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.

of the αὐτῷ . . . αὐτῷ in LL. 10–11. to Plotinus himself and not (as all other translators) to Olympius, and in understanding the passage as a description of one of the attacks of colic to which Porphyry tells us (*Life* ch. 2) Plotinus was subject. I must protest, however, when Merlan goes on to find in this evidence of "delusions of persecution" and a "schizoid personality" and compares the conviction of "that genial schizophrenic Strindberg" that he felt physical symptoms as the result of the machinations of a jealous rival. For an educated man in mid-19th century Scandinavia, to attribute real or imaginary pains to witchcraft might well be taken to indicate some degree of mental abnormality: but for a man of the 3rd century A. D. to attribute a perfectly genuine and in no way neurotic attack of illness to magic indicates nothing of the sort. And we cannot be quite sure that Plotinus's remark attributing his sufferings to Olympius was meant to be taken quite as seriously as Porphyry, or his informants [1] thought. The words τὰ σύσπαστα βαλάντια come from a decidedly frivolous passage in the *Symposium*[2]. If what Plotinus really said (the words in our text are probably a report at second or third hand) was something to this effect "The colic is very bad this morning. I feel like one of those bisected creatures in Aristophanes's speech when Apollo was sewing him up. Olympius must be at it again"; then it is by no means certain that the reference to Olympius represented the considered statement of a sincere belief!

However, I do not wish to press this last point. Let us agree that the Olympius story provides additional confirmation of something which no-one doubts and for which there is ample evidence in the *Enneads*, that Plotinus seriously believed that magic arts could cause bodily harm. But this does not satisfy Merlan, who interprets the reference to the ill effects Olympius himself suffered from his goings-on, along with a passage from the Fourth Ennead [3], as adding up to "a strong suggestion that Plotinus did practise magic". Porphyry, as Merlan does not make quite sufficiently clear, explicitly denies this is the case of Olympius.[4] This however is not enough by itself to disprove Merlan's contention; so let us consider the passage he cites from the Fourth Ennead. It runs as follows: - ὁ δὲ σπουδαῖος πῶς ὑπο γοητείας καὶ φαρμάκων; ἢ τῇ μὲν ψυχῇ ἀπαθὴς εἰς γοήτευσιν, καὶ οὐκ ἂν τό λογικὸν αὐτοῦ πάθοι, οὐδ' ἂν

[1] I should agree with Merlan (n. 19) that it is quite likely that the incident took place at Alexandria, not at Rome.

[2] 190 e 7-8. [3]. IV. 4.43.

[4] κινδυνεύσας ὁ 'Ολύμπιος πολλάκις αὐτός τι παθεῖν ἢ δρᾶσαι τὸν Πλωτῖνον ἐπαύσατο. (*Life* 10.12-13).

μεταδοξάσειε. τὸ δὲ ὅσον τοῦ παντὸς ἐν αὐτῷ ἄλογον κατὰ τοῦτο πάθοι ἄν, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῦτο πάθοι ἄν. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔρωτας ἐκ φαρμάκων, εἴπερ τὸ ἐρᾶν ἐπινευούσης καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς ἄλλης τῷ τῆς ἄλλης παθήματι. ὥσπερ δὲ ἐπῳδαῖς τὸ ἄλογον πάσχει, ὕτω καὶ αὐτὸς ἀντεπάδων τὰς ἐκεῖ δυνάμεις ἀναλύσει. Θάνατον δὲ ἐκ τοιούτων ἢ νόσους ἢ ὅσα σωματικὰ πάθοι ἄν. τὸ γὰρ μέρος τοῦ παντὸς ὑπὸ μέρους ἄλλου ἢ τοῦ παντὸς πάθοι ἄν, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀβλαβής. (LL. 1-11 Bréhier.).

I translate "How can the good man be affected by magic and drugs? In his soul he cannot be affected by magic; his rational part will not be affected; it will not change its opinions; but as regards that much of the whole in him which is irrational, he will be affected in this, or rather this will be affected. He will not however fall in love as the result of philtres, for love only occurs when one soul [the higher] assents to the affection of the other [the lower]. Just as his irrational part is affected by spells, so he himself by counter-spells disintegrates the powers working there: but he may suffer death from such enchantments, or sickness, or other things that affect the body. The part of the All [in him] may suffer from another part or from the All, but he himself remains unharmed''.

It seems to me a radical misunderstanding of this passage to interpret it as meaning that the philosopher can or ought to practise magic. As always in Plotinus, the human personality is here sharply divided into two parts, the true self, αὐτός, τὸ λογικόν, and the lower nature, the complex of body and body-soul τὸ ἄλογον: and the question under discussion is whether in the case of the σπουδαῖος, the higher soul as well as the lower can be affected by the operations of magic. Merlan omits from his translation and does not mention in his discussion the sentence about love-philtres, which is the key to the whole passage. Plotinus admits that magic can affect the philosopher's lower, irrational part, even to the extent of killing him; he obviously thinks this completely unimportant [1], and in no way suggests that the philosopher should take counter action on this level. After all, if he was presenting the sage as a magician he would hardly present him as so inefficient a magician as to be unable to prevent an enemy wizard from killing him. What the philosopher can prevent, he says, is that affection of his rational or true self which would be necessary if he was to fall in love as the result of a philtre. It is to resist this that his "counter-spells" are brought into

[1] cp. I.4.9 ff. where Plotinus maintains that the philosopher's true self is not affected or his fundamental εὐδαιμονία upset even if he is driven out of his senses by illness or magic arts.

play. And once we have understood this it surely becomes much more natural to take ἀντεπάδων as an instance of the metaphorical use of ἐπωδή applied to salutary philosophical exhortation which we find elsewhere in the *Enneads* [1] and which goes back to the well-known passage in the *Charmides*.[2] The philosopher, by strictly philosophical "counter-spells" will prevent the love-philtre from affecting his higher self; what it or any other form of vulgar magic does to his lower self does not matter. This interpretation is in complete accordance with Plotinus's language and thought elsewhere in the *Enneads:* and if the passage is understood in this way it provides no evidence whatever for the belief that Plotinus was a practising magician.

We can now turn with Merlan to the second episode recorded in ch. 10 of the *Life*, the conjuration of Plotinus's tutelary spirit by the Egyptian priest in the Iseum. (It is a quite perverse use of language to say of this episode as Merlan does [3] "we are in the thick of black magic at its blackest". The term "black magic" has a definite significance in English. It means magic applied to practical evil ends, like the incantations of Olympius, and cannot properly be applied to theurgy, however much we may dislike or despise the latter). Dodds has shown that too much historical value should not be attached to this story [4]; it is a piece of school gossip on which it would be dangerous to base any conclusions about Plotinus's attitude to theurgy. But Merlan tries to increase its value as evidence for his case by linking it closely with the treatise III 4 *On Our Allotted Guardian Spirit*, which he regards as being Plotinus' commentary on the incident. Porphyry certainly seems to say that there is a connection between the conjuration and the treatise, though his language is not perfectly clear.[5] But if we read the treatise itself we shall find that, far from suggesting that Plotinus was seriously interested in theurgy, its evidence is all the other way. It is not concerned with giving the sort of superstitious interpretation of the differences in rank of tutelary spirits which would be of any use to a theurgist. What it does do is to give a rational interpretation in terms of Plotinus's own philosophy of this difference which shows that it is, in the last resort, our own decision whether to live by the higher or the lower in us (a decision of course whose effects extend over more than one bodily life) which

[1] V. 3 17. LL. 18-20 Br.
[2] 156-7.
[3] art. cit. p. 344.
[4] *Greeks and the Irrational*, Appendix II, iii p. 289.
[5] *Life* ch. 10. LL. 28-32 cp; Merlan's note on the passage art. cit. n. 21.

determines the rank of our tutelary spirit, which is according to Plotinus the next highest level in the hierarchy of being above that which our personality at its highest reaches. The "daemon" so interpreted may be something far higher than Plotinus can possibly have believed the "god" which appeared at the Iseum to be. In the case of the σπουδαῖος, who lives by Νοῦς, his δαίμων is indeed a θεός: it is the One, the Good itself.[1]! This is a view which has nothing to do with conjurations of spirits. We must remember that in Plotinus's theory of magic, which is expounded in the later chapters of IV.4. the sphere of its operation is precisely defined. It covers the organic unity of the physical universe and soul only in so far as it is intimately involved with body. In the case of men and daemons (in the popular, not the special Plotinian sense) their irrational part is subject to the operations of magic.[2] In the case of the visible gods, the sun, moon and stars, even their bodies cannot be harmed or diminished by magic; all that the magician can do is to manipulate the effluences which come from them without their knowing anything about it.[3] The higher soul, and still more Νοῦς and the One, are far beyond the sphere of magic. No true god could ever be conjured in Plotinus's universe. What Plotinus is doing in the treatise III.4. is well described by P. Henry [4] "Il transpose ici, comme plus d'une fois, dans la tonalité d'une philosophie quelque peu rationaliste et d'une mystique en tout cas toute spirituelle les croyances religieuses, voire les superstitions de son temps".

Finally Merlan discusses Plotinus's famous answer to Amelius ἐκείνους δεῖ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἔρχεσθαι, οὐκ ἐμὲ πρὸς ἐκείνους which he interprets in the sense that Plotinus claimed to be able to compel the gods to come to him by theurgic magic. Now it seems to me to be a little dangerous to assume that this remark was quite as profound in meaning and intended to be taken quite as seriously as Plotinus's adoring entourage assumed. It was an answer, perhaps rather an impatient answer, to a request by the ritualistic Amelius that Plotinus should come round with him visiting the temples on the feasts of the gods. And it seems to me at least possible that the only clear and distinct idea in the mind of the Master when he made this exalted utterance was that he did not want to go church-crawling with Amelius. If we assume, however, that it was a considered utterance with a serious meaning it seems to me unlikely that it should be interpreted as a claim to theurgic powers. We have seen

[1] III.4.6. LL 1-5.
[2] IV.4.43, already cited in part.
[3] IV.4.42 LL. 23-30.
[4] *La dernière Parole de Plotin*, *Studi Classici e Orientali* Vol. II, Pisa, 1953 p. 115.

that there is no evidence anywhere else for supposing that Plotinus took theurgy seriously; on his own theory all it could influence were the irrational parts of daemons and effluences from the bodies of astral gods; it might produce visions and phantasms, but not the true self of even the lowest god. And the whole of the *Enneads* show that the One was the only god in whose presence Plotinus was interested and that his whole life and work was an effort to attain that presence entering as a necessary preliminary into the company of the divinities of Νοῦς; and Νοῦς and the One (the δαίμων of the σπουδαῖος) are far beyond any possible range of theurgic conjuration. Plotinus does sometimes speak of the "coming" of the One to the soul [1], but it is a mystical vision which has nothing to do with theurgy. I do not, however, now think it as likely as (following Bréhier) I used to do that the remark recorded in the *Life* referred to this sort of "coming". It seems more natural to take it with Henry [2] as referring to the crowd of lower gods who are to be found at sacrifices and as expressing, not an assertion of theurgic power over them, but at least an assertion of social superiority. "These beings are my inferiors; it is for them to visit me, not me them".

This does not, however, provide as much support as might appear for Merlan's assertion in the last part of his article that Plotinus considered the philosopher as a superior of the gods. After all who are these beings who are particularly present at sacrifices? Plotinus does not tell us, but Porphyry does, in a well-known passage of the *De Abstinentia* [3] on philosophical and popular worship, in which the point of view is thoroughly Plotinian and which may even have some reference to the incident recorded in the *Life:* at least there are two scathing references[4] to philosophers who share in and encourage the beliefs and practices of the popular religion where Porphyry may well have the φιλοθύτος Amelius (and others like him in Plotinus's circle) in mind. Porphyry says that the "gods" who are worshipped with the rites of the popular religion are δαίμονες [5] and that those who delight in blood-sacrifice in particular are thoroughly evil δαίμονες. [6] He is developing a line of thought which goes back to Xenocrates [7] and certainly would have been familiar to Plotinus. Plotinus then, if he thought about what he was

[1] V.5. 8. V.3. 17.
[2] *Dernière Parole de Plotin* p. 115.
[3] II. 34-43.
[4] ch. 35 and ch. 40.
[5] ch. 37.
[6] ch. 42.
[7] Nilsson, *Geschichte d. Gr. Rel.* II pp. 244-5 and 424-6.

saying at all, would probably have thought that he was claiming superiority only to the lowest and basest sort of spiritual being. If you regard the curate as your social inferior (so that it is his duty to call on you first) it does not follow that you regard yourself as the social superior of a bishop. And there is no evidence in the *Enneads* that Plotinus regarded the philosopher as the superior of the higher gods, the visible gods or those above them. Merlan says that Plotinus thought of the gods as subject to magic while the true self of the philosopher was superior to it. But we have seen that according to Plotinus's doctrine the true selves of both gods and philosophers are immune to magic, and the philosopher's lower nature is far more vulnerable to magic than that of the visible, embodied god. The magician may kill the philosopher or drive him mad by his spells but he cannot affect the body of the visible god at all. It is impassible and perfect, no impediment to the intellect, far superior to the poor earthy carcase which the philosopher bears about in this present life.[1] The sage can become the equal of the gods in his true, intellectual self but his lower nature, his body-soul complex, always remains inferior to theirs [2]; and one of the principal signs of its inferiority is its vulnerability to magic, a vulnerability, however, for which the sage cares little, no more than he does for anything else which may befall his lower self.

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[1] IV. 4.42. II. 9.8.
[2] As long, that is, as he remains in a human body; he may become an astral god himself. (III. 4. 6.).