: Exegèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture. Paris 1959-1964. T. II, Paris 1961, pp. 437-558.

<sup>31</sup> Titles and dates from Reeves, Marjorie: Prophecy in the Late Middle Ages. Oxford 1969, pp. 518ff.

<sup>32</sup> 2 Macc. 1:18-36

with the letters will be consumed and disappear completely. For every fleshly understanding will be inane when faced with the spirit. In this work it is our task to prepare the altar of the Old Testament for the gift of the almighty God and thus build a receptacle to receive the water of the New Testament. Therefore both have to be concordant like two circles visibly fit together. They expect the invisible spirit to come from the third heaven, which directs its spiritual fire to the perfect and evacuates what is imperfect.”<sup>33</sup>

This is a remarkable and characteristic combination, intertwining several typological levels of interpretation: the story of Elijah's plea for rain (1 Kings 18) is related to the relationship between the New and the Old Testaments, as well as to the motif of spirit and letter in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 3:6). This thought complex also alludes to the interference between spiritual matter and gross matter, between the celestial waters of the first day of creation and the earthly waters of the original separation of water and earth. The Old Testament represents the earthly altar of Elijah as well as the letter of the Holy Scripture. The altar is the receptacle, the *potentia passiva*, as it were, for the spiritual water. Water thus has the spiritual meaning of the waters of the New Testament's teachings, with which the Old Testament is bathed and fertilised. Both Testaments, the Old and the New, are consumed by the fire of the Spirit.

The literal meaning of both Testaments is spiritualised; in light of the intellectual spirit, both Testaments appear in typological concordance. In this piece it also becomes clear how Joachim's interpretation of the Old and New Testaments is closely aligned with St. Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament. Since only the New Testament can reveal the meaning of the Old Testament, the meaning of the concordance between them will only be apparent to those who are bestowed with the Holy Spirit. Joachim demonstrates this with the typology of numbers and correspondences. “We have said that the concordance is essentially a likeness between the

<sup>33</sup> “Construendum est nobis cum Elia altare de terra ipsa: terra collocanda inferius, ut aqua desuper locari queat; expectantibus nobis ignem de coelo, qui consumat terram et aquam; expectantibus spiritualementem intellectum, quia terrenam illam superficiem littere, que de terra est et de terra loquitur evacuando consumat: et nichilominus evangeliam doctrinam, designatam hic in aqua lambendo commutet: secundum quod aqua illa crassa quam posuit in altari Neemias sacerdos conversa est in ignem; aut sicut in Chana Galilee aqua ydriarum commutata est in vinum. Et hoc quare? ut caro que interposita est consumpta usquequaque deficiat: ut omnis carnalis intelligentia a facie spiritus inanescat. Oportet inquam nos in hoc opere altarem testamenti prioris pro dono omnipotentis Dei ordinate componere: fundentes et statuantes adsuper aquam testamenti noui, ut aliud inter aliud, acsi rota infra rotam inesse per concordiam uideatur; invisibilem autem spiritum expectare desuper qui, ueluti de tertio celo, ignem suum dirigere: ut, ueniente quod perfectum est, evacuetur quod ex parte est.” Liber de Concordia Noui ac Veteris Testamenti. Ed. Daniel, Randolph. Philadelphia 1983, pp. 60f. Liber Concordiae, Venice 1519, fol 7r, cf. Reeves Prophecies p. 17.

proportions of the New and the Old Testaments. This holds true for numbers, not for dignity. The relations that can be found form a face-to-face similarity: Person to person, order to order, war to war. This is true for Abraham and Zechariah, Sarah and Elizabeth, Isaac and John the Baptist, Jesus as a man and Jacob. There are twelve patriarchs and as many apostles, and many other similarities of that kind. Whenever these similarities occur, it is not an allegorical meaning, but rather it is certain that these similarities constitute the concordance of the two Testaments. It is certain that one spiritual meaning grows out of both Testaments.”<sup>34</sup>

This is above all a defence against the reproach that Joachim allegorises arbitrarily. He claims to interpret typologically and spiritually, thereby spiritualising the letters of Scripture in the light of typology. His reasoning derives from speculative trinitarian theology and is supported by the scripture that says, “the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). This Spirit alone, interpreted as the Spirit of the Holy Trinity, reveals the true meaning of Holy Scripture: “There are namely, if we understand it correctly, two signs which, however, signify but one *significatum*. We believe in one living God, the first is the Father, to whom especially the Old Testament refers. One is the Son, to whom especially the New Testament belongs. One is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both, to him especially pertains the mystical intellection, for he, as I said, proceeds from both.”<sup>35</sup>

The fact that both signs, the New and Old Testaments, signify the same spirit, is not, according to Joachim who differs here from St. Paul, because the New Testament interprets itself through the Old one. Joachim rather claims a particular spiritual status for himself as the interpreter of both Testaments. His proper interpretation will completely extinguish the earthly nature of the letter and spiritualise it. As an example of thoroughly spiritualised trinitarian exegesis, Joachim cites the Kosmokrator’s words from St. John’s Apocalypse (Rev. 1:8; Rev. 21:6): “I am the Alpha (A) and the Omega (ω)”. His interpretation reminds us of cabalistic methods. For Joachim, Alpha (A) and Omega (ω) are signatures of the Holy Trinity: “The first definition is signified by the ‘A’. It signifies the triangle. The second is

<sup>34</sup> “Concordantiam proprie esse dicimus similitudinem eque proportionis novi ac ueteris testamenti: eque dico quo ad numerum, non quo ad dignitatem: cum uidelicet persona et persona, ordo et ordo, bellum et bellum ex paritate quadam mutuis se vultibus intuentur: ut pote Abraham et Zacharias, Sara et Helisabeth: Isaak et Johannes baptista, Jacob et homo Christus Jesus, duodecim patriarchae et numeri eiusdem apostoli: etsi quod simile: quod totum ubicumque occurrit, non pro sensu allegorico sed pro concordia duorum testamentorum facere. Certum est unum vero spiritualement intellectum ex utroque procedere.” ed. Daniel p. 62, Ven. 7r,v.

<sup>35</sup> Ed. Daniel, p. 62, Ven. 7v.

designated by the 'ω', where a twig occurs in the middle of the two. From both we can suitably learn, for both letters belong to the Catholic faith."<sup>36</sup>

c) The Three Ages of the World

If the New Testament opens up the meaning of the Old, but both are only fully revealed by the light of the Spirit, then a third status is required for the perfect exegesis of God's revelation. It is just this that Joachim claims to introduce when he outlines his spiritualist and historical synopsis of the divine plan of creation. God's work, he explains, is empty for his readers, "if they do not understand how everything has been created in wisdom, and if they ignore the great work God has chosen in his will. Thus there are two: one of which is not begotten, the other is begotten. Two Testaments are established, the first of which, as we said above, belongs to the Father, the second to the Son, one to each of them. Furthermore, the spiritual intellect is one which proceeds from both, and it pertains to the Holy Spirit."<sup>37</sup>

This speculative insight is temporalised in outward creation. The typology of the divine Trinity requires three steps of spiritual history and hence three Testaments. "The letter of the Old Testament pertains to the married, the letter of the New Testament to the clergymen; the rules to which the monks are subjected pertain to the orders of monks."<sup>38</sup> Thus the monastic rules of St. Benedict are equated with the two biblical Testaments; and it will become clear for Joachim that the monastic orders are the representatives of the Spirit's third age. "Since the three divine persons are equal and equally eternal, it is due to this similitude of the persons that the first stage must be

<sup>36</sup> "Prima diffinitio designatur in A. Quod est elementum trinangulum. Secunda designatur in ω, in quo virgula de medio duarum procedit. Utrumque ergo scire oportuit: quia utrumque plenarie pertinet ad catholicam fidem." Ed. Daniel p. 80, Ven. fol. 10r. On the interpretation of this cabalist passage see Reeves/Hirsch-Reich: *The figurae of Joachim of Fiore*. Oxford 1972, pp. 47ff. It is important in this context to also describe Joachim's peculiar interpretation of the tetragram as IEUE. This IEUE is composed of IE = Father, EU = Son and UE = Spirit. Cf. McGinn, Bernhard: *The Calabrian Abbot Joachim of Fiore*, p. 170. Joachim's cabala may be indebted to "ebreus quidam Petrus nomine", (Ibid. p. 196), a converted Jew. Cf. Beatrice Hirsch-Reich: *Die Quelle der Trinitätskreise von Joachim von Fiore und Dante*. *Sophia* 22, 1954, pp. 170.178. Moore, G.: *Notes on the Divine Name JAHVH*. *American Journal of Theology* 12, 1908, pp. 47-52. On Joachim's relationship to Jewish culture see Grundmann, Herbert: *Biographie Joachims von Fiore und Rainers von Ponza*. In: Grundmann, Herbert: *Ausgewählte Aufsätze II*, Stuttgart 1977, pp. 255-360, esp. 323-340. *Schriften der MGH* 25, 2. Hirsch-Reich, Beatrice Maria: *Joachim von Fiore und das Judentum*. In: *Miscellanea medievalea 4: Judentum im Mittelalter*. Ed. Paul Wilpert. Berlin 1966, pp. 228- 363. See chap. 3, 4: *The Cabbala of the Name of Jesus*.

<sup>37</sup> Ed. Daniel. pp. 78f., Ven. fol. 10r.

<sup>38</sup> Ed. Daniel, p. 79; Ven. fol. 10r.



set from Adam to Christ, the second from the King Josiah up to our present, and the third from St. Benedict up to the consummation of time.”<sup>39</sup>

Clearly Joachim does not have in mind the establishment of precise borders between his three ages. He rather conceives of three dynamic moments in world history, which follow upon and overlap with each other. Adam and Christ are paralleled typologically, while the third anti-type remains open. The anti-type of the last king of Israel, Josiah, is also not specified. If this anti-type is to be the last king of any earthly reign, then this typology contains a political prophecy against the last emperor or king. The third reign, for Joachim, always begins with the spiritual reform of monasticism, whose type is St. Benedict, the founder of occidental monasticism. This third age of monastic spiritual reign will last until the end of the world.

Joachim temporally and typologically varied the sequence of his ages and illustrated his ideas in accordance with his symbolic thought, with schemes and diagrams.<sup>40</sup> But even if the dates and persons vary, his idea of a threefold world history remains the same. In his diagrams, the history of the people of Israel is the Old Testament’s type of the world’s spiritual history. This type is repeated in the time of Jesus and his apostles and is to be fulfilled in the spiritual monastic reign (*Figure 1*).

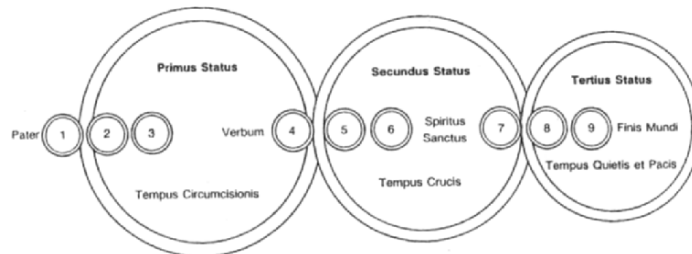


Figure 1. Joachim's three Epochs

<sup>39</sup> “Quia igitur personae deitatis tres unde coaeternae sibi et coaequales, secundum hoc quod hoc pertinet ad similitudinem ipsarum personarum primus status tenendus est ab Adam usque ad Christum: Secundus ab Osia Rege usque ad praesens, tertius a beato Benedicto usque ad persumptionem saeculi.” (Ed. Daniel, p.79, Ven. 10r). On the monastic interests of Joachim: Wessley, Stephen E.: Joachim of Fiore and Monastic Reform. New York 1990.

<sup>40</sup> Reeves, Marjorie and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich: The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore. Oxford 1972.

When the era of the political reign of the priests comes to an end in Joachim's times, the spiritual monastic reign is to begin. Joachim specifies his interpretation historically and identifies his immediate future as part of the coming spiritual reign: "To neglect the beginnings of the ages and just to emphasise their specificities: the first is from the Hebrews Isaac and Jacob up to Zechariah, the Father of John, or rather to John himself and to Christ Jesus; the second from that time to our present; the third from our present time to the end."<sup>41</sup>

#### d) The Reign of the Spirit and its Political Implications

Joachim's characterization of his present day as already being part of the third spiritual reign put his age under a considerable amount of theoretical – later even political – pressure. The new age of spirituality was only to appear externally once the political reign of the clergy had come to an end. Joachim and his followers dreamt of the spiritual reign of an "angelic Pope".<sup>42</sup> In any case, the existing institutions were being given notice; they had to be changed. If they were able to reform themselves, the new spiritual rulers could accept them; if not, they were considered to be institutions of the Antichrist. As the sovereign of the third reign, the spiritual power had already judged the institutions of the second, papal and imperial, reign.

In this situation everything depended on the anticipated rise of the third spiritual reign. This of course was to happen in a typological way, following the pattern of the Apocalypse, with the revelation of an "eternal evangel" (Rev. 14:6) proclaimed by an angel in the last days preceding the thousand-years reign. In 1254, the Franciscan Gerardus de Borgo San Donino published an interpretation of Joachimite texts, the now lost "Introductorius".<sup>43</sup> Here he stated in the spirit of Joachim that the Old and the New Testaments were definitively completed, and that all authority had been passed on to the Eternal Evangel and the Holy Spirit. Gerardus considered Joachim's three principle works, the "Concordia Veteris et Novi Testamenti", the "Psalterium decem chordarum", and the "Expositio in Apocalypsin",<sup>44</sup> to be the canonical scriptures of this Evangel.<sup>45</sup>

Gerardus' pronouncement of the Joachimite "Eternal Evangel" provoked a considerable scandal, and Joachim's writings were consequently re-examined. A now lost trinitarian tract had already been condemned by the Lateran Council because of differences between Joachim's and Peter Lombard's teachings. Gerardus' "Introductorius" was censored in 1255 by a

<sup>41</sup> Daniel, p. 79, Ven. fol. 10r.

<sup>42</sup> See Denifle, Heinrich: *Das Evangelium aeternum und die Commission von Anagni*. Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters. Vol. 1, 1885, pp. 59-164.

<sup>43</sup> See Denifle, lc, pp. 55-70.

<sup>44</sup> Ed. Ven. 1527, repr. Frankfurt 1964.

<sup>45</sup> Denifle lc, p. 59. Reeves, *Prophecies in the late Middle Ages*, p. 60.

commission in Anagni and was condemned by Pope Alexander IV.<sup>46</sup> At first Joachim's writings remained undisturbed, but in 1260 the provincial Council of Arles condemned the whole "pernicious doctrine" of the three periods as they were described by the Joachimites, along with Joachim's writings. The records of the council summarise the teaching of Joachim and the Joachimites to the point:

"Those Joachimites need to construct a chain of triads. Thus the time of the Holy Spirit will soon be revealed along with a great law. At the base of their error lies their opinion regarding the holiest and super-celestial triad of the unfathomable, individual persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That upon which all truth is built, there they try to establish their vain error. But no doctrine is so pestiferous and false that there is not any truth mixed into it. With this highest truth they combine and intertwine triads, saying that three periods or orders of names succeed in illuminating the ages. The first is the order of the married, which blossomed in the time of the Father or in the Old Testament. The second is the era of the clergy, flourishing in the time of grace through the Son; it is the middle state of the world. The third state is the order of the monks, which will flourish through the Holy Spirit in the time of greater grace. To this they add another triad of the holy doctrine. The Old and New Testaments would be followed by an eternal gospel of the Holy Spirit. Hence they add a third, fantastic wheel to the two prophetic wheels [of the Testaments], and they dare to claim with their blasphemous and impious mouths, that the spiritual gospel of the Son is only literal, compared with the gospel of the Spirit. They divide and distinguish the whole extent of time into three ages, the first of which, the spirit and the age of Moses, they attribute to the Father. The second, which they call spirit of grace, they attribute to the Son; it was to have lasted 1260 years. The third, which they call the time of enlarged grace and of revealed truth, they attribute to the Holy Spirit. To this time they refer 'the gospel' of the Son, that the Spirit will come, 'who will teach you all' truth (John 14:26). What was concealed in the holy day of Pentecost and what has been fulfilled by the apostles and the following apostolic men they claim to have already been exposed by the catholic doctors. They also add to their teaching a certain triad of life, which varies from what they said about time. First they have proposed a time in which men lived according to flesh. Second they interpose a period between flesh and spirit, reaching to the present time. From this there is to follow another one, in which they will live according to the spirit, and this will last until the end of the world."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Denifle *lc*, pp. 88f.

<sup>47</sup> Mansi, Goivanni Domenico: *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova, et Amplissima Collectio*. Vol. 23. Venice 1779. Col. 1002f.

This report summarises and precisely describes the core of the Joachimite doctrine. It also makes the historical dynamic of his concept particularly evident. The council clearly recognised the destructive and revolutionary force of the Joachimite symbolism for the 13<sup>th</sup> century church, and consequently prohibited the “Concordance of the New and the Old Testaments” in particular. “Since the triads are intertwined and connected which each other, what else follows from that perfidious and pernicious ‘Concordia’ if not the devaluation of Christ’s redemption and the end of ecclesiastical sacraments?”<sup>48</sup> For this reason the council forbade the pronouncement and dissemination of this doctrine by mouth and in writing. “So that this pest and cancer will not spread in the church and that our subjects do not make use of it and will not receive it sub anathematis interminatione prohibemus”.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless the influence of Joachim’s theory of the three states of world history was widespread. Equipped with the symbolic power of God’s Holy Trinity, whose traces were stamped into all structures of history, this theory was itself the type of a spiritual revolution, which declared every present to be surpassed by the divine spirit, and longed for a new spiritual future.

To what extent this spirit must be considered revealed and prophetic, or whether or not it is at mankind’s disposal, remains open. One can claim every theology of reform to be Joachimite. Every revolution must then be interpreted in the spirit of the Calabrian abbot, as delegitimising present institutions and expecting new ones to only be legitimised spiritually. In this respect, endeavours like the Rosicrucian movement are born of a Joachimite as well as of an apocalyptic spirit.<sup>50</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was not the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Col. 1003.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Col. 1004.

<sup>50</sup> A selection of literature on Joachimism: Potestà, Gian Luca (ed.): *Il Profetismo Gioachimita tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*. Genoa 1991. Reeves, Marjorie and Gold, Warwick: *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford 1987. Kestenberg-Gladstein, R.: *The Third Reich: A Fifteenth-Century Polemic Against Joachimism, and its Background*. In: West, Delno C.: *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought. Essays in the Influence of the Calabrian Prophet*. New York 1975, vol. II, pp. 559-569. Benz, Ernst: *Ecclesia Spirituality. Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der Franziskanischen Reformation*. Stuttgart 1934. Taubes, Jacob: *Abendländische Apokalyptik*. Bern 1947. Töpfer, Bernhard: *Die Entwicklung der chiliastischen Zukunftserwartungen*. Berlin 1964. Cohen, Norman: *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. New York 1970. De Lubac, Henri: *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*. I. *De Joachim a Schelling*. II. *De Saint-Simon à nos jours*. Paris, Namur 1979, 1981. Töpfer, Bernhard: *Das kommende Reich des Friedens*. Berlin 1964. Firth, Katharine R.: *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645*. Oxford 1979. Patrides, C. A. and Wittreich, Joseph (eds.): *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature. Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions*. Manchester, 1984. Ottavia, Niccoli: *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*. (1987), tr. by Lydia G. Cohane. Princeton N.J., 1990. Reeves, Marjorie (ed.): *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*. Oxford 1992.

last to cite Joachimite ideas when he exclaimed in his “Education of the Human Race” (§ 86): “It will surely come, the time of a new eternal evangel which is promised to us in the elementary books of the New Testament”. But he also warned of confessing that spirit at the wrong time (§ 68): “Yet beware, thou scholar of more forward capacity, who frettest and fumsest over the last page of thy Primer: beware lest thy weaker fellow scholars mark what thou dost divine or discern!”<sup>51</sup>

#### 4. DANIEL’S VISIONS AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

##### a) Isaiah’s History of the World and Daniel’s Four Kingdoms

History is always defined by its beginning and its end. Only if its end is perceptible can the meaning of an age be determined. Only if events harmonise into a series with a recognizable orientation, can a historical fact become a sign. By becoming a sign, an event is made meaningful. That is why history, and especially universal history, receives its meaning from its end.

Jewish, Christian, and Muslim histories receive their meaning from the Last Judgement, in which unjustified power and arrogance is to be punished by the last judge according to the measure of faith and obedience. This final judgement contains the meaning of all events in world history; it holds the meaning of all meanings in history. The final judgement is therefore part of the Western concept of history, since judgement alone gives meaning to the fantastical anticipation of the end of history, and makes our present understandable. The end of history gives meaning to the present; it is the measure of the lives of individuals and groups. Hoping for the final judgement is the only meaning in the personal history of the suffering innocent, whose absence of guilt is to be finally made apparent.

Since the ‘Babylonian Captivity’ of the Jewish people, since Isaiah discovered *Yahweh*, not only as the God of the Jewish people, but also as the cosmic creator, the idea had been growing that it was this cosmic God who was finally to redeem his people from slavery and reveal them as ‘God’s own people’. Isaiah praised God’s grandeur as the cosmic ruler, singing: “Who hath measured the waters with the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens with his palm?” (Is. 40:12) “Lift up your eyes on high, and see, who hath created these things: who bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names: by the greatness of his might and strength,

<sup>51</sup> Trans. in: Zimmern, Helen: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. His Life and His Works. London 1878, p. 426.

and power, not one of them was missing.” (Is. 40:26) “He that bringeth the searchers of secrets to nothing, that hath made the judges of the earth as vanity” (Is. 40:23).

This cosmic God, Isaiah says consolingly, will redeem his people, God’s servant: “Behold my servant, I will uphold him: my elect, my soul delighted to him: I have given my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles” (Is. 42:1) “Thus saith the Lord God that created the heavens, and stretched them out: That established the earth: and the things that spring out of it: that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that tread thereon. I the Lord have called thee in justice, and taken thee by the hand, and preserved thee. And I have given thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Is. 42:5,6).

It was Isaiah’s vision in exile, that this ‘servant Israel’, the elected people, the light of the Gentiles, would return to Jerusalem, to that Jerusalem which was the light of all people, and which would clearly show the glory of the Lord’s chosen people: “Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentile shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising.” (Is. 60:1-3)

In Jerusalem’s glory the Lord will judge the assembled peoples, and his salvation will appear: “Who is [...] this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” (Is. 63:1) “I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me: I have trampled on them in my indignation, and have trodden them down in my wrath”. (Is. 63:3) The judgement, which already in Isaiah appears as a judgement of wrath, will free the Lord’s people from oppression. In the suffering servant the elementary topos of suffering, redemption, and glory becomes clear, to which the judgement is necessarily joined. For only with the judgement will God’s final glory appear, and only through the final judgement will it become obvious who the just are.

“O that thou wouldst rend the heaven, and wouldst come down: the mountains would melt away at thy presence. They would melt as the burning of fire, the waters would burn with fire, that thy name might be known to thy enemies: that the nations might tremble at thy presence. When thou shalt do wonderful things, we shall not bear them”. (Is. 64:1-3)

It is probably impossible to overestimate the meaning of this prophetic text, whose impact is unaffected by the fact that it was written by three different authors. Isaiah’s prophecies contain the discovery of world history and the first claim of a meaning for the world. This meaning is still concealed but will finally become visible when the creator appears. This

Lord is simultaneously creator, Messiah, and judge of the world. The identity of creator, Messiah and judge is decisive, for it changes natural time into history. What the creator and judge ‘meant’, that which makes up the concealed meaning of time, will only become clear at the end of the world, and cannot already be experienced in the present time. Staring at the present causes blindness. Without history’s end in a final judgement, the present is nothing but meaningless suffering.

It seems that Isaiah was the first to come up with the idea that history does not proceed according to the natural pattern of becoming and vanishing, but relies rather on the topos of concealment and revelation. This topos was born from the suffering of a people hoping for its apotheosis. Here the type of God’s battered servant shows itself, the type of the Jewish people, but also the type of Christ and the type of the Christian people longing for their Lord’s return. In the final judgement, the damnation of the oppressors is connected with the apotheosis of the sufferers. This typology of history contains a sort of reverse logic. The unjust rulers are to be punished and the just sufferers elevated. This topos exerts the force of hope and hence unfolds a considerable revolutionary energy.

Even before St. John’s Apocalypse, this messianic topos of history, which was founded by Isaiah, was radicalised in Daniel’s prophetic and apocalyptic visions. Daniel’s visions contain graphic imagery of animals functioning as symbols of political power. In Daniel, the symbolic animals are much more precisely drawn than those in St. John’s Apocalypse. Daniel’s animals can almost be considered heraldic. They have precise correspondences, making it possible to interpret them allegorically. At the same time, the animals in Daniel’s visions are associated with the concept of a final judgement. This brings Daniel close to Isaiah’s vision of God’s suffering servant, whom Daniel reinterprets as the “son of man”. Since this is also an attribute of Christ, it becomes possible to telescope the Jewish and Christian apocalypse.

The political symbolism of Daniel’s four animals also provided the possibility of an interpretation of world history. In Daniel’s vision the reign of the fourth animal ends with the judgement of the “son of man”. The vision thus suggested that all of world history was contained in four kingdoms and would end with the apocalypse (Daniel 7:1-8): “In the first year of Belshaz’zar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter. Daniel said, ‘I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a

man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, was like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, "Arise, devour much flesh." After this I looked, and saw another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast was terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

An angel tells Daniel how to interpret his dream (Dan. 7:17): "These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth." The fourth kingdom has a specific significance (Dan. 7:23): "As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down and break it to pieces." This will be the last kingdom, at the end of which the evil king will appear (Dan. 7:25): "He shall speak words against the Most High and shall wear out the saints of the Most High...and they shall be given into his hand for one time, two times, and a half time."

Then there will be the day of judgement, and the evil king will lose his power and will vanish. The kingdom, the power, and the glory will be given to the saints; the Lord will appear and with him the son of man. Thus the Lord makes his heavenly glory apparent (Dan. 7:9-10): "As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like poor wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgement and the books were opened."

Following this first judgement, the fourth beast will be slain and its body will be burnt by fire. The dominion of the other beasts will come to an end, but they will survive for a certain time until the Messiah, Isaiah's suffering servant, the son of man, appears on the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13,14): "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of the heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."



## b) Johannes Sleidan's (1506-1556) Theology of the Holy Roman Empire

The teaching of the four kingdoms, which Daniel preached through his visions of the four beasts, reiterated his vision of the great image (Dan. 2:32f.): "The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze and its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay." Both visions legitimised the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages. The medieval *Glossa Ordinaria*, the canonical exegesis of the Bible, which was developed at the Sorbonne and was the authoritative interpretation for centuries, interpreted the four beasts in accordance with St. Jerome's commentary on Daniel.<sup>52</sup> The lion was the Babylonian kingdom "because of its viciousness and luxury". The bear was identified as the "dominion of Persia because its harshness and ferocity can be compared with a bear". The winged leopard was the "reign of the Macedonians", i.e. the reigns of Alexander the Great and his followers. The fourth beast with the iron teeth was the Roman Empire: "It is remarkable that Daniel compares the lion, the bear, and the leopard to three reigns, but that he does not compare the Roman Empire to a beast. Perhaps he lacks the words for this formidable monster. Whatever we find in the beast's ferocity and cruelty we again recognise it in the Romans' behaviour."<sup>53</sup>

This interpretation was used to legitimate the 'translatio imperii' from the Roman Empire to the Holy Roman Empire. Daniel's vision provided for only four kingdoms; therefore, world history was restricted to four kingdoms. Since there was no legitimacy for a fifth reign, the Roman Empire had to be seen as being continued by the German Emperors.<sup>54</sup> Especially since Otto of Freising's Chronicle, the identification of the German Empire with the Roman Empire was canonical.<sup>55</sup>

This was, however, a tricky legitimization, since Daniel's fourth reign was rather ambiguous. He prophesied that it was to oppress the holy in the end, that its last representative was to speak arrogantly against the Lord and was

<sup>52</sup> See Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera Pars I, 5: Commentariorum in Daniele Libri III (IV). CC series latina LXXV A, pp. 838-844r.

<sup>53</sup> Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria. Facsimile reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81. Brepols 1992, Vol. 3, p. 336.

<sup>54</sup> See Goetz, Werner: *Translatio Imperii. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Tübingen 1958, esp. ch. 4-6, where he treats the conception of *translatio* from the perspectives of Charlemagne, the Ottonian families, the Saliers and the Hohenstaufens. The *translatio* was the biblical legitimization of the primacy of the German Empire in Europe and was consequently attacked by the French. E.g. Calvin did not agree with the identification of the German Empire with Daniel's fourth reign; cf. Goetz, pp. 371-373. Jean Bodin polemicalised against this legitimization in his "Methodus artis historiae", ch. 7. The 1688 editors of Sleidanus, Heinrich Meibom and Aegidius Strauch, hence characterised him as "Germanici nominis hostis". Cf. Sleidanus, Johannes: *De Quatuor Imperiis libri tres*. Frankfurt 1688, p. 248.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Goetz: *Translatio Imperii*, pp. 113f.

to adopt the role of the Antichrist - all of which, in a sense, placed the legitimacy of the Holy Roman Empire on feet of clay. The Emperor could assume the role of the Antichrist;<sup>56</sup> the Empire could become the "katechont" holding up the final return of the Lord.<sup>57</sup>

But every earthly reign stands on feet of clay: The final judgement is to judge the rulers, too, for their power is merely borrowed from divine power. The Lutheran Johannes Sleidanus (1506-1556)<sup>58</sup> presumed this divine legitimization of human power and hence justified the Empire's world historical chronology with the Bible. For Sleidanus, in every historiography "biblical scriptures claim the first rank, for they transmit the origin of the human race. Its documents show God's will, his piety and his wrath."<sup>59</sup>

Both the biblical justification of world history and the continuity of the Roman and German empires are important to the Strasbourg professor. His book "*De quatuor summis imperiis*" is based on the historical order of, and the relationships between, the dominions, already revealed in Daniel's era.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Sleidan's book is foremost a historical chronicle structured according to Daniel's visions. The German Sleidan's main interest is devoted to the Roman Empire and its German successor: "The Assyrian and Babylonian reigns are briefly run through, for they belong to the realm of the chairs of the Holy Scriptures. The other three reigns, especially the Greek and Roman ones, will be illustrated by many authors."<sup>61</sup>

Sleidan is not very interested in the antecedents of the four kingdoms, and the non-biblical sources of primeval times do not count much for him: "For the first times we lack the necessary books, and we do not have anything which we could use besides the Scripture. Without any doubt, this age was very heroic and full of eminent deeds, but what has remained until our times?"<sup>62</sup> He briefly relates that the first, the Assyrian monarchy, began with Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>63</sup> Cyrus founded the second, the Persian monarchy,

<sup>56</sup> The entire literature on Emperor Friedrich II of Hohenstaufen as Antichrist belongs to this context.

<sup>57</sup> 2 Thess. 2:6. Cf. Goez, *Translatio*, p. 78.

<sup>58</sup> On Sleidan: Baumgarten, Hermann: *Über Sleidans Leben und Briefwechsel*. Strasbourg 1878. *Sleidans Briefwechsel*. Ed. Hermann Baumgarten. Strasbourg 1881. Friedensburg, Walter: *Johannes Sleidanus, die Geschichtsschreiber und die Geschichtsmächte der Reformationszeit*. Leipzig 1935. Vogelstein, Ingeborg: *Johann Sleidan's Commentaries. Vantage Point of a Second Generation Lutheran*. Lanham, New York, London, 1986. On the English reception of Sleidan: Firth, Katharine A.: *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain. 1530-1645*. Oxford 1979. Häusler, Martin: *Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronik*. Cologne/Vienna 1980, pp. 170ff.

<sup>59</sup> Sleidanus, Johannes: *De quatuor Imperiis*. Frankfurt a. M. 1688, pref. unpag.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 19: "Nunc satis est videre, hoc primum tempore Deum aperuisse nobis imperiorum ordinem ac vicissitudinem."

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pref. unpag.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pref. unpag.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

which perished with Darius.<sup>64</sup> Alexander the Great defeated Darius in 331, when the third, the Greek reign began.<sup>65</sup> With the wars between Alexander's *Diadochi* and the Romans, the final fourth reign, the Roman Empire, begins.<sup>66</sup> The Roman Empire initially has its own history, which Sleidan recounts in detail up to the birth of Christ.

With Christ's birth begins the second book, and now the political interests of the German Lutheran Sleidan become obvious. His concern is the historical legitimation of the German imperial reign through its continuity with the Roman Empire. He identifies the medieval Empire with the Roman one, thereby giving biblical dignity to the imperial German constitution. Since the Lutheran Reformation took place in the German empire, this empire needed a legitimation that was as independent as possible from the Papal Church. Thus the history of the Roman Church is extensively delegitimated. Sleidanus interprets the juridical constitution of the Church by its medieval administration as the spiritual institution's illegitimate claim of secular power.

For Sleidanus, the theory of "translatio imperii" is established in the continuity of the pagan and Christian emperors. The official conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, which took place with Constantine, poses no real difficulty for Sleidanus. The transition of power from Rome to Constantinople is also well suited to his political and historical interests. He merely sharpens his concept of the church in contrast to his theology of the empire. Of course the Lutheran protestant has no interest in an independent popish institution; he does not intend to bind his church history too closely to the history of Rome.<sup>67</sup>

The real historical difficulty is the interpretation of Charlemagne.<sup>68</sup> Sleidan's crucial argument for the continuity between Charlemagne's reign and Rome's lies in the claim that it was Charlemagne who restored the order of the empire and made it a living political body. Sleidan does not mention the potential competition between the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire in the question of continuity. This would seem to be an obvious issue, since in Sleidanus' time the empire of eastern Rome had

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>67</sup> This corresponds to a reaction of the anti-imperial "prophecies of Telesphor" by a certain "Gammaleon", a relative of Pope Boniface. In this prophecy, Mainz becomes the centre of the reformed church. Bezold, Friedrich von: *Zur deutschen Kaisersage*. Sitzungsbericht d. bayr. Akad. d. W. 1884, p. 605. Cf. Kampers, Franz: *Kaiserprophetien und Kaisersagen im Mittelalter*. Munich 1895, pp. 171 and 237-249; *Die Quellen des Telesphorus*. The most important publication on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is in Wolf, Johann: *Lectiones memorabiles*, 2 vols. Lauingen 1600, vol. I, p. 728.

<sup>68</sup> On the competing interpretations of Charlemagne among Italians, French, and Germans see Kampers, Franz: *Kaiserprophetien und Kaisersagen im Mittelalter*. Munich 1895.

ceased to exist. In 1453 the Turks had conquered Constantinople. And of course only an existing institution could be historically continuous up to the Last Judgement. Sleidan's justification for the *translatio imperii* from Rome to Charlemagne's north thus seems clear: "The western parts of the Roman empire were to a large degree torn apart, especially since the Roman emperors took set up court in Constantinople. This is why it is evident that the empire was reunified by Charlemagne; and it has received, as it were, a new body, a new colour, and a new species; and many provinces have been united into one dominion."<sup>69</sup>

Sleidan draws a continuous line from Charlemagne to Charles IV. Charles IV is important in the development of the empire for two reasons:

1. Charles IV to a large extent gives up the empire's claim to its Italian provinces. Thus the empire loses its transnational character. This reduces the claim of a universal imperial reign to a national one.<sup>70</sup>

2. He proclaims the "Golden Bull" to be the decisive law for the emperors' election, executed by the electors of the empire.<sup>71</sup>

In both moments Sleidan sees a Germanisation and nationalisation of the emperor's reign, legitimating the Reformation.

Different from the stabilised and hence legitimated situation of the empire, the history of the Roman Church is for Sleidan a process of continuous delegitimation. Beginning with the Donation of Constantine,<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Sleidanus, p. 257.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. pp. 348f.: "Post varias deinde simulates in Germania sedatas, (Argentinensis) Carolus in Italiam proficiscitur, deque consentu Papæ INNOCENTII VI. qui in Gallia erat, Romæ coronatus [anno Ær. Vulg. 1355] ab aliquot Cardinalibus, ea lege, ne vel Romæ, vel in Italia diutius hæreret, (Lege hic Fr. Petrarcha Epistolam ad Nerium Foro Juliensem Cæsaris Notarium, Jovium lib. 8 de vita Vicecomitum Mediolan.) Mediolanum redit, & familiæ VICECOMITUM, qui tunc Mediolani multum poterant, concessit, ut per Longobardiam essent CÆSARIS perpetui VICARII: cuius quidem beneficii causa, ingentem pecuniæ vim ab illis accepit, nec ab iis modo, verum ab aliis etiam populis, quibus aliquod esset largitus. Quæ sane res Imperii vires, ea quidem in regione, plurimum enervavit. Atque hinc est, quod Maximilianus I. Imperator de Carolo IV. dixisse scribitur: Eo pestilentiorum pestem nunquam Germaniæ contigisse".

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 349.

<sup>72</sup> "Huc etiam pertinet illud Constantini Cæsaris edictum, quod suis libris inseruerunt, (Distinct. 96. can. Constantinus) ipsorum potentiæ videlicet fundamentum atque robur. Nam, quæ ponitur ibi liberalitatis illius immensæ causa & occasio, falsi redargui potest ex historiis, atque convinci. In vetustioribus exemplaribus Decreti Gratiani non extat Donatio Constantini Magni, ut annotatur Centuria 4. Histor. Eccles. Otto-Frisingensis lib. 4. scribit, fuisse Gratiani tempore, qui donationem illam fictam asserverent. Impugnarunt publicis scriptis hoc commentum Marsilius Patavinus in libro suo, cui titulus, Defensor pacis, Nicolaus Cusanus, Cardinalis, lib. 3. cap. 2. de Concordia Catholica, Æneas Sylvius in suo Dialogo, Volateranus, Laurentius Valla, Ludolphus de Babenberg de jure regni Imperii Romani, chap. 13. Johannes de Parisiis tractatu de potestate Regia & Papali, Martinus Lutherus; item Hottemannus in bruto fulmine, Theophilus Banosius lib. 10. de Politia civitatis Dei, cap. 11. Defendunt hanc eumentitam donationem Augustinus, Steuchus Eugubinus duobus libris contra Vallam scripsit, & Boethius, Episcopus Frisius, lib. 2. Heroicarum quæstionum. Johannes Aventinus lib. 5. Henrico IV. imperante, fabulam

which he attacks as fake, he continues his critique with the report of Pepin's Donation, which he interprets as an illegitimate donation of imperial dominion to the pope.<sup>73</sup> Sleidan continues his list of the church's sins with the decrees of the Lateran Council in 1218, when the clergy's liberation from taxes was decreed, the installation of priests was claimed as a papal right, and the political election of priests and bishops was forbidden. The summit of arrogance, for Sleidanus, is the *Decretum Gratiani*, which set up "Imperatorem debere subesse Papae, non praeesse".<sup>74</sup>

Faced with the delegitimation of ecclesiastic power, which was, according to Sleidan, stolen from the legitimate political institutions of the empire,<sup>75</sup> it seemed obvious that the empire had to be strengthened with political theology. This strengthening of the political and theological role of the empire is an attempt to establish it as the institutional basis of the Reformation. Since, for Sleidanus, the Reformation is theologically correct and is politically legitimated in its relations to the empire, the old church, which was now becoming more Roman than Catholic, loses its universality and is manoeuvred into a situation of illegitimacy. Sleidan considers the church to be an originally spiritual institution that claimed political power and lost its spiritual authority in the course of papal rule. The Roman Catholic Church, however, cannot be moved completely into the role of Antichrist, for, and this is the dilemma of the Lutheran historian, the emperor and therefore the head of the empire still remained Catholic. Yet the empire nevertheless was the only theological institution acknowledged by the Lutheran Reformation.

So the Turks received the character of the Antichrist. In 1453, they had conquered Constantinople and thus had established the Occidental empire as the only remaining legitimate successor to the Roman Empire. At the same time, the Turks relieved the empire of the ambiguity it had in Daniel's vision: The empire was considered to be the good part of the final dominion, while the Turks played the bad role. Sleidan's formula now monopolised the empire as the only existing theologically legitimate institution of his time: "So Germany alone is left, which always resisted the Roman power and sometimes rebelled, as is clear from what was said above. But then it was

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Donationis Constantianae primum excogitatam affirmat, quod ab illorum temporum statu non alienum videtur." (pp. 163f.)

<sup>73</sup> "AISTULPHUS EXARCHATUM PIPINO tradit, quâ quidem in regione hæ sunt urbes primi nominis, Ravenna, Faventia, Cæsena, Forum Livii, Forumpopuli, Bononia, Rhegium, Parma, Placentia.... Regionem hanc omnem Pontificis fidei PIPINUS permisisse fertur... quum Cæsar antea rogasset, ut eam sibi restitueret, quod esset imperii, non Ecclesiæ Romanæ. (pp. 237f.)

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 325.

<sup>75</sup> Sleidan's arguments differ from those of Marsilius of Padua, which he knows and makes use of. For Marsilius the order of the empire is founded in nature; for Sleidanus it is prefigured biblically.

collected by the Emperor Charlemagne and united into one body. When finally the power of election was distributed to the seven Electors, it became, as we have shown above, the house and the seat of the emperors.”<sup>76</sup> Sleidan again points out this specific role of the empire when he summarises his interpretation of Daniel’s vision to legitimate the unique role the German empire plays in the history of salvation: “By the lion Daniel designates the reign of Assur. The two wings he gives it are the two limbs of this reign, Babylon and Assur. By the bear he designates the reign of the Persians, by which the Babylonians were defeated. The three ribs, which he describes as being in his mouth, are this monarchy’s three most important kings - Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes - who were famous before the rest and ate much flesh, as he says, i.e. they bound many peoples to their domination. The leopard is the Greek reign of Alexander the Great. Its four wings and heads are the four kingdoms that came forth after Alexander’s death. The fourth and last kingdom is the Roman Empire. The ten horns are its limbs or parts - namely Syria, Egypt, Asia, Greece, Africa, Spain, Gallia, Italy, Germany, and Britain - but the Empire holds them all together. Now a new horn emerges, which expels three of the ten horns. This is the Muslim or Turkish reign, which came from a humble beginning and occupied three important parts of the Roman Empire: Egypt, Asia and Greece. The little horn, which has eyes and which slanders against the Lord, is Mohammed, who propagates a new teaching that is pleasing to his followers and thus has the appearance of prudence. Those are the eyes, but in truth he is slandering God, for he has destroyed the prophets’ and the apostles’ scriptures and ignored Christ’s good deeds. He has rather viciously agitated against Christ’s entire doctrine. Thus the little horn makes war against the holy and attacks them seriously, until, as it is said, the Old of Age will sit to judge, he who has no beginning and no end.”<sup>77</sup>

The Holy German Empire is called to alleviate the oppression of the holy; for Sleidan this empire is the only legitimate seat of power for the remaining short time of world history. “From which it is obvious that in this empire lies the end of the world’s course, and that there will be no other one. Since all dominions of the world vanish, the eternal reign will arrive, the founder and leader of which will be Christ.”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 367.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. pp. 368f.

<sup>78</sup> “LEO denotat regnum Assyrium: alæ duæ, quas illi tribuit, sunt duo veluti membra illius Imperii, Babylonia & Assyria. Per URSUM significatur regnum Persicum, a quo fuit devictum Babylonicum. Tres costæ, quas inter alios dentes in illius ore fuisse, scribit, sunt tres præcipui Reges hujus Monarchiæ, Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, qui præ cæteris claruerunt, & multam carnem ederunt, ut inquit, hoc est, complures populos suæ ditioni conjunxerunt. PANTHERA est Alexandri Magni seu Græcorum imperium: quatuor illius alæ & capita, sunt quatuor regna, quæ post Alexandri mortem ex illa Monarchia prodierunt. QUARTUM et postremum animal, est Imperium Romanum: decem cornua, sunt ejus

c) Exemplary Versus Apocalyptic History: Philipp Melanchthon's (1497-1560) Historical Difficulties

A Talmudic tradition teaches the world's age: "It was taught in the school of Elijah: 6000 years will the world last; 2000 years of nullity, 2000 years of the Law's doctrine and 2000 years of the messianic time. Because of our numerous sins, many years have already passed."<sup>79</sup>

This "Vaticinium Eliae" had a remarkable career.<sup>80</sup> It served as the basis for the rabbinic teaching of the three ages of the world, with the first as the time before the law, the second as the time of the law, and the third as the time of the Messiah. The four thousand years of the world's existence before the advent of Christ are still celebrated in Christian churches by the four lights during the time of Advent, on the four Sundays before Christmas.

In the chronologies of Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede, the six thousand years also played an important role. The Jewish chronology coincided approximately with the four thousand years until Christ's advent, even though Bede was opposed to a mechanical reckoning of the six millennia. Nevertheless, the six thousand years were somehow convenient for the theory of the world's six ages, which Joachim of Fiore also counted in his "Enchiridion super Apocalypsin",<sup>81</sup> without, however, mentioning a 'third reign'.

Following Elijah's biblical prophecies, it seemed apposite to identify the Elijah of the Talmudic traditions with the prophet Elijah. This was made even more likely by Enoch and Elijah being the immediate forerunners of the Last Judgement, a teaching that was already propounded by Bede, who had identified Enoch and Elijah as the two witnesses of St. John's Apocalypse (Rev. 11:3-14).

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membra seu partes, cujusmodi sunt Syria, Ægyptus, Asia, Graecia, Africa, Hispania, Gallia, Italia, Germania, Britannia: nam illi haec omnia tenuerunt. Jam inter decem ista cornua, nascitur & prodit cornu quoddam parvulum, quod de decem illis cornibus, tria revellit: Istud denotat regnum Mahometicum sive Turcicum, quod ex humili initio natum, in Romana Monarchia, tres Præcipuas partes illius occupavit, Ægyptum, Asiam, Græciam. Deinde, cornu istud parvulum habet oculos, & est contumeliosum adversus DEUM: Mahometus enim novum doctrinæ genus proposuit, suis valde gratum, & quod prudentiæ speciem aliquam haberet: hi sunt oculi, sed revera DEUM afficit contumelia. Nam Prophetarum & Apostolorum scripta plane delevit, & Christi beneficium nullum agnoscit, imo conviciis exagitat omnem de CHRISTO doctrinam. Ad hæc parvulum istud cornu bella gerit cum sanctis, & vehementer illos affligit, ut inquit, donec judicium fecerit Antiquus ille, cujus nec initium est, neque finis." (pp. 368ff.) On the connection with the motif of the Old Wise Man from the mountain, which is of Muslim origin, see Kampers, Franz: *Kaiserprophetien*, pp. 103ff.

<sup>79</sup> Babylonischer Talmud (German), Vol. VII, p. 825, fol. 9, Aboda Zara I, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Warburg, Aby: *Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten*. In: Id.: *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. III Berlin 1932, pp. 487-558.

<sup>81</sup> Joachim of Fiore: *Enchiridion super Apocalypsin*. Toronto 1986, p. 13.

This “*Vaticinium Eliae*” reappears in the most important historical textbook of early German Protestantism, the “*Chronicon Caronis*”. In a way, Sleidan’s book on the four monarchies is a late counterpart to Johann Carion’s (1499-1537)<sup>82</sup> chronicle, which first appeared in German in 1531/32. It was rewritten in Latin, revised by Philipp Melanchthon in 1558/60, and completed after Melanchthon’s death in 1560 by his son-in-law, Caspar Peucer (1525-1602).<sup>83</sup> The final Latin edition appeared in 1560.

Carion’s Chronicle is ordered according to Daniel’s four reigns. It also includes the thesis of “*translatio imperii*”, the claim of continuity from the ancient Roman Empire to the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>84</sup> In a further step, universal history is structured according to the scheme of the “*Vaticinium Eliae*” giving the Chronicle a double internal structure: The four monarchies are arranged according to the scheme of the six thousand years. Thus the four monarchies clearly reveal the chronology of the world. The fourth monarchy, the Roman Empire, is situated within this chronology: It encompasses the third period of the two thousand-year cycles and will last, it is implied, until the year 2000 after Christ.

Carion’s Chronicle, which in the Latin form given it by Melanchthon and Peucer became the standard historical textbook of Lutheran Protestantism, included all epochs of world history. With the “*Vaticinium Eliae*” it contained the teaching of the three stages of the world, without explicitly adopting the Joachimite doctrine of the Spirit’s reign. With the six-thousand-year-old age of the world, it alluded to the theory of the six ages of the world, and it explicitly took over Daniel’s vision of the four monarchies.

In his preface to the “*Chronicon Caronis*”, Melanchthon initially determines his arrangement of world history according to the “*Vaticinium Eliae*”: “It is useful to keep in mind, as far as possible, the series of times and the most important changes of mankind. For this it is very convenient to know the dictum that is cited in Jewish commentaries like this:

Tradition of the house of Elijah.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Warburg: *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Chronicon Caronis*, *Expositum et auctum a Philippo Melanchthone, & Casparo Peucero*. I used ed. Wittenberg: Samuel Crispin 1617. Melanchthon authored books 1-3, Peucer books 4 und 5. On the chronicle of Carion see Menke-Glückert, Emil: *Die Geschichtsschreibung der Reformation und der Gegenreformation*. Osterwieck 1912. Münch, Gotthard: *Das Chronicon Caronis Philippicum*, in: *Sachsen und Anhalt*, vol. 1 Magdeburg 1925. Cf. Goetz: *Translatio Imperii*. pp. 258 -280. Klempt, Adalbert: *Die Säkularisierung der universalhistorischen Auffassung. Zum Wandel des Geschichtsdenkens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen 1960. Haeusler, Martin: *Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronik*. Cologne/Vienna 1980, p. 161.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Chronicon Caronis*, pp. 422ff.



Six thousand years of the world, then it will be burnt. 2000 of nullity, 2000 of the law, 2000 of the messiah. And because of our sins which are many and great, the years will be missed which still are missed.”<sup>85</sup>

Melanchthon attributes this historical arrangement of the world to the prophet Elijah and interprets it as follows: “The first two thousand years are called inane, which I simply interpret that before the foundation of Babylon men did not settle in very far-reaching regions. Others say, ‘inane’ meant that there was still not founded any ecclesiastical order and that the church has not yet been divided into several peoples. Nor were there reigns, like the ones that later became monarchies. But whatever may be the reason for Elijah’s dictum, there is no doubt about the fact that this first age was a blossoming one. For men’s nature was less exhausted, which is obvious from the long duration of their lives; it was blossoming because the Wise Old Men lived in a divine light, became witnesses of the creation and the promise, invented many arts, and embellished them.”<sup>86</sup>

This golden age in which, remarkably for a Lutheran theologian, neither the fall nor sin have any place, but which fits perfectly with the ancient teaching of the age of giants,<sup>87</sup> is followed by the age of the Law. This is the second period “which is counted from the circumcision to Christ’s birth from a virgin. It lasts approximately 2000 years.”<sup>88</sup>

For Melanchthon the third period is the most important one. It lasts up to the present and marks its apocalyptic character. “The third age perhaps signifies a period less than 2000 years, for impiety has grown excessively, and so the human race will be eliminated sooner. And Christ will himself appear at the judgement, declaring: because of the elect, the days will be shortened.”<sup>89</sup>

Melanchthon expects the return of Christ in his near future; in spite of the two thousand years the “Vaticinium Eliae” leaves from Christ’s birth to the final fire. His expectation of Christ’s impending return is connected with the exegesis of Daniel’s apocalypse. In the second two thousand-year period, in the age of the law, “the monarchies begin in which, according to a consistent view, many great changes of mankind take place. For God has predicted a series of four reigns to signify the advent of the messiah and the end of the world, i.e. of mankind, and the time of the Last Judgement. The monarchies are not to be understood as ones which extend to all regions and peoples, but rather as ruling a great part of the earth and having such power that they can

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. pp. 6f.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. on that topic ch. 9, 4: Anniius of Viterbo.

<sup>88</sup> Chronicon, p. 7.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

conquer other kings. God wanted the monarchies to be established so that men would be ruled by laws, judgements, and discipline.”<sup>90</sup>

The reign of law and the dominion of right and order, which can be observed in history, make up Melanchthon's humanistic credo. That the divine law, the Decalogue, established the moral measure of history, and that all history had to be measured according to this law, was for Melanchthon the *raison d'être* of all historiography. In his interpretation of the second age of the “*Vaticinium Eliae*”, the age of the law, history became *magistra vitae* again. And this doctrine is particularly important in the apocalyptic present. “It is an eminent task for philosophy and rhetoric to write history truly. But it is also wise to consider what is necessary for the reader, for they have to make use of the histories. Their rule is: The norm of life shall be the Ten Commandments; this is the law of God, which is written: Walk following my precepts. Thus we know that histories are but examples of the laws, and that they are the punishment of atrocious criminals and the salvation of the just.”<sup>91</sup>

Melanchthon tries almost desperately to maintain this very humanistic standard for historical justice. For he also holds to the historical type of salvation history, in which the suffering of the just precedes their apotheosis. He is caught in a dilemma between the humanistic claim that history teaches morality and the theological claim that the suffering of the just is the motor of history. This tension becomes clear in his interpretation of the four monarchies.

“1. The first monarchy is the one of the Chaldeans, which includes the Assyrians, their neighbours. For from the beginning there were the mighty kings of Babylon, and they were different from those in the vicinity of Nineveh. There is no doubt that Babylon and Nineveh are different cities.

2. The second is the Persian reign.

3. The third is the reign of Alexander the Great and his closest followers.

4. The fourth is the one of the Romans,

which Daniel shows will finally be destroyed, and that it has feet, partly of iron and partly of clay. Even if some believe that the iron feet were the reign of the Turks and the other monarchies had clay feet, I nevertheless do not believe that the Turkish reign can be counted among the reigns that God established for the sake of law. For it utters blasphemies against the word of the Lord and expressively tries to delete the name of Christ. As for the iron feet, I understand some mighty German emperors like Charles I, his son Ludwig, Henry of Saxony, who is usually called the Fowler. Older German histories call him ‘humble’, as it were. Then the family of the Ottonians, and Henry of Bamberg. Afterwards there were many less important ones, who

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. pp. 7f.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Ep. dedicat. iiij.

are indicated by the clay feet. But they were mixed with strong princes who did useful work, like Lothar of Saxony. From these monarchies which were established by God for the sake of law and order, I sharply divide the Turkish reign.”<sup>92</sup>

Melanchthon does not recognise the character of his own time as exemplary in a moral sense, as is usual for humanist historiography, which construes every epoch as a tableau of examples without attention to their specific historical differences. Melanchthon finds himself forced to argue typologically in order to situate his own epoch. Thus he characterises his Reformational era as the ectype of the archetype emerging in Christ’s lifetime. At the end of the second book, where the histories of the second era of the Vaticinium Eliae are recounted, he writes: “We know, however, that age to be the image of our second time, when a universal change of mankind becomes apparent. The doctrine of the monks and the pope is as widely spread as was the one of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”<sup>93</sup>

With this typology, Melanchthon’s reformational claim becomes apparent: His time was revolutionary as Christ’s time was. This typology characterises Melanchthon’s attempt to apply the humanistic concept of “*historia magistra vitae*” to a messianic concept of history. But at their cores, the two concepts of history disagree with each other. The Ciceronian concept of history, with its instructive examples and its character of a timeless tableau, has nothing in common with a prophetic and apocalyptic history as it was taught by St. Paul. In Judeo-Christian history, the obscure and the suffering were to be made glorious; a glory that would only become visible with the return of the Lord. Melanchthon himself felt this tension and addressed it in the context of two instances crucial for the history of ancient Christianity and Reformation apocalypticism, namely the persecution of the early Christians and the threat of the Turks.

In his introduction to the third book of Carion’s chronicle, Melanchthon attempts an inquiry into the meaning of history, including its atrocities. Implicitly this is an attempt at a theodicy. The incompatibility between the humanistic approach to history and the Judeo-Christian history of salvation becomes obvious when exemplary historiography is confronted with the history of the suffering innocents. The suffering confessors and martyrs as well as the cruelty of their persecutors can only be judged by a final judgement; they cannot be considered moral examples. Hence Melanchthon characterises Daniel’s vision of the fourth reign as follows: “Daniel painted a horrible picture in order to signify the civil wars of his times and the atrocities the tyrants committed on the church; for those were the worst devastations which occurred before the Goths, the Saracens and the Turks

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. pp. 8f.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 191.

arrived. But when we consider why God wanted us to know this series of monarchies, it becomes clear that he wanted to show us that the confusions of the human race would not last forever but that they would be finished one day, and a better life of the church was to come. Thus he wanted us to know that God's Son was to appear to mankind and that he would finally come back for the judgement of the world."<sup>94</sup>

This is an almost desperate attempt to justify the early Christians' persecution by looking forward to the world's end, when everything is to be judged by the Lord's glory. The decisive point about this attempt is that Melanchthon made it at all. For the question of "quod consideranda est in lectione Danielis"<sup>95</sup> does not treat the biblical text as a prophecy that has to be accepted fearfully as a revelation of what is to come. Rather it addresses the question of revelation itself. It asks about the meaning of revelation and tries to calculate the divine plan of human cultivation. Melanchthon's belief does not consist in a simple acceptance of historical facts, and so he has difficulty interpreting the divine plan of salvation as rational.

This is especially true on the question of the historical meaning of the Muslims. Melanchthon does not make it as easy for himself as Sleidan did, who let the Turks appear only after the Reformation. Melanchthon observes with horror that their reign, which was not prophesied by Daniel, has already existed for nearly a thousand years, and that it therefore cannot be interpreted as an indication of an imminently ensuing Last Judgement. Its historical meaning in God's plan of salvation is inscrutable. Melanchthon does not allow himself this question of the historical meaning of the Turks' threat. "It may not be disputed 'why does God allow that so many people are so horribly deceived and will vanish? Why does he allow the blasphemers to achieve the highest power?' We rather have to suffer under the fact that the devils have so much power and that they inflict so much misery and evil on the human race."<sup>96</sup> For Melanchthon, there is only the consolation of the gospel. "Since the Muslims have occupied the supreme power for such a long time, let us console ourselves with the doctrine of the gospel showing that the church is submitted to the cross, and that the church is not similar to the crowd of impious men; according to the prophet's dictum 'to me one poor people has remained shouting my name'."<sup>97</sup>

This was indeed the crucial difficulty in which Melanchthon saw his Church. The dilemma can be described as follows: The Church had to consider itself an instrument of divine providence. It was the movement that exhibited pure doctrine. This spiritual concept of the Church discredited *ipso*

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 364.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 365.

*facto* the Roman Catholic Church. According to the logic of the history of salvation, viz. “who is not with me is against me”, Roman Catholicism became the adversary of true doctrine.

At the same time, this pure Lutheran doctrine was connected to the institution of the Holy Roman Empire. This empire was legitimated theologically as Daniel’s fourth reign. Hence it was the born enemy of the Turks. But the head of this institution, the emperor, was still a Catholic. Even if the empire was regarded as a reign of electors, the fact that the last remaining institution of biblical legitimacy had an ambiguous status made the protestant’s situation even worse, and intensified the apocalyptic tension of Reformed faith. Faced with this confusion in the world, Melanchthon saw only his tiny congregation as blessed with God’s grace and awaiting, in desperate hope, the final return of their Lord. This is why Melanchthon, a new Noah, pleaded for the salvation of his tiny church from the flood of his age: “In this confusion, God will help his true church, which preaches the true doctrine, and he calls it to the knowledge and faith of his Son. That is what he explicitly says about the world’s last age: It will be like in the days of Noah, ‘One will be saved, another will be left behind’.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 186.

## TRANSLATIO SAPIENTIAE

### 1. THE HISTORICAL LOGIC OF PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

A philosophy based on the unity of revelation and science has to assimilate science to revelation. Revelation takes precedence over science, if its divine origin is taken seriously. The doctrine of creation, as part of revelation, has consequences for human knowledge. Knowledge is held to derive from a divine origin, and, just as any other existence, it is created. Human knowledge is received through communication with the divine, since God reveals all wisdom to the human race. It is accordingly impossible to separate science and divine revelation.

But what is the character of divine wisdom? If the doctrine of creation is taken seriously here as well, then it is God's primordial wisdom that contains the complete knowledge of the world. The divine source of wisdom includes the treasury of all wisdom. This idea implies that divine wisdom is before and beyond time. Timelessness is a characteristic of logical and mathematical truths, as well as of the moral knowledge of goodness. But beyond this knowledge, whose participation in divine wisdom is immediately evident, the divine plan of creation must also include a positive knowledge of the essences of all things; for God conceived of all things in his wisdom before they were separated into extramental reality. Considered logically, divine wisdom does not contain merely categorical and syntactical structures, but also the knowledge of the quiddities of things.

The knowledge of quiddities, or essences, of things, is fundamental to the concept of creation. For only if God in his wisdom knows what things are, and how they came into being, can creation be reconstructed by the pious imagination. In the theory of creation, things must become extramental reality just as they were preconceived. This extramental realisation is the essence of every thing.

In the theology of creation, the quality of things is established in God's thoughts. This quality has a twofold character:

First, quality means pure *quidditas*, the definition of a species. This definition is determined by the thoughts of God, who conceives things as archetypes, i.e. as they should be. Quality secondly means the rank an individual attains as it approaches its perfect status as conceived in the divine mind. If it does not reach this status, it is of bad quality. This is not a question of an individual being part of a species, but rather one of the relationship between individual and species. This second definition of quality emphasises the question of the individual's perfection, its 'health' or 'illness'.

The second meaning of quality has been described by the spiritual theology of creation in the dramatic history of individuation. This history becomes even more dramatic when it includes the concept of evil. The divine archetype, or species, passes from beyond the farthest heaven of fixed stars into the earthly realm. On its way, the archetype receives the character of those stars and planets that are influential at that time. As the species is informed by the influence of the stars it becomes an individual. Its contingent existence in space and time has been individualised by the impact that celestial nature has on the essence of a specific being.

It makes sense in such a concept to understand space and time as natural elements in the process of individualisation. Hence astrology and the environment are extremely influential on an individual in the process of its becoming. Only through this process does a species receive its individual form.

This process of forming an individual is characterised by suffering. A species is not only extramentally formed to become an individual, but suffers also in its mental qualities from the cosmic forces of good and evil, and from the mental characters of the Zodiac and the planets. Thus the process of individualisation is not only a process of forming, but also contains the dangers of deformation and evil. Hence every individual shows the qualities of its species as well as concealing them.

In this process, the signature of each thing, the evidence of its essence, becomes somehow mysterious. This mysteriousness is further increased by the fact that the process of forming and deforming is also the struggle between good and evil. The mighty cosmic powers are not only so ambiguous that "nature longs for redemption" (Rom. 3), but, beyond this, the human race also has the disastrous ability to commit evil. This ability, which is human freedom, leads to the original sin in paradise.

The knowledge of the essence of things is neither a categorical nor a syntactical one, for knowledge of essences is not structural knowledge. After Adam's fall there is no longer a human knowledge participating in God's primordial wisdom of essences. In its post-lapsarian condition, human

knowledge only participates in the structures of divine categorical and moral wisdom, but not in the knowledge of the essence of things. The inside view into the primordial qualities of things was lost, and can only be regained by experience. This, however, is a difficult task, since the knowledge of essences became obscure in the process of individualisation, and is dimmed by original sin.

Nevertheless, insight into the essence of things can be strived for and achieved, for it is a knowledge that God wanted to be revealed, and that was evident to mankind before Adam's fall. So if the wisdom of paradise still exists, even if in shadows, it must have been transmitted from paradise. As Edenic wisdom, the knowledge of the essence of things can be imagined and somehow remembered. However, the condition for its remembrance is a continuous transmission of Adam's wisdom through the ages. This is the meaning of perennial philosophy, namely that a timeless, divine wisdom is transmitted through all time.

This concept of wisdom establishes a complete parallel between science and revelation. Like biblical revelation, knowledge of the essence of things is considered to be revealed. Also like biblical revelation, the revelation of wisdom has to be transmitted without interruption. Like divine revelation, knowledge derives from divine wisdom. Being divinely revealed, the knowledge of the true essence of things receives the character of salvation and, hence, of a medication for body and soul. The knowledge of things as they should be increases the knowledge of the healing powers, and provides the possibility of avoiding injury.

Of course this entire train of thought strengthens the theology of creation and revelation. It assimilates philosophy to theology and situates philosophy within the framework theology provides. This also applies to the historical framework, since the tradition of wisdom has to follow the course of world history, as it is structured by the biblical account. Biblical history has, without question, the historical monopoly. This priority of biblical history was claimed in late antiquity by Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus, and was reinforced by Clement of Alexandria. In St. Augustine's "City of God", it already defined the framework of all historical events, and from here it was transmitted through the Middle Ages into Early Modern times.

This concept of perennial philosophy signifies a monopoly of the Judeo-Christian philosophy of history over competing Greek conceptions of philosophy. This becomes obvious when the antiquity of the Old Testament is emphasised in relation to Greek philosophy. With the consideration that perennial philosophy contains the knowledge of Adam transmitted from paradise, this claim makes sense. As a result, the Jewish tradition obtains the privilege of origin and antiquity. The Old Testament is the authentic source, and its witnesses are the most important. The 'pagan' philosophers,



especially the Greeks but also the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus and the “Chaldean Oracles”, are only of secondary importance compared to the wisdom of the Old Testament. Since, however, the dignity of their philosophy is evident, and since Hermes’ Egyptian revelations and the wisdom of the Chaldean sages coincide with the wisdom of Moses and the Prophets, it makes sense to integrate their wisdom into the Judeo-Christian concept of revelation. With this policy of integration, which of course takes seriously the pseudepigraphical scriptures’ claims for antiquity and integrates texts like the *Corpus Hermeticum* into its biblical chronology, the concept of science is considerably enlarged. The universal science of perennial philosophy claims to include all of transmitted knowledge. Perennial philosophy’s realm spans everything from revelation to poetry. Having been transmitted, all species and forms of knowledge are accepted as objects of science and hence are integrated into the theological system of creation. Thus perennial philosophy makes up a monotheistic, historical, and universal science.

## 2. ST. AUGUSTINE’S GENEALOGY OF WORLD-WISDOM

The concept of Christian world-wisdom developed rather slowly. It was based on the concept of Adam’s original wisdom and had to guarantee its Edenic tradition. Adam’s wisdom could be substantiated by the account of the book of Genesis in which Adam named the creatures: “So of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them into to the man to see what he could call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field” (Gen.2:19f.). Philo of Alexandria was the first to interpret this account as Adam’s participation in God’s wisdom. “For as the rational nature was as yet uncorrupted in the soul, and as no weakness, or disease, or affliction has yet come upon it, man having the pure and perfect perceptions of bodies and of things, devised names for them with great felicity and correctness of judgment, forming very admirable opinions as to qualities which they displayed, so that their natures were at once perceived and correctly described by him. And he was so excellent in all good things that he speedily arrived at the very perfection of human happiness.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philo: *De opificio mundi* (52), § 150. Tans. by C. D. Yonge. London 1854, pp. 44ff

This insight into divine wisdom, which included, according to Philo's contemporary Flavius Josephus, the ability to understand the language both of animals and men,<sup>2</sup> formed the basis for the tradition of Adamic ideas and language. A first indication of this tradition could be found in Flavius Josephus' "Antiquitates Judaicae". Adam lived, according to Josephus, quietly and harmoniously with his son Seth until the end of his life. "They also were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies, and their order. And that their inventions might be not lost before they were sufficiently known, upon Adam's prediction that the world was to be destroyed at one time by force and fire, and the other time by violence and water, they made two pillars, one of brick, the other of stone: They inscribed their discoveries on them both, that in case of the pillar of brick should be destroyed by the flood, the pillar of stone might remain, and exhibit those discoveries to mankind; and also inform them that there was another pillar of brick erected by them. Now this remains in the land of Siriad to this day."<sup>3</sup>

This report could be read as proof of Adam's wisdom, as a prefiguration of the two tablets of the Decalogue, but also as Adam's invention of hieroglyphs, which were interpreted as the first expression of Adam's original language.

The theory of Adamic language could be identified with the theological knowledge of Moses. Since the Torah came from Moses, he could be considered the one who collected the plenitude of revelation God wanted to grant the human race. His revelation described the world's creation and thus represented the world's divine order. Thus Mosaic wisdom could be described as archetypal wisdom, in which the teaching of perennial philosophy was included. This concept of *philosophia perennis* reinforced the claim for the priority of Jewish wisdom, and was widespread in the Jewish and Christian communities of late Antiquity. Philo had already stated that the Greeks obtained their wisdom from the Law of Moses,<sup>4</sup> and Heraclitus and Zeno the Stoic philosopher were reported to have read

<sup>2</sup> Josephus Flavius: *Antiquitates Judaicae* 1, 1 (4), 41: "All living beings had but one language". On the knowledge and usage of Flavius Josephus in the Middle Ages: Schreckenberg, H.: *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*. Leiden 1972.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 69-71 ch. 2, 3. Trans. Whiston, William (1667-1752); *The Works of Josephus*, New York 1897, vol. 1, p. 83. Translator's note: "Of Josephus' mistake here, when he took Seth the son of Adam for Seth or Sesostris, king of Egypt, the erector of these pillars in the Land of Siriad" see *Essay on the Old Testament*, [London 1722] Appendix, pp. 159, 160. "He is most likely thinking of the history of Egyptian Pharaoh Seosis, from whom Diodorus Siculus reports that he erected two obelisks of hard stone, of a height of two hundred feet, in which he inscribed the magnitude of his troops and the number of the peoples defeated. Diodorus Siculus Book 1, LVII, 5."

<sup>4</sup> On the Special Laws § 59 and 61.

Moses.<sup>5</sup> Above all, Clement of Alexandria in his “Stromateis” had affirmed the Mosaic Law as the model for Greek philosophy. According to him, the philosopher Aristobul, living about 200 years B.C., stated that “the entire peripatetic philosophy was dependent on the law of Moses.”<sup>6</sup> The most important story of perennial philosophy can be found in Clement, who states that Numenius reported Moses to be Plato’s teacher.<sup>7</sup> This account was adopted by Eusebius<sup>8</sup> and considered by Ficino to be the ancient proof of perennial philosophy. Justinus Martyr claimed in his “First Apology” that Greek philosophy depended on the Mosaic Law, and Cyrill of Alexandria even said that the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus had read Moses but not always understood him.<sup>9</sup>

In his “City of God”, Augustine summarised in detail the theory of the transmission of wisdom. He is chiefly interested in proving the Mosaic revelation to be the original one, antecedent to Egyptian wisdom and Greek philosophy. He does not explicitly claim that Greek philosophy was intellectually dependent on the Mosaic law, but he insinuates this by stating: “Even in the days when the writings of our Prophets had already attracted close to world-wide attention, there were no pagan thinkers properly called ‘philosophers’ in the sense first stated by Pythagoras of Samos. Now, since Pythagoras won a name and fame for himself only about the time the Babylonian captivity ended, it is obvious that all other philosophers came still later than the Prophets. Socrates the Athenian, for example, master of all the famous philosophers of his age and the outstanding exponent of moral or practical wisdom, is dated later even than Esdras in the Chronicles. Plato was born shortly after Socrates, and was destined to outstrip all of his fellow disciples. Even if we go back beyond Pythagoras to those who were not yet styled ‘philosophers’, for example to the Seven Wise Men or to the Physicists, who followed Thales in the careful scrutiny of nature, to men like Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras and others, we shall still find no men of pagan wisdom antedating the first of our prophets. Thales, who leads this list, became well known during Romulus’ reign, at the time when in

<sup>5</sup> Who is the Heir § 281, Every Good Man is Free § 57.

<sup>6</sup> See Droge, Arthur J.: *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture*. Tübingen 1989. p. 46. Cf. in detail *Der Platonismus in der Antike; Grundlagen, System, Entwicklung*. Begründet von Heinrich Dörrie. Fortgeführt von Matthias Baltes unter Mitarbeit von Friedhelm Mann. Vol. 2: *Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus*. Stuttgart Bad-Cannstatt 1990. pp. 480-504.

<sup>7</sup> *Stromateis* V, 14, 101, 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Praeparatio Evangelii* 18, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Quotations from Höpfner, Theodor: *Fontes historiae religionis Aegyptiacae*. In: *Fontes historiae religionum* II, 4, 1924, p. 655. Cf. Johannes Leiphold und Siegfried Morens: *Heilige Schriften. Betrachtungen zur Religionsgeschichte der antiken Mittelmeerwelt*. Leipzig 1953.

Israel a torrent of prophecy broke loose in those minor prophets whose words were destined to flow like rivers over the whole earth.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, for St. Augustine, it is verified that Greek wisdom grew in the light of divine revelation and that, ultimately, it exists thanks to this revelation. The demonstration of dependency for the remaining source of pagan wisdom, i.e. the Egyptians, is more difficult. In this case, Augustine has to go back before the dates of Moses' life. He therefore has to make use of a concept of original wisdom, antedating the Mosaic revelation, in order to save the originality of Hebrew wisdom. “On the other hand, I must admit that certain peoples other than the Greeks, the Egyptians, for example, had before Moses' time a certain body of learning which they called their ‘wisdom’. Otherwise, holy Writ could not have said that Moses was schooled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Act. 7:22). It tells how he was born there, adopted and reared by Pharaoh's daughter, and put to learning letters. Even so, if you remember that Abraham himself was a prophet, you will see that Egyptian wisdom, too, is posterior to the wisdom of our Prophets. For, what wisdom could there have been in Egypt, anyway, before Isis (who was worshiped as a great Goddess after death) gave them an alphabet? She was the daughter of Machus, first king of the Argives, and in this king's days Abraham was already a grandfather.”<sup>11</sup> This king Machus will play a key role in the theory of *translatio sapientiae*.

A text like St. Augustine's made it easy for Renaissance Christians to accept that Abraham already possessed a secret revelation in the book “Yezirah”. The contents of Egyptian wisdom, therefore, were undoubtedly known to St. Augustine, as well. “Besides, what was their extraordinary learning, their vaunted ‘wisdom’, except in the main, astronomy and other cognate studies which furnish more in the way of intellectual callisthenics than any genuine illumination of the mind, such as true wisdom affords. Speaking of philosophy, it was the essential function of this subject to teach men how to attain happiness. There was nothing of this kind in Egypt until around the time of Mercury or Trismegistus, as he was called, when such studies began to win public attention. This was, admittedly, much earlier than the appearance of the sages and philosophers in Greece. Even so, it was later than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What is more, it was later even than Moses himself. For Moses was a contemporary of Atlas, Prometheus' brother, the eminent astronomer, the maternal grandfather of Mercury the elder of whom Mercury Trismegistus was the grandson.”<sup>12</sup> Thus St. Augustine is able to reconstruct the genealogy of wisdom. His strategy is

<sup>10</sup> De civitate Dei XVIII, 37, trans. Walsh, Gerald G., S.J. and Honan, Daniel J. New York 1954 = The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, vol. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> De civitate Dei XVIII, 38.

simple: philosophy of nature, especially astronomy, is devalued. The purpose of philosophy is the happiness of the human race. In human happiness, practical philosophy virtually has the same aim as the history of salvation, and can therefore be integrated into the concept of revelation, as it becomes part of Jewish-Christian chronology.

### 3. THE PATRIARCHS' ENCYCLOPAEDIA: ROGER BACON'S (1214-1294) PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

Basing himself on St. Augustine's historical concepts, Roger Bacon reconstructed the tradition of original wisdom for the philosophy of nature and astronomy. Augustine's doctrine of perennial philosophy obtained its consistency from its Euhemerism.<sup>13</sup> Just as Euhemerus interpreted mythological figures as the historical founders of cities, Augustine thought of the Greek and Egyptian gods as historical persons. Thus he could bring them together with the chronology of the Patriarchs. This made it possible to place the figures of Greek mythology in the same historical timetable as the biblical Patriarchs. To that extent it was easy to integrate pseudepigraphic authors like Hermes Trismegistus into the biblical context, especially since these authors proclaimed a teaching similar to that of the Bible. The doctrines of those writings, however, were not of a practical, but rather speculative nature. Consequently Augustine's emphasis on practical philosophy began to shift in Bacon's reception. With him, the philosophy of nature also became a central subject of "Mosaic philosophy". The 'theoretical part' of the Mosaic traditions could be harmonised with the Chaldean and Egyptian teachings. For St. Augustine, the Holy Scriptures had authority in questions of natural philosophy, which he understood as analogous to the ancient Hermetic traditions. Following the Mosaic revelation, the genealogy of wisdom was evident – it derived from biblical plenitude.

This is why St. Augustine had already considered a history of natural philosophy originating in the time of the Patriarchs. His Euhemerism provided the basis for an interpretation in which the pagan gods were considered to be historical heroes who learned from the inspired Jewish fathers. The framework for this world history was defined by creation and the last judgement, thereby principally presupposing biblical chronology. Thus established, this chronology only had to be investigated in its details. In this Euhemeristic interpretation, mythology was integrated into the Judeo-

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Dörrie, Heinrich, article "Euhemerus" in "Der Kleine Pauly" II, column 414f.

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Christian framework of world history.<sup>14</sup> In St. Augustine's time, this concept of historical integration was still competing with different chronologies, whereas by the time of Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede, the Judeo-Christian chronologies had obtained a theoretical monopoly that was accepted unquestioningly by Roger Bacon.

In the appendix to the second part of his *Opus Maius*, which deals with "philosophiae cum theologia affinitas", he characterises his philosophy in this way: "Thus I say that the same persons are given by God the faculty of philosophy to whom Holy Scripture was given, too: namely to the holy persons in the beginning. So it is obvious that all of wisdom is but one and that it is necessary for all people."<sup>15</sup>

This concept of one wisdom makes it clear that Bacon, the anti-Aristotelian philosopher, lays claim to the unity of theology and philosophy. Different from his contemporary Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), he is not theoretically satisfied with the primacy of theology over philosophy. Bacon's wisdom is obtained from Edenic philosophy, and this received divine science requires a tradition. For this reason Bacon quotes "Flavius Josephus who, in the first book of his *Antiquities*, says: 'Since the sons of Adam were pious because of Seth and pleasing to God, God gave them six hundred years of life to study the parts of philosophy God revealed to them during their lifetimes.' He adds that Noah and his sons taught the Chaldeans some of the philosophy and that Abraham went to Egypt to teach the Egyptians. And later on, in the eighth book, he reports that Solomon, in order not to leave any aspect of nature unexplored, philosophised about everything and explained manifestly the learning of all disciplines. Touching all things and descending into the particulars, he wrote four to five thousand books."<sup>16</sup> Bacon fills the gaps Augustine left in wisdom's genealogy by introducing Noah, his sons, and Abraham, who came from the town of Ur in Chaldea, as teachers of the Egyptians. Thus Adam's universal wisdom becomes manifest in the stages of its historical tradition. It was this encyclopaedia of Edenic knowledge, collected by Solomon in his *Wisdom*, which inspired Roger Bacon's conception of his encyclopaedia of natural philosophy. Original wisdom was already attested to in the pseudo-Aristotelian book "*Secreta secretorum*", and especially in the Arabic tradition, from which Bacon cites Averroes and Albumazar: "In the great introduction of Albumazar and elsewhere - many others confirm this - it is found that Noah and his sons disseminated philosophy. Here especially

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<sup>14</sup> On this context see Grafton, Anthony: *Scaliger*, vol. 1. Oxford 1979.

<sup>15</sup> *Opus maius*. Ed. Richard Steele, p. II, cap. IX, vol. 1, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

Shem was outstanding. All major and minor philosophers lived after Noah, his sons, and after Abraham.”<sup>17</sup>

Since Bacon finds references in (pseudo-) Aristotle (*Theologia Aristotelis*) and elsewhere to the Greeks having learned their philosophy from the Chaldeans and the Egyptians, he is eager to introduce Noah and his sons as the teachers of the Chaldeans, prior even to Abraham’s teaching of the Egyptians. “But this was no study like in the Schools, but its order and exercise grew slowly.”<sup>18</sup>

In order to substantiate his theory of a divinely revealed, universal science transmitted through the centuries, Bacon establishes a genealogy of apprenticeships. His most important sources<sup>19</sup> are Flavius Josephus’ “*Jewish Antiquities*”, Clement of Alexandria’s “*Stromateis*”, St. Augustine’s “*City of God*” and the genealogical lists in the fifth book of Isidore’s “*Etymologies*”. Using these sources, he constructs the following genealogy: Noah is the origin of all post-diluvian wisdom. In Clement of Alexandria’s “*Stromateis*”, Bacon discovered that Noah’s son Ham was the Father of Zoroaster, who invented the magical arts.<sup>20</sup> Bacon adopts the genealogy of Egyptian wisdom from St. Augustine’s “*City of God*”: “Abraham was uncle to the first King Machus who lived in Jacob’s and Esau’s times and was for his part father of Io who later was called Isis and taught the Egyptians to write.”<sup>21</sup> This genealogy covers the second source of wisdom and at the same time gives a history of hieroglyphs. On the origin of Greek philosophy, Bacon writes that at the time when Isis blossomed, “Minerva appeared in virgin age, the inventor of many things (as Augustine writes in the book mentioned above) who is called Pallas, too, and who, by the poets, is named goddess of wisdom and Athena and Tritonia.” The place of Tritonia, after which Athena is named Tritonia, lies in Africa, as Bacon knows from Isidore and Pliny. The goddess lived during the time of the flood of Ogygis, which, according to Solinus’ books on the miracles of the world, took place in the time of Phoroneus, who, for his part, was the son of the frequently mentioned King Machus, Abraham’s nephew, and consequently lived in the time of Jacob.<sup>22</sup>

A history of magic and hieroglyphs, along with a history of technical inventions, is set up with this genealogy. Bacon begins his history of morality with Phoroneus, but the history of right and law derives from divine revelation. As grandson of Abraham and son of Machus, Phoroneus stands in genealogical relation to divine revelation. For Bacon, Noah, as the only one to transmit Adam’s wisdom through the flood, transmits the original law

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Additional sources quoted: Solinus’ *Polyhistor*, Vincent of Beauvais.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 46. Cf. ch. 9, 4, p. 426.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. pp. 46f.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 47.

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as well. After the flood, the consumption of blood was forbidden, and the consumption of flesh was allowed.<sup>23</sup> Abraham bought and sold things in his cave. Because of the holiness of the Patriarchs and the simplicity of their customs, one could not, however, characterise this habit as practical philosophy.

Thus Roger Bacon abandons the realm of moral philosophy after Noah, and takes up St. Augustine's idea that the genealogy of mythical persons could simultaneously signify a genealogy of philosophy. Bacon uses this argument to legitimate astrology as original revelation, a claim stemming from Flavius Josephus. Bacon's genealogy is as follows: Prometheus, who, as the poets report, made men of clay, was the brother of Atlas, the first pagan astrologer of African origin. The story of Atlas holding up the heavens was really just the name of 'Atlas' mountain in northern Africa transferred to this astronomer. Before Atlas, however, Noah's and Abraham's sons were skilled astronomers, as reported by Josephus, Isidore, and Clement. According to Roger Bacon and Isidore of Seville, Atlas too was "under the servitude of Israel's sons."<sup>24</sup>

Atlas was the grandfather of the elder Hermes Mercurius on his mother's side. This Hermes was "erudite in famous arts which he transmitted to men. That is why he was worshipped as a god after his death. That was the time, says Augustine in the eighteenth book, when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. His nephew was Hermes Mercurius, who, according to another doctrine is called Trismegistus, a famous Egyptian philosopher, especially in morality, as Augustine teaches in the eighth book of the City of God. Hermes was the one who wrote to Asclepius, as is clear from the well-known book *De divinitate*. The grandfather of this Asclepius was Aesculap, the first inventor of medicine among the pagans."<sup>25</sup> In an answer to Isidore's objection that Apollo was the father of Aesculap, Bacon states that (1) Apollo only healed through songs and similar remedies while Aesculap relied on experience; and (2) in [pseudo-] Aristotle's book "*Secreta secretorum*" there is the statement that, in the field of medicine, Adam and Enoch were more trustworthy than the subsequent philosophers. "And medicine being more necessary than many other sciences, there is no doubt that Adam and the sons of Noah invented it, who were gifted by the plenitude of wisdom and to

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<sup>23</sup> This alludes to the so-called Noachide Laws. Cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. Noachide Laws: "The seven laws considered by rabbinic tradition as the minimal moral duties enjoined by the Bible to all men; ... 1. the prohibition of idolatry, 2. blasphemy, 3. bloodshed, 4. sexual sins, 5. theft, 6. eating from a living animal, as well as 7. injunction to establish a legal system." These laws appear also in Maimonides.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



whom you must concede that they lived such a long time as to finish the study of wisdom.”<sup>26</sup>

In this way Bacon’s encyclopaedic wisdom is completely legitimated as deriving from biblical origin. It came from Adam and his sons after the fall, and from Noah and his sons after the flood. Noah’s sons taught this wisdom to the Chaldean philosophers surrounding Zoroaster. The Egyptian wisdom, however, derives from Abraham, who taught Machus, the father of Isis. From this source stems the wisdom of Minerva as well. The concrete medical knowledge of the Greeks comes from Abraham via Machus, and the general knowledge concerning health and old age derives from Adam’s sons and from Enoch.

The Euhemerism of this genealogy makes it possible to construct a continuous transmission from archaic to historically graspable times. This was guaranteed by the doctrine of a divinely preconceived chronology that embraced all time. Isidore and Bede had given this chronology the medieval corset; Bacon was thus able to order Greek mythology according to Bede’s Christian chronology.

He elegantly solved the chronological difficulties he had with Apollo and Hercules by claiming that each of them was composed of three historical persons. In Bacon’s genealogy, Apollo and Hercules are followed by the Erithreian Sibyl, “who was superior to all preceding pagans mentioned above”,<sup>27</sup> and who lived at the time of the Trojan War. Homer and Hesiod succeed Sibyl, initiating, for Bacon, the time of the theological poets. Only after this period do philosophical authors appear who “auctores sapientiae vocati sunt.”<sup>28</sup> Thus Bacon reaches the era of Greek philosophy, which is easily paralleled chronologically with biblical history. According to “Beda in libro temporum and Isidoro quinto etymologicarum”, Thales lived at the same time as the biblical King Josiah (2 Kings ch. 22), who also investigated nature and was a skilled astronomer.<sup>29</sup> Thus the origin of Greek philosophy is interwoven into biblical history.

Italian philosophy, for Bacon, is of a different origin. Pythagoras lived at the time of Tarquinius, which was also the age of the Persian king Cyrus. Through his teacher, the Syrian Pherecides, who lived during the time of Ezra’s youth, Pythagoras could have come into contact with biblical wisdom.<sup>30</sup> And so the beginnings of Greek philosophy, Thales and Pythagoras, are both linked to biblical origins. For Bacon, this connection is also the historical legitimation for his own project of a universal science uniting theology and philosophy. At the same time, mythology and poetry

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp. 48ff.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

are historically integrated into his encyclopaedia, as are the magical arts and astrology.

This concept, which takes antique knowledge seriously by integrating it into a Christian cosmos, had a considerable, but rather obscure impact on the Renaissance. Bacon's philosophy was itself born from the same spirit of Christian Platonism that defined Renaissance philosophy.

#### 4. **ANTEDILUVIAN WISDOM AND THE PEOPLES' GENEALOGY: ANNIUS OF VITERBO'S (1432-1502) EDITION OF 'BEROSUS'**

In the year 1498 the "Antiquitates" of the Vatican librarian Annius of Viterbo appeared, finally revealing the ancient proofs of perennial philosophy's dignity. Here, for the first time, the thesis that the origin of all wisdom derived from Noah's sons was proved not by Jewish or Christian, but by pagan sources. They were the Chaldean astronomer Berosus' five books, "De antiquitatibus totius orbis", which Annius edited in a Latin translation with extensive commentaries.

This edition is one of the most famous Renaissance forgeries,<sup>31</sup> and it is hard to discern if it is an actual modern forgery or perhaps one of the last examples of medieval pseudepigraphy. The framework of world history had been well established since the chronologies of Isidore and Bede. The questions regarding the world's prehistoric times and their structure were answered by biblical chronology: After their expulsion from paradise, the human race had lived in sin and had perished, except for Noah and his

<sup>31</sup> On Berosus/Berossus see Reallexikon der Assyriologie. Ed. Erich Ebeling und Bruno Meisner, vol. 2, Berlin and Leipzig 1938. pp. 1-17. For the edition of the true fragments of Berossos, see: Schnabel, Paul: Berossos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur. Leipzig 1923, reprint Hildesheim 1968. On the history of this forgery cf. Gerhardus Johannes Vossius: De Historicis latinis III, 8, Amsterdam 1687, pp. 189ff. Jacob Thomasius: De occultatione scientiarum. In: Jacob Thomasius, Dissertationes LMII. Ed. Christian Thomasius, Halle 1693. pp. 722-730. Ligota, Christopher: Annius of Viterbo and historical method. Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes. Vol. 50, 1987, 44-56. Stephens, Walter: Giants in those Days. Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism. Lincoln 1989; Grafton, Antony: Defenders of the Text. Cambridge 1992. pp. 80-103. Tate, R. B.: Mitología en la historiografía española de la edad media e del renacimiento. In: Ensayos sobre la historiografía española del siglo XV. Trans. J. Diaz (Madrid 1970); Asher, R. E.: Myth, Legend, and History in Renaissance France. In: Studi francesi 39 (1969), pp. 409-419. Owen, A.: The Famous Druids. Oxford 1962. T. D. Kendrick: British Antiquity. London 1950. Borchardt, Frank L.: German Antiquity in Renaissance Myth. Baltimore 1970. Cochrane, E.: Historians and Historiography in Italian Renaissance. Chicago and London 1981, pp. 431-435. Johann Albert Fabricius: Bibliotheca Graeca vol. XIV, Lib. VI, cap 12. Hamburg 1728, pp. 211-227.

family. All of human history, as well as knowledge of the divine, therefore had to be pursued through the historical needle's eye of the flood.

Berosus, whose "Antiquitates" Annii pretended to edit, had been mentioned in Josephus Flavius as one of the few Chaldean wise men known by name.<sup>32</sup> From these references Annii constructed a short biography: "Berosus lived before the reign of the great Alexander, like Metastenes<sup>33</sup> who was a Persian priest and succeeded Berosus in the time of the Assyrian monarchy. Berosus was versed in the Greek language and taught Chaldean doctrines at Athens, especially astronomy in which, according to a testimony in Pliny's natural history, the Chaldeans excelled before the other peoples. He was so successful in his predictions that the Athenians, in their public gymnasium, erected a statue of him with golden letters. The reason for their noting and adopting the Chaldecic tradition was that Greek chronology only reached the Greek pagan king Phoroneus and was filled with many errors concerning antiquity. Since writing had been invented by the Babylonians about 70 years or more before Phoroneus (according to Pliny's testimony in his 'historia naturalium' book 7, last chapter), the Athenians, like Pliny, were forced to believe that writing had always been in use by the Assyrians. That is why Berosus taught them, in a short treatise, which testimonies the Chaldeans received from their antiquity and history and which were from their literary customs (*usus literarum*).

Berosus divided his work into five books. In the first book he transmits what he wrote about the times before the first flood; in the second about the genealogy of the first gods, i.e. the leaders after the flood. In the third he teaches the antiquities of Janus, whom he also calls Noah. In the fourth he transmits the antiquities of the whole world's kings all together. In the fifth he explains the particularities.

The title of this book is 'Defloratio of Berosus the Chaldean'. The style is an oriental one; a short public narration like this, which was written on a pillar, was called *defloratio*. Therefore Josephus, too, wrote in the first book of his 'Jewish Antiquities', 'Berosus the Chaldean made an anthology (*defloravit*) of Chaldean history', in which he mentions, as Josephus asserts in 'Contra Apionem', the flood, the Arc, Noah, and his sons."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Antiquitates I, 3, 6 and I, 3, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Annii also wrote a forgery alleging to be by Metastenes.

<sup>34</sup> Annii von Viterbo:(I r/v); Antiquitates Wittenberg 1612 "Floruit autem Berosus ante Monarchiam magni Alexandri, quia idem Metasthenes sacerdos Persa florens in principio Monarchiae Assyriorum. Calluit item Berosus Graecam linguam, & docuit Athenis disciplinas Chaldaicas, praecipue Astronomiam, in qua caeteros anteibant Chaldaei, adeo ut teste Plinio in naturali historia, Athenienses illi statuam inaurata lingua, in publico Gymnasio ponerent, ob divinas ejus praedictiones. Causa scribendi & transsumendi has chaldaicas traditiones fuit, quia Graeci solum usque ad Phoroneum Priscum regem Graeciae attigerant, & quidem commixtis multis antiquitatum erroribus. Et inventis literis apud

Thus Berosus is introduced into both pagan and Judeo-Christian chronology. The afore mentioned king Phoroneus is referred to by St. Augustine as the son of Abraham's student Machus and the brother of Isis. Phoroneus also appears in Eusebius and Jerome. Thus the link with biblical chronology is manifest. At the same time, Anniius adopts St. Augustine's Euhemerism. He interprets, in passing, the mythological gods as historical leaders who lived in the time after the flood and who were made gods after their deaths. This figure was utterly self-evident in Anniius' time; Roger Bacon had also understood the gods this way.

Anniius' 'edition' of Berosus became especially important due to its reception. It not only presented a genealogy of wisdom through the history of Noah's sons, Anniius' main interest, but it also offered a universal genealogy of peoples that conformed to the Bible.<sup>35</sup> This theologico-political argument made Anniius' forgery resistant to historical critique. The last edition of his famous fake was printed as late as 1612 in Wittenberg.<sup>36</sup> This is not difficult to understand: Protestant historiography, based on Lutheran biblical theology, was, of course, interested in stabilizing the biblical chronology. The Lutheran historians seem not to have troubled themselves with the criticism of Anniius,<sup>37</sup> especially since Melanchthon's and Sleidan's histories of the world's early ages were based on the 'sources' Anniius had provided.

Anniius has the antediluvian history of his 'Berosus' begin with the statement that the Chaldeans truly remembered the times before the flood.<sup>38</sup> He then reports of a large city named Enoch, which ruled the whole world

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Babyloniam ante hunc Phoroneum annis septingentis & amplius, teste Plinio in 7. naturalis historiae cap. ult. cogeantur Athenienses credere, uti ibi credit Plinius, usum literarum fuisse aeternum, & literas Assyrias semper fuisse. Quamobrem ab eodem Beroso edocti sunt in hac transsumptione brevissima, quid de temporibus & antiquitatibus haberent Chaldaei, penes quos semper fuisset usus literarum. Dividit autem hunc librum Berosus in quinque libros. In primo tradit, quid Chaldaei scribant, de temporibus ante primum diluvium. In secundo de Genealogiis primorum deorum, id est, ducum post diluvium. In tertio docet antiquitatem Jani patris, quem & Noam nominat. In quarto, de antiquitatibus regnorum totius orbis in communi tradit. In quinto, singula explicat. Titulus huic libro est, Defloratio Berosi Chaldaica. Modus est orientalium, ut brevem & publica fide transsumptam narrationem, vocent deflorationem. Unde & Josephus in primo de antiquitate Judaica scribens: Berosus, inquit, Chaldaeus, omnem Chaldaicam defloravit historiam, in qua ut contra Appionem asserit, nominat diluvium, Arcam, Noam, & filios ejus." Flavius Josephus: *Contra Apionem* I, 19, I, 20 *Antiquitates Judaicae* I, 3, 6

<sup>35</sup> On the consequences for nationalistic theories in early modern times cf. Stephens, Walter: *Giants in Those Days. Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism*. Lincoln, Nebraska 1989. On the reception in Germany see Müller, Jan Dirk: *Gedächtnis. Literatur und Hofgesellschaft um Maximilian I.* Munich 1982, pp. 87f.

<sup>36</sup> This is the edition I used.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Grafton, Anthony: *Defenders of the Texts*, pp. 86f. 94ff.

<sup>38</sup> Anniius de Viterbo: *Antiquitates*, Wittenberg 1612, fol. 4r.

and was inhabited by giants. “They invented arms and suppressed all beings. For their lust they invented tents, musical instruments and games. They seduced men and abused them during luxurious meals; they had intercourse with their mothers, daughters, sisters, men, and animals, and there was no vice that they did not admit”.<sup>39</sup>

Following the biblical account in which Cain’s wife “bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name after the name of his son, Enoch” (Gen. 4:17), Anniius in his commentary connects this town of Enoch with the prophet Enoch, who was born in the year 1034 before the flood. Using the Euhemeristic method, Anniius conjectures that Enoch was the founder and hero of this town. “As for Enoch, the Apostle Judas Thaddeus had witnessed in his ‘Canonica’ that Enoch had prophesied the last judgement as well as the flood. Josephus testifies that Enoch posted two pillars: the one of bronze, the other of brick. So writing was already in use, as were the arts of metallurgy and brick making, and the art of prophecy - more than 1000 years before the flood. When Adam was still alive and working, 620 years after creation, this Enoch was born, as Moses reckons.

This makes the supposition and the argument that Enoch received scripture and wisdom from his ancestor Adam rather clear. Theologians assert that writing and Chaldeian astronomy began at the same time, as we stated above. Jerome says with good reason that Moses followed the revelation concerning the world and its creation. It was referred to Enoch, who should transmit the history of these events to his followers. Enoch delivered it to Lamech the prophet, who was Noah’s father, and Lamech to his son Noah. After the flood, Noah left it to the Chaldeans, from whom Abraham and his seed wrote the truth of the events”.<sup>40</sup> So Anniius is not surprised to find that the Chaldeans have a similar history of antediluvian times as is found in the biblical book of Genesis.

The text of ‘Berosus’, which Anniius presents following this commentary, precisely confirms the commentary’s statements. Before the flood two pillars of stone had been erected (by Seth, not by Enoch), on which the prophecy of the flood was written. This corresponds to the reference in Josephus, and at the same time intimates the Egyptian obelisks with hieroglyphic inscriptions erected by Sesostris, the Egyptian king, whom Josephus identified with Seth, the son of Adam.<sup>41</sup> But most significant is that Berosus’ text explicitly names Noah in his report of the flood: “One of the giants was a venerator of God and was more prudent than the others. He had left them and honestly lived in Syria. His name was Noah and he had three sons, Shem, Japheth and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. fol. 5v.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. fol. 6v.

<sup>41</sup> See above p. 413, fn. 3, William Whiston’s note on Seth. In Josephus, one of the pillars is of stone, the other of brick.

Chem; his wives were the great Tyrea, Pandora, Noela, and Noegla. He feared a flood which he foresaw already 78 years before it happened and began to build a ship that was closed like an ark.”<sup>42</sup>

The story of the flood itself is only told briefly. Corresponding to the account of Flavius Josephus, Annius/Berosus also had Noah landing in Armenia on the mountain Gordicus, “and until the present day the ark is part of it, from which men take bitumen, which they use for their expiation.”<sup>43</sup> The ark’s survival guarantees the translation of wisdom, which, according to Annius/Berosus, is spread to all peoples and can be found “in Asia, in our Highest Babylon, in Africa, in Egypt and Libya, which were then united and are treated as a unity, and finally in Europe, where our wise men count four tribes: the Keltiberes, the Celts, the Kytim whom they call the people of Italy, and the Thuyscons who spread from the Rhine to the Sarmatic narrows. They also add a fifth people whom they call Ionians.”<sup>44</sup>

These peoples have to be connected to Noah’s sons, so Annius/Berosus provides genealogies. Noah, also called Janus Ogyges, begot more children after the flood, so that he finally had seventeen Titans for children: Marem, Japhetus the younger, Prometheus, Priscus, Tuysco the giant, Crana, Cranus, Granaeus, Ham, Shem, Japheth, Araxa prisca, Regina, Pandora the younger, Thetis, Oceanus, and Typhoneus.

All of them became progenitors of peoples. Annius, however, is specifically interested in Tuysco, who is mentioned not only by Berosus, but also by Tacitus, as Annius reports, as the father of the Germans who are named after him; he is also the ancestor of the Slavs. In his commentary, Annius emphasises that “Noah adopted through his sons the posterity of Tuysco and put them into his family tree, and not the nephews of others. Among them the Germans and Sarmatians are eminent. The Germans are now called Tuysci by the Latin and the Gallic peoples. The peoples of Sarmatia are the Polish, Gothic, Russian, Prussian and Dacian peoples, as well as others.”<sup>45</sup> This genealogy is directed particularly against the descent of the Frankish people from Virgil’s Aeneas.

But Annius/Berosus is not primarily interested in the genealogy of the peoples. For him genealogy serves only as the condition for the translation of wisdom. After explaining the complicated genealogies of Noah’s seventeen children, and after drawing parallels between them and the lists of families occurring in the book of Genesis and in pagan literature, Annius describes the

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. fol. p. 8v sq.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. fol. p. 8v.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. fol. 10r.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. fol. 15r: “Sed notanda sunt duo, quod Noa sibi in filios adoptavit Tuysconis posteritatem, & ideo in ejus arbore ponuntur & non aliorum nepotes, in quo precellunt Germani & Sarmatae, qui dicuntur nunc Tuysci a Latinis & a Gallis. Sarmatae autem populi sunt Poloni, Gothi, Russi, Prussiani, & Daci, atque hujuscemodi.”

content of the wisdom that had survived until Noah. According to Berossus, Noah not only taught moral law, monogamy, and the cult of God, but after that, “he began to cultivate human wisdom. He wrote down many secrets of nature, which he recommended to the priests in Scythian Armenia. It was not by chance that he only revealed and taught it to the priests who read it and that he left ritual books to the priests from which first the name of Saga could be taken, meaning priest and sacrificer and pontifex.”<sup>46</sup>

This thesis of the priests’ original, secret wisdom is a constitutive part of perennial philosophy, which has to preserve its secret character. If its core consists of divine wisdom, it cannot be exhausted, for it is the original revelation of the divine. Thus it merits men’s devotion. Berossus, as represented by Annianus, is himself a priest who had insight into the secrets of Noah’s teachings. So what did Noah teach the priests? “He taught them the course of the stars, and he measured the year according to the course of the sun and the months according to the course of the moon. He explained to them how, from the very beginning, this science predicted for them what the year and the placement of the stars contained for their future; and how they could perceive therein that they were participants in God’s nature.”<sup>47</sup> These astrological doctrines, as they were invented and taught by the original philosopher Noah, are grounded in the structure of the cosmos.

Berosus/Annianus presents a Neoplatonic cosmology, which even includes the doctrine of divine predicates. Noah left his children “many books through which he trained them in divine things by which God was worshipped, and where he was called heaven, sun, chaos, seed of the world, father of the major and minor gods, soul of the world which moves the heavens, and was mixed with the vegetables, the animals, and men, God of peace, justice, holiness, expelling the evil and preserving the good”.<sup>48</sup>

The famous story of the corruption of Noah’s original wisdom is also found in Annianus’ ‘Berosus’. It is the story of Ham, who uses the teachings of agriculture, the divine signature of things, to practice sorcery. This is also ‘Berosus’ interpretation of the account of Noah’s drunkenness (Gen. 9:20-27). “Before Noah left Armenia, he taught his children simple agriculture, which was more concerned with religion and customs than with opulence and luxury, which lead to vice and injustice. He was, of course, the first to invent viniculture; he planted vine grapes and taught how to prepare wine. But he did not know the force of wine, and the effects of its fumes made him drunk so that he sunk to the earth in an impudent manner. With him was, as we said, his oldest son Chem, deriving from his first family, who was always studying magic and venomous arts. Later he was called Zoroaster. He hated

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. fol. 24r.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. fol. 25r.

his father, who loved the later-born twins more ardently than him, and he thought himself neglected. For his vices he was deeply hated by his father. So he seized the opportunity. As his father lay drunk, he tacitly took his virility, murmured a magic song to his father and made him sterile and castrated, so that, after that time, Noah could not impregnate any more women.”<sup>49</sup>

Hence evil enters the world again, despite the flood. The story of the black magician Ham contains at the same time the classical denunciation of black magic. Berosus/Annius appoints Ham as the originator of the decay of morals in the human race and therefore as the origin of its new decline. The philosophical priests and their secret knowledge thereby take on a new function. During the course of the human race's decline, they are the only ones who save the true, secret knowledge. “Ham, however, demoralised the human race by reinforcing and practicing what was commonly done before the flood: intercourse with women, sisters and daughters, with men, and with animals of any kind. Therefore Ham was expelled by Janus, who was pious, chaste, and virtuous. The expelled was now called Ham esenua, which is impudent Ham, the propagator of impudence and fornication.”<sup>50</sup>

The story of the spread of Noah's *philosophia perennis*, which is not essentially threatened by Ham's black magic, is quickly told. Following their father's orders, Noah's children dispersed and founded cities. “Father Janus sent the aged Chem with colonists to Egypt, to Libya and Cyrene he sent Triton, and Japheth, who is called Atola by the pagans, to the whole of remaining Africa. To eastern Asia Ganges was sent with some sons of Comes Gallus; to Felix Arabia he sent Sabus with the surname Athuriferus. Arab was sent into the desert Arabia, Petreus to Petrea. Cana was given the whole land from Damascus up the borders of Palestine. In Europe he made Tuysco the king from Tanai to the Rhine; all sons of Istrus and Meza as well as their brothers were joined to him; their reign spans from the mountain of Adula to Pontica Mesembrica. Among them can be found Thyras, Arcadius, Emathius. Italy is held by Comerus Gallus; Samotes possesses Celtas. Jubal occupied Celtiberos.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus the world is apportioned. Annius' remaining task consists in commenting on this division of the world with his map of the world, adapting the names of the cities to the standard of historical knowledge, and

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. fol. 25r. Flavius Josephus tells this story according to the biblical text (Ant. Jud. 1, 6, 3). He adds only that Ham laughed at his father, yet “he did not curse him, by reason of his nearness in blood, but cursed his posterity”. In his “Prodomus historiae Literariae” Leipzig and Frankfurt 1710, p. 13, Peter Lambeck furiously recounts Annius' story of the identity of Ham and Zarathustra (which is also found in Roger Bacon; cf. ch. 9, 3, p. 418) as well as the story of Ham's black magic; these were “impudentissima illius impostoris verba”.

<sup>50</sup> Annius: Antiquitates, fol. 27r,v.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. fol. 30r.



adjusting the dates of his heroes according to the biblical chronology. With Anniius' story of perennial philosophy's spreading, divine wisdom can be found in the secrets of the priests throughout the world. Perennial philosophy thus is proven to be the original as well as the universal wisdom.

## 5. THE THIRD REVELATION: STEUCHO'S (1496-1549) *PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS*

The Vatican librarian (beginning in 1542) Agostino Steucho's (Augustinus Steuchus Eugubinus<sup>52</sup>) book, famous in its time, gave the whole movement of Christian Neoplatonism its name. For him, perennial philosophy "proves most clearly, with the finest fruits and rewards that Plato and Aristotle, the true princes of philosophy, do not propose anything else but science and worship of God, what in their language means *theorein kai therapeuein tû theû*. This is the sum, this is the desire of the philosophers' studies and achievements."<sup>53</sup>

Right at the beginning of his book, Steucho makes this declaration of a science that has an edifying character and unites theology and philosophy. Steucho's book is the most comprehensive work in this philosophical tradition. It not only vouches for the antiquity of the secret science and of astrology, but also tries to propose that the central doctrines of Christianity – the Trinity and the unity of God, the creation, the existence of good and evil angels, the immortality of the soul, and the end of the world – can be grounded systematically.

Steucho's perennial philosophy neither contains a program of natural mysticism nor emphasises the secrets of creation. For Steucho, God's original revelation, which was granted to Adam, is not so much insight into the essence of things, but rather participation in the *logos* of creation as was revealed in the prologue of St. John's gospel. This is the knowledge that Steucho thinks was lost in the course of history (apart from the priests' secret

<sup>52</sup> Literature on Steucho: Willmann, Otto: *Geschichte des Idealismus*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Braunschweig 1904, vol. 3, pp. 172-179. Freudenberger, Th.: *Augustinus Steuchus aus Gubbio. Augustinerchorherr und päpstlicher Bibliothekar (1497-1548) und sein literarisches Lebenswerk*. Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte Nr. 64, 65. Münster 1935. Schmitt, Charles B.: *Perennial Philosophy: From Steuco to Leibniz*. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, 1966. pp. 505-532. Id.: *Prisca theologia e philosophia perennis*. Due termini del Rinascimento e la loro fortuna. In: *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro*. Florence 1970, pp. 211-236. Santinello, Giovanni: *Storia della storia della filosofia*, Brescia 1981, vol. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Steuco: *De perenni philosophia*. Lyons 1540. Reprint New York 1972, with a preface by Charles B. Schmitt. Dedication to Paul III. fol \*.

science), and which can be brought back to light with the proper philosophy. Whether this process accelerates the process of world history is clearly not a problem for Steucho. His science rejoices in the discovery of truth; he does not expect it to impact God's rule of the world, even when both philosophical and historical truths are reinvestigated.

What, however, is the core of his science? The original object of this investigation is creation; its aim is theory and the worship of God.<sup>54</sup> For Steucho, too, all science is but received knowledge, and this is why it is founded in creation. Steucho proceeds directly from the concept of Adam's wisdom. Men in paradise participated in the original philosophy: "Wisdom was accumulated and complete in the first men. This is clearly proved by the fact that they recognised themselves, when they were born, to have been created by God, and that shortly before all had been created by him: heaven and earth and sea had been made from nothing, as well as animals, stars, and the seeds of the field. After their birth they had the fruitful experience of divine presence, and conversation with Him. Everything that happened from the time before their creation until their expulsion from paradise was miraculously known to Adam. So it is no accident that they did not transmit the memory of all this to their progeny. But it is also not probable that the first man forgot his and the world's origin, and that he did not preach this to his sons wisely and in a loud voice."<sup>55</sup>

This conjecture that Adam preached the original truth to his children is the condition for the transmission of this knowledge from paradise. Steucho explains that the long lives of the antediluvian patriarchs were due to their proximity to creation, "*animo et corpore fuisse nobilissimum.*" He thereby can confirm the account of the giants, which is found in the Apocalypse of Enoch and in Philo of Alexandria.<sup>56</sup> For him, Methusala is the most important link in the transmission of Adam's wisdom to Noah: "There was especially one whose name was Methusala, who stood in the midst between Adam and Noah. He saw both men and lived with both. Methusala and Noah accepted very piously the education of the respectively elder one; they assented to the reasoning of the elder and thus produced the Hebrews' antiquities. The age of Methusala and the others can truly be proved: he died in the year before the flood. He was born when Adam was 680 years of age. He could communicate with Adam and could see him."<sup>57</sup>

Thus Noah was able to teach his sons, from whom the peoples of the world descended, what he had learned for three hundred years after the flood. Steucho avoids telling the awkward story of Noah's sons by making

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* p. 619.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 1a.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Stephen, Walter: *Giants in Those Days. Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism.* Lincoln, NE. 1989.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* fol. 2c.

Noah and Abraham contemporaries. According to Steucho, Abraham was born during Noah's lifetime, and they overlapped for at least fifty years. As for Noah and his family, it is very unlikely that "such a pious father and sons alike had suppressed these valuable memories which lead men to piety, justice, and their divine origin, and that they did not inflame the remembrance of the punishment which decimated the human race. They must have taught this to Abraham, whom they foresaw as a holy and a pious leader of a nation."<sup>58</sup> In this common doctrine taught by Noah and his sons to their peoples and especially to Abraham, Steucho sees "the true reason that it is the same great science of human and divine matters which descended from then and which, during the following barbaric centuries, lost its certainty and firmness which it had among the first men and became worse in its old age."<sup>59</sup> Steucho has to provide a different explanation for the corruption of wisdom than did Annius, for whom Noah's son Ham was the originator of black magic. Steucho, on the contrary, sees the scattering of peoples as colonisers all over the world as responsible for the decay of science. "Since, after the human race's dissemination and scattering into all parts of the world there remained only people who lived far apart and who intended to recognise solely what was necessary for their lives, it happened necessarily that they neglected their memories which therefore remained restricted to a few people."<sup>60</sup> Moreover, in that time the knowledge of writing was nearly lost. Only those peoples who lived near the region where Noah taught, namely the Chaldeans, Armenians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, and Phoenicians, transmitted the original knowledge, "partly directly and open, partly secret, partly fabulous and hidden in myths and tales, partly violated by unpious fictions."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. fol. 2d. According to Fabricius, *Bibl. graeca* XIV, Hamburg 1728, p. 210, Berosi Chaldaci fragmenta, there is a notice in Suidas s.v. Sibilla, where Berosus is referred to as the father of the Sibyl. But in the ed. of Gottfried Bernhardt, Halle 1853, the Cumean Sibyl is said to stem from Noah's family. On the history of the Chaldean Oracles see Lewy, Hans: *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic, and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*. Cairo 1956, pp. 3f: "The peculiar character of the Chaldean Oracles is evinced by the existence of accurate dates concerning the biography of their authors: There were two of those, Julian, surnamed 'the Chaldean' and his son, Julian 'the Theurgist'. The younger of them was born in the time of Trajan and lived in Rome in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. He took part in the campaign of Marcus Aurelius against the Marcomans and claimed to have worked a celebrated rain miracle. (A.D. 174)" Cf. Fabricius, Johann Albert: *Bibliotheca graeca*, vol. 1, Hamburg 1701, Lib. I, cap. XXXVI, § XI. It was Steucho who rediscovered a mystic hymn of Porphyry's *Philosophy of Oracles*. Cf. Lewy: *Chaldean Oracles*, p. 9. Cf. Wolff: *Gustavus. Porphyrii de philosophia ex oraculis haurienda librorum reliquae*. Berlin 1856. Repr. Hildesheim 1962, p. 144. On Steucho see Wolff, Ibid. pp. 106f., 143: *Steuchus de perenni philosophia* libr. 3, cap 14, p. 189, ed. Basiliensis [1542]. *De libri indice versuumque numero consentit Mornaeus*

This is the situation in which true philosophy can rediscover the true teachings. Steuco's uniqueness lies in his doctrine that it is the independent task of philosophy to rediscover the ancient Mosaic wisdom. The first philosophical rediscovery took place in the time of the pagan and Christian philosophers since Plato. He ascribes the ability to completely unfold the seeds of true ancient philosophy to his own era, the Renaissance. "It is likely that the philosophy of the ancients was much more perfect and clear than the one which later was born from contemplation. But in most recent times, especially nowadays, a new light has arisen outshining the previous eras (like the rising sun obscuring the stars) and which are the rays of a new time and the dawn of the rising sun."<sup>62</sup>

Steuco optimistically hopes that through his philosophical Renaissance, divine wisdom can be reconstructed philosophically. He sees this wisdom throughout the world: "All the wisdom which always has been in the human race does not only convince us through its reasons. In many examples, scattered among all peoples, it rather shows us Moses' scriptures like in a removed mirror. Afterwards a bright light reflects and fills all eyes and minds."<sup>63</sup>

These sparks of Mosaic wisdom rediscovered in Renaissance times have to be collected by true philosophers. This newly regained, complete philosophical wisdom is twofold, according to Steuco: It is natural knowledge as well as the wisdom of creation. The course of philosophical knowledge, however, historically proceeded in three steps. In the first step of rediscovery, the ancient philosophers recognised the power of God the Father and God the Son. Steuco ascribes this wisdom to the Chaldeans, who invented magic. The sum and substance is attributed to Zoroaster, and it was Berosus, the father of the Erytrean Sibyl, who transmitted it: "The Father perfected all, and he transmitted it to the second soul, which is called the first by human beings'. Thus the theology of the magicians speaks. The most recent theology, however, has declared that the father of all that can be discerned and is hidden from our eyes is the father who created through this soul or reason. This is the second in respect to the father. It is the first in respect to things created visible and invisible, the principle of which is the soul."<sup>64</sup>

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[Duplessis-Mornay] de relig. Christ. cap 3, qui versus graece quidem non edidit, sed Francogallicae et latine enarravit. Is tacens hauserat ex Steucho. On the Chaldean oracles see *The Chaldean Oracles. Text, Translation, and Commentary* by Ruth Majercik. Leiden, New York, Copenhagen, Cologne 1989.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. fol. 3a.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. fol. 3b.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. fol. 8d. cf. *The Chaldean Oracles. Text, Translation, and Commentary* by Ruth Majercik, no. 7: "For the Father perfected all things and handed them over to the Second Intellect, which you - the entire human race - call the first intellect."

1. It is now easy for Steucho to interpret this creating mind as the Son in the Holy Trinity. He ascribes this knowledge to the Jews, whose wisdom derives from the Chaldeans. But they did not understand the Christological meaning of this truth: "It was the Jews alone who knew the Son of God, but they blindly fail to recognise that they blaspheme the later redeemer of mankind who previously had given the Law to Moses on the mountain."<sup>65</sup>

2. This Chaldean knowledge is found in the Egyptians, too. Hermes has it, and from him, according to Steucho, this knowledge is imparted to Anaxagoras and the other Presocratic philosophers. But that is only the transmission of the wisdom of the Chaldeans. The next step is more important: The creating soul, *mens*, is identified as the son of the highest good. Steucho finds evidence of this knowledge in Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's "somnia Scipionis". He identifies the following sentence as being of Chaldean origin: "God is the highest principle of all things who, by the Greeks, is called the first good before all; and the soul, *mens*, which the Greeks call *nous*, contains the species of things called ideas, is born and proceeded from the highest God."<sup>66</sup> Here he sees an agreement with St. Paul's doctrine of Christ: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or principalities or Powers - all things were created through him and for him." (Col. 1:15f.)

3. After having established that the doctrine of the Father (as originating and good principle of all creation proceeding from the Son) was already the philosophy of the Chaldeans, Steucho also finds there the teaching that man's soul is the image of the divine soul. "Chaldean theology as it is found in the sentences of Zoroaster asserts that the eternal mind (*mens*) has created according to its image, which agrees with Moses. The eternal mind implanted signs or indications of the father into the human soul."<sup>67</sup> It was in Psellus that Steucho found the reference to the Mosaic teaching of man's creation from God's image as already being included in Chaldean theology. He also finds the accord of Chaldean and Mosaic theology cited in Philo: "[B]ecause of his rational nature every man has communion with the divine word, for he was by his creation an image or a ray or a spark of the good."<sup>68</sup>

4. The Vatican librarian knew of Hermes Trismegistus through the edition of Marsilio Ficino. Hermes was here no longer the hard to grasp philosopher mentioned in St. Augustine's "City of God" (VII 26) and in the "Book of 24 Philosophers".<sup>69</sup> After Ficino the Corpus Hermeticum was

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. fol. 8d.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. fol. 14d.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. fol. 16c.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. fol. 17.

<sup>69</sup> Le livre des XXIV Philosophes. ed. F. Hudry. Grenoble 1989. Sturlese, Loris: Proclo ed Ermete in Germania da Alberto Magno a Bertoldo di Moosburg. Per una prospettiva de

completely accessible. For Ficino, Pico, and Steuco as well, the wisdom of the Egyptians emerged one generation after Chaldean theology. And so it is in the dialogue of *Pimander* that Steuco finds the proof that “mind (*mens*)” is “the divine child”. “I mind, accede to the holy, good, pure, compassionate, and pious, and my presence brings aid. At once all recognise me, and they invoke the gracious Father with joy. Joined together in his grace, they give thanks by blessing and praising.”<sup>70</sup>

5. Steuco has a Chaldean proof even for perennial philosophy's final realm, the theology of the word and the joint metaphor of speculation. In Proclus he finds an “ancient” reference that the Father recognises himself at the source of everything: “Wisdom has the Father's ability to recognise itself. Namely it is the Father's wisdom.”<sup>71</sup> This passage is not only seen as the self-intellection of the Father in the process of separation, but also as a preliminary stage of what later will be interpreted as the self-knowledge of the trinitarian God.

The first book of Steuco's “*Philosophia perennis*” already shows the method of his entire concept of philosophical history. The Greek philosophers adopted the core of Chaldean and Egyptian philosophy as derived from Noah and explicated it as a science of the highest principle. Concerning the knowledge of the holy trinity's second person, Steuco comes to the conclusion that, according to the Chaldeans, Hermes and the Platonic philosophers, the soul ‘*mens*’ is the divine principle that created the world. According to the testimony of Proclus, the divine Father is concealed behind this *idea mundi*, which is also St. John's *logos* as the archetype of the world. For Steuco, this Neoplatonic doctrine cannot be discerned from ancient Adamic revelation. “The ancient theology is identical with the new one; we do not worship a different God as creator. This is affirmed by Plotinus' sermons on great principles, which we now possess: On the Word, On the Image, On the Highest Good, On the First Origin, and On the Creator. They were not new but very ancient, and he affirms that what we say today was only an interpretation of the ancients. Obviously he said the truth.”<sup>72</sup>

Steuco shows how philosophy becomes increasingly independent from revealed Christian theology. He accordingly finds the truth of the Trinity in Hermes, Pythagoras and Plotinus. He acknowledges the triad of *bonum*, *mens* and *anima* in Dionysius the Areopagite and in Proclus. He demonstrates that trinitarian philosophy was a pure philosophical achievement of the Platonic and Neoplatonic schools. Plotinus and Proclus

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ricerca sulla cultura filosofica tedesca nel secolo delle sue origini (1250-1350). In: Flasch, Kurt (ed.): *Von Meister Dietrich bis Meister Eckhard*. Hamburg 1984, pp. 22-32.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. fol. 18c.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. fol. 19b.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. fol. 78c.

are counted as the chief exponents of trinitarian philosophy. For Steucho, trinitarian philosophy is of genuine Christian origin, because Dionysius is considered to be St. Paul's student. Thus the Neoplatonists are seen as the heirs of an original Christian revelation.

The philosophical doctrine of the Trinity demonstrates one God. This is the central topos of natural theology as presented in the fourth book of "*De perenni philosophia*". Steucho also finds this doctrine in classical Greek philosophy, especially in Plato and Aristotle. He thus directs most of his attention to the concordance of the two. In this way, the "newly invented" historical science of Renaissance philosophy establishes the truth of its ancient sources. In true philosophy, which in the Renaissance is the newly discovered ancient philosophy, the immutable truths of the origin become evident again. These are the knowledge of the divine Trinity, the creation, and the immortality of the soul.

The aim of Steucho's philosophy was to make visible the original philosophy of the Chaldeans and, at the same time, to renew Neoplatonic philosophy, which, for its part, had first renewed the Chaldean philosophy. Thus he did not need to rediscover truth in its originality, but could renew the ancient philosophical interpretation of the original philosophy. This story of the forgotten ancient rediscovery of the original truth needed a further explanation, for the newly discovered authors – especially Hermes, Plotinus, and Proclus – had already explained and sufficiently interpreted Chaldean philosophy. But they had suffered the same fate as Chaldean philosophy had – they were forgotten. This insight leads Steucho to construct his own historical theory of a circular, philosophical renaissance. The philosophy of his contemporary Renaissance times was already the third philosophical beginning, after the first one in the time of the Chaldeans and the second in ancient (neo-) Platonism. The philosophical origin is being rediscovered and revived for a second time. So Steucho discovers that there were "three ages of philosophy. The first was the blossoming and strong age of youth, which, when it came into the age of senility, began to be reborn and renewed in the second age of the philosophers. In the most recent times, philosophy was not only reborn, but became greater and more splendid than it ever was. Its light grows and shines as much as the spirits can grasp it."<sup>73</sup> Contributing to this achievement was Steucho's main interest. He did not say, however, whether he considered this third age of philosophy to be the final philosophical and theological revelation.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. fol. 3a,b.

## 6. JOHANN HEINRICH ALSTED'S (1588-1642) UNIVERSAL APOCALYPTIC SCIENCE

The great polyhistor from the small university of Herborn in Nassau, Germany, which was quite famous at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, knew how long the world was going to last.<sup>74</sup> In his “*Diatribē de mille annis apocalypticis*” (1624) he had reckoned the age of the world according to Daniel and St. John’s Apocalypse, and he incorporated his apocalyptic theories into in his great “*Chronologia*” (first published in 1628). He founded his argument on the typology of the Jewish temple, and divided all of world history into six epochs: “The first lasts from the beginning of the world until the universal flood, - 1656 absolute years. The second from the flood until Israel’s exodus from Egypt, - 797 years. (Gen. 12:1, Exod. 12:41) Therefore from the beginning of the word until the exodus there are 2453 years. The third is from the exodus until the Temple of Solomon (which is also called the first one), - 400 years, sum 2933. (1 Kings 6) The fourth from Solomon’s Temple until the Temple of Zorobabel (which is also called the second one) - 595 years. Sum 3528. The fifth from the restoration of the Second Temple until its destruction; - 490 years. (Daniel 9) Sum of the world’s years: 4018. The sixth and last interval lasts from the Temple’s destruction until just before the world’s end, for which the destruction of the temple is the type; - 2625 years. The sum of the years is 6643, from the beginning of the world roughly to its end. For this the dictum of Elia’s [Elijah’s] house has a round number, namely 6000. Refer to Dan. 12:11,12; Rev. 20:6,7,8.”<sup>75</sup>

Based on this, the world’s end can be precisely calculated. Alsted had described this in detail in his “*Diatribē de mille annis*”, and he repeated it in his chronology: “From the destruction of the Temple until the battle of Gog

<sup>74</sup> Literature on Alsted: Clouse, Robert: *The Influence of John Henry Alsted on English Millenarian Thought in the Seventeenth Century*. Iowa 1963. Id.: *The Rebirth of Millenarianism*. in: Toon, Peter (ed.): *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel. Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660*. Cambridge, London 1970, pp. 42-65. Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm: *Topica universalis. Eine Modellgeschichte humanistischer und barocker Wissenschaft*. Hamburg 1983, pp. 100-139. Id.: *Apokalyptische Universalwissenschaft*. J. H. Alsteds “*Diatribē de mille annis apocalypticis*”. In: *Pietismus und Neuzeit. Ein Jahrbuch zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus*. Bd. 14: *Chiliasmus in Deutschland und England im 17. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen 1988, pp 50-71. Id.: Vorwort zu Johann Heinrich Alsted: *Encyclopaedia Septem Tomos Divisa*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1988. Giesing, Beate: *Johann Heinrich Alsted, Herborns Calvinistische Theologie und Wissenschaft im Spiegel der englischen Kulturreform des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt, New York 1988. Hotson, Howard: *Paradise postponed. Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism*. Dordrecht 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Alsted, Johann Heinrich: *Thesaurus Chronologiae*. Herborn 1650, p. 7.



and Magog there will be 2625 years. (Dan. 12:11,12; Rev. 20:1,7,8.) Those years will end in the year of Christ 2694, for the temple was destroyed in the year of Christ 69. From the current year of 1623<sup>76</sup> until 1694 is the time of preparation for the apocalyptic 1000-year reign, which starts after the end of the battle of Gog and Magog and ends with the Lord's famous return for his last judgement. Then he alone will make all things new."<sup>77</sup>

Alsted remained convinced throughout his lifetime of his calculation of the thousand-year reign beginning in 1694. Until his death in Transylvanian Weißenburg (Alba Iulia), he believed that the Thirty Years' War was the apocalyptic battle of Gog and Magog and that only a few elect – presumably from his Calvinistic congregation – would enjoy the millennial kingdom.

Cyclical eras, as Steucho described them in his philosophy, have a calming effect on knowledge, for they promise that, in the up and down of history, the true philosophy will always reappear. The Apocalypse, on the other hand, makes the eras tremble. The Lord's advent causes people to quake in expectation of his coming. After the thousand-year reign, the Lord will make all things new. But why should universal science still be conducted in the era of expectation preceding the millennium? It is not quite clear how Alsted conceived of the justification for his universal science given his apocalyptic situation. He must have seen his science as a divine teaching assignment. Faced with the imminent, divine millenarian reign, a plenitude of knowledge had to be collected. This knowledge could perhaps prepare for the thousand-year reign of the pious and the wise, for its wisdom was mined from God's revelation and from his created nature. In any case, Alsted defended his erudition on theological grounds. In his answer to the common reproach, "the thicker the books the worse they are",<sup>78</sup> he wrote: "I hope you will come to the conclusion that this does not apply to my encyclopedia. The labour we undertook is our last attempt to improve philosophy. Through this we will testify publicly what the subjects of our teaching were, which were offered in the School where we taught before and which we, with God's help, prepared in the form of a book."<sup>79</sup> We consider it necessary to transmit all the knowledge that makes up a complete philosophical encyclopedia."<sup>80</sup>

Alsted understood this encyclopaedic knowledge to have its origin in Adam and its completion in the final age of the world. He had no doubts

<sup>76</sup> The foreword of Alsted's *Chronology* is signed in 1623; the "Diatribes" was printed in 1624.

<sup>77</sup> *Thesaurus Chronologiae*, pp. 502f., no. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Gilly, Carlos: *Spanien und der Basler Buchdruck bis 1600*. Basle, Frankfurt a. M. 1985.

<sup>79</sup> This was written during the time Alsted was preparing his move to Weißenburg/Alba Iulia.

<sup>80</sup> *Encyclopaedia* 1630, ND 1988, vol. 1, pref. unpag. last p.

about the Adamic origin of science, and it was self-evident that this knowledge had been transmitted through the world's ages.

In his "Chronology" he states: "Adam was a famous philosopher and retained many pieces of the wisdom that God implanted in him."<sup>81</sup> Alsted conventionally supports Adam's wisdom by referring to the naming of the creatures in paradise. The philosophical description of these names is as simple as it is convincing: The names flow from the forms of things. They are the part of the creator's word that is accessible to mankind. And so Alsted refers to Philo's idea<sup>82</sup> that Adam "named every thing according to the attributes which flow from its nature and which he knew from natural light. If he had been without this knowledge, he would not have possessed perfect wisdom."<sup>83</sup> It will become clear that this natural light is not natural reason, but the divine, creating light of grace.

Like St. Augustine, Alsted is convinced that Hebrew was God's original language. But after the Babylonian confusion of languages (Gen 11:1-9), Hebrew also received the character of an earthly language. However, if names are to somehow touch the essence of things, every language that claims to tell the truth must contain certain traces of Adam's original language. Hence Alsted finds sparks of the original Adamic language in the semantic elements of his mother tongue, German. He is able to prove, for example, that the names of the persons in the biblical book of Genesis share their roots with German semantics; his method is the ancient and medieval practice of etymology.<sup>84</sup> The semantics and composite bodies of words have preserved parts of their Adamic roots. "Adam somehow meant 'hat' [hate] and 'dam' [dam], which mean hate and dam. For through this he was reminded that he should resist the serpent's temptation, which is not different from a 'dam', which must constantly resist the ocean's waves. Hence his name was a prophecy of his fall. You can also say 'A'-'dam', = from earth. Eva means 'Ev', that is 'ever' and 'vat', i.e., vase which means vase of the whole ages, or 'E' which is oath [German 'Ehe'], and 'vat' = vase, for she was the vase of the oath, the promise of seed."<sup>85</sup> Methusalem means 'mat u salich' = makes you happy [German 'selig'].<sup>86</sup> Noah means somehow 'Not' [German for need], necessity and 'Acht', care [German: Acht haben], which is also meant by [Greek] 'Prometheus', bearing

<sup>81</sup> Thesaurus Chronologiae, p. 479.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. fn. 1 of this chapter.

<sup>83</sup> Encyclopedia 1630, p. 2025.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Klein, Wolf P.: Am Anfang war das Wort. Berlin 1992, pp. 203-216. Alsted shares this conception of the proximity of German and the Adamic language with Böhme and Schottelius, Georg, Justus: Von der deutschen Haupt Sprache. Braunschweig 1663. Repr. Tübingen 1995 3. Lobrede, pp. 27-49.

<sup>85</sup> Encl. vol. 4, p. 2025.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

sorrows.”<sup>87</sup> In the name of “Cham”, Noah’s curse still holds: “‘cha’ is evil, harmful [Greek *kakos*], and ‘Amt’ [office] means magistracy, for Cham’s posterity produced very bad rulers.”<sup>88</sup>

Thus etymology substantiates the Adamic language. Etymology makes it clear that, in a certain manner, names predetermine the fate and the histories of their owners, for the meaning of the Adamic language lies in the knowledge of the essence of things. And the essence is nothing but that which unfolds in the course of a thing’s becoming and vanishing, thus constituting every thing’s history. These histories are indicated prophetically by the names, their semantics having preserved something of what God imagined in his foreseeing wisdom. The names thereby participate in God’s creating word and in the seeds of God’s primordial wisdom.

Etymology only indicates fragments of the divine wisdom. Alsted also interprets the accounts of paradise before the fall as the foundation of marriage and political order, which was simple and chaste. For him, this is the type of the church. “Like the church, paradise was a holy place of conversation between God and man.”<sup>89</sup> With the expulsion from paradise began the first of the six periods of world history, which Alsted calculates as having lasted from the year 325 after creation until 1331. There are nine events that characterise this period and prefigure the course of the coming world: the “profanization of God’s name, the foundation of the church or of Seth’s family, the miraculous visible ascension of Enoch, the corruption of customs, the begetting of Giants, the birth of Noah and his sons, Noah’s preparation for the flood, the good and evil politics of those days, and the traces of sacred history among the heathens.”<sup>90</sup> Through this combination of the decline of history with conserving, sacred institutions, Alsted guarantees the transmission of Adamic wisdom from antediluvian times. The historical decay is due to Adam’s fall, Cain’s act of murder, and Lamech’s fornication.<sup>91</sup> For Alsted, the race of giants derives from the intercourse of Adam’s pious sons with the impious daughters of the world,<sup>92</sup> both seceding from the original pious cult. God gives their offspring giant statures so that it will become obvious in the flood that no amount of strength can resist his power.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 2026.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 2028, ch. XIII.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Gen 4:19-24; Lamech took two wives and, presumably out of jealousy, slew a young man.

<sup>92</sup> On this subject see Stephens, Walter: *Giants in Those Days, and the Book Henoch in Kautzsch: Die Apokryphen des Alten Testaments*, vol. 2, Tübingen 1900; Philo: *De gigantibus*, and Flavius Josephus: *Antiquitates*, III, 1.

<sup>93</sup> *Enycl.* 2029.

In the face of this history of decay, it is the family of Seth, Adam's third son, that preserves God's true revelation. With Seth the church of the just begins. "1. According to Josephus and Zonaras,<sup>94</sup> the Sethists were dedicated theologians and astrologers, and as can be gathered from the Scripture, they had the gift of prophecy. 2. Before the law the church remained only in Seth's family - then in the family of Abraham. After the law, in the family of Israel or Jacob. After Christ it is brought together from families of all peoples."<sup>95</sup>

The special holiness of the antediluvian church is highlighted in Enoch's ascension. Alsted interprets this account typologically: first as a moral example, then tropologically according to his concept of the world's ages. He adopts, with alterations, the account of Enoch's prophecy of the flood and combines Enoch and Elijah, the two prophets of the apocalypse, with symbolic numbers: "Enoch (whom Tertullian calls a candidate for eternity) was visibly and miraculously taken up into heaven, not into an earthly paradise. He was changed in one moment, so that this change was like a death. Thus he was transformed so that the pious of his age would be confirmed in their hope for a future resurrection into happiness. Additionally Enoch edited a book of various prophecies, particularly about the flood, which had been collected by erudite men. The books of Enoch, Seth, and Abraham, which were circulating in the times of Tertullian and Augustine, on the other hand were apocryphal ones, for they were obviously far removed from the divine character and filled with fables." So far, Alsted has both conformed to the Bible as well as to his role as critical historian. But then the prophet of the apocalypse risks a typological interpretation: "Here I cannot help but insert a pious meditation: Seven is the number of mystical plenitude that has a particular meaning in Scripture. It consists of three, which is the number of God the creator in the unity of three, and of four, which is the number of creation or the four elements as the reasons and causes of sub-lunar things. Seven therefore indicates the admirable harmony of both three and four, and they rest in seven in a certain way. Thus Enoch, the seventh after Adam, was taken up into heaven in a visible and moral way. And it is likely that in the same way the world will last for six thousand years, and that the following seventh will return as a new beginning. That is, approximately in the year of 7000, eternal happiness will begin. This can also be observed in the history of Elijah. For just as Elijah was the seventh

<sup>94</sup> Zonaras, end of the 11<sup>th</sup> – middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine historiographer, widely uses Flavius Josephus' "Epitome Antiquitum" in the construction of his world-chronicle, which lasts from the beginning of the world until 1118. *Johannes Zonarae Epitome Historiarum*. Ed. Ludwig Dindorf. 5 vol. Leipzig 1868-1874. On the relationship between Josephus and Zonaras, see Schreckenberg, Heinz: *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*. Leiden 1972, pp. 141-144.

<sup>95</sup> *Encyclopaedia* p. 2028, II.

from Adam, counted in generations, and was taken up into heaven, so will be the pious ride up to heaven in Elijah's chariot. I intentionally said that Elijah was the seventh from Adam counted in lifetimes, but not in generations. Adam's age lasted until Methuselah, from Methuselah until Shem, from Shem until Jacob, from Jacob until Amram, from Amram until Ahias, from Ahias to Elijah."<sup>96</sup>

It seems evident to Alsted that every history is constituted typologically. He is deeply interested in finding a divine typology in encyclopaedic, historical knowledge. Divine typology can be discovered in the traces of Adamic language as well as in the numerical structure of history. These are the indicators of the Adamic language, which, along with the tradition of divine revelation, holds together the core of the world.

All knowledge depends on the original Edenic wisdom. All science derives from this treasure that was saved from the flood and must be communicated to all peoples. The history of this transmission is not particularly complicated, for it is identical with the history of the church, which, in the first age, consisted of Seth's family, with Noah as a member. The church not only preserves and cultivates revelation, - this is Alsted's affirmation of the original unity of philosophy and theology - but it also grants knowledge and erudition. However, Seth's family, i.e. the first church, lost its monopoly on wisdom after the flood, when Noah's sons passed on their knowledge to their various peoples.

Concerning this transmission of wisdom, Alsted once more tells the story of the evil Ham, who became the ancestor of black people. For this reason Alsted freshens up the genealogies of Annius' 'Berosus' forgeries: "Gen 9. Noah planted grapevines in his garden, as it seems, in Damascus. Later, he was drunk from it, and he was derided for his drunkenness by his son Ham. Therefore, Ham was cursed, whereas Shem and Japheth were blessed. Cham's malediction was a severe blow for all his progeny. Since those heathen ages, his descendents have preserved their memory of servitude, which was injurious for other peoples. They became idolatrous, then black and deformed."<sup>97</sup>

Thus far the history of the Hamites and the account of the origin of black people. Alsted also has Tuisco appear among Noah's sons, even if he is somewhat sceptical: "Anyway, Noah was, so to speak, lord and heir of the whole world and he distributed it to his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth to whom the Rabbis add a fourth, namely Jonithus, whom Noah begot after the flood. Aventinus<sup>98</sup> makes Tuisco to be Noah's son who was sent by his

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 2028, III.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 2031.

<sup>98</sup> I.e. Johannes Aventinus (1477-1535) in his "Historia Boica" 1522 = Bavarian History, book I.

father to Europe together with 20 leaders. But this is unwritten lore. Berosus and others transmit that Noah assigned each part of the world to his sons, namely Asia to Shem, Europe to Japheth, Africa to Ham.”<sup>99</sup> Writing during the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Alsted also has to consider America. He conjectures that “America seems to be occupied later by Asiatic peoples, who passed through the straits of Annian”.<sup>100</sup> From the world’s distribution among the sons of Noah, Alsted infers a biblically grounded international law: “From here the law of the peoples is born, so that nobody invades the borders of another.”<sup>101</sup>

It must have been the appeal of participating in God’s plan for the world’s salvation that inspired Alsted to collect all the knowledge of his time, which was so close to its end. As a believer in predestination, Alsted was irresistibly attracted by the prospect of discovering the concealed message that contained the world and its history. God’s wisdom permeated all knowledge that after the flood was disseminated throughout the world. So history represented the plenitude of divine providence: “For it is of course the providence of God, who remains always the same, to describe the state of the church flourishing among calamities, the reliable rewards of piety, the inescapable punishments of impiety, the fanatic betrayal of the heretics, the vain techniques of the tyrants; the conservation, mutation, and conversation of the impious; the flourishing, expiration and fall of families - the heroes’ extraordinary crimes, and finally the innumerable examples of all the arts: that is, I say, everything that can be recognised as if by one intuition. Which we are driven to accept as history”.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 2031.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 2031.

<sup>102</sup> Chronol. Praef. unpag. Beginning.

## D. THE ECHO OF PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY

## SCHELLING'S "WORLD-AGES"

In a summary of the most important arguments of perennial philosophy, five pivotal topics emerge. From the beginning of perennial philosophy in late antiquity through to its blossoming in the Renaissance, this philosophy is continuously characterised by these five themes:

### 1. Philosophia adepta

Perennial philosophy was always considered to have been received. It was seen as a science whose dignity was not grounded in the autonomy of human reason, but in the participation with a wisdom located beyond the rational capacity of man. The concept of a received reason on the one hand includes the idea of partaking in a superior wisdom; on the other hand it converges with revelation, whether it be natural or biblical. Since both versions of revelation derive from the same divine origin, there is no principal difference between the two.

### 2. Philosophy of Spirituality

Origin and movement: Perennial philosophy is a philosophy of spirituality. The spirit is recognised as being original; it is conscious of its own originality and therefore of its absolute status. The moment of beginning is characterised by an initially undetermined beginning becoming defined in a process of original separation. This definition allows for a perception of the beginning, the original separation, and the connection of both moments in the continuity of a trinitarian self-relation. Thus the first, self-cognizant moment of being has the character of trinitarian self-constitution.

The primordial world: The trinitarian self-sufficiency of the original beginning transcends itself in a subsequent fourth movement: This is the moment of Sophia. Now the thinking, trinitarian God no longer thinks only himself but beyond himself. These thoughts transcending the divine realm constitute the preconceived primordial world that precedes the creation of the extended world.



### 3. The emergence of the extended world

The extended world is characterised by its status as ectype of the archetypical, primordial world. Its decisive difference from the primordial world lies in its extension. One essential element of spiritualist physics consists in the explanation of this extension. There are two complementary models: The first is the (Neoplatonic) model of the bursting point, which expands from non-extension into the three dimensions of space and fills the universe as God's spirit. The second is the (Neopythagorean) model, where a potential space is already conceived as opening up in God's original Christological separation from the undefined One to the defined two. It is common to both models that neither time nor space is absolute, but only emerges with development and movement.

### 4. The phases of becoming

The description of theogony and cosmogony in perennial philosophy is oriented toward the process of becoming. The basic pattern of becoming is the (Aristotelian) model of life. In the pulsating of an active impulse and a passive reception, a being develops. It is in this being that the development of life appears as contraction (systole) and expansion (diastole). This movement of becoming is defined as the life of every being. The life of theogony and cosmogony develops in the three phases that characterise every becoming: theogony, the creation of a primordial world, and the creation of the extended world. These phases of creation are not historical periods but modal steps that mark the various states of dependency and independency. While the absolute constitutes itself in the process of theogony, the defined, eternal essences constitute a primordial world that is reflected in the extended, contingent world.

### 5. Eschatology

Every life and essence that stems from the absolute yearns to regain the absolute state of its beginning. It is characteristic of this philosophy of becoming that it employs the concept of separation. Separation generates yearning as a sign of love for the absolute One. This is why every development urges towards its end. This paradoxical situation shows itself for instance in music, where the melody is always longing for its end. It is similar with the course of nature, which on earth appears as eternal becoming and decaying, but always longing for its perfection. This perfection is the eternal remaining in blossom and fruit, the *apokatastasis*, the eternal restitution of all beings. This central moment of Origenistic eschatology holds sway over the philosophy of history in perennial philosophy. The time of perennial philosophy longs, from within the mourning of earthly separation and unfinished development, for the glory of

eternal and final redemption. This glory cannot derive from the created beings, but comes to the present from the future.

It is remarkable how close the later Schelling is to all these issues. His arguments make use of all the important figures of perennial philosophy. His 'positive philosophy' corresponds to adept philosophy and sharply distinguishes this concept from transcendental philosophy. The way Schelling, beginning with his "System des transzendentalen Idealismus" (1800), conceives the notion of the absolute beginning and absolute self-knowledge resembles the Neoplatonic trinitarian self-constitution step by step. With his concept of the will as characterizing the absolute beginning, Schelling, along with Jakob Böhme, follows in the Origenistic tradition. In 1806, Schelling explicitly joins the tradition of the philosophy of Sophia, and works with the concept of a primordial world. It is especially in the "Weltalter" (1810) that he works out the Origenistic implications of the philosophy of spirit for a philosophy of history.

Schelling's usage of the principal figures of perennial philosophy is of course anything but a simple adoption of patristic and early modern figures of thought. Schelling renews this philosophy by confronting it with transcendental philosophy, thereby creating an opposition between positive and negative philosophy. On the other hand, subjectivity is present in his 'romantic' philosophy of feeling and presentiment. It is especially the subjective and specifically irrational moment that separates Schelling from his predecessors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is obvious from his early philosophical and theological writings that Schelling from his youth was intimately familiar with the Origenistic elements in theology. Especially in his commentary on the Platonic Timaeus, Schelling argues in Neoplatonic terms. Tanja Gloyna, in her book "Kosmos und System. Schelling's Weg in die Philosophie" Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2002, points out the most important sources of Schelling's Origenism (without using the term): 1. Johann August Eberhard's "Neue Apologie des Sokrates," where the question of the origin of evil, the creatures' guilt, and the *apokatastasis panton* are dealt with. 2. The debate surrounding the Trinity and the "Platonism of the church fathers" was a crucial issue in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; one important author is Matheu Souverain, whose "Le platonisme dévoilé" first appeared in 1700 and was translated into German and commented on in 1786 and 1793. The relationship between Böhme and Schelling has already been emphasised by Benz, Ernst: Schellings theologische Geistesahnen. Wiesbaden 1955. Cf. Schulte, Christoph: F. W. J. Schellings Ausleihe von Hand- und Druckschriften. In: Zeitschrift für Religion und Geistesgeschichte 45, 1993, pp. 267-277. Cf. especially vols. 1-3 of Schelling's posthumous works. For Schelling's relationship to Baader see Zovko, M. E.: Natur und Gott. Das ordnungsgeschichtliche Verhältnis Schellings und Baaders. Würzburg 1996.

## 1. POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, AND ADEPT PHILOSOPHY

Schelling's conception of a positive philosophy corresponds to the concept of wisdom, which, in the Judeo-Christian and Arabic traditions, is thought of as a divine, natural revelation of knowledge. This divinely revealed philosophy cannot be understood as a production of the human mind; it can only be received, accepted, and assented to by man. It is a philosophy in the sense of St. Augustine or Paracelsus. With this accepted philosophy, the status of the notions in idealistic philosophy changes. The leading notions are no longer produced by human reason but are only received. The logic of the notions in Schelling's positive philosophy lies only in the power of their semantics, in which human reason participates. This is not only the case for logic, but holds for every instance of meaning that can be thought. Human knowledge consists in the participation and imitation of this divine wisdom, which reveals itself in its semantic power and can become human wisdom only in the process of partaking. Negative philosophy is opposed to positive philosophy, which consists in partaking in, and imitating, divine wisdom. In negative philosophy man tries to master semantics, by presenting the order of his thoughts as the condition of truth and knowledge. For Schelling such a negative philosophy is unable to grasp positive reality, the external object of every thought. Negative philosophy cannot answer two questions: 1. How can the process of learning be thought, since learning implies receiving something that is not self-produced? 2. What is the positive reality towards which our thinking tends?

Positive and negative philosophy have a reciprocal relationship.<sup>2</sup> Negative philosophy constructs the transcendental categories and forms of intuition of the concept of reason. Long before Schelling, the philosopher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi argued that transcendental philosophy was unable to understand what the reality of real things consisted of, since transcendental philosophy could only describe a reality that was produced by

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<sup>2</sup> Tillette, Xavier: Schelling, une philosophie en devenir. 2 vols. Paris 1970. Schulz, Walter: Die Vollendung des Deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings. Pfullingen 1975. Lawrence, Joseph P.: Schellings Philosophie des ewigen Anfangs. Würzburg 1989. Kreiml, Josef: Die Wirklichkeit Gottes. Eine Untersuchung über die Metaphysik und Religionsphilosophie des späten Schelling. Regensburg 1989. Maesschalck, M.: Philosophie et révélation dans l'itinéraire de Schelling. Paris, Leuven 1989. Courtine, Jean François and Marquet, Jean François (eds.): Le dernier Schelling. Raison et positivité. Paris 1994. Tomatis, Francesco: Kenosis del Logos. Ragione e rivelazione nel ultimo Schelling. Rome 1994. Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm: "Vorwort" to: Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling: Weltalter-Fragmente. Ed. Klaus Grotzsch, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2002, pp. 1-78.

the apparatus of human thought. Thinking always remains the counterpart of external reality, is always negative in its opposition to real, given reality. Transcendental thought is fundamentally unable to reach outside reality, since the condition for the possibility of the experience of objects is, according to Kant, the condition for the possibility of the objects themselves. So one can only experience objects that fit the categories of human thought. Jacobi's conclusion is that transcendental thinking always remains removed from its real objects. This critique is the basis of Schelling's distinction between positive and negative philosophy. According to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, knowledge begins with experience. But how is it possible that we are affected by objects that only have a phenomenal status? Being affected presupposes substantiality, since only real things can be causes. Phenomena, however, are defined as not being causes at all, since causality is an achievement of transcendental reason. Therefore, for Jacobi and Schelling, the problem of transcendental philosophy consists in its not having an idea of real knowledge. Jacobi's formulation: Without the thing in itself we cannot enter the realm of pure reason; with the thing in itself we cannot remain in it.<sup>3</sup> For Jacobi, the result of this thinking was a radical scepticism towards the capability of reason. Schelling, however, tried to describe what happens to the subject that has experiences and learns unexpected things not deriving from the constructive ability of negative, transcendental reason. If something is experienced, it must be possible to explain this experience to be true, but the proof of truth cannot be provided by reason, since reason can only judge its own products. How then is experience possible at all? Answering this question is the task of positive philosophy, which begins as a philosophy of participation and presentiment.

Positive philosophy is the knowledge of what happens in the process of experience. At its core, experience is the unexpected event, since it is not foreseeable. Experience approaches us; it comes along and jumps into the mind. The activity is in the object, not in the subject. This can easily be shown by analysing the concept of the 'new'. One is surprised by what is new, the new event provokes amazement, the 'new' is positively given. If one asks what 'positively given' means, one finds that what is given is the absolute, which has its existence independently from the reasoning subject. It is the absolute that makes up the objective being, the absolute in which the subject of transcendental reason must lose itself so that the experience of the new, of that which is not constructed, can be thought at all. "One could use

<sup>3</sup> Wir können "ohne jene Voraussetzung [i.e. das Ding an sich] in das System [der reinen Vernunft] nicht hineinkommen und mit jener Voraussetzung darin nicht bleiben." In: Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: Über den transzendentalen Idealismus, 1787, in: Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: Werke. Ed. by Friedrich Roth und Friedrich Köppen. Vol. 2, Leipzig 1815, Repr. Darmstadt 1968, p. 304.

the concept of ecstasis for this relationship. Our 'I' is set outside itself, outside its place. Its role is to be the subject. However, it cannot be the subject against the absolute; therefore, it has to be set outside itself, as something which is no longer a being. Only in this decomposition of the self can the absolute subject emerge for him; this is the same state we experience when we are amazed. This is the softer expression, which the gentle Plato uses, 'amazing', *to thaumazein*, since there is no other beginning of philosophy than being amazed."<sup>4</sup> The transcendental subject is affected by the absolute object, which is the real, acting subject. As a result, the transcendental subject is surprised. The subject does not produce this result, the result rather happens to it. In every process of real experience the absolute becomes apparent, and, just as for any surprising event, it cannot be predicted by reason. The absolute is given through itself; it is not constituted by knowledge. The absolute is the positive.

## 2. PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT

### a) Transcendental Productivity and the Absolute Beginning

Being given without ground, being given through itself, contains two spiritual elements constitutive of transcendental philosophy since Kant. First, being through oneself is freedom. Second, being through oneself is the beginning. 'Beginning' implies consequences and hence movement. But how can the absolute beginning be conceived? The absolute beginning is not spiritual, since it is not conscious. In his "System des transzendentalen Idealismus" (1800), Schelling emphasised that the absolute beginning is a preconscious yearning, an original presentiment of the transcendental subject, which, driven by that yearning, produces the contemplation of itself. This transcendental production of self-contemplation was a moment of the process that could be described as expansion and contraction. In its self-reflection, the 'I' conceived itself as productive; in its living and pulsing it was organic life. It conceived itself as the will of the beginning, since it originated from the first movement of the *punctum saliens*, the springing point, which is always longing to transcend itself. Thus time becomes conceivable as the transcendental subject's experience of reciprocal remaining and changing. At the same time, the inside and outside of the transcendental subject emerge, since, at the moment the will transcends itself into an object, it transcends its own existence. Organic life is the representative of this willing, preconscious life, in which consciousness only

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<sup>4</sup> Schelling: *Über die Natur der Philosophie als Wissenschaft* (1821) Werke vol. 9, p. 229 sq.

plays a part. This is at first a transcendental philosophy, since the condition for the knowledge of change is conceived as a structure of being that is also represented in the transcendental 'I'. This representation is the "productive imagination," which originates first in the will, and is secondly followed by knowledge. As a *punctum saliens*, the will wills without already knowing what it wants. Once it has recognised what it wants, the will has already been doubled into wanting and wanted, into recognizing and recognised, into subject and object. The beginning in the will is defined by its longing to be beyond itself. In this longing beyond itself it produces duplication. This process of duplication implies identity as well as difference.

It is evident that the movement of time is prefigured by this duplication. Time represents the unity of that which is duplicated, the unity of what remains and what changes in the process of movement. In this way, historical time can be conceived as part of the productive imagination of the transcendental subject. As such it is irrational, since it is produced unconsciously by the productive imagination. In the process of its history it emerges as a series of individual events and can be grasped by knowledge, because the transcendental subject participates in the process of history, which it unconsciously produces. The knowledge of the production and the production itself are parallel. They fit together in a pre-established harmony; their unity is the unity of an identical producer.

About ten years later, Schelling judges this transcendental philosophy to be a negative philosophy, since transcendental philosophy makes the existence of the given world dependent on the knowledge of the transcendental subject. Transcendental philosophy does not answer the question of the absoluteness of the given, positive world, since reality is only seen in the context of transcendental knowledge. Until this problem is solved, it is impossible for Schelling to constitute a positive philosophy of history.

But how can the reality of the real, the essence of reality, be described? Only if existence - both spiritual and corporeal - is revealed to the subject instead of the subject producing this reality. Schelling transforms his idealism founded on transcendental philosophy into a conceptual realism, which ascribes an independent spiritual reality to concepts, beyond the limits of the transcendental subject. This reinterpretation of the concept of idealism implies a change in Schelling's notion of reality. Reality is no longer opposed to ideality; ideality is rather the reality of concepts. And why should there not be a subject-free semantics, since there is a psychology-free logic? In order for this ideality to be perceived at all, ideality has to communicate itself to the subject. This happens by means of the subject's participating perception of concepts in the world of ideas. In the philosophy of the late Schelling, after his "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der

menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände" (1809 "Philosophical Investigations on the Nature of Freedom and the Related Subjects") the concepts are no longer concretely thought by a subject; they rather reveal themselves to the thinking individual. In this self-performing semantics, a transcendental subject is no longer required. The transcendental subject vanishes in face of the absolute. The concepts organise themselves in a living system.

Since knowledge is thought of as a communicating process proceeding from the object to the subject, the question of the radical, absolute beginning of this process arises. Beginning is impulse, *primum mobile*. How can we conceive the beginning of an infinite movement? It is a permanent pulsing power that maintains every movement. It must be permanently present as the source of all becoming, so that life can live. In the "System des Transzendentalen Idealismus" (1800), this beginning was qualified as the originating will to be beyond oneself, and also as freedom. In 1809, in the "Philosophical Investigations on the Nature of Freedom", the absolute beginning and freedom are also combined, but no longer in connection with transcendental philosophy, rather according to the model of trinitarian theology.

The will relying on itself, which is freedom,<sup>5</sup> is the beginning as such, the first mover. This will permanently begets the beginning. The reality that emerges from this first will is not a mechanical necessity, but is begotten and therefore free. "Begetting means the establishment of the independent."<sup>6</sup>

This begetting will, which is seen as the divine will, posits an independent power. The originating will can only be the divine one, since the absolute beginning cannot be anything but divine. This beginning separates itself at first into a conception of itself, and then into an imagination of that which derives from it but is not identical with it. "The divine imagination, which was the cause of the specification of the world [these are the primordial ideas of creation], creates the world and its beings as its representatives. These representatives of the godhead can only be independent beings".<sup>7</sup>

If one follows this logic of emanation, one easily discovers the three theological functions that constitute Johannine theology: "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

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<sup>5</sup> Freiheitsschrift, Schelling, Sämtliche Werke, Stuttgart and Augsburg 1860, vol.7 p. 347: "An sich ist's nur das Ewige, auf sich selbst beruhende, Wille, Freiheit."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 346: "Zeugen heißt Setzen des Selbständigen."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 347.

First it is the inner-trinitarian function of the word, i.e. the duplication of the Father, which is understood as the finding and defining of the divine will. The connotations of Böhme's interpretation of the Holy Trinity in "Von der Gnadenwahl" are evident.<sup>8</sup> "Corresponding to the yearning which, as a dark ground, is the first movement of the divine existence, an innermost reflexive imagination arises in God. Since it cannot have another object but God himself, God sees his own image. Absolutely considered, this imagination is the first in which God is realised, even if only in himself. It is in the beginning with God and is the begotten God within God. This imagination is also the reason - the word of that yearning, and it is the eternal spirit, who perceives the word in himself and also the infinite yearning, and who is caused by the love that he himself is, and he utters the word. So reason and yearning constitute the almighty will, become an organ and form original nature that is without rules."<sup>9</sup> The *topoi* are trinitarian theology and the theory of creation.

Second, Schelling deals with the function of the creating word, which he identifies with the wisdom of the pseudepigraphical "Wisdom of Solomon" in the Septuagint. Here the idea of God's self-conception in an "unspotted mirror" (Wis. 7:26) occurs, and God's wisdom is conceived as the primordial world of creation. This corresponds to Schelling's "specification of the essences of the world", which, as the representatives of the Godhead, are within the "divine imagination". "If the essences of the world were only a concept of the divine mind, they must be living beings because of that. It is in this way that thoughts are begotten by the soul; a begotten thought, however, is an independent power working for itself and growing in the human soul to such a might that it overcomes and submits its own mother."<sup>10</sup>

For Schelling the question that is common to theogony and the theology of creation also becomes central: What is the meaning of becoming? The absolute positive, God, embraces being as well as becoming. God has the ground of his existence in himself, but he is not the ground of existence. How can this be understood? Clearly Schelling presupposes something 'before' existence that then becomes existence. Existence is not utterly all-embracing, since non-existence and the becoming of the absolute beginning are excluded. Every becoming is a transition from non-existence into existence. Becoming weaves between non-existence and existence. Becoming alone is the process by which nature takes place. Between nothing and existence yearning weaves. Becoming is a living impulse in the movements of expansion and contraction. Expansion and contraction show the movement of yearning to existence. With this notion

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Chap. 3, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 360f.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 347.



of becoming, yearning can be described as that which "only longs for one thing: birth".<sup>11</sup> "Yearning is the eternally dark ground"<sup>12</sup> of existence; it is also the central impulse of the becoming of every reality. Before Schelling this is nowhere as clear as in Böhme's doctrine of the divine qualities.<sup>13</sup>

In the process of becoming, evil appears as an implication of the dark ground of existence. It is in this process that the force of separation shows itself as the type of the antagonism between good and evil. In its potency, this separation is already manifest in the eternal becoming of the Godhead, in the begetting separation of the Father and the Son. It becomes manifest in reality only in the dramatic separation of the creation from God and in the selfish love of the individual spirits who desire themselves.

Is yearning for existence the absolute ground of existence, or does yearning imply the unfulfilled force of becoming? Does yearning not already imply the difference between the 'here and now' and the 'not yet'? As this dualism, yearning cannot be the absolute and the beginning, but only the first symptom of the absolute. The ground of existence, the in-difference before every existence, before every duality, is also before yearning, for "how else can we call it but the 'original ground' or the 'unground'? Since it precedes all oppositions, they cannot be distinguished nor in any way be included in it. It cannot be designated as identity; it can only be called absolute indifference."<sup>14</sup>

It is from this indifference of the *Ungrund* that the first standing (*Ur-stand*) and the first defining (*Ur-teil*) emerge, and it is here that the notions of life and love and the person become visible.<sup>15</sup> The visible part of the separation – the form – does not resist the reunification with its source, for it is part of the whole. The traces of this history, however, persist in the concepts of the separated things. The separation that once occurred has something so definitive about it, that the pain and suffering of separation remains hard, evil and as eternal difference. The reality of the concepts can only be understood as the result of this original process of separation from the origin, and this is why the relationship of the separate concepts to their origin can only be understood as a reunification and a healing. The fact that there was a tear, that the separating pain was suffered, cannot be cancelled or forgotten. In this way *evil* emerges in the separation: Everything that is not love, life or person; i.e. the "wrong and impure is eternally enclosed in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 359.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. chap. 3, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 406. Cf. Christian Iber: *Das andere der Vernunft als ihr Prinzip. Grundzüge der philosophischen Entwicklung Schellings mit einem Ausblick auf die nachidealistische Philosophiekonzeption Heideggers und Adornos*. Berlin 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 408.

darkness and remains as the eternally dark ground of selfishness, as a *caput mortuum*<sup>16</sup> of the process of life and as a potency which never can become actual existence.”<sup>17</sup> This is the description of evil as a “non-reality”, the nullity of which will become apparent at the end of time, in the “return of all things”.<sup>18</sup> “The end of revelation is therefore the expulsion of evil from the good, its declaration as thoroughly unreal.”<sup>19</sup>

There is certainly a narrative being told here, the story, in fact, of God and his creation, of theogony and cosmogony. Schelling’s history of philosophy retells this history of the beginning. It is an experience that begins in the darkness, in impenetrable gloom. “It is only in the divinely revealed words that hints sparkle up like single flashes and tear the primeval darkness.”<sup>20</sup> In the childlike intimacy, in the presentiment of the undivided, the divine revelations can be retold. And this memory of the primeval period of becoming appears as the hope for an eternal reunification in the future.

#### b) Participation and Presentiment

In his “System of transcendental Idealism” (1800) Schelling, following F.H. Jacobi, had insisted that transcendental philosophy was unable to rationally grasp the history of becoming beyond and before subjectivity. In this transcendental stage of his philosophy, he had suggested a “pre-established harmony” between unconscious production and transcendental construction. His questioning, however, became even more radical when he investigated the possibility of an experience that does not conform to reason. There was no transcendental concept corresponding to the yearning for becoming; this yearning could only be described phenomenologically. Therefore Schelling chose a concept occupying a marginal position in the spectrum of consciousness: half-dream and presentiment (*Ahnung*). This form of recognition took up the model of prophetic dreams, which had emphasised the special role of the imagination as the inspired participation in the world of divine imagination. Divine imagery was one of the essentials of perennial philosophy, and Johann Arndt, among others, had described the special philosophical meaning of the images.<sup>21</sup> Schelling, however, intended more than a mere adoption of a theology of dreams. In its confrontation with the rationalism of transcendental philosophy, his psychology of dreams

<sup>16</sup> Caput mortuum is the insoluble remains in alchemical processes.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 408.

<sup>18</sup> “Wiederbringung aller Dinge” Ibid. p. 405. Cf. chap. 8, 3: Origenism.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. “Das Ende der Offenbarung ist daher die Ausstoßung des Bösen vom Guten, die Erklärung desselben als gänzlicher Unrealität.” The Origenistic allusions are obvious.

<sup>20</sup> Die Weltalter, ed. Manfred Schröter. Munich 1946, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. chap. 1, 3.

received a romantic bent, as becomes evident in his description of clairvoyance:

At the moment of falling asleep, the essences of things appear in mysterious clarity. Whereas in the process of discursive perception new aspects of things always become apparent, clairvoyance means 'to view without images'. It is to perceive the seeds of things prior to their development. Clairvoyance is a participation in the potential imagery of the world-soul. Psychologically, clairvoyance is the trembling readiness to perceive the types of the world that are missed by discursive reason. If waking consciousness disturbs the half-sleep of clairvoyance in its perception, the soul flinches, and the perception of the seminal reasons, the supernatural, divine somnambulism, is destroyed by negatively critical consciousness.

Schelling observes a phenomenological particularity of this somnambulism: On the one hand it is a tendency to dissolve consciousness, on the other, there is an intensified "sensibility that feels its own distinctive ability to recognise the essential". This corresponds to the bliss of a "clairvoyance which is not interrupted by awakening",<sup>22</sup> and it is also the "highest clairvoyance - and thus the state of eternity."<sup>23</sup> The participation in the world-soul consists in this supra-rational perception of the essences. "Here especially the highest inner life becomes visible. Everything announces the innermost consciousness; it is as if their whole essences were concentrated in one focal point that unites past, present, and future. Far from losing memory in clairvoyance, the far-reaching past becomes enlightened, and so is the far reaching future."<sup>24</sup>

Schelling describes this state of clairvoyance, in which the individual trembles but does not disappear in his agitation, with his concept of magnetism. Magnetism is more than just a physical phenomenon, but inherits the Aristotelian notion of life, in which the active, male moment depends on the passive, female one in order to give life an essence. In the magnetic field, every tiny particle is polarised by the power of the magnet. Even dust becomes an animated and internally moved chain, permeated by the polarizing power. This internal pulsation between the poles prefigures eternal bliss, where the soul is suspended between its surrender to the absolute and its own identity. In eternity, every being knows its own essence but at the same time disappears in the face of God's splendour. Every thing is agitated in the pulsing field of God's power. And as such an agitated

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<sup>22</sup> Über den Zusammenhang der Natur mit der Geisterwelt. 1810. Werke I, 9, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

being, the individual soul feels itself to be the centre of experience, and the organ of the presentiment of eternal perfection.

Men take part in universal history, which embraces theogony, creation, and their revelation, and, being images of God, they partake of his spirit. Only because of this partaking knowledge (*Mitwissenschaft*<sup>25</sup>) is 'positive' philosophy possible at all. All knowledge is adopted, as is particularly apparent in clairvoyance. "Mankind must be conceded to have a certain principle which is beyond and above the world. How could mankind, as a distinguished creation, pursue the long path of developments from the present up to the deepest night of the past, if there were no principle in him before the beginning of the times? The human soul has a partaking knowledge of the creator, taken from the source of things, which is equal to the soul. Here lies the highest clarity of all things, and the soul does not recognise something, but is itself the science."<sup>26</sup> Knowledge of the past is a memory of the divine wisdom of creation, which was darkened by original sin. "This original image sleeps in the soul, dark and forgotten, but it is not thoroughly extinguished."<sup>27</sup> The darkness that is remembered in the state of clairvoyance and naiveté is the representation of "presentiment and yearning" ("Ahnung und Sehnsucht"<sup>28</sup>). The ages become visible from their beginning, from which a presentiment arises of "that which is above time and wants to reveal itself in every development".

The concepts of memory and inner experience are impregnated with the terminology of feeling: 'yearning', 'anxiety', 'love', 'wrath', and 'anger'. These notions have the same objective meaning as the metaphysical and logical notions such as 'being', 'essence', 'connection', and 'separation'. Objectivity of feeling is no different than the objectivity of logical notions. There is no reason to doubt the objectivity of feeling, since, for the late Schelling, all concepts are connected in a world of meaning, in which presentimentality participates. Thus Schelling can describe what is in tender terminology, and his philosophy becomes edifying as it participates in the sublime: "Not only the poet, but also the philosopher has his delights."<sup>29</sup> The language of feeling expresses the dynamic of theogony, in which the prophetic and naive mind participates. It is in this partaking knowledge that God displays his revelation in the world-ages, in the past of the Father, the present of the Son, and the eternal future perfection of the Spirit.

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<sup>25</sup> Weltalter, ed. Schröder, p. 4. On the context cf. Hideki Mine: *Ungrund und Mitwissenschaft. Das Problem der Freiheit in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*. Frankfurt, Bern, New York, 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

### 3. HISTORY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

"The past is known, the present is recognised, and the future is felt in advance. The knowledge is told, the recognised is offered, the presentiment is prophesied."<sup>30</sup> The notion of becoming must be explained in all its dimensions in order to understand the concept of the world-ages. The concept of 'becoming' connects 'nothing' and 'being' and can be represented in epochs. Schelling's history, just as the history of becoming in general, is theogony. Schelling here partly employs his conception of the epochs, in the process of the self-production of the transcendental 'I', from his "System of transcendental Idealism". There he had conceived of the originating process of the 'I', which posits itself as an object. In this process four epochs become apparent: 1) an unseparated unity, 2) the will for development, 3) the cognition of the originating will and its object and 4) the recognition of this process as a whole. Schelling combined this theory with the conceptions of a threefold history of the world, as he found it in Joachim of Fiore and Lessing, as well as with the stages of creation in the Origenist tradition, with which he had been acquainted since his dissertation on the origin of evil.<sup>31</sup> Here he shares the Johannine and Origenist conception that the Father is dynamic nature, and that the Son defines the Father and the creation. This distinction reappears in the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi had used this distinction to interpret Spinoza. *Natura naturans* was the dynamic moment of creation and represents the will, while *natura naturata* represents the defining quality of the logos in the process of creation.

In his "World-Ages", (1810) Schelling explicated his concept of 'becoming' more precisely:

The first stage of the world-ages, the past, is the epoch of theogony, the processing self-contemplation of the trinitarian God who conceives his creation.

The second stage is the presence of the logos of Christ in creation. Here the life of nature, and with it space and time, emerge. It is also the time of world history, of mythology and of positive revelation, in which the spirit is proclaimed.

Schelling only hinted at the third stage, the return of creation into eternity. This is the epoch of the world's Johannine and Origenist end.

<sup>30</sup> "Das Vergangene wird gewußt, das Gegenwärtige wird erkannt, das Zukünftige wird geahndet. Das Gewußte wird erzählt, das Erkannte wird dargestellt, das Geahndete wird geweissagt." Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> De malorum origine. (1792) In: Schelling, Werke I HKA Stuttgart 1976.

## a) First Stage: Theogony and the Past. The Power of Becoming

The epoch of the theosophical past is the time of God's eternal becoming. In the manner of negative theology, the argument begins with God's indifference. This unfathomable God has not yet revealed himself. Divine indifference becomes sensitive only after God enters into the process of becoming. Schelling distinguishes four moments of theogony:

- the self-definition of the will
- the mirror of wisdom and first corporeality
- the knocking point, systole and diastole
- suffering and breaking through into freedom

## Self-Definition of the Will:

All of the past must be seen as an existence before God's communication into the world. This existence originates from God's indifference, which Schelling describes with the most tender terminology: "It is the pure enjoyment that does not know itself, the deliberate delight (*gelassene Wonne*), which is completely fulfilled in itself and does not think about anything, the quiet intimacy (*stille Innigkeit*) which rejoices at its non-being."<sup>32</sup> This idea that the concepts of 'being' and 'non-being' cannot be applied to God is based on negative theology. Since God reveals himself in the process of becoming, 'being' and 'non being' are first constituted in the process of theogony. In this process of God's becoming, the will, which before was suspended in happy indifference, conceives itself as a contracting will to existence, "so that it can work in itself". This is the process of qualification, which Cusa calls "contractio," and which Böhme calls "*Qual*", the painful process of becoming.

Such a process cannot be founded. What could be its ground and reason except the process itself? It can only be recounted, which is what Schelling does with his history of becoming. How does the becoming of the will take place? In the will that does not want anything, there is no distinction between subject and object.<sup>33</sup> Only if the will wants something does a separation between the willing subject and the wanted object emerge; this is the distinction between subject and object. "In playful charm both rejoice at their mutual finding and being found."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 30: "...in holdem Wechselspiel erfreuen sie sich des gegenseitigen Findens und Gefunden-Seins." On the terminology cf. Böhme, *Von der Gnadenwahl*. Cf. ch. III, 6.

## Mirror of Wisdom and First Corporeality:

From this happy epoch of inner-trinitarian love grows Sophia. Schelling conceives Sophia as a communication of God's overflowing power, which surpasses the definition of the divine Trinity. In this wisdom God mirrors himself, and this mirroring is, at the same time, God's externalisation into a primordial creation. Schelling introduces divine wisdom with quotations from the Book of Wisdom and from Proverbs: "The ancients seem to have recognised this playful charm in God's originating life, which they expressively call 'wisdom', an unblemished mirror of divine power [Wis. 7:26] and an image of his goodness (because of the suffering qualities which the essence received in its being). In a book rightly esteemed as holy, it is introduced as a speaking person: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing from the beginning. I was appointed from eternity, and of old before the earth was made, before the mountains were established and the fountains of waters streamed forth.' 'I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times.' [Prov. 8:22-25, 30]. This is a doctrine as old as science itself, that the essences of things are of eternal origin and were present in eternal archetypes (*Urbilder*) before they became outwardly visible."<sup>35</sup> This primordial world is not static; it also contains the dynamic of self-realization. The mirror reflects the force of essence and becoming, "so that nothing remains and is fixed, but is in the process of permanent formation."<sup>36</sup>

Schelling here first introduces his concept of matter. This moment of the passive potency of matter was essential in the transition of the spirit into extension, and was always connected with the first, ethereal matter. St. Augustine had dealt with this problem in his commentary on the book of Genesis;<sup>37</sup> Schelling was familiar with it from Giordano Bruno<sup>38</sup> and the discussions on Spinozism, in which spirit and extension were described as the two modes of the absolute.<sup>39</sup> Like Augustine and Bruno, Schelling offers a concept of a potential, that is passive matter, which at the same time indicates its remoteness from divine indifference. This Sophia is not the trinitarian God, who rejoices and defines himself in his pulsing life of expansion and contraction, but rather an "already softened essence of light". No longer the overwhelming lightning of inner-divine light, wisdom is only

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. ch. 5, 6: Augustine's trinitarian archetypes.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. ch. 6, 10: Bruno's infinite space.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Schmidt-Biggemann, W.: *Veritas particeps Dei: Der Spinozismus im Horizont mystischer und rationalistischer Theologie*. In: Id.: *Theodizee und Tatsachen*. Frankfurt 1988, pp. 117-149.

a mirroring, and thus a negation of the deity. It is in this negation that the “most subtle corporeality”<sup>40</sup> emerges.

The Knocking Point, Systole and Diastole:

How is it possible that the spiritual essence of things introduces itself into extended life? How can, at the same time, the living, subtle corporeality of matter become an active living existence? In the process of life, love and wrath wrestle with each other in an alternation of contraction and expansion. This is how Schelling describes active and passive potency. The essence that is to become extended reality develops from the point that is endowed with divine life. The living essence reveals itself as the “first knocking point, almost the pulsing heart of the Deity, moving in everlasting systole and diastole, and longing for rest without finding it.”<sup>41</sup>

Suffering and breaking through into freedom:

The primordial living forms of Sophia are part of the ‘past’ of the world-ages, the epoch of theogony. God’s life, which constitutes the past, is also the root of cosmogony. Every living being is independent and free. Since everything derives from God, independence and freedom are also divine predicates. Therefore the moment of independence must already be contained in divine nature. Schelling sees this independence as preformed in the trinitarian process of Christological begetting. Therefore the inner-trinitarian division into the persons of the Father and the Son has its analogy in the process of creation. The freedom of created beings is also conceived in analogy to the freedom of the divine persons. Schelling shares Origen’s and Gregory of Nyssa’s emphasis on human freedom in the image of God.

Freedom comes about through separation, and separation causes pain. The path of pain exerts the pressure of individualisation. In this path of pain, the essence as conceived by the divine Sophia twists and turns in antagonistic being, in the struggle between contraction and expansion, until it breaks through into its freedom and essential independence. This process is prefigured in the inner pain of the deity; it is here that the archetype of individuality becomes visible. It is the moment of the inner-divine separation between Father and Son that preforms the separation between God and his creation, as Böhme dramatically described it.<sup>42</sup> An essence becomes realised according to the archetype of God’s pain; it draws the power of its own existence from the process of expansion and contraction, of acting and suffering, and sets itself free. The end of this process is the “deliberation of the

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<sup>40</sup> Weltalter p. 32: “zarteste Leiblichkeit”.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. ch. 3, 6.



being"<sup>43</sup> into a freedom which is itself a moment of the divine nature. Here, where the freedom of independence becomes visible as a moment of divine love, the Christological present, the second epoch of the world-ages begins.

b) Second Stage: Christological Presence, the Life of Space and Time

The past is past once the present of extra-divine nature has been released into a free, independent existence. This era is prefigured by the inner-divine *logos* and appears in two motifs:

- The begetting and the setting free of the Son
- The emergence of time and space

The Begetting and the Setting Free of the Son:

The infinite divine power is the power of life. It does not appear as the violence of destruction, but as the might of begetting. Again Schelling adopts the formulae of the Christian theology of the Trinity, namely the unity of nature and diversity of persons. He applies this trinitarian model to the process of creation. Creation is conceived as a partial duplication, as the positing outside itself of the conceptions of God. As a result of this process, creation is set free.<sup>44</sup> Schelling describes this process as one of begetting and birth.

Driven by its inner life and love, the divine being gives up its secrecy. The contracting power is internally overcome. "The more it concedes the separation without really leaving contraction the more its heart swells, at the same time as yearning and presentiment increase within its essence."<sup>45</sup> Yearning and presentiment are directed at what is to come, namely separation and duplication. This event is the birth of the world, a process prefigured by inner-trinitarian Christology. Through the begetting and birth of the Son, who is "delight and love",<sup>46</sup> "the dark original power of the Father steps back into the past and recognises himself as the past relationship to the Son".<sup>47</sup>

The Emergence of Time and Space

Without the future unity of the Father and the Son, the unification of the separated would be impossible. It is, however, indispensable, since separation is only conceivable with the idea of the whole. The presentiment

<sup>43</sup> Weltalter, p. 46: "Gelassenheit des Wesens".

<sup>44</sup> On this concept of freedom cf. Vergauwen, Guido: *Absolute und endliche Freiheit. Schellings Lehre von Schöpfung und Fall*. Freiburg, Switzerland, 1975. Moiso, Francesco: *Vita natura libertà. Schelling 1795-1809*. Milan 1990.

<sup>45</sup> Weltalter p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 58.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

of this primeval and final unification, however, does not abolish the independence and freedom of the trinitarian persons. It is part of the presentiment of the future that “the spirit is free from the Father and the Son, such as both are free from each other. ... Nevertheless the Spirit is the common will of both, or it is the will in which both are united.”<sup>48</sup> With the free nature of the present, the moment of the Father has become the past; the Spirit, however, unites them and guarantees the final perfection of all things. The Father prefigures the being that embraces and contains all, while the Son is the archetype of the essence that perfects the separate beings. Both moments are mirrored in Sophia: Being is the moment of the living unity of the world, and essence the moment of its freedom. The Spirit conceives both moments as the constitution of a living organism. The elements of this life, in turn, are also trinitarian. The indifference of the Father begets the absolute beginning. Beginning is the separation from the living One. In the moment of separation the beginning becomes conceivable as “the word found”.<sup>49</sup> Only in the moment of separation does being become conscious of itself. Schelling describes this process, reminiscent of St. Augustine’s exegesis of the book of Genesis, with the formula “In the Son was the beginning”.<sup>50</sup> “Only now the real beginning is found, as well as the beginning in time. It is the world’s beginning insofar as it shows the acting form of the divine living not as such but in its revelation.”<sup>51</sup> The Son prefigures God’s creation of the world. This continuing process - *creatio continua* – also shows the permanent power of the Father. In every moment, the Father’s remaining and contracting power is revealed and overcome.

This permanent act introduces time to the living beings,<sup>52</sup> who find in their essence the wrestling and pulsing movement of contraction and expansion. So it is not a time outside the living things, rather time is always manifest as a whole in the organism. The organisms contain the moments of separation and past, of the living essence of the present, and of future perfection. The connection of all organisms with their internal time together constitutes the living course of all time. Time is the lifetime of the organisms, and in its future unity, this time is prefigured by the Holy Spirit, who perfects all time of theogony and cosmogony. “The Spirit acknowledges in what measure the eternal secrecy is to disclose and to be set as past. Thus the Spirit is the device and regulator of the ages.”<sup>53</sup> In the Spirit, the past of the Father, the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 73.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ch. 5, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Weltalter, p. 78.

<sup>52</sup> Weltalter, p. 71.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 82. Cf. Courtine, Jean François: Temporalité et futurition. In: Id.: Extase de la raison. Essais sur Schelling. Paris 1990, pp. 203-262.

Christological presence, and the future are interwoven. Past, present, and future are the living time of every being, life revealing itself as time. Time is the manifestation of the inner form of becoming, which pushes things to their standing, to their essence, and to their end.

The life of love acts in the things and unfolds their spiritual seeds in the process of expansion and assimilation to matter. This is the becoming of space. This space is not a container, but is impregnated with the pulsing power of life and is organic, just like time. "Space, as a whole, is nothing but the swelling heart of the deity, which is, however, always held and contracted by an invisible power. Therefore space is nothing but the extension of all living beings."<sup>54</sup> In the becoming of space, the emergence of the Trinity repeats itself: The heart of the divinity sets the Son free.

For Schelling, space and time live together. Both pulse in the organic unfolding of the essences of things, in the process of systole and diastole. Space and time are the sensual realisations of the essences, late processes of becoming, repeating the prior spiritual dramas of theogony and cosmogony.

#### 4. HISTORY OF THE SPIRIT

##### a) Pantheism and the History of Philosophy

Only after time and space have become manifest as late natural expressions of the divine drama, can the history of mankind be conceived. Every creature reveals itself to be divinely animated, and this holds too for human history, especially since human history is part of the life of creation. In the history of mankind the moment of the spirit is distinctively present. In the spirit God's revelation becomes manifest, far beyond the revelation in nature, for it is the spirit who reveals God's particular will for mankind through his supernatural revelation. The spirit alone mediates positive revelation and religion, and it is particularly the human spirit that is able to receive this divine revelation. In the "most important moments through which the divine life develops up to our present," Schelling tries to "recognise the germs of the great original systems of all religions and philosophy".<sup>55</sup>

Schelling did not finish his philosophy of "World-Ages"; he did not completely formulate how he imagined the transition from the Christological history of nature to the history of the spirit in the history of philosophy and religion. However, the structure of the argument is evident: In the epoch of

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<sup>54</sup> Weltalter p. 86.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p. 88.

the spirit, the assimilation of the human spirit to the divine spirit is worked out through religion and philosophy. This assimilation moves mankind, which represents the universe, into a spiritual state, in which it can await the Lord's final return and the *apokatastasis panton*. This expectation illumines the entire spiritual history of mankind, and this splendour shines back from nature, too.

According to his trinitarian speculations, Schelling considered the doctrine of pantheism to be the oldest philosophy. The analogy consists in the logic of the beginning and of freedom: "Since the first which follows eternity never emerges because of eternal movement but only because of its own power", and since the "overflowing separates itself from that which it overflowed",<sup>56</sup> history emerges. It lies in the logic of emanation that this overflowing becoming is followed by a subtle dualism, for every process has two opposite tendencies: the one of remaining identical, the other of separation.

Schelling locates the transition from the mythical to the heroic era here, in this subtle dualism. In the era of myth, man is still part of the wildly animated and chaotic natural history of the gods, without having achieved freedom from it. Heroic history presupposes the natural history of the gods, but at the same time is different from it. In heroic history, the freedom of an acting individual becomes apparent, and this individual makes himself into the whole of history. Schelling interprets this heroic disposition as original pantheism. In the individual, emanating from the beginning, the "will for existence"<sup>57</sup> becomes manifest. With this will for existence, which is attributed to every extra-divine being, Spinoza's formula "suum esse conservare" is identified. In every process of becoming, this moment of the will copies God's perfect unity. The feeling of life that has not yet become rational is represented in the hero. This feeling of the individualised power of life is the spiritual drive in sensual beings. It represents the era of divinely impregnated history, for the will to exist is the will of the Father to become everything. Pantheism is the feeling of this will, the feeling of a spiritual drive in every corporeality. This feeling of a spiritually permeated corporeality is a peculiar moment in human life; it is the moment in which the divine presence becomes immediately apparent in sensuality. It is an original revelation to the senses.

This presence is the divine essence in the human spirit, and it partakes of the history of the human "senses and passions that do not speak and understand anything except images".<sup>58</sup> God's presence in human passions

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Hamann, Johann Georg: *Aesthetica in nuce*, 1762. In: Hamann, Johann Georg: *Sämtliche Werke*, Vienna 1950, vol. 2, p. 197.

and senses marks the transition from the mythical to the heroic age, and is also the transition from natural history to the history of the human spirit.

If the relationship of nothing and being is conceived as becoming, if theogony, cosmogony, and the history of the human spirit are divined and recounted in mythology, religion and philosophy - if all this is philosophy, then the philosophy of history and the history of philosophy cannot be distinguished. Here Schelling's distinction between positive and negative philosophy becomes important. "The whole history of philosophy shows a struggle between negative and positive philosophy."<sup>59</sup> A philosophy that disregards the given reality of life disqualifies itself as secondary; it misses the plenitude of life and restricts itself to methodical questions. Faced with the living, the 'positive' reality, it is dead and negative. This is why Schelling considers mythology and theosophy to be the true history of philosophy. Historical narrative is the only form in which the process of becoming can be recounted. For that reason, history and life belong together. Negative philosophy, however, whose object is dead being, must be disqualified as itself dead, since it negates life. The decisive separation of negative and positive philosophy derives from the fact that negative philosophy only analyses its objects. It is unable to dwell within life since it is itself unmoved. Mythological and theosophical accounts, however, whose form contains life and movement, and which are impregnated with the yearning, passion and feeling for life - these accounts are positive and partake of the divine revelation.

#### b) History of Mythology and Revelation

Schelling nearly lost himself in this life of mythological history, as his "Philosophy of Mythology" shows. He recounts the history of mythology as being open-ended; he feels the multiplicity of life in the human spirit, and this life proliferates from the pantheism of prehistory to the late heroic mythologies of the epochs and peoples.<sup>60</sup> Heroic mythology represents an originally living pantheism, which is the condition for polytheism. From the beginning of the unfathomable One, present in every religion, derive the myths and the gods of Persia, Greece, Egypt, India, and even China. In Greek mythology he finds the exemplary form of prolific mythical life.

Schelling's "Philosophy of Mythology" shows the diastole of spiritual life, the inhalation of the spirit, the unfolding of plenitude, and an abundance that risks getting lost in its differences.<sup>61</sup> The "history of revelation",

<sup>59</sup> *Philosophie der Offenbarung* I, p. 145.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Riconda, Giuseppe: *Schelling storico della filosofia (1794-1820)*, Milan 1990.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Wilson, John Elbert: *Schellings Mythologie. Zur Auslegung der Philosophie der Mythologie und der Offenbarung*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1993. Beach, Edward Allen: *The Potencies of the God(s). Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology*. New York 1994.

however, appears as the systole, as a tendency towards unification of the prolific myths. Its essence is a positive philosophy. It is the history of rituals, which is able to bring together what was dispersed in the different myths. The rites pull the myths together into devout practice. All ritual practice converges in the insurmountable type of divine action, in God's word becoming flesh.

In the history of revelation, the history of positive philosophy leads straight to the gospel. This positive history recounts the development of the myths of all peoples as one process. This is the process of theogony, which is the archetype of every development in the natural and spiritual history of the world and its peoples. This is Schelling's perennial philosophy.

Is this the true core of Schelling's history of philosophy? This question is not easily answered. Perhaps his program is just a diversification of comparative mythology, a history of conventional, that is, negative philosophy, theosophy and evangelical revelation. In that case, the philosophy of the "World-Ages", which tried to show the past of the Father, the presence of the Son, and the future of the Spirit, would have been a failure. At any rate, Schelling did not complete his program.

He was, however, the last philosopher to identify the scattered limbs of Adam Kadmon, of the cosmic man, of the divine Sophia, who had once constituted the life of creation. He was the last to demand that philosophy write the history of the beginning, the middle, and the end.

One should close an account of Schelling's history of philosophy with his interpretation of St. John's Gospel, as Schelling himself did. Schelling hoped that the spirit of this Gospel was also the spirit of the Apocalypse. (This is why he saw the author of the Gospel as being identical with the author of Revelation.) Just as the time of the future is the time of the unifying spirit, so the pneumatic gospel of St. John corresponds to the unity of the believers. It shows the divine bride Sophia as the universal Church: "John is the apostle of the coming, only truly universal Church of the second, new Jerusalem which he himself saw descending from heaven, embellished like a bride for her husband, this city of God where nobody is excluded ... and which the Heathens and the Jews enter as well."<sup>62</sup>

We need not decide whether this is still philosophy or rather the suspension of philosophy in revelation. It is, in any case, an edifying end. And even if some say that philosophy should guard itself against becoming edifying, one can answer with Schelling: "Not only the poet, but also the philosopher has his delights."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Philosophie der Off. II, p. 328.

<sup>63</sup> Weltalter, p. 6.

## **Bibliography**

### **Abbreviations**

CC SL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina.
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae historica.
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina.
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte.
BGPM	Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters.
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie.
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
AHDL	Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge.
HWPh	Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie.

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