INTRODUCTION

0.1. It is generally recognized that there exist noncoincidental parallels between the Anonymous Turin Commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* (=ACPP) and the surviving Coptic tractates from Nag Hammadi—Allogenes and Zostrianos—whose titles are also mentioned by Porphyry as being among those Greek *apokalupseis* that were read and critiqued at great length in Plotinus’ circle.¹ Most significant among several features common to both the Commentary and these two Platonizing Sethian Gnostic tractates are versions of a triad consisting of Existence (*huparxis*), Life, and Intellect² that mediates between the utterly transcendent First principle and the second, intellectual, principle, and that appears to foreshadow the noetic triad formalized in later Neoplatonism.³ Yet the explanation for these parallels has proven to be extremely elusive. That there is some relation of dependence between the Commentary and the Platonizing Sethian tractates is not in question, but in which direction? The controversy over the precise historical relationship between the Commentary and the Platonizing Sethian tractates has divided the scholarship into essentially two camps. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that the extant Coptic tractates Zostrianos and Allogenes found at Nag Hammadi are more or less accurate translations of the homonymous Greek tractates read in Plotinus’ circle, with the implication that the Platonizing Sethian Gnostics were themselves a pre-Plotinian

¹ Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 16.6–7.
² In the Platonizing Sethian tractates, “Blessedness” is often substituted for “Intellect.”
³ A version of the triad (though without the term *huparxis*) occurs in Plotinus as well, but is largely implicit and less formulaic than it becomes in later Neoplatonism. Interestingly, it is most formulaic in his very first treatise, at I.6[1].7.8–12, which suggests he did not develop it gradually but had derived it from some prior source.
source of certain doctrines central to later Neoplatonic metaphysics.⁴ On the other hand, there are those who maintain that the parallels between Plotinian Neoplatonism and the Platonizing Sethian tractates may best be explained as the result of a series of intermediary redactions by the Platonizing Sethians who supposedly attended Plotinus’ lectures and who came under the influence of Plotinus, Porphyry, and / or their successors.⁵ According to the latter hypothesis — I call it the redaction hypothesis — the Commentary itself would therefore be the work of a post–Plotinian Neoplatonist, either Porphyry — as Pierre Hadot famously argued on the basis of parallels with supposedly Porphyrian material preserved in Marius Victorinus⁶ — or some later Neoplatonist,⁷ and the extant Platonizing Sethian corpus would be directly or indirectly dependent upon the Commentary and thus dependent upon, and not a tributary of, Neoplatonism itself.


⁷ Thus M. J. Edwards, M. J., 1990. “Porphyry and the Intelligible Triad,” Journal of Hellenic Studies 110 (1990): 14–25. The Commentary’s sole terminus ad quem would then be the date of the burial of the Coptic codices at Nag Hammadi — typically thought to be the second half of the 4th century, but conceivably later — minus just enough time to allow for the composition and translation of the tractates.
0.2. Up until this point, therefore, much of the debate concerning the relationship between the Commentary and the Platonizing Sethian tractates has focused upon the question of Hadot’s widely (but by no means universally) accepted Porphyrian, hence post–Plotinian, attribution—an issue on which, as it would appear, the very nature of what has come to be called “Neoplatonism” itself is at stake. Yet here I would like to take a somewhat different approach. For the purposes of this paper, I would like to avoid any direct discussion of the relationship between the Commentary and the Platonizing Sethian tractates themselves—precisely what is under question—and also, more importantly, to defer discussion of the precise authorship of the commentary, whether it is by Porphyry or anyone else. Rather, the very circumscribed objective of this paper is to suggest that the redaction hypothesis is seriously compromised by the existence in the Commentary of other unusual terms and conceptions—that is, conceptions besides the triad—with parallels not only to the Platonizing Sethian tractates under question but also to demonstrably pre–Plotinian Gnostic thought. In other words, were it the case that the Commentary preceded the extant Platonizing Sethian tractates and that the Platonizing Sethian authors had borrowed from it doctrinal elements such as the triad, one would not expect the Commentary itself to contain additional technical vocabulary and theoloumena specific to pre–Plotinian Gnostic thought. Conversely, however, if the Platonizing Sethian tractates or their immediate Gnostic antecedents did in fact precede the composition of the Commentary—and if the latter had indeed derived elements such as the triad from the former—we would expect the


9 For instance, M. Zambon, *Porphyre et le moyen–platonisme* [Histoire des doctrines de l’antiquité classique 27], Paris: Vrin, 2002, pp. 40–41: “Accepter la thèse de Bechtle [that the ACPP is pre–Plotinian] entraînerait une révision profonde de l’historiographie sur le platonisme antique: un texte qu’il faudrait dater du IIe siècle ap. J.-C. présenterait en effet—à côté de traits indubitablement typiques de cette époque—des aspects doctrinaux et linguistiques qu’on ne trouve attestés que pour des auteurs postérieurs à Plotin, et en particulier pour Porphyre.” But to his very great credit, Zambon does not rule out transmission from the Gnostics to Porphyry: “Par ailleurs, un rapport inverse de dépendance, de la source gnostique à Porphyre, ne peut être exclu a priori, depuis que les études de L. Abramowski nous en ont démontré l’occurrence.”
Commentary to exhibit other Gnostic features as well: that is, besides the specific doctrines shared by both sources but whose original provenance is under question. And indeed, as it turns out, the Commentary is replete with allusions to a variety of Gnostic themes, and contains a profusion of technical terms and conceptions that are particularly prevalent in, and on occasion indigenous to, the Patristic heresiological accounts of indubitately pre–Plotinian Gnosticism as well as a wide variety of Gnostic texts preserved in the Nag Hammadi corpus, especially those writings that are thought to be the antecedents of the Platonizing Sethian tractates and are most likely to be pre–Plotinian. And although any single instance might be considered either coincidental or merely the result of mutual dependence on some common philosophical koiné, the density and cumulative weight of the Gnostic resonances in the Commentary is ultimately overwhelming, and suggests that the Commentary itself emerged not from a strictly academic–philosophical environment but rather from a Platonizing Gnostic (or crypto–Gnostic) milieu that was at least as familiar with the topoi of classic Gnosticism as with the dialogues of Plato and their contemporaneous Neopythagorean and Middle Platonic exegeses. The concomitant implication is that the grounds for maintaining a Neoplatonic rather than Gnostic provenance of the triad— or indeed any other particular feature shared by the Commentary and the Platonizing Sethians— becomes increasingly tenuous.

0.3. In what follows, then, I would like to present some preliminary results of my recent research into the technical terminology and conceptual lexicon of the Commentary. However, before I begin, a few qualifications are in order. First, my analysis— which, I confess, relies perhaps excessively on the TLG, and which covers only a few of the possible terms in question—has no pretension to be anywhere near exhaustive, and covers only a portion of the technical terms that one might eventually want to investigate. Moreover, conspicuously absent will be any substantial analysis of the use of these terms in Plotinus, Porphyry, and / or later Neoplatonists, as well as a discussion of the Platonizing Sethian tractates themselves. Also absent will be any direct argumentation against Hadot’s formidable Porphyrian hypothesis or against the more recent proponents of the redaction hypothesis. My intention here is only to elucidate some of the pre–Plotinian Gnostic associations of the terminology of the Commentary that have been given perhaps somewhat less attention in the prior scholarship than they might deserve. This exposition is divided into two parts: first, an examination of the technical terminology of a crucial passage of the Commentary (2.14–27) which describes the

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10 While the pre–Plotinian date of the evidence from the Nag Hammadi corpus is likely, it is less secure than that of the heresiological material; nevertheless, the presence of these common features across a broad array of Gnostic texts suggests that whatever their precise date, they are not dependent upon a delimited instance of transmission from the precise milieu of Plotinus’ circle.
precise mechanism by which the aspirant is able to apprehend the utterly transcendent Unknowable first principle; and second, a discussion of several additional terms scattered throughout the remainder of the text.

**PART ONE: THE MECHANISM OF TRANSCENDENTAL APPREHENSION, ACPP 2.14–31**

At 2.14–31 of the Commentary we encounter the following account of the mechanism by which one attains an ultimate apprehension of the transcendent First One (or “God”):

Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* (= ACPP) 2.14–27

...οὐκ ἔσται σαμ ποτε καὶ ἀποστάντι τῶν δι’ αὐτῶν ὑπο&lt;στάν&gt;τῶν τῆς νονέσως στήναι ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀρρήτου προ&lt;τ&gt; ὑπονοιαν τὴν ἐν ένεικονιζομένην αὐτοῦ διὰ σιγής οὐδὲ ὁτι σιγά γιγνώσκουσαν οὐδὲ ὁτι ἐνεικονιζεται αὐτοῦ παρακολουθούσαν οὐδὲ τι καθάταξ εἰνυῖα, ἀλλ’ οὕσαν μόνον εἰκόνα ἀρρητού τὸ ἀρρητον ἀρρήτως οὕσαν, ἀλλ’ οὕχ ὡς γιγνώσκουσαν, εἰ μοι ὡς χωρὶς λέγειν δύνασαι κἀν παντεστικὸς παρακολουθήσα. Ἀλλὰ ἤδε μὲν γενοίμηθα αὐτοὶ αὐτοὶ δι’ ἐκείνου, ἵνα πρὸς τὸν ἐνθουσιασμὸν τραπέντες τὸν ἑραννοῦ, δ’ οὐκ ἤσμεν ἀλλά γνωσόμεθα ποτε, αὐτὸ χωρὶς τις έτος ἄγνωστου ἡξιοι γενοίμηθα. .... it will at some point happen to you, while also standing away from those things substantiated through him, to [a] stand upon an unutterable [b] preconception of him that [c] ‘images’ him through [d] silence, without recognizing that it is silent nor conscious that it is ‘imaging’ him [e] nor knowing absolutely anything at all, but being an ‘image’ of the unutterable alone, unutterably being the unutterable, but not as coming to know, [f] if you can follow me imaginatively insofar as I am able to explain. But let us become [g] propitious to ourselves by ourselves through that one, so that having turned towards divine possession by the lovely thing— which we do not know but at some point come to know— we may become worthy of somehow containing the Unknowable itself.

This crucial passage displays a profusion of concepts and technical terms that occur frequently in a variety of Gnostic texts which describe a similar approach to, and/or visionary apprehension of, the supreme, unknowable deity.\(^{11}\) The high concentration of pre–Plotinian Gnostic terminology suggests that this entire passage is indebted to Gnostic sources. We may examine each of the salient terms or phrases in the order they occur.

**2.19–20: στῆναι.** At 2.19–20, the aspirant is exhorted to attain the ultimate apprehension by “standing” upon an ineffable “preconception” that “images” the Unknowable first One. We find these three technical concepts— stasis, preconception, and imaging— in various combinations in a number

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\(^{11}\) It also bears a striking and certainly noncoincidental resemblance to the Platonizing Sethian corpus, especially the crucial passage of *Allogenes* (*NHC* XI,3) 60.12–61.22 in which the eponymous visionary successively ascends through the three powers of the Triple–Powered so as to attain the ultimate “primordial manifestation” of the Unknowable. As it is not the purpose of this paper to analyze the Platonizing Sethian literature itself— precisely what is under question— and as I have also discussed this passage extensively elsewhere (most recently in a paper given at the NHGN conference at Yale last month), I avoid discussion here.
of pre–Plotinian Gnostic texts, but the theme of stasis itself, usually in the presence of the Divine, has deep–rooted Gnostic associations. The activity of “standing” frequently occurs both in soteriological contexts and also in that of protology, in which divine principles emerge from superjacent powers and then revert towards their source so as to “stand” before them in veneration of their superiors. Although there are reflections of this in both Plotinus and Porphyry, as well as the Platonizing Sethian corpus— the most closest example being Allog. 60.12–61.22, in which the eponymous visionary attempts to stand at each of the successive powers of the Triple–Powered—we can also find a striking parallel in a securely pre–Plotinian Gnostic source, the ostensibly Simonian Apophasis Megalē paraphrased by Hippolytus (Ref. VI.17.1.1–2.1), in which an aspect of the transcendent deity—“He who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand”— inheres in potentiality within all human beings; salvation entails “standing beside” the supreme deity: “There is, therefore (according to Simon) that which is blessed and incorruptible, hidden within every(one), in potentiality, not actuality: [i.e.] that which is ‘He who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand.’ He has stood above in unbegotten power. He stands below in the flow of waters, having been begotten in an image. He will stand above, beside the blessed indefinite power, if he is made as an image.” As in the Commentary, we find the theme of stasis in the Simonian work to be closely associated with a salvific “imaging” process. A similar constellation of themes may be found in the description of ontogenesis in both long and short versions of the

12 The Gnostic emphasis on stasis traced back to the legends of Simon Magus, who according to Hippolytus’ paraphrase of the purportedly Simonian Apophasis Megalē (Ref. IV.51.9.4; VI.9.2.1, 17.1.3, 18.4.3) was called ὁ ἐστώς στὰς στησόμενος, “he who stood, stands, and will stand,” or simply ὁ ἐστώς, the “standing one”; thus the pseudo–Clementine Hom. II.24.7.1; XVIII 12.2.1, 14.3.3; Rec. I.7.2; II.7.1–3; II.47.3; Hipp. Ref. VI.13.1.10; cf. also Clem Alex. Strom. II.11.52; Acts of Peter 31.2. Efforts have been made to connect this with genuine Samaritan tradition; thus J. Fossom, The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism, [Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 36], Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985 5 ff. Whether or not one accepts the arguments for this lineage, the theme is certainly pre–Plotinian. On “standing” as a defining motif among the Sethian Gnostics in particular, and the philosophical roots of this theme in the notion of divine stability, M. Williams, “Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism,” pp. 819–29 in B. Layton, ed. The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978. [Studies in the History of Religions, Supplements to Numen 41]. Leiden: Brill, 1980–1981, and idem, The Immovable Race: a Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity. [Nag Hammadi Studies, 29]. Leiden: Brill, 1985.

13 The theme occurs frequently in both contexts at Zost. (NHC VIII,1): 27.9; 31.14; 32.9; 45.21; 46.20; 65.12; 74.15; 81.12–13; 97.16–17; 115.12–13; 116.7; 117.1; 125.18; 127.16; cf. also Marsanes (NHC X,1) 15.4. Examples of stasis in soteriological contexts in presumable pre–Platonizing Sethian Gnostic literature from the Nag Hammadi corpus in soteriological contexts include Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 34.9 (=BG 67.6–7; II,1 26.14; IV,1 40.31–32; Gos. Thom. (NHC II,2) 36.15 [Log. 18]; Dial. Sav. (NHC III,5) 120.5–8; Great Pow. (NHC VI,4) 37.18–19; Treat. Seth. (NHC VII,2) 57.34–58.1.

14 Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 8.9 (= BG 28.9; II,1 5.16; IV,1 8.4); III,1 11.19 (=BG 32.3–4; II,1 7.34–8; IV,1 12.7–8); Hyp. Arch. (NHC II,4) 93.9–10, 20–22; Orig. World (NHC II,5) 104.32; 105.10; Treat. Seth (NHC VII,2) 66.16–17; Tri. Prot. (NHC XIII,1) 35.4; 38.20.

15 E.g., in the context of the mystical approach to the One. Plot. IV.8[6]; 1.8; VI.9[9]; 7.2; 9.51; 11.15; 24; III.8[30]; 9.25–27; V.5[32]; 8.10; in ontogenetic contexts, V.2[11]; 1.7–13; V.5[32]; 5.18–19; cf. Porphyry, Sent. 40.11, 30.

16 Hippolytus, Ref. VI.17.1.1–2.1: Εστιν οὖν κατὰ τὸν Ἵμισυα τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἀβάρματον ἵκειν ἐν παντὶ ἄνθρωπῳ κεκρυμμένον δυνάμει, οὐκ ἐνεργείᾳ, ἀλλὰ ἐστὶ ὁ ἐστῶς στὰς στησόμενος· ἐστῶς ἄνω ἐν τῇ ἀγεννησίᾳ δυνάμει, στὰς κάτω ἐν τῇ ὑβρίσει τῶν ὀδάτων, ἐν εἰκόνι γεννηθείς, στησόμενος ἄνω παρὰ τὴν μακαρίαν ἄπεραντον δυνάμαν, έναν ἔξεικουσθή.
Apocryphon of John, although in this case it is not the human aspirant but rather the the incipient second divine principle, Barbelo, who stands in the presence of the transcendent Invisible Spirit from which emerges as his own reflection; here again we find a connection between transcendental stasis and an imaging process “in every likeness he sees his own image (eikôn) in the pure light—water that surrounds him; and his thought became an actuality; she appeared; she stood before him in the brilliance of his light.”

2.20: προ<τ>έννοια. The hapax προσέννοια, according to the the ms., or προτέννοια, if one accepts my conjectural emendation, is a Gnostic neologism that is already evident in the eponymous savior—figure of the (presumably pre–Platonizing Sethian) Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1). This principle—the “first thought” or “preconception”—simultaneously comprises the pre–noetic, reflexive self–apprehension of the transcendent principle that initially establishes ontogenesis, and also—as in the Commentary—the extra-salvific human faculty uniquely capable of apprehending that principle. Although we find the notion of transcendental apprehension as preconception in one passage of Porphyry and somewhat more obliquely in Plotinus, it is most abundantly attested in the Platonizing Sethian corpus, and is widespread in other Gnostic sources, with roots in the classic Gnostic systems of the 2nd century. The theme of the “first Thought” (prôtè ennoia) projected by the Father during the first moment of ontogenesis is first evident in Justin

17 Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 7.9–16 [and parallels]: ΖΗΧΟΙΤ ΝΙΜ ΤΕΡΙΚΟΝ | ΜΗΙΝ ΝΟΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΥ ΕΡΟΚ ΖΗΡ ΠΙΟΝΟΥ ΝΟΙΟΕΙΝ ΝΙΚΑΕΙΡΟΝ ΕΤΚΩΕ ΕΙΠΡΟΣ ΑΓΙΩ ΤΕΙΝΝΟΙΑ ΑΕΡΟΠΟΣ ΑΣΟΥ ΕΒΑΣΕ ΕΡΑΤΩ ΝΠΕΠΙΜΤΩ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΗΡ ΠΕΛΛΑΜΠΗΔΟΝΟΣ ΝΙΟΟΕΙΝ.

18 The ms. has προσέννοιαν; P. Hadot (Porphyre et Victorinus, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968, 1.117 and 2.71, n. 2) suggests προσεννοιαν, and is followed by A. Lingüiti (Commentarium in Platonis ‘Parmenidem,’ Florence, 1995; G. Bechtle (The Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s ‘Parmenides,’ Bern: Paul Haupt, 1999) however, prefers to retain προσέννοιαν.

19 NHC XIII,1 36.1–2: ΑΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΠΡΟΤΕΝΝΟΙΑ ΠΗΜΕΕΥΕ ΕΤΚΩΕ ΑΝΟΚ ΖΗΡ ΠΙΟΟΕΙΝ | “I am Pro[tennoia, the thought] that exists in the light”; 6.17: ΑΝΟΚ ΤΕ ΠΗΜΕΕΥΕ ΑΠΙΚΟΤ / “I am the thought of the Father.”

20 As I have attempted to demonstrate in a paper entitled ‘“First Thought,’ ‘Prethinking,’ ‘Forethought’ (Prôtè Ennoia, Pronoein, Pronoia, etc.) as Faculty of Transcendental Apprehension in Plotinus and Gnosticism,” presented at a colloquium on Plotinus and Gnosticism at the Université Laval, Québec, in March 2010, available on my web page at http://kalyptos.org/Zeke/, and in my dissertation, “The Platonizing Sethian Gnostic Background of Plotinus’ Mysticism,” University of Chicago, 2010.

21 Porphyry, Sent. 26.1–5: Μη δε το μεν γενναρεΐς χαρισθεντος του δυτος, το δε προεννοοιμεν εχομενοι του δυτος; ου ει γε χαρισθειμεν του δυτος, ου προεννοοιμεν το υπερ το δυ κατι δυ, αλλα γενναρεΐς φευδες παθος το μη δυ, συμβεβηκος περι του εκσταντα εαυτο; “Nonbeing': one (kind) we generate while separated from being, another we preconceive while holding fast to being. If indeed we are separated from being, we do not preconceive the nonbeing above being, but we generate the false experience ‘nonbeing,’ which is found around the one standing out of himself.” Also Plot. V.3[49],10.41–44: ου εις δυτα νοησις αυτου, αλλα βεος κα ουν επαριν μονην αριστος κα ανοητος, προνοοιμεν ευτος νου γεγονοτος κα του θυγανουτος ου νοουτος. / “There will not be thinking of it, but touching, and, as it were, only an unutterable and unthinkable contact— ‘pre–thinking’— Intellect not yet having come into being, and what is touching is not thinking.” Cf. Also Marius Victorinus, Adv. Ar. [I]B 49.26–29 and 50.1–3.

22 Thus Zost. (NHC VIII,1) 20.11–18; 24.1–17; 56.16–20; 60.10–21; 82.6–13; Allog. (NHC XI,3) 48.13; 53.10–31; 64.30–33. Since I have discussed this at length in the Québec 2010 paper and in my dissertation, I will not provide a full analysis here.
Martyr’s account of the teachings of Simon Magus, who claimed that his own consort Helen was an incarnation of the “First Thought” generated by the Father. Other early securely pre–Plotinian sources include Irenaeus’ account of the system of the Valentinian schismatic Ptolemy, for whom the first ennoia in fact precedes the emergence of Nous: “Those around Ptolemy say that [Buthos] has two consorts, which they also call ‘dispositions,’ namely Thought and Will; for it was first conceived to project something, as they say, and next it was willed.” Similar ideas may be found in pre–Platonizing Sethian corpus; thus in Eugnostos (NHC III,3) the Universals—presumably the Platonic Forms in an embryonic state—are contained prefiguratively within the “primal knowing” (περινοστήσασαν τὴν ηεθέναν και τὴν σιωπήν τοῦ Θεοῦ...) of the Unbegotten first principle, and in the description of ontogenesis in the Apocryphon of John, in which the emergent Barbelo is referred to both as the Invisible Spirit’s “primordial thought,” and is equated with Pronoia, which in both the Apocryphon itself—and in the related Gospel of the Egyptians—is understood less as divine providence than as the extraordinary prenecotic cognition and / or salvific projection of the primordial vision—cognate with protennoia—by which the transcendent deity apprehends itself and by which humans may also apprehend that deity.

23 Justin Martyr, Apol. 36.3.1–6: καὶ σχήδου πάντες μὲν Σαμαρεῖται, ὄλγοι δὲ καὶ ἐν ἀλλοίς ἔθεσιν, ὡς τον πρῶτον θεὸν ἐκεῖνον ὁμολογοῦντες ἐκεῖνον καὶ πρόκοψαν τῇ Εὐφορίᾳ ταῦτα, τὴν περιποιηθέντας αὐτὸν κατ’ ἐκεῖνον τοῦ καιροῦ, πρότερον ἐπὶ τέγνους σταθείαν, τὴν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐννοιαν πρῶτην γενομένην λέγουσι. “And almost all the Samaritans, and a few also among the other nations, agree to and revere [Simon Magus] as the first god; and some Helen—who wandered about with him during that time, who had previously prostituted (herself) in a brothel — she they claim (to be) the first thought generated by him.”

24 Irenaeus Adv. Haer. I.6.1–10 (= Hippolytus, Ref. VI.38.5–6): οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Πτολεμαίον δύο συζύγους αὐτὸν ἔχειν λέγουσιν, δὲ καὶ διαθέσεις καλούσιν, ἔννοιαν καὶ Θέλησιν: πρῶτον γὰρ ἐννοιήθη τι προβάλειν, ὡς φασίν, ἐπειτα ἠθέλησα. “Those around Ptolemy say that [Buthos] has two consorts, which they also call ‘dispositions,’ namely Thought and Will; for it was first conceived to project something, as they say, and next it was willed.”

25 Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 6.24–7.23 [see also parallels; CGL synopsis: 9.20–11.18 = BG 8502.2, 26.11–27.19 and NHC II, 4.15]: ὢν γὰρ ὁ πρώτης ἐν τοιχωμένος διὰ Προνοίας τὸν Προβαλεόμενον ὁμονοιάς τὸν ἀρμονικόν ἔνακτος τὰς ἔννοιας τὴς Προβαλεόμενης ἔνακτος τῶν θεοῦ· ὡς τῆς τῆς προβαλεόμενης τοιχωμένης ἔνακτος τῶν θεοῦ, ὃς πρὸς τὸν τοιχωμένον ἔνακτον προσδέχεται καὶ τὴν Προβαλεόμενην ἔνακτον προσδέχεται. “She is the power (dunamis) that is before everything, the Pronoia of the All, who shines in the light of the invisible image (eikón), the perfect power (dunamis), Barbelon, the aeon that is perfected, the glory giving glory to him, since she appeared by means of him. And she gave glory to him, she who is the Primordial Thought, his image (eikón).”

26 Pronoia of the All

27 Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 27.2–4 [CGL synopsis 56.9–10]: “I am the Pronoia of the pure Light. I am the thought of the Virgin Spirit, who raises you up to the honored place.”

28 Gos. Eg. (NHC IV,2) 50.5–9 [cf. also 75.11 and NHC III,2 63.22]: “...the light of the perfection, the eternal light of the eternities, the light in silence, in the Pronoia and silence of the Father...” Note the close association of Pronoia with silence just as in the case of the protennoia of the ACPP.
The conflation of the salvific pronoia of the transcendent deity with the extraordinary faculty by which that same deity is apprehended may already be found in a fragment of Valentinus himself preserved by Clement of Alexandria. Other examples may be found in the "Untitled Text" from the Bruce Codex and the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I,5).  

2.21: ἑνεκονιζομένη. The 4 occurrences in the Commentary of the unusual verb ἑνεκονιζόμεθα is noteworthy, as forms of ἑνεκονιζω occur elsewhere only 3 times prior to the 4th century CE, where it begins to occur primarily in Christian authors; later it is used some 22 times by Proclus. Yet the context for this word in this passage of the Commentary— that of the assimilation to an "image" (eikon) of the transcendent deity at the penultimate moment of ascent— is originally Gnostic. The eikon refers simultaneously to the primordial self–apprehension of the supreme principle itself that is extruded during ontogenesis, and to the reiteration of this moment of divine self–vision by the human aspirant during a salvific or mystical reascent towards that principle. The notion ultimately derives from the language of the anthropogony in Genesis, in which the first human is made in the image of God.

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29 Valentinus ap. Clem. Alex. Strom. II.114.4–6: ...τὸν τρόπον τούτον καὶ ἢ καρδία, μέχρι μὴ προνοίᾳ τυγχάνει, ἀκάθαρτος [οὐδα], πολλῶν οὐσιών οἰκήτηριον, ἐπειδὰν δὲ ἐπισκέψῃ αὐτὴν ὁ μόνος ἄγαθος πατήρ, ἡγίασται καὶ φωτὶ διαλάμπει, καὶ οὕτω μακραίστατε ὁ ἢξον τὴν τοιαύτην καρδίαν, ὅτι ὑπερήφανον ὅνος. / “In this way too, until the heart encounters pronoia, it is impure, being the domicile of many demons. But when the Father who alone is good inspects (the heart), he sanctifies it and causes it to shine forth with light, and thus one having such a heart is blessed, because he will see God.”  

30 Bruce Untitled 265.11–18 Schmidt–MacDermot ἑνεκονιζόμενοι ἡμῶν καὶ προνοίᾳ ἡμῶν προσευχὴν ἔχουσι εἰς ἅμα τὸ ποιητήριον τοῦτο ἀπὸ προνοίας. / “Through his members he has of himself provided a place for his members so that they would be situated within him and so that they know that he is the Father and that he is who projected them in his first thought.”

31 Tripart. Tract. (NHC I,5) 61.1–8: πεντάπετρον ἡμείς ἔχουμεν προνοίαν ἄματα τριγώμευσε τις γὰρ καρδίαν καὶ τριγώμευσε τοιαύτην καρδίαν, ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ἕναν ἑνεκονιζόμενον ἐνα. / “The one (the Father) who preconceived them [i.e., the Aeons]— not only that they should exist for him, but also that they should exist for themselves as well, that they should then exist in his thought as the substance of thought, that they might also be (substance of thought) for themselves as well— he sowed a thought as a spermatic seed.”

32 The notion of the assimilation to the transcendent deity with the extraordinary faculty by which that same deity is apprehended is available on my web page, http://kalyptos.org/Zeke/.

33 This use by Porphyry might appear to support P. Hadot’s attribution of the ACPP to Porphyry. However, as G. Rocca–Serra has shown (in “La Lettre à Marcella de Porphyre et les Sentences des Pythagoriciens,” pp. 193–202 in Le Néoplatonisme [Colloque de Royaumont, 9–13 juin 1969]. CNRS: Paris, 1971), Porphyry’s letter to his wife is replete with borrowings from diverse pre–Plotinian florilegia and therefore is poor evidence for originally Porphyrian language.
“according to the image and likeness” of God. Although the closest example might be that of Allogenēs, in which the eponymous visionary encounters an “image and likeness” of the transcendent deity at the supreme power of the Triple–Powered (Huparxis) at the penultimate phase of ascent, just prior to the ultimate attainment of the Unknowable, this theme is extremely widespread in Gnostic soteriology. For instance, we encounter intriguing (and indubitably pre–Plotinian) parallels in Hippolytus’ paraphrase of the previously mentioned pseudo–Simonian Apophasis Megalē, in which one may reascend to stand beside the transcendent deity if one is “made into an image” (exeikonisthēi), and also his account of the doctrine of the Peratae, among whom the Elect are referred to as the “perfect, constubstantial race that is ‘made in an image’ (exeikonismenon).”

2.21: σιγή. According to the commentator, the protennoia in which one is supposed to stand somehow images the Unknowable deity through “silence.” Silence is, of course, a central theme of Gnostic literature, and is a frequent attribute of the transcendent deity and consequently associated with salvific ascent. In Valentinian thought personified silence—Σιγή—is hypostatized as the feminine consort of the supreme transcendent principle, Buthos (Deep). In pre-Platonizing Sethian thought sigê appears not to have been hypostatized into a fully independent hypostasis but as an attribute of the supreme principle was linked with the “preconception” of the hypertranscendent deity; in the Gospel of the Egyptians we repeatedly find silence and pronoia in close association, just as in the Commentary we find protennoia and silence together, while in the protology of the Apocryphon of John, Nous is said to emerge in both ennoia and silence.

2.27–31: Αλλὰ ἵλεω μὲν γενοιμέθα αὐτοί αὐτοῖς δι’ ἑκείνου. ἦν πρὸς τὸν ἑνθουσιασμὸν τραπέντες τοῖς ἐρανοῖς, δ’ οὐκ ἵλεων ἡλικίᾳγενοιμέθα μὲτα, αὐτὸς λόγος θεοῦ ἦν τῶν δόροι τὸς πάλιν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἐξεικουσιόν τῆς νόμου τῶν ὀμοσίων, ἀλλὰ δὲ καθὼς ὡς αὐτοῦ κατατεθήθη, ὡς οὖν οὐδέν, ἤμερα ἡ ἄνοιξις τοῦ ἑκατόν, ὡς δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἑνθουσιασμὸν τραπέντες τοῖς ἐρανοῖς, δ’ οὐκ ἵλεων ἡλικίᾳγενοιμέθα μὲτα, αὐτὸς λόγος θεοῦ ἦν τῶν δόροι τὸς πάλιν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἐξεικουσιόν τῆς νόμου τῶν ὀμοσίων, ἀλλὰ δὲ καθὼς ὡς αὐτοῦ κατατεθήθη, ὡς οὖν οὐδέν, ἤμερα ἡ ἄνοιξις τοῦ ἑκατόν, ὡς δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἑνθουσιασμὸν τραπέντες τοῖς ἐρανοῖς, δ’ οὐκ ἵλεων ἡλικίᾳγενοιμέθα μὲτα, αὐτὸς λόγος θεοῦ ἦν τῶν δόροι τὸς πάλιν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἐξεικουσιόν τῆς νόμου τῶν ὀμοσίων, ἀλλὰ δὲ καθὼς ὡς αὐτοῦ κατατεθήθη, ὡς οὖν οὐδέν, ἤμερα ἡ ἄνοιξις τοῦ ἑκατόν, ὡς δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἑνθουσιασμὸν τραπέντες τοῖς ἐρανοῖς, δ’ οὐκ ἵλεων ἡλικίᾳ. “But let us become propitious to ourselves by ourselves through that one, so that having turned towards divine possession by the lovely thing— which we do not know but at some point come to know— we may become worthy of somehow comprehending the Unknowable itself.”

οὐδέν>, μάλλον δὲ ὡσπερ ἢ Ἑρακλεία λίθος τὸν σίδηρον, ἀλλὸ <δὲ> οὐδέν, ἢ ὡσπερ ἢ τοῦ βαλασιοῦ ἱερακος κερικὲς τὸ χρυσόν, ἔτερον δὲ οὐδέν, ἢ ὡσπερ ἄγεται ὑπὸ τοῦ ἑλέκτρον τὸ χρυσὸν μισόνον, σότως, φησιν, ὑπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἄγεται πᾶλιν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἐξεικουσιόν τῆς νόμου ὀμοσίων, ἀλλὰ δὲ οὐδέν, καθὼς ὡς αὐτοῦ κατατεθήθη. / “Thus no one, he [the Peratic author] says, is able to be saved nor to ascend without the Son, who is the Serpent. For just as (he says) [the Son] brought the paternal ‘characters’ down from above, so also he carries from here up again those who have been awakened from slumber and who have become paternal ‘characters,’ transporting the hypostatic ones from the Unhypostatic one from here to there. This, he says, is the saying: ‘I am the Door’ [John 10:7]; for, he says, [the Serpent] transports ‘those who close the lids of their eyes,’ just as naphtha sucks in fire, but nothing else, from everywhere to itself, or rather just like the magnetic stone [attracts] iron but nothing else, or just like the spine of the sea hawk [attracts] gold but nothing else, or just like bran alone is led by amber; so also, he says, in this way the perfect, consubstantial race that is ‘made in an image,’ but nothing else, is also sent down by him.”

40 For the theme of silence—both as hypostasis and as soteriological technique—in Valentinian literature, Gos. Truth (NHC I,3) [compounds of KAPU]: 37.12; Tri. Tract. (NHC I,5) [compounds of KAPU]: 55.37; 56.25; 57.5; 63.31; 72.26, 33; 124.19; 128.31; 129.24; Val. Exp. (NHC XI,2) 22.27; 23.22; 25.33; compounds of KAPU: 22.22; in Sethian texts, Gos. Eg. (NHC III,2) 40.18; 41.10, 12; 42.2, 23; 43.23; 44.14, 15, 28; 50.15, 51.11; 65.12; 67.15; (IV,2) 50.8, 9; 51.1, 19; 52.14, 16; 53.2, 23; 56.5, 18; 60.9, 12, 25, 26; 63.5; 77.7; Eug. (NHC V,1) 15.21 = III,3 88.8, 9 = Soph. Jes. Chr. III,3, 142 = BG 113.16; III,4 177.21 = BG 124.1: [Compounds of KAPU]: Soph. Jes. Chr. (BG) 113.16; 123.13; 124.1]; Allog. (NHC XI,3) 52.21; 59.12; 60.16; 62.25; 68.32; compounds of KAPU: 52.24; 59.25; 61.21; 63.35; 65.19; Marsanes (NHC X,1) [compounds of KAPU]: 4.21; 7.3, 8, 9, 20, 21, 25, 8.15, 21, 9.14, 16, 23; 13.17; 15.1; 30.18; 55.17; Tri. Prot. (NHC XIII,1) 46.12; compounds of KAPU: 36.3; 37.12, 29; 46.13,23; 50.20. Elsewhere, outside of identifyably Sethian or Valentinian literature, I Apoc. Jas. (NHC V,3) 28.2; Testim. Truth (NHC IX,3) [compounds of KAPU]: 44.4; 68.28.

41 Irenaus, Adv. Haer. I,1.1.7, 11, 17; I,1.2.9, 3.16; I,5. passim; I,7,5.12; II passim; Hipp. Ref. VI.29.3.6, 4.1; 31.3.4; 38.3.4; 44.3.3; 49.2.6; 51.3.4, 5.6; X,13.2.1; Clem. Alex. Exc. Ex Theod. II.29.1.1, 30.1.5.

42 Gos. Eg. (NHC IV,2) 50.5–9 [cf. also 75.11 and NHC III,2 63.22]: ποιοῦ[ιν] ἐν η metabolic terminology, of the Father...”

This peculiar self–supplication, somewhat out of place in a conventional philosophical treatise, suggests that the human aspirant must in some manner approach and eventually “comprehend” (χωρεῖν) the eikón of the Unknowable through the mediation of his or her own (inner) self. Besides the general localization of an eikón of the transcendent deity deep within the consciousness of the mystical subject, a theme which is prevalent in pre–Plotinian Gnosticism⁴⁴—and some other suggestive terms⁴⁵—this passage bears an intriguing similarity to the hymnic invocation of the Gospel of the Egyptians, in which the aspirant addresses the deity as a luminous presence within his or her self, and then proclaims that he or she has “comprehended” (Ῥχωρὶ) the deity: “This great name of yours is upon me, O indivisible self–begotten one, who are not outside of me. I see you, you who are invisible before everyone... Now that I have recognized you, I have mixed myself with the immaterial; I have armed myself with an armor of light; I have been made light....I was given shape (morphē) in the circle of the wealth of the light that is in my bosom....I will proclaim your glory truly, for I have comprehended you....”⁴⁶

2.25: ἀρρήτως. According to the TLG, the first clearly negative theological use of the adverbial form (not counting the 2 earlier instances in the undatable pseudo–Clementine corpus) occurs in Hippolytus’ account of the doctrines of the Peratae and of Basilides.⁴⁷

2.26–27: εἰ μοι ὡς χωρῷ λέγειν δύναι καὶ φανταστικῶς παρακολουθήσαι / “... If you can follow me imaginatively insofar as I am able to explain.” In this phrase, which occurs immediately after the discussion of the approach to the Unknowable, the commentator expresses some hesitation about the ability of the reader to grasp the true meaning of the exposition.⁴⁸ This corresponds to a trope in revelatory texts—including but not limited to Gnostic texts—in which the divine revealer emphasizes the paradoxically ineffable nature of the revelatory discourse by expressing doubt (at least

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⁴⁴ As I have demonstrated in my dissertation.
⁴⁵ The curious terms ἐνθουσιασμὸν and τοῦ ἐραννοῦ merit more attention in a future version of this paper; τραπέντες has a distinctively Gnostic connotation, that of mystical self–reversion or epistrophe. In my dissertation I attempt to demonstrate that Plotinus borrowed this notion from the Gnostics.
⁴⁶ Gos. Eg. (NHC III,2) 66.22–67.14 [with parallel, NHC IV,2: τοιειαν ἡπαν | ετήτακ ζιωκειτιατῃσστ | Ναυτογενος | παι τιμτατοαν | εειλαν | εροκ | πιατάναχ | ερον] νασογουοιον–νη-νη-μι... τενυ | ζε | δειογουνκ | δειομονφ | μπιειτε μεμπιε | δειποταζε | [μμωει τινο | οσπολαν νουοιειν] | δειρογοιειν... τενει αμφι θα | ζε | πυκνοκο | [τινοιτρειοι | μπιογοιον ερον] | κογουογ....] Τναξου | μπεκεοου | αλεωου | δειφκουρ | μμοκ....
⁴⁷ The Peratae: Hipp. Ref. V.17.3.2: ο μεν υιός ἀπό τοῦ πατρὸς ἄρρητος καὶ ἀλάλωος καὶ ἀμεταστάτως; also 17.12.1; Basilides: VII.20.4.4.
⁴⁸ Cf. also the commentator’s own self–doubt at 6.12–16: Άλλ’ αἰσθάνομαι ἐμαυτοῦ ἐξολοθάνουτος τῆς ἑκεῖνος ἐν ἀπὶ[ὁ]τίτοι τε γνώσαις καὶ σάχητου πρὸς τα γνωστά *** καὶ ἀμαζ[ήθη] φθεγγομένου διὰ τὴν τῆς ἐρμηνείας ἐν τούτοις ἀσθενέαις. About this latter sentence, Bechtle writes (1990, p. 51 n. 66): “A passage as we have it here in 12–16 with a very personal and self–critical remark would not be expected from Porphyry.”
rhetorically) that the recipient of the revelation can actually understand, or, conversely, by cautioning that no one besides the immediate recipient of the revelation has a sufficient spiritual status to receive it. Thus we find an equivalent 2nd person address to the aspirant in the negative theological prologue of the Apocryphon of John: “What will I say to you about the incomprehensible? This is (only) the likeness of the light to the point I will be able to intelligize it, for who will ever intelligize him according to the way I will be able to speak with you?”

Similarly, the concluding lines of Eugnostos (NHC III,3): “Up to this point, enough! All these things I have revealed to you I told you according to the manner in which you might accept, until the one who does not receive teachings reveals himself among you, and all these things he will tell to you in joyfulness and in a knowing which is pure.”

This is in effect a more complex and possibly more philosophical phrasing of the formula “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” found repeatedly in the sayings of Jesus in both the canonical and apocryphal gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas.

2.31: <τὸ> ἄγνωστον. The negative predicate ἄγνωστος when applied to the deity has a distinctly Gnostic resonance, and may be traced back to the negative–theological interpretations of the altar to the “Unknown God” mentioned in Paul’s speech on the Areopagus at Acts 17:23.3. The original biblical sense of this term was apparently the notion of a potentially knowable deity who was simply not yet known to those who had originally dedicated the altar, although later—perhaps, if I am not mistaken, beginning with Clement of Alexandria—this passage came to be adduced as a source text for negative theology. However, the first use of the neuter τὸ ἄγνωστον on its own to indicate the transcendent deity, precisely as we find in the Commentary, occurs in Irenaeus’ account of Marcosians. Irenaeus says (Adv. Haer. I.13.1.10–12) that they adduced a treatise—what must be an


50 Eug. (NHC III,3) 90.4–11 (and parallels): Δαι ητω να ηπειμα ην ηε ηηρον ητεαιν ηετηπ πιηνοο ηακ | ηεθεσου κατα θε ετεηκαν ητο | ημος | ηαντεπιατ | ηατα | ηεεμβ ηο | ηηντ | ηαν ναι ηθρον ηθαξοο ηε ηον ουραςε | μη ογοοον | ηητοβηηου.

51 Similar injunctions occur in the Platonizing Sethian corpus, e.g. Allog. (NHC XI,3) 50.6–32. Zost. (VIII,1) 128.15–18.

52 See, for instance, E. R. Dodds, “The Unknown God in Neoplatonism,” Appendix I, pp. 310–313 in Proclus: The Elements of Theology, Oxford UP, 1963, p. 310: “That the actual phrase ἀγνωστος θεος occurs in no writer of purely Hellenic culture is (I believe) true, but as regards Plotinus irrelevant; for the phrase, so far as I know, occurs nowhere in the Enneads. It is frequent in Gnostic writings, and Norden produces good reasons for regarding it as specifically Gnostic. Did Plotinus, while avoiding the word, borrow the thought from the Gnosis, either directly or through the mediation of Numenius or Philo? Such a mediation is undoubtedly possible.” Also A.-J. Festugière, “Le problème du dieu inconnu,” pp. 2–5 in La Révélation d’Hermès Trismegiste, vol. 4: Le dieu inconnu et la Gnose, Paris, 1950, [reprint, Paris: Belles Lettres, 1990].


54 Clem. Alex. Strom. I.19.91.2.2; V.12.82.4.2, 6.
infancy gospel like the Infancy Gospel of Thomas— in which the young Jesus harangues his
grammar teacher with talk of the mystical meaning of the letters alpha, beta and so forth; Καὶ τοῦτο
ἐξηγοῦνται ὡς αὐτοῦ μόνου τὸ ἀγνωστον ἐπισταμένου, ὦ ἐφανέρωσεν ἐν τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ ἀλφα.
“For this [the Marcosians] provide the exegesis that he [Jesus] alone understood the Unknowable,
which is manifested in the type of the Alpha.”

PART TWO: ADDITIONAL TERMS AND PHRASES

1.3–4: Ἀρρήτον γὰρ καὶ ἀκατονομαστὸν [cf. also 13.17]. As J. Whittaker has shown, the
close association of the two negative–theological attributes of unnameableness and ineffability
ultimately derives from the Parmenides.⁵⁵ Although the particular turn of phrase does not occur in the
Platonic source text, the commentator is certainly not the first to use it, since it does occasionally
occur, more or less similarly, in Philo, Apuleius, and Origen,⁵⁶ yet it appears to be most characteristic
of Gnostic literature, where the phrase becomes formulaic. Whittaker notes that “the term
[ἀκατονομαστὸς] is not used by Plotinus, perhaps because of his dislike of words that had gained a
Gnostic ring.”⁵⁷ According to Hippolytus, the Phrygian heretics refer to the son of the Father of the
Universe as ἀκατονομαστὸς καὶ ἀρρητὸς,⁵⁸ and Basilides refers to his supreme principle as
“ineffable and unnameable non–being.”⁵⁹ The Apostolic Constitutions attack unspecified Gnostics for
maintaining that God is “unknown... and that he is not the Father of Christ nor the Demiurge of the
Cosmos, but unspeakable, ineffable, unnameable, self–begotten.”⁶⁰ The two predicates are also
associated with each other in the negative–theological prologue of both versions of the Apocryphon of
John: “[he is] the ineffable since there is no one able to speak (of) him; the unnameable since there is no

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⁵⁶ Philo De somn. 1.67: ἀκατονομαστὸς καὶ ἀρρήτως; Apuleius, De dog. Plat. I.5.190: indicium, innominabilem; Celsus ap. Origen Cont. Cels. VIII.43.2: ἀρρήτως καὶ ἀκατονομαστὸς (Origen complains that Celsus contradicts Plato when he refers at 43.6 to God as ἀρρήτως; De princ., frag. 33.14: ἀρρήτως καὶ ἀκατονομαστὸς (referring to the Father).

⁵⁷ Whittaker, “ἀρρήτος καὶ ἀκατονομαστὸς” p. 304 n. 7.

⁵⁸ Hippolytus, Ref. V.9.2.1: τοῦ ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀκατονομαστοῦ <και> ἀρρήτου παῖδα ἐαυτοῦ.

⁵⁹ Hipp. Ref. VII.26.1.4–5: τοῦ ἀρρήτου καὶ <και>κατονομαστοῦ ὀκ ὄντως. Basilides thus appears to be responding to, and trying to outdo, a prior tradition of negative theology with the remarkable insistence that his deity cannot even be called ἀρρήτως; Whittaker thinks this prior tradition is also Gnostic. J. Whittaker, “Basilides on the Ineffability of God,” Harvard Theological Review 62 (1969), 367–371.

⁶⁰ Const. apost. VI.10.3–5: ἀγνωστον...καὶ μὴ εἶναι Πατέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴδὲ τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργόν, ἀλλ’ ἀλεκτον, ἀρρήτως, ἀκατονομαστος, αὐτογενεθλον.
one before him to give him a name,” similar formulae may be found in Valentinian literature.

According to Irenaeus, a certain subset of Valentinians maintain that a hypostatized attribute of Unnameable emerges from Ineffable, the third of a primary tetrad of principles.

1.4–5: τοῦ ἐπὶ πάσιν ὄντος θεοῦ [cf 1.18–19]. Hadot took this formula to be characteristic of Porphyry. However, the phrase ὁ ἐπὶ πάσιν θεὸς and its close equivalents have a long pre–Plotinian history, occurs in the New Testament, and are in fact significantly more characteristic of pre–Plotinian Gnostic and Christian authors. Indeed, although it is not unique to Gnostic thought, the formula is most at home in theological context which distinguishes sharply between a supreme transcendence (“over all”) and other, intermediary, divine strata.

1.6: ἡ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐννοια [cf. 2.13: τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐπινοοιας]. The context of this phrase in the Commentary is ambiguous, and here I will present simply one possible interpretation. At ACPP 1.3–6–34. 10.12; 62.33. 12; 47.33–47.34. Also I Apoc. Jas. (NHC 5.3) 20–21: οὐάτ ΤΡΑΝ ἘΡΩ| ἘΙΝΩΝ ΟΥΑΤΧΕ ΧΕΝΟΠ ΤΕ / “He is unnameable and ineffable.” Note the significance of naming in Valentinian literature such as Gos. Truth (NHC 1.3) 39.29–40.19.


67 Acts of John 57.8: τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων θεόν; Apoc. Jn. (BG 8502.2) 22.7: (πνοίας... | πέτωσον ζιχη πρωθική) / “the god who is above the All”; cf. II, 1.2.4. (θονάμα... | ἐμών | πέτωσον | μήλως: II, 1.2.7: ετώσως | μήλως | πρωθική: III, 1.6.21: πέτωσον ζιχη μήλως ἰμν突如其来 νιμ: BG 26.8–9: ζιχη μήλως: II, 1.28.28–29: ιμν突如其来 | τής θηρού | “...the god in heaven above them all.” See also Soph. J. Ch. 118.25: ἐπὶ πέτωσον ζιχη | πρωθική | “the god who is above the All.” Tri. Prot. (NHC XIII, 1) 35.5–6: (πέτωσον | ρα | ρα | μήλως | | πρωθική | “...the one who exists prior to the All.” Ἰππ. Arch. (NHC II, 4) 97.19–20: μήλως | | ζιχη | πρωθική | “The Son above the All.” Orig. World (NHC XIII, 2) 125.14–15: μήλως δὲ ετώσως εὐογιόν νιμ | “The Logos which is prior to everything.” See also the formula “the Power above all powers” in Great Pow. (NHC VI, 4) 47.11–12; 47.33–34. Cf. Simon Magus’ claim (in the Latin Irenaeus Adv. Haer. I.16.1 p. 191 Harvey) to be super omnia Pater. 68 The Pauline use is followed by Christian authors of the 2nd cent. CE such as Ignatius of Antioch, Ep. 4.2.1.4, 5.1.1; Ep. 5.7.1.2 and Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. [Book V] fr. 16.7. Celsus, Aléthès Logos ap. Origen Cont. Cels. VI 52.6 and VII 15.3–4: τοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεοῦ; also the 160–plus uses of the phrase in Origen listed by S. Cazelaiz (2005: 210): “L’expression HO EPI PASI THEOS de l’Ancienne Académie à Origène et dans le Commentaire anonyme sur le Parménide,” Science et Esprit 57.3 92005: 199–214.
commentator is trying to emphasize that the negative predicates of the One do not imply a deficiency of nature as it does in the case of ennoia of the One. The commentator thus implies that the ennoia of the One is in fact slightly deficient, as it does not replicate the perfect unity of the One. Yet again, one might suspect that the proximate source for this notion is Gnostic. Significantly, as with the prenoetic protennoia, Gnostic protologies frequently involve the emission of an ennoia by the supreme principle, in essence a thought of itself, often (paradoxically) prior to the generation of Nous, just as we have seen in the case of the protennoia; thus, for instance, the 2nd Treatise of the Great Seth: “And a single ennoia became all of them, it (the ennoia) being from one”, or Eugnostos: “the Monad and the ennoia [are] of the Immortal Man.” In Valentinian systems, a hypostatized Ennoia is the consort of the supreme principle (Buthos or Propatôr). Moreover, unlike protennoia (and its cognates), the ennoia is sometimes understood to be slightly deficient—as in the ACPP—and thus to fail in an attempt to grasp its source. Thus for instance, followers of Ptolemy refer to two “dispositions” (diatheseis) of Buthos as Ennoia and Thelêma; Nous then emerges from Ennoia, able to conceive only through her coupling with Thelêma. Similarly, Simon Magus apparently equated his consort Helena, an ex-prostitute, with the fallen Ennoia of the supreme principle.

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69 Here I differ from the interpretation of Bechtel, who understands the ὡς ἄ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἐννοια to mean, in a more positive sense, “as [it is] like the notion of the One.” Either way, the point is not critical for my argument.

70 I was unable to find an obvious source in earlier philosophical literature. Although the phrase τοῦ ἑνὸς ἐννοια already occurs in Alex. Aph. In Arist. Metaph. Comm. 602.11; 615.9 (in a discussion of the Parmenides) and Sext. Emp. Adv. Math. VIII.333.5, the context is entirely different.

71 2nd Treat. Seth. 50.18–20: ἀγὼ ἄγνοια ἑνοικτεῖ ὡς ταῖς ναοτὶς ἑνὸς θεοῦ εὐρκυτεῖ εὐολόον ἐν οὐρα. Also 66.12–21: ἔποικτε ἑνὸς ὑμαίοιου ἑνολόον ἐν τῇ ἑνοικτεῖ ὡς ναοτὶς θεοῦ ὡς ἐπεμεῖνος ἑνοικτεῖ ἑνοικτεῖ ὡς ναοτὶς ἑνοικτεῖ ὡς ναοτὶς ἑνοικτεῖ. “But he, turning himself, often appears to himself, as existing as a Monad of all these, a thought and a father, he being one. And he stands to(wards) them all.”

72 Eug. (NHC V,1) 7.24–25: Μοιακ ἐν ἔννοια Ματ Τεθανακ τεθηρευγ αὐτό ἔννοια. “And this is the Monad that is within the Sethus in the manner of an ennoia.” Also Irenaeus’ Barbeloites from Adv. Haer. I.29 [lines 9–10 in CGL vol. 2 p. 188]: ubi esse Patrem quendam innonimabilem dicunt. Voluisse autem hunc manifestare se ipsi Barbeloni. Ennoeam autem hanc progressam stesse in conspectu eius.... / “...wherein exists, they say, some unnameable Father, [and that] he wished to manifest himself to Barbelo, and this Ennoia came forth and stood confronting him.” Similarly in Ap. Jn., describing the incipient Barbelo Aeon as the self-reflection of the Invisible Spirit; thus NHC III,1 7.12 [with parallels, BG 27.5, II,1 4.27, IV,1 7.1–2]; ἀγὼ τεθανακ ἀπὸ οὐγος ὡς / “...and his thought (ennoia) became an actuality.” In Gos. Eg. (NHC III,2) 42.7 [=IV,2 52.25], Ennoia is one of the members of the first Ogdoad. With respect to τοῦ ἑνὸς ἐννοιας at 2.13, (Pseudo–?) Simon Magus, Apophasis Megalê, from Hippolytus, Ref. VI.18.2.1–7.5: For this is ‘the one who Stands, Stands, and Will Stand,’ being a masculofeminine power according to the pre–existent unbounded power which has neither origin nor limit, existing in unity. Proceeding forth from this, the Epinoia in unity became two.”

73 Justin Martyr, Apol. 26.3.5–6.
1.14 τινος ὀροῦ. Here again, the sense of the passage is recondite, and will eventually need more attention than I can give it here. Very generally speaking, at ACPP 1.10–17 the commentator suggests that “some kind of boundary” or “limit” separates off from the One the multitude of (intelligible) things that are generated from the One, including, it is implied, its ennoia. This boundary simultaneously preserves the absolute unity and transcendence of the One, but also provides the limit and definition without which those things (i.e. the Forms) would not exist at all. Here we have an apparent allusion to the Valentinian systems in which a hypostatized entity or aeon known as Horos—“boundary” or “definition”—is emitted by the transcendent first principle after the generation of the primary Aeons. Horos then serves both to delimit and / or “support” all things, and also to restricts the access to the Pleroma; thus Horos restrains Sophia from comprehending the Father, and subsequently, after her eventual repentance and restauration to the Pleroma, Horos prohibits her Enthumesis (inherent conception or intention) and her passions from entering along with her. In the Valentinian Exposition from Nag Hammadi, Horos is explicitly accorded four functions—separation, confirmation, substance–producing, and form–providing—in explicit opposition to those Valentinians who attribute only the two powers of separation and confirmation. The Valentinian conception of horos very likely has pre–Plotinian origins in the Pythagorean notion of “limit” (peras). However, the functions accorded to Horos in the Commentary—those of both limiting access to the transcendentalia and of sustaining the existence of all things—appears to be noncoincidentally related to the Valentinian conception.

1.18 προσηγορίαυ. The word προσηγορία and its cognates, used here as the generic term for an “appellation” or “designation” of the transcendent deity, occurs frequently in non–theological contexts in Porphyry, but at least once in a similar context; in fragment 15 of the History of Philosophy he refers to proségoriai as the technical term for appellations of a transcendent God, such as the One

75 ACPP 1.10–17: Εἰ διασπασθέντα γοῦν ἂρ’ ἑαυτῶν καὶ διαρτηθέντα καὶ πολλὰ καὶ πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς γενόμενα καὶ τὸ εἶναι ὑπὲρ τέως ἢ ἀποδεδείχθηκεν, οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲ ἐπὶ πλῆθος οὐτὰ εἶναι· τοῦτο γοῦν αὐτὸ ὑπὲρ τοὺς δρόους οὐ εἶ ἀπεὶ ἂπρεπώς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐντύχησεν, εἰς ἂν ἀπειρα καὶ ἀορίστα, οὐδαμῶς ὑπα· ταῦτα δ’ ἐγὼ ἔστι, οὐκ ἂν ἧν ὄντα.

76 I.1.3.13–15: Ὁ δὲ Πατὴρ τῶν προερημένων Ὄρων ἐπὶ τούτους διὰ τοῦ Μονογενοῦς προβάλλεται ἐν εἴκοσι ἴδια, ἀοὐζυγοῦ, ἀθήνηνων / “After these, the Father projects the aforementioned Horos in his own image by means of the Only—begotten, without consort, unfeminine.” (note also Hadot’s emendation <a>suzugos</a> at ACPP 13.23).

77 Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 1.1.2.29.

78 Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 1.1.3.19–23; see also I.1.5.4, 49, I.1.6.1 ff.; I.1.7.2.; I.1.16.24–25; I.5.1.15–18 (here Irenaeus complains that Valentinus posited two different principles called Horos, one dividing Buthos from the rest of the Pleroma, another between the Pleroma and the lower principles); I.10.1.23. Hippolytus, Ref. VI.31.5.4, 6.1, 7.1, 8.5; VI.34.7.6, VI.37.6.2, 4; VI.37.8.4; VI.53.4.5; X.13.2.4, 3.1. Tri. Tract. (NHC 1.5) 75.13–17; 76.33; 82.12.


80 Thus Thomassen, Spiritual Seed 238–240, 273–275, 279–283.
and the Good, that are inappropriate for lesser beings.\textsuperscript{81} Yet the term has a strongly Christian, Gnostic, and Hermetic connotation. We find a similar use to describe the appellation of the ineffable deity in the excerpts of the Valentinian Theodotus preserved by Clement: “Silence, they say, being the mother of all those emitted by the Deep, with respect to that which cannot be spoken, remained silent about the Ineffable, but with respect to that which she grasped, designated this (\textit{proségoreusen}) the Ungraspable.”\textsuperscript{82}

1.25–26: \textit{ἀπειρον δύναμιν}. The phrase is originally Aristotelian.\textsuperscript{83} Yet it also occurs in the supposed fragments of Origen’s \textit{De Principiis} preserved in Justinian’s letters (which apparently deny that the divine power is unlimited); eventually we find variants in middle– and late–period Plotinus, first at VI.5[23].12.6— a treatise which, as I will attempt to demonstrate in a future study, is specifically responding to the Platonizing Sethian tractate \textit{Zostrianos (NHC VIII,1)}— and subsequently in IV.3[27].8.36, V.8[31].9.25, and III.7[45].5.23. There are two instances in Porphyry himself,\textsuperscript{84} (the latter passage itself containing what is, as I will attempt to demonstrate in a future study, a rough paraphrase of, and commentary on, \textit{Zost.} 44–46, following Plotinus’ precedent in VI.5–6 [22–23]). And yet, despite the venerable philosophical pedigree of the phrase, a similar construction already occurs in the pseudo–Simonian \textit{Apophasis Megalé} quoted by Hippolytus, in which the supreme principle is referred to as an \textit{ἀπέραντον δύναμις}.\textsuperscript{85}

1.32 \textit{ἀνεπινόητος}. Hadot ranks the term \textit{ἀνεπινόητος} among those that are both relatively common in philosophical vocabulary of the time and also occur elsewhere in Porphyry.\textsuperscript{86} Yet

\textsuperscript{81} Porphyry, \textit{Phil. Hist.} fr. 15.5–10.
\textsuperscript{83} E.g., Arist. \textit{Phys.} 266a25, 266b6; \textit{De Cael.} 275b22; etc. At \textit{Metaph.} 1073a8, Aristotle implicitly applies it to the prime mover (i.e., to God), in a passage, interestingly, much like that of ACPP 1.17–31 in which we find the phrase; here Aristotle critiques the doctrine of “Speusippus and the Pythagoreans” (1072b31 ff.) concerning the imperfection of the first principle (recall the criticism of “Speusippus and ‘Tima[l]ios’ [of Locri?]” at ACPP 1.20–24. It is also interesting that the Aristotelian passage immediately preceding this one has been suggested as one possible source text for the noetic triad itself, Arist. \textit{Metaph.} 1072b14–30, on which P. Hadot, “Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin,” pp. 107–141 in \textit{Les sources de Plotin.} [Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique, 5]. Vandoeuvres–Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1960, 112. The phrase also occurs in commentators; thus Alex. Aphr. \textit{In Arist. Metaph. Comm.} 700.40
\textsuperscript{84} Porphyry, \textit{Ep. ad Anebo} 1.2b.5; \textit{Sent.} 40.42.
\textsuperscript{85} Hipp. \textit{Ref.} VI.9.5.3, 12.3.1–2, 17.2.1; X.12.3.2. That the Simonian principle was also described as an \textit{ἀπειρον δύναμις} is confirmed later by Theodoret, \textit{Haer. Fab. Comp.} 83.344.35–6: ἂπειρον τινα υπέθετο δύναμιν.
\textsuperscript{86} P. Hadot, “Fragments d’un commentaire de Porphyre.”
according to the TLG, it occurs only 4 times prior to Sextus Empiricus, where it occurs some 30 times,\(^{87}\) then once in Origen (at Cont. Cels. IV.76.7), and finally once again in Porphyry, Phil. Hist. fr. 18.4. We next find this term, interestingly enough, in Hippolytus’ account of the system of the Sethians (Ref.) where it is applied to the pneuma intermediate between light and darkness (not to be confused with the supreme Invisible Spirit in the more standard accounts of Sethian doctrine): this pneuma is λεπτῇ διοδεύουσα δύναμις ἀνεπινόητῳ τινὶ καὶ κρείττῳν ἢ λόγῳ ἔστιν ἐξειπεῖν / “a subtle interpreting power, inconceivable and superior to what can be expressed by discourse.”\(^{88}\)

Significantly, however, there is some reason to suspect that Porphyry’s use of the term in this particular fragment derived from a Gnostic source, although the argument for this involves a considerable detour. It happens that the source of the only securely Porphyrian instance of ἀνεπινόητος — namely in fr. 18 of his History of Philosophy, whose content Porphyry attributes, rather suspiciously, to “Plato”— contains other terms that that are most at home in a Gnostic context, the most important of which being the curious term αὐτοπάτωρ in the description of the emergence of Nous from the supreme deity in lines 8–10: “Pre–eternal [Nous] proceeded from its cause, starting out from God, being self–generated and Self–Father (αὐτοπάτωρ).”\(^{89}\) With respect to the general notion involved, J. Whittaker has pointed out that the notion of divine self–generation of either the 1\(^{st}\) or 2\(^{nd}\) principle was widespread in Gnostic sources,\(^ {90}\) which at least provide some of the earliest evidence for notion.\(^ {91}\)

With respect to the particular term αὐτοπάτωρ itself, we may note that it is not necessarily an original Gnostic coinage, as Whittaker points out, since it already occurs twice (according to the TLG) prior to the ACPP: once, most securely dated, in Aelius Aristides, where it describes Zeus’ self–generation,\(^ {92}\) and again, somewhat less securely dated, in a Hermetic fragment.\(^ {93}\) Nevertheless, despite its earliest appearance in Aristides, it appears to have emerged as a term with an unmistakably Gnostic

\(^{87}\) Sextus Empiricus wrote in the late 2\(^{nd}\)– early 3\(^{rd}\) cent. CE.

\(^{88}\) Hippolytus, Ref. V.19.3.5 and X.11.2.6.

\(^{89}\) Porphyry, Phil. Hist. fr. 18.8–10: προῆλθε δὲ προσώπων ἀπ’ αἰτίου τοῦ θεοῦ ὄρμημένος, αὐτογένητος ὁν καὶ αὐτοπάτωρ.


\(^{91}\) E.g., inter alia, the self–begotten Son in Apoc. Jn., (NHC III,1) 9.17: ΠΑΥΣΟΓΕΝΗΣ; BG 30.6: ΠΑΥΣΟΓΕΝΗΣΟΣ; also, Hippolytus’ Peratae, Ref. V.12.3.2. While affirming (in the two articles cited supra) that the Gnostics provide the best evidence for this conception, Whittaker struggles to argue— despite a paucity of evidence— that the Gnostics themselves were not themeselves generative, but were instead entirely derivative from lost Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean— i.e. academic–philosophical as opposed to sectarian— sources; he consequently tries to trace the notion and language of divine self–generation back to Stoic and classical antecedents, especially in tragedy and oracular literature.

\(^{92}\) Aelius Aristides, Or. 43.7 [=Hymn to Zeus 3.6].

\(^{93}\) C.H. frag. var. 13.5 Nock–Festugière (cf. also αὐτοπάτωρ in Alex. Aphr. in Arist Metaph. Comm. 126.13).
resonance prior to Plotinus, and does not occur in non–Gnostic sources (other than the one rather suspicious instance in Porphyry’s History of Philosophy) until well afterwards. We find the term itself in Eugnostos, in the course of a protological account of the emergence of the second principle by mean of the self–apprehension of the first: “He sees himself within himself, as in a mirror, having appeared in his likeness as Self–Father (autopatôr) which is the Self–Generator, and as Confronter, since he confronted Unbegotten Pre–Existant one.”

Later in the narrative the emergent Immortal Man (equivalent to Nous) is referred to as “father out of himself.” Several other Gnostic usages of this term can be found. That the term had a venerable pedigree in classic Gnostic systems is suggested by a passage of the ostensibly Simonian Apophasis Megalê preserved by Hippolytus which imputes to Simon the doctrine of the emergence of the second principle through the self–reflection of the first:

“This, he says, is one power divided above [and] below, generating itself, making itself grow, seeking itself, finding itself, being mother of itself, father of itself, sister of itself, consort (suzugos) of itself, daughter of itself, son of itself, mother–father, being one: the root of the entireties.”

To this putatively Simonian evidence we may add the interesting datum that the terms autopator and autogenetos in Rufinus’ Latin translation of the pseudo–Clementine Recognitions, in the course of a section (III.2–11) thought to be a Eunomian interpolation in which— as M. Tardieu has shown — Peter is made to polemicize tacitly against a certain rival sect, apparently Homooysians, by imputing to them Gnostic protological doctrines. While Tardieu points to the widely–diffused Eugnostos (very likely an early text) as a possible source— a text Tardieu refers to as a “[un] ‘best–seller’ du gnosticisme de ce temps” — it seems equally likely that the Eunomian redactor equally had in mind a doctrine associated with Simon Magus, who is Peter’s adversary in much of the rest of the narrative, and in any

96 The term αὐτωτατωρ occurs in Untitled Bruce p. 228.9 Schmidt–MacDermot; Epiphanius attests (Pan. 1.287.11) that certain (Barbelo–worshipping) Gnostics refer to Barbelo as άυτωτατωρ, while at I.390.10 and 394.1 he attributes the use of the term to the Valentinians. At Zost. (NHC VIII,1) 20.13–14 the Kalyptos is described as ὁδικός γαρ ἐβολα ἡμιορ πε σίμ | ὁδικοὶ ἐβολα | ἡμιορ | ἐναγνωρ ἐβολα | ἡμιορ | ἐνανγωργος | “He is a power from himself and a father from his own self.”
97 Hipp. Ref. VI.17.3.1–4: αὐτὴ, φησίν, ἐστίν ἢ <γ> δύναμις μία, διημένη <δ> ἢ κόσμο, αὐτὴν γεννώσα, αὐτὴν αύξονα, αὐτὴν ἐνοτοίσα, αὐτὴς μήτηρ οὐσα, αὐτῆς πατήρ, αὐτῆς ἀδελφή, αὐτῆς σύζυγος, αὐτῆς υγιάτηρ, αὐτῆς υίς, [μήτηρ, πατήρ,] ἐν οὐσά· <ρίς> τῶν ὄλων.
100 Tardieu, op. cit. 336.
case suggests the strongly Gnostic connotation of the term. In conclusion, Porphyry’s use of αὐτοπάτωρ in Phil. Hist. fr. 18, in conjunction with other unusual terms, suggests that he tacitly borrowed the entirety of the passage— ἀνεπινώτος included—from some Gnostic source whose ideas he admired but of whose sectarian identity he was embarrassed, and that he fathered its content onto Plato so as to recover for the term some philosophical respectability.

2.2: ἐνθυμεῖσθαι. The context in which this term appears is a description of the transcendental cognition of the hypostasis of the supreme One, which on the one hand transcends activity, including intellect, and yet on the other hand inherently preconceives—or possibly is conceived by all subsequent realities, without extruding this conception from itself, as is the case, for example, with the ennoia of the One at 1.6. This appears to reflect a Gnostic technical term for divine precognition— ἐνθύμησις—that deliberately avoids the language of noêsis. Thus Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 14.10–12 [with parallels BG 36.16–19 and II,1 9.25–27]: τοιοὶ έγαίων τε· ἐγείρετε ἐγείρετε ἐβολά οὔτε ἔστη τενογνωμία ἔπειτα / “Sophia, being an aeon, thought of a thought from within herself, in the enthümêsis of the [Invisible] Spirit.” Clem. Alex. Ex. ex. Theod. I.7.1.1–4: ἄγνωστος οὖν ὁ Πατήρ οὖν, ἦθελος εὐγνωθῆναι τοῖς Αἰῶνι καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐνθυμήσεως τῆς ἐαυτοῦ, ὡς ἄν ἐαυτῶν ἐγνωκὼς, Πνεῦμα γνώσεως οὖσης ἐν γνώσει, προέβαλε τὸν Μονογενῆ / “Thus the Father, being unknown, wished to make himself to the Aeons, and—through his own inherent intention (enthümêsis)—inasmuch as he could know himself, being a pneuma of knowledge within knowledge, he projected the Only—Begotten.” See also I.7.15, 2.2, 3.2. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I.1.2.32: τὴν προτέραν ἐνθύμησιν; also I.1.3.22, 24; I.1.5.53; I.1.7.2; I.1.9.17; I.1.17.11; I.4.1.33; I.8.8.13; Tertullian, Adv. Val. 9–11 passim. That at least some Gnostics also used verbal forms of ἐνθυμεῖν in a technical sense is confirmed by Plot. II.9[33].12.7–12: τὸ δὲ εἰδωλον τούτο, εἶ καὶ ἀμυδρός, ὡς λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ οὖν ἄρτι γενόμενον ἐνθυμηθήναι ἐκείνα ἢ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ, εἰδωλον ὑλικόν, καὶ μὴ μόνον ἐνθυμηθήναι ἐκείνα καὶ κόσμου ἐκείνου καὶ [κόσμου ἐκείνου], ἀλλὰ καὶ μαθεῖν εὖ οὖν ἄν γένοιτο; / “But this ‘image,’ [i.e., the Demiurge], even if

101 ACPP 1.31–2.2: [...]διὰ τὸ ἀγαν ἐξηλλαγμένον τῆς ἀνεπινώτου ὑποστάσεως, ἢ μήτε μετὰ πλῆθους μήτε μετ’ ἐνεργείας μήτε μετὰ νοησιῶν μήτε μετὰ ἀπλότητος μήτε μετ’ ἀλλὰς τῶν ἐπιγιγνομένων ἐνυοιῶν διὰ τὸ ὑπέρτερον αὐτῶν εἶναι καὶ τῶν πληθους ἐνθυμείσθαι. / Bechtle (1999) 40–41: “...but because of the very great separation of the inconceivable hypostasis, which is without multiplicity, without act, without intellection, without simplicity, without any of the other supervening notions, because of its being superior to them and thinking of all of them”; Linguiti (1995) 97: “bensi per la condizione di assoluta differenza di questa ipostasi inconcepibile, la quale non è con pluralità né con attività, né con intellezione, né con semplicità, né con altra delle nozioni posteriori, per il fatto di essere e di essere concepita come superiore a tutte loro”; Hadot, Porphyrè et Victorinus vol. 2, Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968, 69: “mais parce que cette hypostase inconcevable est absolument différente de tout, elle qui est sans multiplicité, sans acte, sans connaissance, sans simplicité, sans aucune des notions qui la sont postérieures, parce qu’elle est et est conçue comme supérieure à toutes ces choses...”.”
obscurely—as they say—and while just at the point of having come into being, nevertheless conceptualizes those [intelligibles] or also its mother, a material image, and not only conceptualizes those things and undertakes a thought of the cosmos, but also learns whence it came to be.” Cf. also Soph. Jes. Christ (NHC III,4) 104.10–13 [with parallel BG 98.18–99.5]: ἀφενεομαί μὴ τοῦδ᾿ ἑρμοῦφα τεκενυγγος ἀμολυκώς ἐβολὴ τενευσιτρίπ οὐκο | ἑμβρο ἑγοογτρείμε / “He considered (enthumei) with the great Sophia, his consort (suzugos), and manifested his first—begotten androgynous son.” Also note use of noun ἐνθυμησία as one extraordinary cognitive faculty within the transcendent first principle at Eug. (NHC III,3) 73.8–11 [= III,4 96.37 and BG 86.16–19]: πεττιμάγ γὰρ ὑμοιες τηρη ὑμοιοια | μὴ ὑμεομηματικαὶ μὴ ὑμεομηματικαὶ ὑμεομηματικαὶ ὑμεομηματικαὶ / “For that one is entirely an intellect, and a thought and an enthumêsis, a rationality and a power.” These six cognitive modalities—possibly drawn from some philosophical source, on which see van den Broek (1988)—are also attributed to the First Man at Eug. (NHC III,3) 78.7 [= III,4 102.23 and BG 96.17], and are reminiscent of the names given to the soul in a book on Manichaean doctrine preserved in Epiphanius Pan. 3.63.4: νοῦς, ἕννοια, φρόνησις, ἐνθυμησία, λογισμός (cf. also Acta Archelai 10; Acta Thomae 27). on Valentinian Enthumêsis, see also Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. II.13.2; Hipp. Ref: VI.48.2.3. Theodoret of Cyrus, Haer. Fab. Comp. 83.356.25, 40. According to Hippolytus, enthumêsis was the last of six Simonian principles (known as “roots”); thus Ref. IV.51.9.4; VI.12.2.3, 13.1.12, 20.4.5; X.12.3.1. Neither the nominal or verbal form occurs in Porphyry, though the adverbial ἐνθυμησιακός occurs at Quaest. Hom. 1.389.40. After the 3rd cent. CE, it is used exclusively by Christians and not (as far as I can determine) by pagan Neoplatonists.

2.16–17: μένειν δὲ ἐν ἀκαταλήπτῳ καταλήψει καὶ μηδὲν ἐννοούσῃ νοήσει. The paradoxical juxtaposition of positive and negative cognition by which the transcendent One is apprehended at 2.16–17—“inapprehensive apprehension” and “non–conceptual thought”—implies an extraordinary kind of knowledge above knowledge (as we find later at 5.7–11).102 This has a parallels in Porphyry Sent. 25: the principle above Intellect is contemplated ἄνωσια κρείττονι νοήσεως, “by means of un–knowing better than knowing,” and also, Tübingen Theosophia §65 Erbst: according to Porphyry “knowledge of [the first cause] is un–knowing” (ἐστιν αὕτοῦ γνώσις ἢ ἁγνωσία); it also occurs in Plotinus (e.g. VI.9[9].7.17–21), but it is most evident in the Platonizing Sethian corpus, especially in passages describing the final stages of visionary ascent and the ultimate apprehension of the transcendent deity, which I cite here—exceptionally—simply so as to provide some context. Thus

102 ACPP 5.7–11: Ἄρ’ οὖν γιγνώσκει ὁ θεὸς τὸ πάν: Καὶ τὶς οὖτως γιγνώσκει ὡς έκεῖνη: Καὶ πῶς γνώσιν [ἐξω] οὐκ ἔστε πολὺς: Ὄτι φημὶ εἶναι γνώσιν ἐξω γνώσεω<>, καὶ ἁγνωσίας, ἂφ’ ἤς ά γνωσίς[...].
Allog. 59.26–32: ἀγω εκλαχθη | οὐσίας ἐβολὴν ἑτεραί ἐβολὴ | ζιτοτη | ηὐνύμφωροι ἡπογούρως ἐβολὴν ἑτεραί ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι | προτετευκτός ηἰμητατογοιοι ἐροτορ ἑπογούρως ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι / “And if you receive a manifestation of this one by means of a First Manifestation of the Unknowable One— the one one whom you will come to know— you must ‘unknow’ him”; 60.10–12: ἀλλα ἐβολὴν εἰναὶ ἐννοια ἐκεῖ | ἐροτορ ἑπογούρως ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι / “but knowing him through a luminous ennoia, un–know him!”; 61.1–4: γ(ος) | εἰε ηἰμητατογοιοι ἐροτορ ἑπογούρως ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι | ἐροτορ ἑπογούρως ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι / “as though ‘unknow–’ing’ him, I knew him and received power from him”; 61.14–17: Νείκωτε ἁθναντοῦσα ἑπογούρως ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι | προτετευκτός ἑπογούρως ἐβολὴν ηἰμητατογοιοι / “I was seeking the the ineffable and unknowable god— whom one should know him, one would absolutely ‘unknow’ him”; 64.8–14: ἀγω | εβολὴ | ζιτοτης ἑρυθραὶ ηἰμητατογοιοι οὐδεὶς ἔστι ηἰμητατογοιοι | τοι ἐπογούρως καταροφ ἀγω | εβολὴ | ζιτοτης ἑρυθραὶ ηἰμητατογοιοι οὐδεὶς ἔστι ηἰμητατογοιοι / “And through them all it is within them all; the unknowable knowledge that is proper to [the Unknowable] is not unique; it [the Unknowable] is also conjoined by means of the unknowingness that sees it.” To these passages from Allog. we may compare the obviously related Zost. 20.11–18 which refers to the mode of transcendent apprehension as both pre–knowing and not–knowing: εὐνοία | η ἑκτὸς ἐπε ἐξηρτὶ πε ἐπε ἐνὶ ἑροτὸς ἀγὼ νευεὶς ἐροτορ | ἀν οὐβὸς γὰρ ἐβολὴ | ἡμοῖος ἐπὶ μὴν ὧν | ὑγεικτὸς ἐβολὴ | ἡμοῖος μαγαζ/ “He is a divine father as he is pre–known and he is not–known; for he is a power and a father from himself.” 103 This type of construction ultimately derives not from Porphyry but from a venerable Gnostic topos concerning the self–apprehension of the absolutely transcendent deity, who is frequently said to be unknowable and yet nevertheless paradoxically to know itself, albeit through some extraordinary reflexive faculty superior to intellection; thus Eug. (NHC III,3) 72.19–21 [and parallels: III,4 95.12–14 and BG 85.17–18]: ὁ άγαθος | ἡμοῖος | εὐθαναι ἡμοῖος | ἡμῖν ἡμοῖος | “He is unintelligizible, while he (nevertheless) intelligizes himself” (cf. also V,1 2.10–13; III,3 71.15–18; BG 83.7–16). One might compare the list of similarly paradoxical attributes of the First Man who emerges from the utterly unknowable, pre–existent Father and provides the sole mechanism for transcendent apprehension at Tri. Tract. 61.13–16: πλαγὸς | ἡμῖναι | δι σε ἡμοῖος | ἡμῖν | “the unutterable logos, the non–intelligizing intellect.” Similarly, among the antithetical self–predications of Thund. (NHC VI,2) 14.23–27: ἐνθαρσοῦν | ἡμοῖοι | ἑρατογοιον | ἡμοῖοι | ἀγὼ νετε ἠμοῖοι | ἑροτορ “For there is some Intelligible (noêton), which you must intelligize by means of the flower of intellect. For if you incline your intellect also to that and intelligize it as if intelligizing some thing, you will not intelligize it. For it is the everywhere–appearing power of strength...”.

103 This passage in turn may be connected with Or. Chald. fr. 1.1–4 des Places: ἔστιν γὰρ τι νοστὸν, ὃ χρῆ σε νοεῖν νόοιν ἀνέθε/ ἢν γὰρ ἐπεγελύνη σῶν νοεῖν κάκειν νοῆσαι/ ὧδε τί νοεῖν, οὗ κέννει νοῆσαι; ἐστὶ γὰρ ἀλήθεια/ ἀμφιφωσίς δύναμις/ “For there is some Intelligible (noêton), which you must intelligize by means of the flower of intellect. For if you incline your intellect also to that and intelligize it as if intelligizing some thing, you will not intelligize it. For it is the everywhere–appearing power of strength...”.

23
"You who know me, un-know me, and those who have not known me, may they know me; for I am knowing and un-knowing." These types of paradoxical constructions suggestive of the transcendence of opposition are prevalent throughout Gnostic literature—occasionally also in non-Gnostic Christians such as Tertullian—and extend well beyond the terminology of "un-knowing"; we may note the description of the aeon Truth in the Marcosian system (Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I.8.4.15–16 = Hipp. Ref. VI.44.2–3 = Epiph. Pan. II.13.7–8), as παντὸς ἀρρήτου ῥήσιν, καὶ τῆς σιωπομένης Σιγῆς στόμα, "the utterance of everything unutterable, the mouth of taciturn Silence." Similarly, the eponymous savior of the Trim. Prot. (NHC XIII,1) is said to be simultaneously hidden and revealed within humans (35.8–10); and the aspirant of the Gos. Eg. (NHC III,2) 66.25–26 addresses the indwelling deity εἰσινα γεικτα παντα μὲν τὰς σιωπὴν Σιγῆς στόμα, "the utterance of everything unutterable, the mouth of taciturn Silence." We may also compare a passage from a soteriological context of the Tri. Tract. (NHC I,5) 123.27–124.25 wherein the redemption is described as οὐμετερῶς αὐξην ἵνα πετάσκειτ: τις ἐτε μὴ κρεῖα ΝΗΜΗ ἴμμεν οὐδὲ βατοὶ οὐδὲ ἐπεροῦσι ὡς ἐπεροῦσι ἐνερχεῖ στρομποῦ, "an entrance into what is silent, where there is no need for voice nor for knowing nor for intelligizing nor for illumination, but (where) all things are light, while they do not need to be illuminated.” With respect to ἀκαταλήπτω καταλήψι, although we do not find a precise equivalent, we may note similar contructions; thus Ptolemy (Tetr. I.2.17.2) derisively uses the phrase τὴς τῶν ἀκαταλήπτων κατάληψις of the claim to know more about the future than can actually be predicted; or, more positively, at Clem. Alex. Strom. VI.8.70.2.3–3: ὁ γνωστικὸς δὲ ἐκεῖνος, περὶ οὗ λέγω, τὰ δοκοῦντα ἀκαταλήπτα εἶναι τοῖς ἄλλοις αὐτὸς καταλαμβάνει / “That Gnostic of whom I speak himself apprehends what appears to others to be inapprehensible.”

2.11: ὑπερούσιος. The first theological use of this term occurs in Alexander of Aphrodisias, In Arist. Metaph. Comm. 600.26: ἐ ἀπλή ὑπερούσιος οὐσία καὶ ἀκινήτως κινοῦσα, ὁ πολυτιμητὸς θεός; also 634.23; for the general sense only, Numenius fr. 2.16 des Places [= Eusebius, Prep. Ev. XI.22.1.10–2.1]: the Good is ἐποχούμενον ἐπὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Cf. Plotinus’ unique (and apparently Gnosticizing) neologism ὑπερούσιος (a hapax) at VI.8[39].14.42; Porphyry, Sent. 10.4: ἄνευ νοῆτως τε καὶ ὑπερούσιος [?]. According to the TLG, forms of ὑπερούσιος occur exactly four times prior to the 4th ccent. CE, one of which is this reference in the ACPP. Of the remaining three occurrances, two

104 Tertullian, Apol. VII.3: Ὅτι καὶ κατάληψις, deum aestimari facit, dum aestimari non capit. Ita eum vis magnitudinis et notum hominibus obicit et ignotum. / “This is what makes an estimation of God possible, while God is not able to be estimated; so in the magnitude of his power he is revealed to humans as both known and unknown.”
are in Alexander of Aphrodisias In Arist. metaph. comm., at 600.26 and 634.23 respectively, but the fourth— an adverbial form, ὑπερουσίως— occurs in Porphyry, Sent. 10.4, the oft-repeated passage in which he insists that all things are in all things in a manner appropriate to each ontological stratum; at the transcendent level, he says, all things abide ἀνεννόητως τε καὶ ὑπερουσίως. For Hadot, this single instance in Porphyry provided further support for a Porphyrian attribution; yet here again, as with ἀνεπινόητος, we have another indirect hint, ironically through Porphyry himself, of the original Gnostic context of this term. For the first negative-theological use of the other term, ἀνεννόητος—which Porphyry clearly associates with ὑπερούσιος in Sent. 10—occurs in Irenaeus’ description of the protology taught by an unnamed Valentinian heresiarch, quoted apparently verbatim at Adv. Haer. I.5.2.15–18: Ἐστι τις πρὸ πάντων προαρχῆς, προανεννόητος, ἄῤῥητος τε καὶ ἀνονόματος, ἢν ἐγώ μονότητα ἀριθμῶ. Prior to this Valentinian use of the term ανεννόητος, each of the 14 instances reported by the TLG connotes a negative valence, that of simple ignorance. Most interestingly, this is even the case with the two occurrences of ανεννόητος in Alcinous; thus Didask. 25.5.6 (referring to irrational souls) and 35.1.8 (referring to τὸ μὴ δύν, the province of the sophist as opposed to the philosopher). This suggests that the robust notion of the hypernoetic aspect of the first principle emerged had not yet emerged in the academic milieu of the pre-Plotinian (Middle) Platonism; for Alcinous, Didask. 10.4.1, God is ἄῤῥητος but nevertheless still νόμῳ ληπτός. Thus the use of the term ανεννόητος with a positive valence—i.e., as an attribute of the Divine—appears to be a Gnostic innovation, which the Valentinian term προανεννόητος, “pre-inconceivable,” is already trying to surpass, much as Basilides elevated his “not even ineffable” deity beyond the prior Gnostic negative-theological attribute of ἄῤῥητος. That this term—which occurs here augmented with the prefix pro-in a type of construction which, as Hadot notes, is also to be found in Porphyry, e.g., προαιώνιος at Hist. Phil. 18.8—is originally Gnostic, is suggested by Irenaeus’ exasperated complaint later in the passage (Adv. Haer. I.5.2.33–47) that the unnamed Valentinian heresiarch has himself coined these unusual appellations. The suggestion, therefore, is that despite its use by Porphyry and its apparent absence from the extant Gnostic evidence, ὑπερούσσιος as well derives from a Gnostic context. As we will see, this is more clearly the case with the self-evidently related and indeed synonymous term ἀνούσιος at ACPP 12.5.

2.13–14: δι' αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐν καὶ μονᾶς [cf. also 4.9–10: διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνάδος καὶ μονώσεως]. A specific reference to the Monad and the One in the same breath occurs already in Aristotle’s critique of the Pythagoreans in Metaph. 1081b2–4: εἶπερ καὶ πρώτη τις ἔστι μονᾶς καὶ ἐν πρῶτον, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ δυάδας, εἶπερ καὶ δυάς πρώτη ἔστιν. The notion of a distinction between
the One and the Monad is suggested by a passage preserved in Photius (Anon. Phot. 237.18–21 Thesleff) to the effect that some Pythagoreans differentiated between the Monad and the One as the source of intelligibles and numbers respectively. This type of doctrine would seem to be at home in the Neopythagorean milieu of the first century CE, in which the Pythagorean / early Academic conception of a primordial opposition of Monad and Indefinite Dyad was gradually supplanted by a transcendent principle or series of principles overarching the first pair of opposites (thus, for example, Eudorus of Alexandria in Simplicius, In Arist. Phys. Comm. IX p. 181.7–182.6 Diels). Indeed the notion of both a One and a Monad which emerge from a transcendent God, is as Bechtle (1999: 41 n. 24) notes, is uncharacteristic of Neoplatonism and is more appropriately situated in pre–Plotinian Neopythagorean thought. Bechtle points to Philo as a possible source for such language, and we may note parallels at Quaest. Gen. IV frag. 110b.; Leg. Alleg. II.3.5; De Vit. Cont. 2.9; De Praem. 40.2; Moderatus fr. 2.2 Mullach [= Stob. I.p.9.2]; and finally Clem. Alex. Paed. I.8.71.1.8–2.1: ἐὰν δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς μονάδα. Significantly, however, the emergence of both the One and the Monad from the supreme principle becomes formalized in Valentinianism (whose debt to Neopythagoreanism is abundantly evident), and we find the specific phrase τὸ ἑν καὶ μονάς (and its simple permutations) in heresiological citations of Valentinian literature; moreover, in certain Valentinian systems the One and Mond themselves emerge from the prior principles or pre–substantial, paronymic attributes “Monotês” and “Henotês” that inhere within the supreme transcendent principle, just as the commentator attributes both a ἑνὸς and a μονώσις to the transcendent First One at ACPP 4.9–10. This is most evident in Irenaeus’ (previously discussed) report of the doctrine of an unnamed but apparently much–respected Valentinian heresiarch at Adv. Haer. 1.5.2.15–32: “Εστι τις πρὸ πάντων προαρχή, προανευνόητος, ἁρύτητος τε καὶ ἀνονόμαστος, ἡν ἐγὼ μονότητα ἀρίθμῳ. Ταύτῃ τῇ μονότητι συνυπάρχει δύναμις, ἥν καὶ αὐτὴν ὄνομαζε ἑνότητα. Αὐτῇ ἐνότης, ἢ τε μονότης, τὸ ἑν οὐσία, προῆκαντο, µὴ προέμεναι, ἀρχὴν ἐπὶ πάντων νοητῶν, ἀγέννητον τε καὶ ἀόρατον, ἦν ἀρχὴν ὁ λόγος μονάδα καλεῖ. Ταύτῃ τῇ μονάδι συνυπάρχει δύναμις ὀμοιόσιος αὐτής, ἥν καὶ αὐτὴν ὄνομαζε τὸ ἑν. Αὐτὰ τὰ δυναμεῖς, ἢ τε μονότης καὶ ἑνότης, μονάς τε καὶ τὸ ἑν, προῆκαντο τὰς λοιπὰς προβολὰς... / “There is some Proarchê, prior to all things, pre–inconceivable, ineffable, and unnameable, which I count as Monotês (Singularity). There coexists with this Monotês a power which I call Henotês. Henotês itself and Monotês being one, they sent forth— without (themselves) proceeding forth—the intelligible origin of all things, unbegotten and invisible, an origin which discourse calls Monad. There coexists with this Monad a power consubstantial with it, which itself I denominate the One. These powers— i.e., both Monotês and Henotês, the Monad and the One— sent forth the remaining emanations.” Irenaeus attributes an identical doctrine to Marcus, who apparently
claimed to have received it in a revelation from Silence (*Adv. Haer.* I.8.11.2–5): τῇ μονότητι συνυπάρχει ἑνότητι, ἐξ δόο προβολαί, καθ' ἀ προείρηται μονάς τε καὶ τὸ ἐν ἐπὶ δύο οὐσαί τέσσαρα ἐγένοντο· δίς γάρ δύο, τέσσαρες. Cf. Hipp. *Ref.* VI.38.2–3, 49.1–2. These two instances in Valentinian literature are (to my knowledge) the closest extant parallels to ACPP 2.13–14 and 4.9–10, in which the indefinite qualities of *henas* and *monôsis* are applied to the first principle while a definite *hen* and a *monad* emerge from it. However, we may note that the terms ἑνάς and *monôsis* of ACPP 2.13–14 are not precisely identical to the Valentinian *henotês* and *monotês*, although the sense is similar. With respect to the term ἑνάς, its use is peculiar here because it appears to be a quality, not a projection, of the supreme One itself, parallel to the latter’s *monôsis* (could the commentator be consciously trying to avoid the more grammatically–appropriate term *henotês*?). Moreover, its application to the first principle is—as Bechtle (1999: 48 n. 44) points out—not typical of its use among later Neoplatonists (although Proclus does on occasion apply it to the One). Following the history of the term provided by Saffrey–Westerink *Proclus: Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 3, pp. ix–lxxvii., Bechtle notes its use in Alex. Aphr. In *Arist. metaph. comm.* 111.22, 124.8, 13–14, 19, 22; 125.50; Theon of Smyrna, *Exp. rer. math.* 21.14, Origen *De Princ.* I.1.6, and Plot. VI.6[34]9.33, to which I would add *C.H.* XII.15.3; (the Henads beget number); *C.H.* XIII.12.11–13 (Life and Light are united when the number of the Henad is born of spirit). Apparently the term “henads” first occurs in Plato, *Phil.* 15a6, where it is synonymous with both “monads” and the Forms, and this sense—that of a simple unity within a multiplicity, like a Form—underlies its use by Theon, Alexander, and Plotinus. Bechtle thinks its use in the ACPP is closer to that of Origen, who applies it to God, than the other three authors. Saffrey and Westerink note (p. xiv) the rarity of the term in authors between Plato and Proclus. Yet we have some evidence that the term ἑνάς itself was also used by Valentinians along with henotês and monotês. Epiphanius provides a lengthy except of a Valentinian tractate describing a particularly complex protology in which we find a profusion of names applied to the aeons in the Pleroma; among these we find ἑνώσις (*Pan.* I.392.26, 393.2), ἑνότης (I.392.17, 393.2), μόνος (I.393.6), and finally ἑνάς (I.393.13–14).105

2.14–15: ἐκπίπτειν εἰς κένωμα. 1st theological use of κένωμα in 2nd cent. *Shep. Herm.* 43.33 (already apparently known to Irenaeus); Sophia left in “void” in Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I.1.1.7.42: Ποτὲ μέν γὰρ ἔκλαιε καὶ ἐλυπεῖτο, ώς λέγουσι, διὰ τὸ καταλελείφθαι μόνην ἐν τῷ σκότει καὶ τῷ κενώματι... / “At some point, as they say, she cried and lamented for her being left alone and in the

105 With respect to μόνωσις, Bechtle points out the parallels in Philo *De spec. leg.* 2.176; *De Abr.* 87; *Quis rer. div. heres.* 183; *De op. mund.* 151.
darkness and in the void....”; also Clem. Alex. *Ex. ex. Theod.* II.31.3.4–4.2: ‘Ο δὲ βουληθεὶς Αἰών τὸ ὑπὲρ τὴν Γνώσιν λαβεὶν, ἐν ἀγνωσίᾳ καὶ ἀμορφίᾳ ἐγένετο. Ὅθεν καὶ κένωμα Γνώσεως εἰργάσατο, ὅπερ ἐστὶ σκιὰ τοῦ Ὀνόματος. / “The Aeon that wished to grasp that which is above Knowledge (gnôsis) came to be in ignorance and shapelessness, whence also a void of knowledge became operative, that which is the shadow of the Name.”

2.15–16: τολµάω. In the Commentary we find this term in the context of a negative injunction not “to dare” or to “have the audacity” to attach anything conceptual to the supreme One. Despite the reasonably well–attested pedigree of the term τόλµα to qualify the Indefinite Dyad in pre–Plotinian Platonic–Pythagorean tradition, its particular use in the Commentary— in the context of an inappropriate approach to the transcendent— is certainly closer to its use in Gnostic myth, where τόλµα is associated with divine error and specifically the overly ambitious and inevitably unsuccessful attempts of the deities of the second or third divine stratum to either know the Unknowable or to replicate the generative activity of the superior principles. The Valentinians attributed Sophia’s failed attempt to return to the Father to tolma, while conversely, in the *Apocryphon of John* (BG 45.16), Sophia does not “dare” (tolman) return to the Pleroma after her repentance.

4.9: πλήρωµα (ἐν αὐτῶς αὐτοῦ). The context of this phrase in the Commentary is a passage emphasizing that the supreme One transcends all things while still possessing, in some paradoxical manner, certain transcendental characteristics of unity— namely, its henad (henas) and solitariness (monôsis); thus it comprises “its own pleroma.” The term πλήρωµα with the sense of divine plenity is biblical, with the *locus classicus* for at Colossians 2:9— ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωµα τῆς θεότητος σωµατικῶς— but as a technical term to describe the transcendentalia it becomes specific to

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107 Evident in Zost. (NHC VIII,1) 128.11: ἀγατε ὡσε ὦγνηνως ἢς ὦγοντος ἢς ὦγοναμ ἀγα | ονάντως ἢς ἐκατε ἢς ἀγελασώλοι / “And it was because of a knowledge (gnôsis) of greatness and an audacity and a power that they came into being and adorned themselves.”

108 Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 1.1.2.17–20: δ ῆνηρέατο µὲν ἐν τοῖς περὶ τοῦ Νοῦν καὶ τὴν Ἀλήθειαν, ἀπεκάθεν δὲ εἰς τούτον τὸν παρατραπέντα, πρόφασιν µὲν ἀγάπης, τόλµης δὲ, διὰ τὸ µὴ κεκοινωνήσατο τῷ Πατρὶ τῷ τελείῳ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Νοῦς. / “[Passion] began in those around Nous and Alètheia, but focused upon the one who went astray; it was under the pretext of love, but [in fact] from audacity (τόλµης), because she did not receive communion with the perfect Father, [not] even in the manner of Nous.” Thomassen suggests a comparison with the activity of the Logos at *Trip. Tract.* (NHC 1.5) 76.16–23: λαγὰ ἡκεὶ ἠµιπαττάτη ἤλλαξεν ἄγενα ἠµιποιωσε τῆν πτωτ ἀεὶ ἡµιπαττὰρ ἄµερα | ἐκ τοῦ ἡλί οὗτος ἠµιποιωσε | ἀπεκε καὶ ἠµιπαττὰ ἡµιπαττάτη ἠµιπαττὰρ / “And before [the Logos] begot anything else for the glory of the will in the union of the Totalities, he acted presumptuously (lit. “in a great thought” = *τόλµα?*), out of an overflowing love; he went forth towards that which surrounds the perfect glory.”

109 Other examples include *Treat. Seth* (NHC VII,2) 68.21–69.19; *Teach. Silv.* (NHC VII,4) 102.1–10.
Gnosticism. In accounts of Valentinian doctrine, the Pleroma denotes both the realm of divine perfection in which both the hypertranscendent deity and the subsequent aeons abide but from which the fallen Sophia is excluded until her repentance. The term occurs in texts from a wide variety of Gnostic systems, but does not occur in Plotinus (presumably precisely because of its Gnostic aura), occurs only once in Porphyry (in a fragment of his commentary on the Timaeus), and occurs more than 75 times in Origen, usually in citations of biblical passages.

10.25: τὸ προούσιον. Assuming that the apparent hapax προ{σ}έννοια of 2.20 should be emended to the Gnostic term προ<τ>έννοια that is found in NHC XIII,1, the peculiar term τὸ προούσιον may be the only instance of a unique coinage of the commentator, as there is no pre-Plotinian attestation of any form of προούσιος. Although it does not occur in Porphyry, it occurs subsequently in both pagan Neoplatonists and Christian authors known to have been familiar with Porphyry’s works: e.g., Iamblichus De Myst. VIII.2.11, X.5.22; Didymus the Blind, De Trin. II.4.8.2; Synesius Hymn 1.222; Proclus In Plat. Rem. Comm. I.266.28; Theol. Plat. II.47.17 and III.45.5. This might appear to lend support to the Porphyrian hypothesis despite its absence from Porphyry’s extant corpus. Nevertheless this term too, like the virtually synonymous ὑπερούσιος of 2.11 and ἀνούσιον of 12.5, appears to derive from a Gnostic context. Since we cannot appeal to any instances of this precise term demonstrably prior to the ACPP itself—i.e., precisely what is under question here—we may turn to the closest analogue produced by adding the prefix pro- to the masculine and neuter participles of einai cognate with ousia, whence we arrive at the the masculine προών or the neuter προόν, meaning something like “preceding” (as in transcending) or even “pre-exisitng.” The first thing to note is that even these seemingly more obvious constructions are surprisingly rare in the Greek corpus (a rapid TLG search for “προούν” / “προόν” / “προώντ” returns only 32 hits prior to Iamblichus and less than 126 hits in toto), but appears most frequently in Gnostic, Hermetic, and Christian authors, where it is characteristic of descriptions of the transcendentalia. Variants of this term occur only nine times

110 Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I.1.1.44, 4.26, 5.59, 8.36, etc.; Hipp. Ref. VI.34.2.4, 7.7; 38.4, etc.
111 E.g., inter alia, Pr. Paul (NHC I,1) A8.24; Gos. Truth (I,3) 16.35; 34.30, 36; 35.8, 29, 35; 36.10; 41.1, 14, 15; 43.15; Treat. Res. (NHC 1.4) 44.33; 46.36; 49.4; Tri. Tract. (NHC 1.5) 59.36; 68.30; 74.27; 75.14; 77.5; 78.4, 20, 26, 31; 80.27; 35; 81.30; 85.32; 86.21; 90.15; 93.26; 94.12; 95.5; 96.34; 97.21; 122.27; 123.22; 124.25, 29; 125.31; 136.21; Apoc. Jn. (NHC II.1) 9.20; 14.3, 6; 20.21; 22.7; 25.5, 14; 30.16; (III.1) 14.4; 21.8; 25.14; 27.20; 28.14, 15; 30.20; 32.12, 21; Gos. Eg. (NHC III.2) 50.8, 16, 23; 52.5.18; 53.14; 54.3, 4; 55. 10; 56.2; 62.10; 63.1, 4; 68.17; 69.3; (IV.2) 52.24; 59.15, 28; 62.14; 63.29; 64.12; 65.7, 22, 23; 73.23; 74.13; 16; Dial. Sav. (NHC III.5) 139.14, 16; 2 Apoc. Jas. (NHC V.4) 46.8; 63.9; Auth. Teach. (NHC VI.3) 22.19; Treat. Seth (NHC VII.2) 50.33; Apoc. Pet. (NHC VII.3) 71.2; Norea (NHC IX.2) 28.22, 23, 25; Interp. Know. (NHC XI.1) 19.22; Val. Exp. (NHC XI.2) 27.21; 30.32; 37; 31.38; 33.31; 34.29; 35.20; 36.31; 37.15; 39.16, 18, 32; 40.30; Gos. Truth (NHC XII.2) 58.3, 24; Clem Alex. Ex. ex Theod. 21.3; 22.4; 23.2; 26.3; 31.1; 32.1, 2; 3; 33.3; 34.2; 35.1, 2; 36.2; 38.3; 41.2; 42.2; 43.2; 45.1.

prior to Irenaeus’ account of Valentinian doctrine, and the first theological use of the term occurs in a 2\textsuperscript{nd} century Christian source, at *Shepherd of Hermas* 59.5.1: τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιόν τὸ πρόον. In Valentinianism it essentially becomes a technical term; thus Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I.1.1.1–2: λεγοσι γάρ τινα εἶναι ἐν ἀοράτοις καὶ ἀκατονομάστοις ύψωμαι τέλειον αἰώνα πρὸοντα; also I.14.4.2, 10.25: 5; *Hipp. Ref.* V.7.9.4 (quoting a Naasene *Gospel According to the Egyptians*) and V.9.1.2 (quoting the Phrygian heretics who refer to the Father of the Universe as ἀμύγδαλον...τὸν πρόοντα).

Note also the reference to the supreme transcendent deity at *Eug.* (NHC III.3) 75.9: ἩΠΡΟΟΟΝΤΟC ΝΑΓΕΝΗΤΟC (with parallel at *Soph. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4) 99.9–10); also Adam’s salvation by means of the *ennoia* of pre–existing light at *Apoc.* Jn. (NHC III,1) 27.2: ἡΕΝΝΟΙΑ θΕ ΝΗΠΡΟΟΟΝΤΟC ΝΟΥΣΙΩΝ; also *Untitled Text of the Bruce Codex*, Ch. 21 p. 265 line 1 Schmidt–MacDermott: ΠΕΠΡΟΟΟΝΤΟC (the living Jesus). In Hermetic literature, this occurs in fr. 9.1.3 Festugière [=Stob. 1.11.2]: ἐνεργείας τρόπος τοῦ ἁγενύητου καὶ προόντος, τοῦ θεοῦ; see also fr. 21.1.1–2. That this term was employed already by Valentinus himself would seem to be confirmed by a fragment preserved by Clement (Strom. II.8.36.4.2 and 38.3.1 [= Valentinus fr. C Layton = fr. 1 Völker]) in which Valentinus refers to the primordial heavenly Adam as τοῦ προόντος Ἀνθρώπου. We may thus situate the commentator’s τὸ προούσιον within a broader constellation of technical terms evoking transcendence through the apposition of the prefix *pro–*, whose essentially Gnostic origins have been pointed out by M. Tardieu 1996, 78: “L’apparition de ce genre de termes dans le langage théologico–philosophique est donc à situer entre Philon et Irénée (probablement plus près du second que du premier), autrement dit dans les écrits hermétiques et chez les Gnostiques disciples de Valentin et de Basilide.”

12.5: ἀνούσιον. Although the general notion of a hypersubstantial first principle was widespread following Plato’s description of the Good ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (Rep. 509b9) and the One οὐδαμῶς...οὐσίας μετέχει (Parm. 141e9), the negative–theological use of the specific term ἀνούσιος is apparently a Gnostic innovation. According to the TLG, the term occurs only twice— and in neither case in terms of negative theology— prior to Irenaeus’ account (*Adv. Haer.* I.8.1.12) of the Valentinian Marcus’ qualification of the transcendent Father as ἀνεννόητος καὶ ἀνούσιος. It occurs again at I.8.1.40 and 16.21; cf. *Hippolytus, Ref.* VI.42.4.2, 8.2. We have already seen that the negative–theological application of ἀνεννόητος to the transcendent deity is likely a Gnostic innovation. Similarly, the classic Gnostic systems of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} cent. CE were responsible for the progressive transcendentalization of the first principle, and it is in these milieux where we first find evidence of a doctrine, perhaps inspired by the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, of a first principle that is “non–
exist” due to its transcendence of Being. According to Hippolytus (Ref. VII.21.1.5, 4.1; 23.6.2; 24.5.6), Basilides posited an οὐκ ὡν θεός as supreme principle, and paradoxically qualified this deity in the same breath as both οὐκ οὐσία and οὐκ ἄνουσιον (Hipp. Ref. VII.21.1.1). We also find the term ἀνυπόστατος describing the transcendent principle in Hippolytus’ account of the doctrine of the Peratae at Ref. V.17.8.2–5: ὡς γάρ, <φησι,> κατήνευκεν ἀνωθεν τοὺς πατρικοὺς χαρακτήρας, οὕτως πάλιν ἐπεθύβεθα ἀναφέρει τοὺς ἐξυπνισμένους καὶ γεγονότας [μυστήρας] πατρικοὺς χαρακτήρας, ὑποστάτους ἐκ τοῦ Ἀνυποστάτου ἐπεθύβεθα ἐκεί μεταφέρων. / “For just as (he says) [the Son] brought the paternal ‘characters’ down from above, so also he carries from here up again those who have been awakened from slumber and who have become paternal ‘characters,’ transporting the hypostatic ones from the Unhypostatic one from here to there.” Cf. Also (MIN) ἄνωγιος in Untitled Bruce (inter alia): ch. 21, 264.13, 265.9, 10, 19 Schmidt–MacDermot.

12.34: σοῦζυγον. [cf. 13.23 <ἀ>σοῦζυγος]. The term σοῦζυγος— as a noun, “syzygy,” “consort,” as an adjective, “coyoked”— occurs in a fragment of the Commentary that describes the two modalities of being, the infinital Being (to einai, elsewhere called huparxis), and the determinate being (to on) that emerges from it. In this passage, the second One— cognate with the One—Being of the 2nd hypothesis of Parmenides 142b–e — is said to be “coyoked” with the inferior, determinate type of being (to on). The terminology of σοῦζυγος / σοῦζυγία was certainly used in a metaphysical sense in pre–Plotinian Pythagoreans who applied to couplings among pairs of numbers comprising the tetraktys, and it occurs in Porphyry to describe the union of the nous with the noêton, but already well before Plotinus’ time had come to be closely associated especially with Valentinian thought, in which it designated the primordial couplings of masculine and feminine aeons within the Pleroma, but also with Gnostic thought more generally. Plotinus entirely avoids the use of σοῦζυγος /

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113 ACCP 12.29–35: “Ὡς τε διήττον τὸ εἶναι, τὸ μὲν προϋπάρχει τοῦ ὄντος, τὸ δὲ ἐπάγεται ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος τοῦ ἐπέκεινα ἐνὸς τοῦ εἶναι ὄντος τὸ ἀπόλυτον καὶ ὄσπερ ἱδέα τοῦ ὄντος, οὐ μετασχοῦ ἄλλο τι ἐν γέγονεν, ὡς σοῦζυγον τὸ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐπεφέρομεν εἶναι. / “Thus being is twofold: the one pre–exists being, the other is led forth out of being by the One transcending being, being absolute and, as it were, the ‘form’ of being, participating in which some other One has come to be, to which the Being that is brought forth by it is coyoked.”

115 Porphyry, Sent. 44.2–6
116 On Valentinian syzygies, Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I.1.1.22, 27, 32; 3.15, 16, 21; 4.3, 4, 7; 11.7; 12.28, 30, 46; 17.26, 29, 31; 18.26, 33; 19.13, 15, 17, 18, 40; L5.3a.28. 3.31; Val. Exp. (NHC XI,2) 33.14; 34.26, 31, 38; 36.23, 26, 31, 38; 39.13, 18, 29; Clem. Alex. Ex. ex Theod. 6.4.
117 The terminology of συζύγος / συζύγια also occurs throughout other varieties of Gnostic literature, although the notion may be less formalized than we find it in Valentinianism. For example, a slightly different doctrine of syzygies is attributed to Simon Magus by Hippolytus, Ref. VI.12.2.1; 13.1.2; 18.3.4; etc., but see also (inter alia) Apoc. Jn. (NHC III,1) 14.18, 21; 15.8; 21.1; 30.11; (BG) 37.4, 16; 45.1; 46.13; 47.4; 60.13; Dial. Sav. (NHC III,5) 125.15 Apoc. Jas. (NHC V,3) 35.11; Apoc. Adam (NHC V,5) 66.8; Eug. (NHC V,1) 10.6, 14; (NHC III,3) 77.6; 81.23; 82.8; 88.7; 89.9; Soph. Jes. Chr. (NHC III,4) 101.16; 102.14; 104.11; 106.17; 113.14; 114.15; (BG) 102.17; 116.2.
συζυγία, and does so perhaps because of the evident Gnostic association. Interestingly, if we accept Hadot’s emendation <ἀ>σύζυγος at 13.23, according to the TLG this term is used only eight times in the full corpus, with two of these instances referring to the same passage of Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. I.1.3.15 = Epiphanius, Pan. I.404.12) describing a subset of Valentinians who consider the supreme Father to be “un–coyoked” (ἀσύζυγος) and to beget subsequent divine principles without requiring a female consort.

14.10–14: Εν μὲν οὖν ἔστιν καὶ ἄπλοῦν κατὰ τὴν πρώτην καὶ ἀυτὸ τοῦτό ἀυτοῦ τὸ ἀνεννοητὸν ὁμάν καὶ ἄρρητον οὖσαν καὶ ἀνεννοητὸν. οὐχ ἐν δὲ οὐδὲ ἄπλοῦν κατὰ τὴν ὑπάρξειν καὶ ζωὴν ἔστιν ὑμῖν... / “Thus it is one and simple according to the first [Form] and to ‘this itself’—[i.e.,] the Form of itself—‘power,’ or whatever one should call it for the sake of indicating what is ineffable and unintelligible, but not one nor simple according to Existence and Life and Thinking.” The suggestion that the transcendent first principle has a “form” (idea) of itself is remarkable in itself (and is not quite the same as the statement at 12.32–33 that it is the form of Being). This passage has been compared to Numenius’ conception of the Second (demiurgic) God having generated its own idea; thus Numenius, fr. 16.10–12 des Places [=Euseb. Praep. Ev. XI.22.4.3–5.1]: Ὁ γὰρ δεύτερος διττὸς ζών αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν ζύγον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δημιουργός ζών. Perhaps a closer parallel may be found in Eugnostos, in which it is the first (transcendent) principle that is said to have a “form (idea) of itself”; compare Eug. (NHC III,3) 72.6–13 [and parallels: Eug. NHC V,1 2.22–27 and Soph. Jes. Chr. III,4 94.24–95.6; BG (8502) 84.17–85.9]: οὐ ἔχειν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν ἰδέαν δημιουργός ἰδέαν τε ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο ἐκεῖνο. / “He has a Form (idea) of himself, not like the form we have received or seen, but a strange form that greatly surpasses all other things and transcends the Universals. It looks to every side and sees its own self by means of itself.”

14.14: ἄρρητον οὖσαν καὶ ἀνεννοητόν. The particular conjunction of ἀνεννοητός and ἄρρητος is unique to negative–theological descriptions of the transcendentalia in Gnostic, and especially Valentinian, literature and is a strong indication that the commentator emerged from a Gnostic milieu. This construction occurs neither in Plotinus nor Porphyry (though note the adverb ἀνεννοητός on its own at Sent 10.4) nor in any later Neoplatonic author. Remarkably, a TLG search for the two terms in close proximity returns only the following hits (other than ACPP 14.14 itself): Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I.5.2.17 [= 5.2a.17] (describing Valentinian doctrine): (προ)ἀνεννοητός,


119 From Hippolytus’ paraphrase of the pseudo–Simonian Apophesis Megalê, referring to the emergence of the second principle from the first: “This, he says, is one power divided above [and] below, generating itself, making itself grow, seeking itself, finding itself, being mother of itself, father of itself, sister of itself, consort (suzugos) of
itself, daughter of itself, son of itself, mother–father, being one: the root of the entireties”; the Father “was ‘pre–existing;’ for having manifested to himself from himself he became the second.” In Eugnostos the supreme principle, the Forefather, “looks to every side and sees his own self by means of himself,” and thus “sees himself within himself like a mirror, having appeared (ἐξογγυνωμένον ἐπόλα) in his likeness as Self–Father, that is, Self–Begetter, and as Confronter, since he confronted Unbegotten First Existent.” In Hippolytus’ account of the teachings of an unnamed (presumably Naasene) heresiarch, the supreme principle is an infinitesimal point which, “by means of a mental reflection (επινοία) of itself, [becomes] some incomprehensible magnitude.” And many other examples exist.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that much more research is required—the terms and phrases I have selected here represent only a portion of the potentially Gnostic features of the Commentary—and my analysis of the terms discussed thus far could eventually be made more thorough. But what, then, can we determine from this admittedly preliminary investigation?

[a] First, and most importantly, we can already conclude with relative certainty that the Commentary shares a significant technical vocabulary and conceptual lexicon with demonstrably pre–Plotinian Gnostic texts. The noetic triad is thus hardly a unique feature shared by both the Commentary and Gnostic literature, but rather appears to be part of a constellation of demonstrably pre–Plotinian Gnostic elements in the Commentary. In the absence of earlier formulations of the triad in Neoplatonic authors, the most economical hypothesis is that whoever the Commentary’s author might be, it is this text that is dependent upon prior traditions of Gnostic thought—including, perhaps, Platonizing

121 *NHC* III,3 72.6–13 and parallels: ἐκναγ | ζια κα νη εκεινωρ ημος | ουλας ριτοοττ ημιν ημος. In the Platonizing *Stelae Seth*, the first principle, a “Non–Being Existence,” is praised as one who knows himself, since “the one who belongs to thee is on every side”; here the second principle seems to be the self–perception in the reflective medium of the first principle’s own emanation. We may detect an intimation of the same schema in the *Trim. Prot.* where the 2nd principle, the hypostatized “first thought” (Protennoia) of the Father, declares that she is illuminated by the latter’s own luminosity, and describes the Father himself as an “eye” of that light: that is, as a self–perceptive principle.
122 *Eug.* (NHC III,3) 75.3–9: ἐκναγ ἐποβοι ἕμιν ἡμος ἕπαι ἀντήτη μονας νοεια. ἐκναγομουν ἐπολα ᾿ημ πεζειν ἡνετοπατωρ; see also parallels: *Eug.* NHC V,1 2.22–27 and *Soph. Jes.* Chr. III,4 94.24–95.6; *BG* (8502) 84.17–85.9.
123 Hippolytus, *Ref.* V.9.5.8–12: ἢ γάρ, μηδὲν οὖσα, φησι, καὶ ἐκ μηδενὸς συνεστῶσα [στιγμὴ ἀμεριστο ϊσασαι], γενησεται ἐαυτῆς ἐπινοίας μέγεθος τι ἀκατάληπτον.
Sethian thought—rather than *vice versa*, with the further implication that the noetic triad is a Gnostic innovation. This in turn casts doubt on the redaction hypothesis, and supports the notion that the Greek *Vorlagen* of the Coptic *Zostrianos* and *Allogenae* are most likely to be more or less similar to the homonymous tractates read in Plotinus’ circle. This conclusion is consistent with the pre–Plotinian origin of the Commentary proposed by Gerald Bechtle, Kevin Corrigan, John Turner, and Tuomas Rasimus.

[b] Second, the existence of such an extensive Gnostic substrate tacitly underlying the Commentary may provide us with some clue as to the intellectual and spiritual environment in which it was produced. I would suggest that the concentration of Gnostic terms in this text is too great to be coincidental, and indicates that the commentator him or herself had emerged from what broadly speaking one might call a Gnostic milieu.124 Now at first glance it might appear unlikely that an author whom we would call “Gnostic”—whatever that means—would write a very academic–seeming lemmatic commentary on a text of Plato. However, in light of the opinion of John Turner and Michel Tardieu that one or more pre–Plotinian on the *Parmenides* commentaries were already in circulation prior to Plotinus, we might consider the fact that—as John Whittaker demonstrated long ago—2nd-century Gnostic authors were already bringing the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides* into the service of negative theology. It is therefore not unlikely that some philosophically–minded Gnostic exegete might have taken it upon themselves to provide a commentary on a text that already had acquired something of an elevated status in Gnostic circles. What I believe is most important to note here—and what has often been neglected in the debate on the issue—is that the entire problematic of the Commentary itself is largely coextensive with a very central preoccupation of 2nd-century Gnostic thinkers: namely, that of the relationship between the utterly transcendent supreme deity and the second divine stratum, often understood as an intellectual principle (Nous, Barbelo, Epinoia, and so forth.) While the *Parmenides*, interpreted theologically, provided the Gnostics with a rich conceptual vocabulary to describe both first and second principles in relative isolation from each other, Plato himself had given no real account of their relationship. Most problematically, the *Parmenides* has no mention of the *derivation* of the second principle from the first: precisely the issue that most preoccupied innumerable Gnostic thinkers (as a cursory glance at Hippolytus’ *Refutation of All Heresies* will show), but suprisingly seems not to have been of great concern to the more strictly academic Middle Platonists and Pythagoreans; indeed, with the possible exception of Moderatus,

124 We have seen that the Gnostic elements in the Commentary include elements from several different schools; it would be unwise to try to identify the milieu too precisely. In any case, terminology and theologoumena moved freely between different Gnostic sects.
accounts explaining the articulation of the topology of the divine realm and the emergence of the 2nd principle by means of a richly-described and complex process, such as we find in many Gnostic systems, are virtually absent from the accounts of Pythagorean thought and academic Middle Platonists such as Numenius and Alcinous. Moreover, one might note that the Commentary’s tendency to reify and hypostatize the attributes of the First principle is also found among the Gnostics. We should keep in mind that the Gnostics were the first to emphasize the hypertranscendence of the first principle, and to extend negative theology to its very limit (thus Basilides); they were consequently continuously developing ever more complex mechanisms of derivation, including elaborate and often triadic mediatory principles, to would account for subsequent strata while preserving the extreme transcendence of the first principle. That this tendency preceded Plotinus is certainly evident from his critique in II.9[33].1–2 of the Gnostic systems which posit a profusion of interhypostatic principles that emerge through a successive process of externalization (a doctrine, interestingly, not so very far from his own). It is therefore not inconceivable that a Gnostic author with a philosophical education might have produced the Commentary precisely in order to provide the Parmenides—the crucial Platonic source text for Gnostic notions of hypertranscendence—with a much-needed derivational schema that was missing in the original.

Finally, one might wonder whether such a philosophically-educated Gnostic milieu of the sort I propose—one in which both Platonic commentaries and Gnostic revelations were produced and consumed—might actually have existed. The answer is yes. Remarkably, we find historical evidence for precisely such a milieu in chapter 16 of Porphyry’s Life of Plotinus, among the latter’s Gnostic contemporaries; in other words, those very sectaries who circulated the tractates Zostrianos and Allogenes (among others) in which we find the closest parallels to the Commentary. According to Porphyry, these were “heretics (hairetikoi) who departed from the ancient philosophy, those around Adelphius and Aculinus, who had acquired many suggramata of Alexander the Libyan and Philocomus and Demostratus and Lydus, and who proffered apokalupseis of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nikotheus and Allogenes....”125 The fact that these sectaries possessed both apokalupseis, referring of course to Gnostic revelations, and suggramata, a term which specifically implies philosophical treatises, suggests that this particular Gnostic community—the disciples of the heresiarchs Adelphius

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125 Porphyry, Vita Plotini 16.1–15: Γεγόνασι δὲ κατ’ αὐτὸν τῶν Χριστιανῶν πολλοί μὲν καὶ ἄλλοι, αἱρετικοὶ δὲ ἐκ τῆς παλαιᾶς φιλοσοφίας ἀνιγμινοὶ οἱ περὶ Ἀδέλφιον καὶ Ακολίνον οἱ τὰ Αλεξάνδρου τοῦ Ἄργους καὶ Φιλοκώμου καὶ Δημοστράτου καὶ Λυδοῦ συγγράμματα πλεῖστα κεκτημένοι ἀποκαλύψεις τε προφερόντες Ζωστριανὸν καὶ Ζωστριανὸν καὶ Νικοθέου καὶ Ἀλλογενοῦς καὶ Μέοσου καὶ ἄλλων τοιούτων πολλοὺς ἔξηπάτων καὶ αὐτοὶ ἠπατημένοι, ὡς δὴ τοῦ Πλάτωνος εἰς τὸ βάθος τῆς νοητῆς οὐσίας οὐ πελάσαντος.
and Aculinus—might have been at the origin of a commentary on the Parmenides which employs in roughly equal measure the intellectual idiom of both Gnosticism and academic Platonism. Moreover, such a commentary would be situated—as Gerald Bechtle has suggested—\(^{126}\) at the very cusp of the putative transition from what has been called “Middle Platonism” to what has been called “Neoplatonism.” If I am correct, this conclusion is consistent with my broader hypothesis that much of the apparent ‘innovation’ in academic Platonism in and after the time of Plotinus owes far more to Gnostic creativity than has hitherto been suspected.

**Addendum on Hadot’s Porphyrian Hypothesis**

Until this point I have deferred the question of the precise identity of the author. Indeed, although there are certainly arguments to be made both for and against Porphyrian authorship, Hadot is at least correct that the vocabulary of the Commentary—which he considered to demonstrate a “vocabulaire porphyrien”—shows many features common also to Porphyry. Yet one might equally consider the Commentary to contain a “vocabulaire gnostique.” If this is the case, what—we may ask—are the implications for the question of authorship? One assumption apparently shared by both sides of the debate is that if Porphyry is the author, then [a] the Commentary is post–Plotinian, [b] it is not significantly influenced by Gnostic thought, and [c] the redaction hypothesis must therefore be correct and the Platonizing Sethian tractates dependent upon Porphyry. But even if one were to concede that Porphyry wrote the Commentary, there is no logical necessity to [a], [b], or [c]. Now I should say at this point I am leaning away from a Porphyrian attribution—besides the fact that the doctrines found in the Commentary are not sufficiently attested in securely Porphyrian material, there are too many conceptions that seem unlikely to be Porphyry—\(^{127}\) although I am not firmly committed to this position. But let us for the sake of argument suppose that Hadot is correct that Porphyry was in fact the author. I tend to agree with Corrigan and Bechtle that there is nothing in the Commentary which requires it to be post–Plotinian. Indeed if it is Porphyry, it is very unlikely to be post–Plotinian precisely because of the excessively Gnostic reverberations and the patently un–Plotinian emphasis on interhypostatic intermediaries which are so muted if not deliberately veiled in Plotinus himself. But if

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\(^{126}\) G. Bechtle, “The Question of Being.”

it is the work of Porphyry, why need it be post–Plotinian? At the risk of creating a kind of conspiracy theory, to which in any case I cannot say I am committed, since— I repeat— I still lean away from a Porphyrian hypothesis, I would like to adduce four data points that might be consistent with the hypothesis that [a] the young Porphyry was imbued with Gnostic thought prior to his encounter with Plotinus’ Roman circle, that [b] he wrote the Commentary under Gnostic influence, and that [c] later he came to reject these doctrines due to influence from Plotinus. [1] According to the testimony of Lydus, Porphyry held the rather Gnostic–seeming position that the God of the Jews was only the Demiurge, not the Good.128 [2] According to Socrates Scholasticus, Porphyry was a Christian in his youth, but for unspecified reasons he ran afoul of some other Christians in Caesarea, and was beaten by them, which precipitated his turning against the Christians later.129 We know from Porphyry himself the close connection between Christians and Gnostics (whether he is correct or not, Porphyry considered the latter to be a subset of the former).130 [3] We know from his own testimony that the young Porphyry came to Plotinus’ school with a putatively ‘heretical’ doctrine of extranoetic intelligibles and had to be re–educated and coerced into line with the school ‘orthodoxy’ by Amelius; eventually he was forced to make a public ‘recantation’ of his ‘heresy’ before the assembled school. Now significantly, the 3rd treatise of Plotinus’ Großschrift, V.5[32], whose anti–Gnostic polemic is evident, Porphyry entitled On the Intellect and That the Intelligibles are not outside the Intellect and On the Good (Περὶ νοῦ καὶ ὅτι οὐκ ἔξω τοῦ νοῦ τά νοητά καὶ περὶ τάγαθοῦ), which suggests that the young Porphyry’s own heretical doctrine had coincided in some way with that of the Gnostics. Finally, an argument ex silentio: [4] no name is attached to the Commentary. Could Porphyry have written it under Gnostic influence prior to his arrival at Plotinus’ school, but then, once Plotinus obliged him to turn against his former Gnosticizing tendencies, might he have become embarrassed to have written such an incriminatory document and therefore, so to speak, erased his name from it?

Here I must remain extremely skeptical of my own suggestion.

128 Thus Lydus, De mens. IV.53.31–35: ὁ μὲν τοῖς Πορφύριοις ἐν τῷ ὑπομνήματι τῶν λογίων τὸν δίς ἐπέκεινα τουτέστι τὸν τῶν ἄλλων δημιουργόν τὸν πάρα ιουδαίῳς τιμώμενον εἶναι ἄξιοι, ὅν ὁ Χαλδαῖος δεύτερον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα, τοῦτ ἐστὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, θεολογεῖ / “Porphyry, however, in the Commentary on the Oracles, considers the ‘Twice Transcendent’— that is, the Demiurge of the universe— to be that which is revered by the Jews, which the Chaldaean theologize as the second, after the ‘Once Transcendent,’ that is, the Good.”
130 Porphyry, Vita Plotini 16.Τ: τῶν Χριστιανῶν πολλοὶ μὲν καὶ ἄλλοι, σαρκετικοὶ δέ... / “... among the Christians, there were on the one hand the multitudes, and on the other hand, heretics...”