sharp and easier to break down than it would be for some more modern thought; and it is therefore well to bear it in mind.

But there is another idea, originating apparently with Aristotle, which shows even more clearly how little regard Greek philosophy had for the integrity of the separate individual. This is the theory of the Νοῦς ποιητικός or χωριστός of *De Anima* III. 5, which appears to involve the conception of the highest and most important part of the soul as a separable, impersonal entity, the same for all men, persisting unchanged above the flux of individual existence. The conception recurs in Plutarch *De Genio Socratis* 591 E, though there the νοῦς χωριστός, according to the temper of the time, is translated into a δαίμων ἐκτὸς ὤν and, as there appears to be one of these δαίμονες attached to every man, the impersonality of the concept is somewhat reduced. But the essential feature remains, the detaching of the highest part of the soul from the limited individual personality and the making it into something independent and external. It is clear that a pantheism of exactly the Plotinian type could very easily develop from this conception, for in Plotinus it is pre-eminently the highest part of man, the νοῦς in him, that is one with the supreme reality; and the descent towards body is marked by an ever greater separateness, a greater degree of atomic individuality. In fact the conception of νοῦς χωριστός suits Plotinus' system very much better than it does that of the emphatically non-pantheist and individualist Aristotle.

It seems, then, that there were elements even within the rationalist tradition of something that could easily develop into the Plotinian pantheism. And the spiritual circumstances of the times were peculiarly favourable to its development. It was a period in which the sense of individual isolation in a vast and terrifying universe was perhaps more intensely felt than even immediately after the breakdown of the city-state into the Hellenistic world. For in the Roman Empire, under Babylonian influence, the view of the ruling power of this universe as a cruel, inaccessible Fate, embodied in the stars, worship of which was useless, had come to its full development. The individual exposed to the crushing power of this Fate, and the citizen also of an earthly state which seemed almost as vast, cruel and indifferent as the universe, felt to the full the agony of his isolation and limitation. And all the religions and philosophies of the period try to obtain release for man from this isolation and helplessness.[1] This release may take one of two forms. It may either involve the ascent of the soul, through gnosis or the performance of ritual acts, to a world outside and beyond the Fate-ruled universe, or the recognition that the personality was in fact one with the innermost principle of the universe, that the terrifying isolation did not really exist. In some of the *Hermetic* writings, and above all in Plotinus, the two are combined. Plotinus' God with whom he seeks union is both immanent and transcendent. And both these methods of release are deeply rooted in the traditions of Hellenic philosophy.

[1] Cp. Nock, *Conversion*, ch. 7, pp. 99 sqq. p. 225. Halliday, *Pagan Background of Early Christianity*,

II

"EMANATION" IN PLOTINUS.

PERHAPS the most difficult concept in the whole system of Plotinus is that of "emanation", or the manner in which the lower hypostases, Νοῦς and Ψυχή, proceed from the One. The difficulty is not so much to discover what Plotinus meant by "emanation".[1] His account of the doctrine in all parts of the *Enneads* is fairly clear and on the whole consistent. The lower hypostases are produced by a spontaneous and necessary efflux of life or power from the One, which leaves their source in itself undiminished. This efflux is always described metaphorically. The metaphors which Plotinus uses almost invariably are those of the radiation of light from the luminous source [2] or of development and growth from a seed.[3] The doctrine is one of the greatest importance to him, and in some passages [4] he insists on it with such emphasis as almost to invert the scale of values of his system. The difficulty is to see what the precise philosophical meaning of this conception is, or rather, as it is fairly clear that it has not got any precise philosophical meaning, to explain how a great and subtle thinker like Plotinus came, at a most critical point in his system, to conceal a confusion of thought under a cloud of metaphors. Many interpreters, from Zeller onwards, have been content to note the confusion and leave it at that. There is much reason in this attitude. We must be careful not to go with Dean Inge to the opposite extreme and practically deny that the problem exists at all. But it is not altogether satisfactory. Plotinus is generally an acute critic of his own metaphors.[5] Further, in one passage [6] he applies his characteristic method of criticism, by varying the metaphor to make it fit more closely to the idea in his mind, to this very doctrine of emanation. The passage runs: "If you take a small luminous mass as centre and surround it with a larger transparent sphere, so that the light within shows over the whole of that which surrounds it . . . shall we not say that the inner (luminous) mass is not affected in any way but remains in itself and reaches over the whole of the outer

[1] I use this word not as representing any single term in the philosophical vocabulary of the *Enneads* but as the most convenient English expression for the doctrine referred to; though perhaps Bréhier's "procession" begs fewer questions.

[2] I., 7, 1; V., 1, 2; V., 1, 7; 2, 1; 3, 10; 3, 12; 6, 4; VI., 8, 18; 9, 9.

[3] III., 3, 7; III., 8, 9; V., 9, 6. [4] IV., 8, 5; II., 9, 3.

[5] *E.g.*, in the discussion of the partibility of the soul at the beginning of IV., 3; also the simile of the radii in VI., 5, 5.

[6] VI., 4, 7.

mass, and that the light which is seen in the little central body has encompassed the outer ? . . . Now if one takes away the material mass and keeps the power of the light you cannot surely say that the light is anywhere any longer, but that it is equally distributed over the whole outer sphere, you can no longer determine in your mind where it was situated before, nor can you say whence it came nor how . . . but can only puzzle and wonder, perceiving the light simultaneously present throughout the sphere." Now it is clear that this variation of the metaphor has in effect removed all idea of emanation. The distinguishing characteristic of emanation is radiation from a centre. If the centre, as here, is removed, we have no longer emanation but immanent omnipresence. The treatises in which this passage occurs (VI., 4 and 5) stand midway in Porphyry's chronological list and represent Plotinus's profoundest thought on the question of emanation.[1] Throughout them there seems to be a struggle between a doctrine of emanation and one of immanent omnipresence, which finally [2] issues in an outspoken pantheism. Plotinus makes attempts to reconcile the two conceptions by the idea that the One is present in the lower levels of being through its δυνάμεις,[3] but " where powers are their source must be ".[4] He seems to find it necessary to keep the conception of emanation to explain the origin of the lower hypostases, without finding it adequate to express the relation between those hypostases and the One, and especially its relation to the human soul. But the fact that he goes so far in criticising and revising both the idea of emanation and the metaphor in which it is commonly expressed makes it surprising that he did not realise its inadequacy and attempt to escape from it more completely.

The difficulty is increased when we turn to the earlier history of the doctrine of emanation.[5] This seems fairly certainly to derive from the Stoics, and in particular from the later Stoicism which goes under the name of Posidonius. This " Posidonian " system of emanation is concerned mainly with the adventures of the soul. Hence the modifications which the divine substance endures in the cosmologies of the older Stoicism [6] disappear : we find a genuine system of emanation of the πνεῦμα νοερὸν καὶ πυρώδες, the hegemonikon, from the sun,[7] combined with the distinctive theory of " undiminished giving "

[1] Bréhier, *Philosophie de Plotin*, pp. 116-117, thinks that they may be a definite criticism of the prevailing " solar theology ". This may well be true ; but Plotinus nevertheless was deeply affected by this theology, perhaps more deeply than he knew.

[2] VI., 5, 12 ; *cp.* VI., 5, 7.

[3] VI., 4, 3.

[4] VI., 4, 9.

[5] On this question see Witt, " Plotinus and Posidonius ", *C.Q.* 24 (1930), p. 198, and especially pp. 205-207.

[6] Von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* I., 102, etc.

[7] Plutarch, *De Facie in Orbe Lunae*, 943A, ff. (mixed with a good deal of confused demonology). *Galen De Plac.*, 643 f., Mueller, *Macrobius Sat.*, I., 23. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus' Elements of Theology*, pp. 315-318. Reinhardt, *Kosmos u. Sympathie*, pp. 353-365.

of light [1] which is the basis of Plotinus's light metaphor. The important thing to notice for the present purpose is that the theory is completely materialistic. What comes from the visible, material sun and returns to it again is a fiery breath. Given Stoic physics and Stoic materialism this idea of a material outflowing of the material hegemonikon is perfectly natural and in place. But it is by no means in place in the account of the relations of spiritual beings in a system like that of Plotinus which is very clear about the distinction between material and spiritual. Further, Plotinus is extremely conscious of materialism as the supreme defect of the Stoic system and criticises it vigorously.[2] Therefore the confusion of thought involved in the doctrine of emanation becomes even more remarkable when we realise that it involves a concealed admission of Stoic materialism into the system. How, then, are we to explain its presence and importance ? We can, of course, bring forward general considerations which make the problem appear less alarming. We can say that this confusion of thought was the price which had to be paid to maintain the organic unity of the cosmos, an indispensable postulate alike of magic, Greek religion, and Greek philosophy. We can maintain with Bréhier [3] that at this point in his philosophy Plotinus is describing the spiritual life rather than outlining a philosophically satisfactory cosmology. Both these contentions are true. Further, we can agree with Arnou [4] that every term in Plotinus's philosophical vocabulary brings a little piece of its parent system with it ; in other words that his tradition was too rich and complex for him to master completely. That this is true can be seen clearly in every part of Plotinus's philosophy. But it would be satisfactory if we could make an approach to a more detailed solution. This incursion of metaphor and confusion into the middle of a rational and well-worked out philosophy may be a penalty inevitably incurred by the nature of that philosophy. But it may be possible to discover some circumstances which make the situation more understandable. I think that there are two. The first is the doctrine of the incorporeality of light.[5] It is necessary to note the precise meaning of the different passages referred to rather carefully, as they seem to show a certain development or at least modification of the doctrine. In the later treatises, II., 1, and IV., 5, we have simply the statement that light is incorporeal though dependent on body, an ἐνέργεια of body. In IV., 5, 6-7, this statement appears as a criticism of the Aristotelian doctrine [6] according to which light is also incorporeal, but is simply " a phenomenon in the diaphanous ", the presence in it of the luminary source. Aristotle, while maintaining that light was not technically a σῶμα, regarded it

[1] Witt, *loc. cit.*

[2] II., 4, 1.

[3] *Philosophie de Plotin*, especially chap. iv., p. 35.

[4] *Désir de Dieu dans la Philosophie de Plotin*, pp. 62-63.

[5] II., 1, 7 ; IV., 5, 6 and 7 ; I., 6, 3. Zeller, III., 2, p. 553 (4th ed.).

[6] *De Anima*, 418*a*. Beare, *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition*, pp. 57 *seqq.*

as simply a physical phenomenon. Plotinus is concerned to give light a more august status. His own doctrine is doubtless dependent on the account of colour as a material ἀπορροή of particles given by Plato [1] and is deeply affected by the Posidonian theory of light.[2] What seems to be his own is the combination of the doctrines that light is incorporeal and that it is the outflow from the luminary, and also the very close parallelism that he finds to exist between light and life, the Act or ἐνέργεια of the soul.[3] It is important to notice this last point, as it at once raises the status of light in the universe enormously. It is no longer a mere physical incident but a manifestation of the spiritual principle of reality and activity in the luminary, its λόγος or εἶδος.

In I., 6, 3, Plotinus goes even further than he does explicitly in the passages above quoted and says that light is itself λόγος and εἶδος, the principle of form in the material world. Moreover, he goes on to make the surprising statement that fire " holds the position of Form in relation to the other elements ", though itself a body, and that it is near to the incorporeal inasmuch as it is the subtlest of bodies, that the others receive it into themselves but it does not receive the others.[4] This is all commonplace Stoic physics, but it is startling to find it in Plotinus, even in an early treatise. The whole passage is on the border-line between Neo-Platonism and Stoicism. It combines the doctrine that there is no clear frontier between material and spiritual because the principle of reality in even material things is spiritual, with the doctrine that there is no clear frontier because " spirit " is only the finest and subtlest form of matter.

The unguarded remark about the nature of fire is, I think, unparalleled in Plotinus. He is not usually in danger of lapsing into naïve confusions between matter and spirit of this sort. But I think it is clear from all the passages quoted above that Plotinus's assertion of the incorporeality of light is not, as might at first appear, a simple assertion that light is not a body but an incident of a body. It gives to light a very special status on the frontiers of spirit and matter. This conclusion is supported by another passage [5] in which the same type of thought takes a rather different form. The eleventh chapter of the first treatise on the Problems of the Soul begins with an exposition of the doctrine of " appropriate physical receptacles " of soul. This is a further development of the doctrine of " analogy ", of the exact correspondence of the visible and Noetic universes.[6] As applied here to the making of shrines and images [7] it implies that some physical bodies are naturally more receptive of soul than others. Plotinus then goes on to describe the connection between the world of

[1] *Timaeus*, 67D.
[2] Witt, *loc. cit.*
[3] IV., 5, 7, Julian Oration, IV., 133D-134A.
[4] *Cp.* Julian Oration, IV., 141C-D.
[5] IV., 3, 11.
[6] VI., 7, 6, 12.
[7] *Cp.* the more crudely magical but analogous idea of " making gods " in *Asclepius*, III., 23*b*-24*d*.

Νοῦς and the sense-world in a way that gives a position of peculiar importance to the sun. Νοῦς is described, as frequently in Plotinus, as " the sun of the other world "—ὁ ἐκεῖ ἥλιος. The soul is said to be an intermediary, οἷον ἑρμηνευτική, between this sun of the other world and our own sun. With this may be compared another passage,[1] where the " visible gods as far as the moon ", *i.e.* the sun and the stars, are said to be related to the νοητοὶ θεοί as its radiance to a star. Here we find not only light but the luminous bodies and especially the sun, brought into a specially close relation with the Noetic universe, standing on the frontiers of visible and invisible.

This peculiar position of the sun is of course well known in the later developments of Neo-Platonism, and is particularly characteristic of the theology of the Emperor Julian.[2] It is, however, interesting to discover traces of the " solar theology " in the works of a writer so independent of contemporary religious ideas as Plotinus, particularly as the passages in question occur in treatises [3] written apparently later than the very penetrating criticism of this very theology of radiation contained in *Enneads*, VI., 4 and 5.[4] The interest of these passages is further enhanced by comparison with a passage in the *Hermetica* which may well be roughly contemporary with Plotinus.[5] In this passage the light of the sun, source of all being and life in the visible world, is said to be the receptacle of νοητὴ οὐσία,[6] " but of what that substance consists or whence it flows God (or the sun) only knows ". The Hermetic writer is rather clumsily trying to solve the problem created by the superimposition, on the organic universe of the " Posidonian " solar theology, of the Platonic Intelligible Universe, whose existence he rather grudgingly admits. This is basically very much the same problem as Plotinus is trying to solve by his theory of emanation. And the solution proposed by the Hermetist corresponds very closely with the doctrine of " appropriate physical receptacles " and the important place given to the sun in *Enneads*, IV., 3, 11.

I do not wish to suggest that Plotinus was influenced by Hermetic teaching, either through that unknown and probably unknowable intermediary the philosophy of Ammonius Saccas, or in any other way. Still less do I wish to suggest that Plotinus could at any period of his life have been called a " solar theologian " or a sun-worshipper. But I do wish to suggest that Plotinus was familiar with a type of solar theory (perhaps partly his own invention) in which the sun's light was thought of either as the appropriate receptacle of the

[1] III., 5, 6.
[2] Or., IV., 132D-133, 135D, 139D-140A. Or., V., 172B-C. *Cp. Macrobius Sat.*, I., 23.
[3] IV., 3 ; III., 5 (27 and 26 in Porphyry's chronological order).
[4] 22 and 23 in Porphyry's chronological order.
[5] *Libellus*, XVI., 6 (Scott). For commentary and discussion of date, see Scott, *Hermetica*, II., p. 428 ff. ; also I., Introduction, p. 8.
[6] *Cp.* Julian Or., V., 172B-C.

immaterial substance of the intelligible world, as the intermediary between material and spiritual, or as itself incorporeal, closely parallel to the life of soul, and again on the frontier of spiritual and material (this last form of the theory may be a refinement of Plotinus's own). This theory, allied to the principle of " analogy ",[1] would provide a very good ground for the growth of Plotinus's theory of emanation. It would be much better suited for this purpose than the original " Posidonian " theory of the emanation of the fiery soul from the sun, the materialism of which would naturally repel Plotinus, and the influence of which is more clearly perceptible in Neo-Platonic theories about πνεῦμα and astral bodies[2] than in the Plotinian theory of emanation itself. The theory of emanation expressed in the metaphor of radiation belongs to a type of thought in which there is a wide and doubtful borderland between matter and spirit. What seems to lie behind it is not simply the late Stoic theory of an organic universe centring in the sun but an attempt to reconcile this theory with the Platonic conception of a hierarchy of reality, sensible and intelligible, through the mediation of a half-spiritual, half-material realm of light. This is the theory which we find in *Hermetica*, XVI., and the passages I have quoted from the *Enneads* seem to show that Plotinus knew it and found it acceptable.

[1] IV., 3, 11; VI., 7 6 12

[2] Dodds, *Proclus*, pp. 315-318.

III

Was Plotinus a Magician?

I SUPPOSE that most Plotinian scholars would agree with the judgement of Dodds[1] "The creator of Neoplatonism was neither a magician nor – *pace* certain modern writers – a theurgist . . . . . Not that he denied the efficacy of magic (could any man of the third century deny it?). But it did not interest him. He saw in it merely an application to mean personal ends of "the true magic which is the sum of love and hatred in the universe", the mysterious and truly admirable συμπάθεια which makes the cosmos one; men marvel at human γοητεία more than at the magic of nature only because it is less familiar (*Enneads* 4. 4. 37-40)". But Dodds's judgement has recently been challenged by Dr. P. Merlan in a most stimulating article[2] entitled *Plotinus and Magic*, which might be described as an extremely able speech for the prosecution of Plotinus on the charge not only of being interested in magic but of actually practising it. I do not believe that Merlan proves his case, and I think it is worth trying to show in some detail why he does not, as his article provides a useful opportunity for a re-examination of the evidence which illuminates some important aspects of Plotinus's thought.

Merlan's method is to relate three incidents recorded by Porphyry in the tenth chapter of his *Life of Plotinus* to certain passages in the *Enneads* whose true meaning he thinks the incidents enable us to discern. He begins with the affair of Olympius, which he summarises as follows: "Olympius, a fellow-philosopher envious of Plotinus's intellectual superiority tried to harm him by magic spells. He did so by directing star-rays against him. But he had soon to give up, because he found that the soul of Plotinus was powerful enough not only to resist these spells but even to turn them back on his enemy so that they were harming him. A weird story. And as if he wanted to prove that it was not only a kind of legend about Plotinus, Porphyry adds: "Plotinus knew very well when Olympius was making his attempts. He used to tell that in such moments his intestines were violently contracting". Merlan's last sentence is an interpretation rather than a translation of Prophyry's picturesque phrase λέγων αὐτῷ το σῶμα τότε ὡς τὰ σύσπαστα βαλάντια ἕλκεσθαι τῶν μελῶν αὐτῷ πρὸς αλλήλα συνθλιβομένων. But I am prepared to agree that he is quite probably right in following Harder's reference

[1] *The Greeks and the Irrational* Appendix II. 2. p. 285.

[2] *Isis* Vol. 44. Dec. 1953 pp. 341-8. 3. art. cit. p. 341.