

THE EXISTENCE–LIFE–INTELLECT TRIAD IN GNOSTICISM AND NEOPLATONISM

In his *Life of Plotinus* (16), Porphyry makes reference to certain gnostic ‘revelations’ under the names of ‘Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheus and Allogenes and Messos and many others of this kind’ which were circulated in Plotinus’ school and refuted by Plotinus and his students, including Porphyry himself. Porphyry claims to have made ‘several refutations against the book of Zoroaster’ while Amelius apparently wrote some ‘forty volumes against the book of Zostrianos’. The surprising discovery of Coptic gnostic texts in the Nag Hammadi Library under the specific names of *Allogenes* (Nag Hammadi Codex xi.3) and *Zostrianos* (viii.1) and the close relation of these texts to *The Three Steles of Seth* (vii.5) and *Marsanes* (x) has led to the general consensus that we now possess some of the actual texts mentioned by Porphyry.¹

As a group, these texts are regarded by scholars as examples of ‘Sethian’ Gnosticism (sometimes ‘Barbelo’ Gnosticism), since they share in common a number of basic mythological themes and elements with several other Nag Hammadi texts, i.e. a focus on Seth, the son of Adam, as a divine revealer and saviour figure; references to the gnostic ‘elect’ as the ‘seed’ or ‘race’ of Seth; a complex hierarchy of divine beings and angelic figures headed by a remote ‘Invisible Spirit’ and a divine triad of Father, Mother (‘Barbelo’), and son (sometimes identified with Christ); the recurring presence of four ‘light-figures’ (Harmozel, Oraiael, Daveithe, and Eleleth); various baptismal motifs; and an apocalyptic understanding of history.² The Sethian corpus, as a whole, then, reflects eclectic elements from both Judaism and Christianity,

¹ See John H. Sieber, ‘An Introduction to the Tractate Zostrianos’, *NovT* 15 (1973), 233–40; idem, ‘Introduction’ to *Zostrianos* (NHC viii.1) in John H. Sieber (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex viii* (Nag Hammadi Studies, 31) (Leiden, 1991), esp. pp. 19–25; Michel Tardieu, ‘Les trois stèles Seth’, *RSPT*, 57 (1973), 545–75; James M. Robinson, ‘The Three Steles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus’, in G. Widengren (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism* (Stockholm, 1977), pp. 132–42; Birger Pearson, ‘The Tractate Marsanes (NHC x) and the Platonic Tradition’, in Barbara Aland (ed.), *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen, 1978), pp. 373–84; idem, ‘Gnosticism as Platonism: With Special Reference to Marsanes (NHC 10.1)’, *HTR* 77 (1984), 55–72; reprinted in idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity) (Minneapolis, 1990), pp. 148–64; idem, ‘Introduction’ to *Marsanes* (NHC x) in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (Nag Hammadi Studies, 15) (Leiden, 1981), esp. pp. 244–50; John D. Turner, ‘The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment’, *NovT* 22 (1980), 324–51; idem, ‘Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History’, in Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr (eds.), *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA, 1986), pp. 55–86; Paul Claude, *Les trois stèles de Seth* (Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section ‘Textes’, 8) (Québec, 1983), esp. pp. 26–33; A. Wire, ‘Introduction’ to *Allogenes* (NHC xi.3) in Charles Hedrick (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codices xi, xii, xiii* (Nag Hammadi Studies, 18) (Leiden, 1990), esp. pp. 185–91. (The text, translation, and commentary of *Allogenes* are by J. Turner.)

² Other Nag Hammadi texts considered to be ‘Sethian’ are: *The Apocryphon of John* (NHC ii.1, iii.1, iv.1 and BG 8502.2); *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC ii.4); *The Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC iii.2, iv.2); *The Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC v.5); *Melchizedek* (NHC ix.1); *The Thought of Norea* (NHC ix.2); *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC xiii.1). The *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex is also included in this list. See, for example, Hans-Martin Schenke, ‘The Phenomenon and Significance of Sethian Gnosticism’, in Bentley Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978*, ii: *Sethian Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 588–616.

with different texts reflecting the prominence of one tradition over the other. However, in *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *The Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes*, all explicit Jewish and Christian elements have disappeared. Although the core elements of Sethianism remain, especially the Sethian *dramatis personae*, this basic Sethianism has been totally re-worked in terms of Platonic themes and categories, to the point that this group of texts can be best characterized as a form of pagan philosophical Gnosticism.³

Now of particular interest in these texts, as a way of locating them in a specific Platonic milieu, is their use of terminology similar to that employed by the Neoplatonists to describe various aspects of the divine world, notably the Existence, Life, Intellect triad (and variants). The presence of this triad in a collection of gnostic texts that was known to Plotinus and his circle has led scholars to focus on an 'exchange of ideas' between Plotinus and the gnostics, with some scholars suggesting that it was the gnostics who introduced the triad into Neoplatonism and not vice versa,⁴ since the triad is not attested elsewhere prior to Plotinus.⁵ However, if this is so, certain problems arise. First of all, the various triads found in the gnostic texts often appear in an explicit and fixed form that is not a feature of Plotinus' writings, where the triad remains implicit. Second, in the gnostic texts, the first term of the triad is regularly understood as *ὑπαρξίς*, a term that has no special significance – triadically or otherwise – for Plotinus. Third, some of the variant terms used in the gnostic texts for the three members of the triad (e.g. Substantiality, Vitality, Mentality) reflect a method of paronyms that is uncharacteristic of Plotinus. This is also the case with the principles of implication and predominance which describe the relation between the three members of the triad. These principles play a minor role, if any at all, in Plotinus' metaphysics. Thus an 'exchange of ideas' between Plotinus and the gnostics, based on the triadic concerns expressed in these Nag Hammadi texts, appears to be more problematic than useful. A shift in focus is needed. Since there is no compelling reason why any of these gnostic texts, in the form in which we now have them, must predate or even be contemporaneous with Plotinus,⁶ a more fruitful line of inquiry is to pursue parallels with a successor of Plotinus. The figure who best fits this post-Plotinian time frame is Porphyry, as it is with Porphyry that the aforementioned issues become of special concern.

This line of inquiry – an 'exchange of ideas' between Porphyry and the gnostics – has already been pursued by Luise Abramowski in her 1983 article, 'Marius Victorinus, Porphyrius und die römischen Gnostiker' (*ZNW* 74, 108–28). In this article, Abramowski specifically focuses on parallels between *Allogenes* and select 'Porphyrian' passages from Marius Victorinus and concludes that the author of *Allogenes*, like Victorinus, was dependent on Porphyry for much of his philosophical 'Gottesgedankens' (while allowing that Porphyry may have borrowed selectively

³ See e.g. Turner, 'Sethian Gnosticism', esp. pp. 85–6.

⁴ See e.g. Turner, 'Threefold Path', p. 336; Robinson, *ibid.*, p. 141; Pearson, 'Introduction' to *Marsanes*, p. 246; *idem*, 'Gnosticism as Platonism', 1984, p. 66 = 1990, p. 158; Wire, *ibid.*, p. 191. P. Claude, on the other hand (*ibid.*, p. 31; cf. p. 27 n. 61), opts for a 'common source' behind the *Enneads* and *Steles Seth* to account for the triad. Cf. similarly Tardieu, *ibid.*, pp. 562–3.

⁵ See Pierre Hadot, 'Être, vie, pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin', *Les Sources de Plotin*, Entretiens Hardt, v (1960), pp. 107–41 and 'Discussion', pp. 142–57.

⁶ *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, and *Zostrianos* are variously dated from the end of the second century to the mid-third century, depending on whether the texts are viewed as influencing and/or influenced by Plotinus and his circle, or dependent on a source(s) common to gnostics and Neoplatonists. For the various views, see the titles mentioned in n. 1.

from the gnostics in turn).⁷ In making this assesment, Abramowski draws extensively on the research of Pierre Hadot, whose studies of Porphyry have firmly secured Porphyry's role in Neoplatonism as an innovator rather than a mere 'popularizer' of Plotinus' views. This is especially so if Porphyry was the author of the Anonymous Commentary on the *Parmenides*, a position that Hadot, in my view, has persuasively demonstrated.⁸ As for Victorinus, Hadot argues that the principal Porphyrian source behind the non-Christian aspects of Victorinus' writings (especially his trinitarian theology) was a theogonic work (or works) in which Porphyry commented on the *Chaldean Oracles*.⁹ My contribution to this discussion, then, will be to elaborate further on this 'exchange of ideas' between Porphyry and the gnostics by focusing in more detail on those triadic concepts and terminology in *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, and *Zostrianos* as a whole which most clearly reflect Porphyry's exegesis of the *Oracles*.¹⁰

Now Hadot has stated that a major philosophical task of later Neoplatonism – initiated by Porphyry – was the attempt to interpret and harmonise the teaching of Plotinus with the 'divine revelation' of the *Oracles*.¹¹ This task required no small amount of creative ingenuity as the *Oracles* – a product of second-century speculation – were informed by a Stoicising Middle Platonism with parallels in particular to Numenius. In terms of First Principles the *Oracles*, like Numenius, recognised the existence of two Intellects: a contemplative First Intellect or Father and a dyadic Second Intellect conceived as both contemplative and demiurgic. In the *Oracles*, these two Intellects are also described in Stoic terms as 'fiery' in nature and thus are situated in a transcendent empyrean realm – this realm identified with the Platonic intelligible world of Ideas. The *Oracles* also recognise a third principle, a feminised Power (*δύναμις*), which is apparently to be understood as a median link between the Father and his actualisation as Nous; at least, this is how the later Neoplatonists interpreted a key verse of the *Oracles*: 'For power is with him but intellect is from him' (fr. 4). Based on this verse, the later Neoplatonists – beginning with Porphyry – discerned in the *Oracles* a primal triad of Father, Power, Intellect, although an explicit triad described in these terms is not attested in the extant fragments. However, a general principle of triadic organisation is clearly a central teaching of the

⁷ The term *τριδύναμος* is the most notable example; see discussion below.

⁸ See Hadot, 'Fragments d'un commentaire de Porphyre sur le *Parménide*', *REG* 74 (1961), 410–38; 'La Métaphysique de Porphyre' in *Porphyre*, Entretiens Hardt, xii (Genève, 1966), pp. 127–57; *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1968). (Volume Two includes the text and translation of the *Parmenides* commentary and the 'Porphyrian' passages from Victorinus. Citations from Victorinus in this paper are noted as Hadot ii with the appropriate par. number.) Although, to date, there is still no universal consensus among scholars supporting Hadot's thesis, nevertheless it is generally conceded that if Porphyry was not the author of the commentary, the author – whoever he was – was strongly influenced by Porphyry. See, for example, A. Smith, 'Porphyrian Studies since 1913', *ANRW* II.36.2 (1987), 728–9, 737–41. Cf. J. Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton, 1987), p. xxx: 'On the whole, I am prepared to leave the *Anon. Taur.* with Porphyry on the basis of the analogies which Hadot has brought to light, while being unable to share Hadot's certainty that he has solved the puzzle.'

⁹ See Hadot, *Porphyre* i.461, 474, 477; cf. P. Henry and P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Traités théologiques sur la Trinité*, i (Paris, 1960), p. 75. Hadot (*Porphyre* i.456) considers this source post-Plotinian (written after 268) because it reflects a clear development and critique of Plotinian ideas.

¹⁰ Citations from the *Chaldean Oracles* are from my edition, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden, 1989). The ordering of the fragments in my edition (with the exceptions of frr. 9, 9a, 210a–c) follows that of É. Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques* (Paris, 1971).

¹¹ Hadot, *Porphyre* i, esp. 482–5.

Oracles, with the specific concept of a 'triadic monad' or three-in-one principle operative at various levels of reality. In the words of one fragment: 'For in every world shines a triad ruled by a monad' (fr. 27).¹² Another states: 'For the Intellect of the Father said for all things to separate into three, governing all things by the Intellect <of the very first> eternal <Father>' (fr. 22). Even the Platonic Ideas are conceived triadically, described as a 'measuring triad' inherent in the Second Intellect (fr. 31). But the *Oracles* also wish to underscore the Father's transcendence, so they state elsewhere that he is removed or 'snatched away' (the verb is ἀρπάζω) from his Power and Intellect: 'For he snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual power' (fr. 3). Another fragment describes the Father as 'encompassing all things but existing, himself, entirely outside' (fr. 84). Elsewhere, he is said to be 'all things, but intelligibly so' (fr. 21).

A further element is the identification of the Father or First Intellect with the notion of ὑπαρξίς (Existence). Although this term is not attested in the extant fragments, the verbal form occurs three times in connection with the First Principle (fr. 1, 20, 84). Similarly, an explicit triad of Existence, Power, Intellect is also not attested in the extant fragments, although Damascius frequently attributes such a triad to the *Oracles*.¹³ On the basis of Damascius' testimony, Hadot suggests that ὑπαρξίς may already have been substituted in the *Oracles* for 'pater'.¹⁴ Such a substitution is possible, although an explicit triad of Existence, Power, Intellect – as a variant of the Father, Power, Intellect triad – would reflect Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Oracles* and not the explicit teaching of the *Oracles* themselves. As for ὑπαρξίς, the use of this term – in a philosophical sense – can be traced back to Stoic and Epicurean usage;¹⁵ it is found frequently in various Middle Platonic sources as well as in Plotinus, but it is only among the later Neoplatonists that ὑπαρξίς becomes a virtual technical term.¹⁶ This technical usage can be attributed to Porphyry,¹⁷ who utilised the term to express the idea of pure being, i.e. being without qualification or determination, and thus prior to οὐσία, or determined being, a distinction found in the *Parmenides* commentary. In fr.14, ὑπαρξίς occurs independently five times and once as the first term of the triad Existence, Life, Intellection (ὑπαρξίς, ζωή, νοήσις). It is also found frequently in the writings of Marius Victorinus, where it is translated by the Latin word 'exsistentia' to distinguish it from 'substantia' (οὐσία). Since 'exsistentia' is apparently not attested in Latin before Victorinus, its presence here is clearly a 'learned invention',¹⁸ most likely based on Porphyry's technical usage of this term. For Porphyry, ὑπαρξίς as pure being was

¹² Cf. also fr. 26: 'For the world, seeing you as a triadic-monad, has honoured you.' This particular verse is cited by John Lydus, *de mensibus* 23.10–12, who attributes it to Proclus, not to the *Oracles* (πρὸς γὰρ τὸν ἀπᾶς ἐπέκεινα ὁ Πρόκλος οὕτω. μονάδα γὰρ σε τριούχον ἰδὼν ἐσεβάσασατο κόσμος). This is surely from a hymn of Proclus (lost), though it is 'Chaldean' in sentiment and phraseology. See my comments, *The Chaldean Oracles*, pp. 151–2.

¹³ See e.g. *Dub. et sol.* 1.87.9–10 Ruelle = Westerink-Combès, 2.3.5–6; 1.108.17–20 Ruelle = Westerink-Combès, 2.36.2–6; 1.131.15–20 Ruelle = Westerink-Combès, 2.71.1–6; 2.101.25–7 Ruelle.

¹⁴ Hadot, *Porphyre* i.267–8.

¹⁵ See e.g. the discussions in R. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, iv (Paris, 1954), p. 11 n. 1; Charles H. Kahn, 'On the Terminology for Copula and Existence', in S. M. Stern *et al.* (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition*, essays presented to Richard Walzer (Columbia, SC, 1972), pp. 151–8.

¹⁶ See J. M. Rist, 'Mysticism and Transcendence in Later Neoplatonism', *Hermes* 92 (1964), 213–25.

¹⁷ See e.g. Hadot, *Porphyre* i.112–13; 267ff.

¹⁸ The expression is Kahn's, *art. cit.* p. 155.

conceived as equivalent both to the Plotinian One and to the Chaldean Father. The result was a triad of First Principles which harmonised both Chaldean and Plotinian terminology: Father = Existence = One; Power = Life; Intellect.¹⁹ In equating these terms, it is important to note that Porphyry – inspired by the *Oracles* – coordinates them at the level of the First Hypostasis. This is underscored in fr. 9.1–8 of the *Parmenides* commentary, where Porphyry interprets fr. 3 of the *Oracles* ('the Father snatched himself away and did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual power') to mean that although the Father or 'One' has 'snatched himself away from all that is within him, nevertheless his power and intellect remain co-unified in his simplicity' (ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι αὐτοῦ συνηνώσθαι). This Porphyrian solution to the problem of transcendence was subsequently criticised and rejected by all later Neoplatonists, who restored the Plotinian One to its position of absolute transcendence by locating the Chaldean triad at a level beneath and uncoordinated with the One.²⁰ But it is the Porphyrian solution that is reflected in the writings of Victorinus as well as in *Allogenes* and the related texts from Nag Hammadi. In these Nag Hammadi texts, a triadic principle or hypostasis, the 'Triple Power', is similarly viewed as both continuous and discontinuous with the One or Invisible Spirit of earlier Sethian terminology. The one exception is *Marsanes*, where the author posits the existence of two transcendent First Principles or 'Ones', i.e. a 'Silent One' and an 'Unbegotten One', both of which are situated above and apparently uncoordinated with either the Invisible Spirit or the 'Triple Power' – a reflection perhaps of Iamblichus' metaphysics, who postulated a similar doctrine of two transcendent 'Ones' uncoordinated with any lower principles.²¹

The other texts in this group (*Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, *Zostrianos*), however, more clearly reflect the Porphyrian model of triadisation. Of particular interest in these texts is the regular occurrence of the word ὑπαρξίς (most often left untranslated) to designate the first term of the triad Existence, Life, Intellect (and variants). ὑπαρξίς occurs so frequently in these texts – both in triadic constructs and independently – that it clearly has technical significance for their authors. Since ὑπαρξίς does not occur as a metaphysical term in any of the earlier Sethian texts, but is frequent in *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos* and *Steles Seth* as well as in later Neoplatonism (where it is rampant), a reasonable conclusion is that the gnostics who used this term borrowed it from the Neoplatonists, most likely from Porphyry.²²

¹⁹ See Hadot, *Porphyre* i.260–72. It should be noted that, according to Neoplatonic tradition, Porphyry was the first to give these triads a formal structure (e.g. Proclus, *In Tim.* 3.64.8–65.8). It is clear from what Proclus states here that this was accomplished, in part, as a result of Porphyry's reflections on the *Oracles*. See e.g. the discussion of John Dillon on this passage in his *Iamblichi Chalcidensis Fragmenta* (Leiden, 1973), pp. 356–8. Speculations on the Being, Life, Intellect triad ultimately derive from school interpretations of Plato's *Sophist* 248e.

²⁰ For a criticism of Porphyry's position see e.g. Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 1.86.3–10 Ruelle = Westerink-Combès, 2.1.4–13; Proclus, *In Parm.* 1070.15–30 Cousin. These passages are cited by Hadot, *Porphyre* i.96–8; 258–9.

²¹ This is the view of Turner, 'Sethian Gnosticism', p. 85; cf. Pearson, 'Introduction' to *Marsanes* in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd ed. rev. (San Francisco, 1988), pp. 460–2, who now sees *Marsanes* as similarly close to Iamblichean 'metaphysics' and 'ritual' (*contra* his earlier view that *Marsanes* was one of the texts read in Plotinus' school; see 'The Tractate Marsanes and the Platonic Tradition', p. 375). See also idem, 'Theurgic Tendencies in Gnosticism and Iamblichus' Conception of Theurgy', in R. T. Wallis (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern, 5) (Stony Brook, NY, in the press).

²² This would also be true of the negation of this term in connection with the triad. In *Allogenes* xi.61.36–8, the Unknowable God is described as existing 'without Intellect (νοῦς) or Life or Existence (ὑπαρξίς) or non-Existence (ἀτῶπαρξις = ἀνὑπαρξίς)'. Virtually the same

In contrast, the term *τριδύναμος*, which occurs in numerous gnostic texts and is found in Marius Victorinus but is rare in later Neoplatonism, may well be a gnostic coinage.²³ The appearance of this term in Victorinus to describe God's 'triple power' in terms of his Existence, Life, and Intellect suggests that Victorinus found the term in Porphyry. Since the term is not attested for the *Oracles*, it is possible, as Abramowski argues, that Porphyry borrowed it from the gnostics.²⁴ However, if this is so, Porphyry must have used the term sparingly, as it is attested infrequently in the writings of the later Neoplatonists and never (to the best of my knowledge) in connection with the Existence, Life, Intellect triad. Damascius, for example, regularly uses the Chaldean term *τριγλῶχης* ('three-pointed' or 'three-barbed') to describe the triadic nature of the Chaldean Father, but never uses the word *τριδύναμος* in this (or any other) context.²⁵ *τριδύναμος* is not attested in Iamblichus and is found only twice in Proclus; once in his *Commentary on the Parmenides* (1215, 10–11 Cousin), where it is used in reference to Plato's charioteer and horses; and once in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (2.41.20), where it is used in a discussion on the nature of physical elements. Hierocles uses the term once in reference to the three powers or faculties of the soul (*In aureum carmen* 20). The term is not attested in Olympiodorus nor in the Latin Neoplatonic tradition influenced by Porphyry. Even in Victorinus the term is rare, found twice in Neoplatonic contexts (with reference to God's 'triple-power')²⁶ and once in a Christian context (in connection with the soul).²⁷ *τριδύναμος*, then, unlike *ὑπαρξίς*, apparently had no special technical significance in the metaphysics of later Neoplatonism. Although its appearance in Victorinus suggests that Porphyry did use this term, its association with Gnosticism may have precluded its more widespread usage among the later Neoplatonists.

Although the term *τριδύναμος* can be attributed, perhaps, to gnostic reflection, this is not the case with the principles of implication and predominance which define the relation between the three terms or modalities of the Triple Power, i.e. 'that all is in all, but in each according to its proper nature'. Although these principles were commonplace in Middle Platonism and used in various contexts by different thinkers,²⁸ among the Neoplatonists they become specifically applied to the Existence, Life, Intellect triad as a way of describing the 'horizontal' unfolding of this triad from

triad of terms – *ἀνύπαρκτος*, *ἀνούσιος*, *ἄνους*, *ἄζων* – is also found in Marius Victorinus: *Adv. Ar.* 4.23.23–6 = Hadot ii, §78; 4.25.9–10 = Hadot ii, §86 a; 1.49.17–18 = Hadot ii §36 b. See Hadot, *Porphyre* i.421–3, for a discussion of these terms in the context of Porphyry's metaphysics.

²³ This is the opinion of Pearson, 'Gnosticism as Platonism' (1984), p. 66 = (1990), p. 158. Other gnostic texts (outside the Nag Hammadi group discussed in this paper) in which *τριδύναμος* (or *τριδύναμις*) occurs are: *Pistis Sophia*, chs. 14, 28, 29, 30, 55 and *passim*; 2 *Jeu* (Bruce Codex), chs. 42, 50, 52; *Untitled Text* (Bruce Codex), chs. 8, 9, 10, 12 and *passim*; cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.12.4; 10.10.3.

²⁴ Abramowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–12; cf. Pearson, *ibid.* (1984), p. 65 = (1990), p. 157; *idem*, 'Introduction' to *Marsanes*, p. 246.

²⁵ Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 1.254.1 (Ruelle) and 2.62.19 (Ruelle): *τριγλῶχης ἀννυνέται ὁ θεός*; 2.95.23 (Ruelle): *μία τριγλῶχης μονάς...ὁ νοητὸς νοῦς*.

²⁶ *Adv. Arium*, 1.50.4–5 = Hadot ii, §41: 'tripotens in unalitate spiritus'; 4.21.26–7 = Hadot, ii, §76: 'Τριδύναμος est deus, id est tres potentias habens, esse, vivere, intellegere.'

²⁷ *Adv. Arium*, 1.56.4–5: 'Animae autem quod alia substantia sit, manifestum. Facta enim a tripotenti spiritu, neque pure vox, neque verbum, sed sicut ἡχώ, audit ut loquatur, imago magis vocis quam vox. Et hoc est Iohannis: "vox exclamantis in deserto: dirigite viam domini".'

²⁸ See e.g. Philo, *De Abrahamo* 52–4; Antiochus of Ascalon ap. Cicero, *Tuscul.* 5.8.2; Numenius, fr. 41 (Des Places). These and other sources are cited by Hadot, *Porphyre* i.239–46; cf. *idem*, 'Être, vie, pensée', esp. pp. 123–7.

its initial unity.²⁹ In this interpretation, the triad is not perceived as existing 'vertically' on different planes of reality, but is seen as a dynamic three-in-one principle wherein each moment of the triad, while containing the other two, is named by that quality (its Existence, Life, or Intellect) which dominates as the triad unfolds. It is in this specific sense that the principle is applied in Victorinus (many times), in *Steles Seth*, and in *Allogenes*. A key passage in Victorinus is *Adv. Arium* 4.21.26–31 = Hadot ii, §76:

God is a triple-power (*τριδύναμος*), that is, he has three powers, Being ('esse'), Life ('vivere'), Thought ('intellegere') in such a way that in one there are three, and one itself, if you please, is three, each receiving its name by the aspect which predominates, as I have taught earlier and in many places... Thus in each one there is a triple singularity and a unity in trinity ('triplex igitur in singulis singularitas et unalitas in trinitate').

In *Steles Seth* vii.125.25–33, the principle is applied to the 'Pre-existent One' or 'Father', who is praised in the following way: 'You are One! You are a single, living Spirit! How shall we give you a name? We do not have it. For you are the Existence (*ἔξουπαρξίς*) of them all. You are the Life (*πῶπῶ*) of them all. You are the Intellect (*πῶσος*) of them all.' Elsewhere (vii.121.30–122.13) the aeon Barbelo (=Intellect aspect of the triad) is praised both as a 'triple power' which unfolds from 'one indivisible triple power' and as a 'triple power' which is also a 'great monad from a pure monad'. The linking of triplicity with the monad is implied in the passage from Victorinus cited above ('unalitas in trinitate')³⁰ and is found explicitly in the *Hymns* of Synesius of Cyrene, e.g. *H.* 1.210–13: 'I praise you monad, I praise you triad; you are a monad while being a triad; you are a triad while being a monad'; *H.* 9.65–6; 'ineffable monad...you possess a force with three summits'. These verses from Synesius clearly reflect the teaching of the *Oracles* (e.g. fr. 27: 'In every world shines a triad ruled by a monad'); the expression 'force with three summits' (*τρίκórnyμβον ἀλκάν*) is a variant of the Chaldean expression 'triple-barbed strength' (*τριγλώχης ἀλκή*; fr. 2). As Hadot has demonstrated, the trinitarian theology of Synesius, like that of Victorinus, is similarly dependent on Porphyry's exegesis of the *Oracles*.³¹

In *Steles Seth* vii.122.19–22, there is a variant on the triad utilising the abstractions Substantiality, Vitality, Mentality: 'You have given power to the eternal beings in Substantiality (*ἡμῶντοφία*). You have given power to divinity in Vitality (*ἡμῶντωπῶ*); You have given power to Mentality (*ἡμῶνπτειμε*) in goodness.' A similar triad of abstractions appears in *Allogenes* xi.49.26–37, but here in explicit connection with the principle of predominance:

He is Vitality (*ἡμῶντωπῶ*) and Mentality (*ἡμῶνπτειμε*) and That-Which-Is (*πετῶσον*). For then That-Which-Is (*πῆ ετε παῖ πε*) constantly possesses its Vitality (*ἡμῶντωπῶ*) and Mentality (*ἡμῶνπτειμε*) and {Life has} Vitality (*ἡμῶντωπῶ*) possesses {non}-Substantiality (*ἡμῶντ(Δτ)οφία*)³²

²⁹ The scholastic formulation of these principles in connection with this triad can be found in Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 103: 'All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature: for in Being there is life and intelligence; in Life, being and intelligence; in Intelligence, being and life' (trans. Dodds).

³⁰ According to Hadot, *Porphyre* i.287 n. 2, 'unalitas' = *μόνας* in the writings of Victorinus. Cf. especially *Adv. Arium* 1.49.9–10 = Hadot ii, §36: 'Before all those things which truly exist, there was the One or the Monad or the One itself...' ('ante omnia quae vere sunt unum fuit, sive unalitas, sive ipsum unum...').

³¹ Ibid. 461–74.

³² Turner has emended the text to mean '{non}-Being' (*ἡμῶντ(Δτ)οφία*), but the context surely demands the sense of '{non}-Substantiality' (*ἡμῶντ(Δτ)οφία*) especially given the parallel triad of terms in *Steles Seth* vii. 122.19–22.

and Mentality (τῆς ψυχῆς). Mentality (ἡ νοητική) possesses Life and That-Which-Is (τὸ ὄν). And the three are one, although individually they are three.³³

What these Coptic terms appear to be translating are the Greek abstractions *ὀντότης* (and/or *οὐσιότης*), *ζωότης*, *νοότης*,³⁴ a triad which appears (untranslated) in Marius Victorinus (*Adv. Arium* 4.5.35–45 = Hadot ii, §65), where it is similarly described by the principle of predominance; ‘these powers (sc. *ὀντότης*, *ζωότης* *νοότης*), then, must be understood as three in one, but in such a way that they define their proper being by the aspect according to which each has a predominating property... in reality they are simple, but with a simplicity which is triple’. (This same triad also occurs in Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 4.125.15 Ruelle = Westerink-Combès 2.61.7–8, where *οὐσιότης* is substituted for *ὀντότης*. In *Steles Seth* and *Allogenes*, ἡ μὴ τὸ οὐσίον or τῆς οὐσιότητος would correspond to *οὐσιότης*; πετῶσιον and πῆ ἐτε παῖ πε appear to be attempts to translate *ὀντότης*.) As Hadot has explained, these abstractions were typical of Porphyry, who often used paronyms of this type to express the idea of an originating cause or source.³⁵ Hadot even suggests that the word *ὀντότης* – a rare word – may have been coined by Porphyry himself,³⁶ but this evidence is inconclusive.³⁷

Whatever the source of the term, abstractions like *ὀντότης* or *οὐσιότης*, *ζωότης*, and *νοότης* were congenial to Porphyry’s way of thinking, who used these (and similar) terms as a way of conveying the idea of the pre-existence of Existence, Life, and Intellect in the One itself. Outside Victorinus, the specific witness to Porphyry’s use of *ὀντότης* is John Lydus (*de mensibus* 138.20–5), who states that Porphyry described the goddess Hestia as *ὀντότης* in her role as ‘the source-substance, the cause of being for all things, which is situated in the Father’ (τὴν πηγαιν οὐσίαν καὶ παῖ τοῦ εἶναι αἰτίαν, ἰδρυμένην ἐν τῷ πατρὶ). This statement reflects the teaching and terminology of the *Oracles* (that the ‘source’ of all reality ultimately derives from the ‘Father’). Although Hestia plays no role in the *Oracles*, Hecate does: she is designated as ‘source’ in her role as World Soul (fr. 56: ‘Ρείη (= Hecate) τοι νοερῶν μακάρων πηγὴ τε ῥοή τε; cf. Dam. *Dub. et sol.* 2.59.21 Ruelle: πηγαίης Ἑκάτης) but ultimately she, too, has her origin in the Father. In the terminology of the *Oracles*, Hecate is *πατρογενής* or ‘generated from the Father’ (fr. 35: *πατρογενοῦς Ἑκάτης*). Hestia, then, in this instance, plays the same role, but her pre-existence in the Father as ‘cause’ or ‘source’ is now defined in philosophical terms as *ὀντότης*. It is this kind of abstract language, then, utilised by Porphyry in his attempt to reconcile Chaldean and Plotinian teaching about the nature of the One, that appears to lie behind the similar terminology in *Allogenes* and *Steles Seth* as in Marius Victorinus.

Another feature of *Allogenes* that can be paralleled by Porphyrian reflections on the *Oracles* is the idea of the first term of the triad as that which ‘enters’ or ‘remains in itself’ in a state of ‘motionless motion’ and is said to be ‘standing and at rest’.³⁸ The

³³ Abramowski, op. cit., p. 115, cites this passage as either a direct quotation from or summary of Porphyry’s teaching.

³⁴ See the comments of Turner in his notes to this passage, 252–3. Turner refers to ἡ νοητική as a ‘strange neologism’ for *νοότης*.

³⁵ Hadot, *Porphyre* i.361–75.

³⁶ Hadot, ‘Fragments’, p. 431.

³⁷ The frequent use of *ὀντότης* in Pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias, in *Metaph.* (e.g. 641.27, 642.3.8, 645.18, 658.30, 669.29, 724.35, 783.13 Hayduck) suggests that this word may have first been coined in the context of commentaries on Aristotle.

³⁸ On the concept of ontological ‘standing’ in Gnosticism and Platonism, see the excellent study of Michael Williams, *The Immovable Race* (Leiden, 1985).

first two ideas, those of conversion and immobility, are expressed in *Allogenes* xi.53.10–19: ‘That One moved motionlessly in that which governs, lest he sink into the boundless by means of another activity of Mentality. And he entered into himself and he appeared, being all encompassing, the Universal One that is higher than perfect.’ The concept of repose (or ‘standing at rest’) as descriptive of Existence (*ὑπαρξίς*) is subsequently found in *Allogenes* xi.59.20–2 and 60.31–2. This same complex of ideas is also found frequently in Marius Victorinus. In, for example, *Adv. Arium* 3.7.9–22 = Hadot ii, §40, the Father as Existence or Substance (also equated here with the abstractions *ὑπαρκτότητα, οὐσιότητα, ὀντότητα*) is described as a Being which ‘remains in himself (*manens in se*), moved by his own movement (*suo a se motu*)... (he) is divine perfection... superior to all perfections... he is also called silence, rest, and immobility (*silentium, quies, cessatio*)’.³⁹

Now an interesting detail in this analysis is Victorinus’ linking of these concepts (conversion, repose, immobility) with the notion of Blessedness as a substitute for Intellect as the third term in the Existence, Life, Intellect triad. This substitution is found in several places but most notably in *Adv. Arium* 1.50.1–22 = Hadot ii, §§37 and 41.

This (One) is God, this is the Father, pre-intelligence pre-existing (*praeintelligentia praeexistens*) and pre-existence guarding itself in its own Blessedness and a motionless motion (*immobile motione*), and because of this, having no need of other beings, perfect beyond perfect, Spirit having in its unity a triple power (*tripotens in unalitate spiritus*), perfect Spirit and Spirit beyond Spirit. For he does not breathe, but rather it is the Spirit in that which is his being, Spirit breathing toward itself so that it is Spirit, since the Spirit is not separate from itself (*spiritus inseparabilis a semet ipso*), being at the same time dwelling-place and dweller, remaining in itself, alone in itself alone, existing at the same time everywhere and nowhere. Since it is one in its simplicity it contains three powers (*simplicitate unus qui sit, tres potentias cōniens*): all Existence, all Life, and Blessedness; but all these are one and one and simple, and it is especially in the power of Being, that is Existence, that are contained the powers of Life and Blessedness; for the power which is the power of Existence, this power exists as Life and Blessedness. It is itself and by itself, idea and logos (*λόγος*) of itself, having its life and act in its own Existence which is not Existence; union without distinction of the Spirit with itself, divinity, substantiality, blessedness, mentality, vitality, goodness, being absolutely all things in a universal mode (*universaliter omni modis omnia*), purely unengendered (*pure ingenitum*), pre-existing (*πρόόν*), unity of union which is not itself union (*unalitas cōnitionis nulla cōnitione*).

Hadot has noted the identifying characteristics in this passage of Porphyry’s interpretation of the *Oracles*: that the One is equated with the ‘Father’, that he is ‘all things but in universal mode’ (a restatement of fr. 21 of the *Oracles*: that the Father is ‘all things but intelligibly so’), and that the One or Father ‘being one in his simplicity contains three powers’.⁴⁰ This last concept, according to Hadot, is a restatement of Porphyry’s interpretation of fr. 3 of the *Oracles*: that the One or Father is ‘co-unified in his simplicity’ (*ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι... συνηνώσθαι* = ‘*simplicitate unus qui sit tres potentias cōniens*’; see fr. 9.4 of the *Parmenides* commentary and Hadot’s notes *ad loc.*). As for the substitution of Blessedness for Intellect in connection with the ideas of conversion and immobility, Hadot explains this as a ‘Neoplatonic transposition of Stoic ontology’ wherein Blessedness (originally a Pythagorean term used to describe the Monad) defines God’s nature in terms of his absolute purity and unity, a state of being when, ‘turned towards himself’, he most fully knows himself as he is (i.e. as a pre-existing pre-intelligence).⁴¹ In this context,

³⁹ See, also, *Ad Cand.* 21.5–9 = Hadot ii, §38; *Adv. Arium* 1.52.3–17 = Hadot ii, §44; 3.2.12–22 = Hadot ii, §28.

⁴⁰ *Porphyre* i.273.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 287–93.

Hadot cites a passage from Augustine (based on Porphyry's teaching) where Blessedness is linked with both knowledge and being (*De civ. dei* 8.6): 'nor is it one thing for God to know, another to be blessed, as though he could know and not be blessed. But for Him, to live, to know, to be blessed, are the same as to be'.⁴² The linking of intellect with conversion and repose is found in a summary of Porphyrian teaching on the nature of the Chaldean Father or *ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα* as cited by John Lydus (*de mensibus* 21.15–18): 'For as the mystical doctrine (ὁ μυστικός λόγος) says, the Once Transcendent (*ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα*) is a substantial Intellect (οὐσιώδης νοῦς) which remains in its own substance (οὐσία) and is turned toward itself while standing and abiding (ἐστῶς τε καὶ μένων).'⁴³ These same ideas are also attested in Porphyry's commentary on the *Parmenides*, 14.21–6; 'And thus they (*sc.* Existence, Life, and Intellection) are all acts (ἐνέργεια), so that according to Existence (κατὰ τὴν ὑπαρξιν), act is standing at rest (ἐστῶσα), according to Intellection (κατὰ τὴν νόησιν), act is turned toward itself (εἰς αὐτὴν στραφεῖσα), according to Life (κατὰ τὴν ζωὴν), act inclines away from Existence (ἐκ τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἐκνεύσασα).'⁴⁴ Although Porphyry makes no reference here to the *Oracles*, a similar statement in Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 2.101.25–7 (Ruelle), is attributed to the 'Chaldean' tradition: 'Thus, as it is said in the Chaldean manner (ὡς Χαλδαϊκῶς εἰπεῖν), Intellect (νοῦς), moreover, stands at rest (ἵσταται) according to act (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν), Life (ζωή) according to power (κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν), and Being (οὐσία) according to the Existence of the Father (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπαρξιν).' In this instance, the formulaic ὡς Χαλδαϊκῶς εἰπεῖν refers to a commentary on the *Oracles*, most likely that of Iamblichus, but the triadic concepts (Being = Existence = Father, Life = Power, Intellect = Act) – in connection with the notion of 'standing at rest' – originate with Porphyry.⁴⁵ Finally, the linking of stability and rest with the First Principle (or Monad) is found in a commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Favonius Eulogius (*somn. Scip.* p. 3, 32 Holder), which also utilises Porphyry's exegesis of the *Oracles*: 'As the theologians declare, the dyad, in truth, is a second movement. For the first movement, stable and at rest in the monad goes out, as if going outside, into the dyad.'⁴⁶

In terms of the gnostic sources, we have already noted above the concepts of conversion, repose, and immobility in connection with the One or Existence in *Allogenes*. *Allogenes* also attests to the substitution of Blessedness for Mentality (xi.54.15: 'the Mentality which derives from Blessedness'). In *Zostrianos*, this substitution has become a formal feature of the text in connection with the triad: e.g. viii.14.13–14: 'Existence, Blessedness, and Life'; viii.15.5–10 (here, in a baptismal context): 'the water of Life which belongs to Vitality... the [water] of Blessedness

⁴² Ibid. 292 n. 4.

⁴³ Hadot (ibid. 293 and n. 2) regards this prose statement as an actual paraphrase of a Chaldean verse or verses because of the introductory words, ὁ μυστικός λόγος, which were sometimes used by the later Neoplatonists when citing verses from the *Oracles* (see frs. 8, 59 and notes).

⁴⁴ See Hadot's comments on this passage, ibid. 132–8.

⁴⁵ See F. W. Cremer, *Die Chaldäischen Orakel und Iamblich de mysteriis* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1969), pp. 40–1.

⁴⁶ This passage is cited by Hadot, *Porphyre* i.286 and n. 10: 'Dyas, vero, ut theologoi asserunt, secundus est motus. Primus enim motus in monade stabilis et consistens in dyadem veluti foras egreditur.' In Hadot's words (287): 'Les *theologoi* dont parle Favonius sont probablement les *Oracles chaldaïques* et la doctrine qui leur est rapportée correspond à l'interprétation des *Oracles* par Porphyre.' Although there are several verses in the *Oracles* dealing with the monad and/or dyad (e.g. frs. 8, 11, 12, 26, 27), none of them uses the specific terminology utilised by Favonius. The closest in sense would be fr. 12: 'For the monad is extensible which generates duality' (ταναή (γὰρ) μονάς ἐστὶν ἥ δύο γεννᾷ).

which [belongs] to Knowledge ... the water of Existence which belongs to Divinity'; viii.66.16–18: 'Existence ... and Life and Blessedness'; viii.73,8–11: 'Existence ... Life, and in Blessedness he has Knowledge'. Further, certain sections of *Zostrianos* (although sometimes fragmented) appear to parallel, in addition to the Existence, Life, Blessedness triad, many of the other expressions and phrasing found in *Adv. Arium* 1.50.

Zost. viii.3.8–13: 'He exists as Existence, form (εἶδος), and Blessedness, yet by giving power he is alive with Life. How has the Existence which does not exist appeared from a power that exists?'

Zost. viii.67.14–17: 'Blessed is the [idea (ἰδέα)] of the act that exists. By receiving Existence, he receives power.'

Zost. viii.74.9–14: 'Existence, idea (ἰδέα) [...] It is [according to] act which [is] Life and according to perfection which is intellectual power that [...].'

Adv. Ar. 1.50.14–17: 'For the power which is the power of Existence, this power exists as Life and Blessedness. It is itself and by itself, idea and logos of itself,⁴⁷ having its Life and act in its own Existence which is not Existence.'

Zost. viii.17.1–3: 'And the power exists together with the Being and the Existence of Being, when the water exists.'

Zost. viii.15.13–17: 'Now the water of Life [exists according to] a power, that belonging to [Blessedness] according to Being, and that belonging to [Divinity] according to [Existence].'

Adv. Ar. 1.50.12–14: 'It is especially in the power of Being, that is Existence, that are contained the powers of Life and Blessedness; for the power which is the power of Existence, this power exists as Life and Blessedness.'

Zost. viii.79.16–22: 'The [entire] Spirit, perfect, simple, and invisible, has become a unity in Existence and act and a simple three-[powered] One.'

Adv. Ar. 1.50.4–5: 'Spirit having in its unity a triple power, perfect Spirit and Spirit beyond Spirit.'

Adv. Ar. 1.50.10–12: 'Since it is one in its simplicity it contains three powers: all Existence, all Life, all Blessedness; but all these are one and one and simple.'

Zost. viii.74.17–18: 'It is everywhere yet nowhere.'

Adv. Ar. 1.50.9–10: '...existing at the same time everywhere and nowhere.'⁴⁸

Zost. viii.75.12–24: 'All [these] were in the indivisibility of [the] Spirit. Because of [...] knowledge it is divinity, {non}-substantiality,⁴⁹ blessedness, life, mentality, goodness, unity and singleness. That is, all these are [the purity] of unengenderedness.'⁵⁰ The term 'pre-exists'⁵¹ then appears in a lacuna.

⁴⁷ On Porphyry's understanding of 'idea' and 'logos' as 'generative powers', see Hadot, *ibid.* 295.

⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. Porphyry, *Sent.* 31 (Lamberz): ὁ θεὸς πανταχοῦ ὅτι οὐδαμοῦ.

⁴⁹ The facsimile edition reads ἡμῖτατος[ια] (which I have emended to ἡμῖτ[α]τ[ο]ς[ια]). Sieber (*Nag Hammadi Codex viii*) unnecessarily leaves a lacuna here. The sequence θεϊότης, οὐσιότης is first attested in Albinus, *Didask.* 164.30 Hermann.

⁵⁰ τ[ῆς] οὐκ ἡμῖτατισ. Sieber, *ibid.*, translates this phrase as '[the purity] of barrenness'. Elsewhere, however, he translates ἡμῖτατισ as 'ingenerateness' (viii.121.22; 122.5). Cf. ἡμῖτατισ in *Steles Seth* vii.118.29; 120.23; 123.12–13.

⁵¹ [εἰ]τ[ὴ] ὡρῶν ἡωοον. Cf. *Steles Seth* 124.4–5; 19; π[η] ε[ἰ]τ[ὴ] ὡρῶν ἡωοον = ὁ προών. It should be noted that the divine epithets listed here (e.g. divinity, blessedness, perfection, goodness) were common elements in Gnosticism and Hermeticism as well as in the school theology of Middle Platonism, suggesting (in Hadot's view) the existence of a common literary genre in which the Divine was praised in solemn, hymnic form with fairly fixed terms and

Adv. Ar. 1.50.18–21: ‘Union without distinction of the Spirit with itself, divinity, substantiality, blessedness, mentality, vitality, goodness, being absolutely all things in a universal mode, purely unengendered, pre-existing, unity of union which is not itself union.’

The similarities in these passages are so close one is led to conclude that the author of *Zostrianos*, like the authors of *Allogenes* and *Steles Seth*, had access to the same Greek source used by Victorinus.⁵² If Hadot is correct about Victorinus, that source would be a commentary of Porphyry on the *Chaldean Oracles*. If this is so, then *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth* and *Zostrianos* – in the form in which we now have them – could not have been the same texts known to Plotinus. Given the fact that Amelius and Porphyry both attacked the ‘revelations’ of Zostrianos and Zoroaster in particular, it is reasonable to suggest that the gnostics in Rome – in light of this criticism – revised their revelations (or produced new revelations) to conform more closely to the teachings of the great Porphyry – a politic way to gain intellectual credibility in Roman philosophical circles.⁵³ That Porphyry, on his part, may in turn have borrowed from the gnostics is certainly not out of the question, as evidenced by Victorinus’ use of the term *τριδύναμος* (and its Latin equivalent ‘tripotens’). But such borrowing would have been selective and critical, given Porphyry’s intellectual bent and his open criticism of the gnostics in Plotinus’ school. It may even be the case that Porphyry was familiar with the term *τριδύναμος* in a non-gnostic context, perhaps through the medium of Middle Platonic and/or Neopythagorean commentaries on the nature of the soul, and then used it creatively in certain instances as a substitute for the more poetic Chaldean term *τριγλῶχης*.⁵⁴

As for Victorinus’ use of the word Spirit (‘Spiritus’) as an equivalent term for the One or Father in *Adv. Arium* 1.50, Hadot suggests that its usage here – in a Neoplatonic context – may reflect Porphyry’s substitution of the Stoic term *pneuma*

expressions. What is of interest, however, is the inclusion of these terms in the framework of Neoplatonic metaphysics, especially the Existence–Life–Intellect triad (and variants), an innovation Hadot attributes to Porphyry (see *Porphyre* i.283–4; 457–61).

⁵² It is also possible, of course, that one (or more) of the authors of the gnostic texts has selectively borrowed from another; see e.g. Turner, ‘Threefold Path’, p. 330; idem, ‘Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History’, pp. 79–85 (Turner argues for the literary priority of *Allogenes* and thus refers to these texts collectively as the ‘*Allogenes* group’); cf. similarly Wire, op. cit., pp. 182–5. Robinson, op. cit., p. 138, notes either a literary dependence between *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* or ‘a mutual dependence on some fixed text’. The *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex should also be mentioned here. Jean-Marie Sevrin refers to this text as an ‘extremely syncretistic’ and ‘artificial’ work which is dependent, in part, on *Zostrianos*; see *Le Dossier baptismal Séthien: Études sur la Sacramentaire Gnostique*, Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section ‘Études’, ii (Québec, 1986), pp. 204–21.

⁵³ On this point, Pearson observes – in the case of *Marsanes* – that the gnostic author of this text ‘is “bending over backwards” to make his teaching as palatable as possible to Platonist readers’ (‘Introduction’ to *Marsanes*, p. 248); cf. idem, ‘The Tractate Marsanes and the Platonic Tradition’, p. 384: ‘Gnostics modified their views in response to the doctrines of contemporary Platonists, perhaps in an attempt to achieve a more respectable standing in the Platonist schools’. On Porphyry’s influence in the Latin West (where his works were known and cited even during his lifetime), see the excellent study of Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources*, trans. by Harry E. Wedeck (Cambridge, MA, 1969). Cf. Hadot, *Porphyre* i.80–6; Smith, ‘Porphyrian Studies’, pp. 764–73.

⁵⁴ Hierocles, for example, uses the word *τριδύναμος* in connection with the three faculties or powers of the soul (*In aur. carm.* 20); he is also familiar with terminology from the *Oracles* on the ‘vehicle’ of the soul (*In aur. carm.* 26 = fr. 120). This terminology was most likely mediated through Porphyry. See e.g. A. Smith, *Porphyry’s Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 156–7.

as an equivalent expression for the Chaldean Father as an 'intelligible fire'.⁵⁵ Victorinus says of the Spirit that it is 'inseparable from itself' ('inseparabilis a semet ipso'),⁵⁶ an idea that is paralleled in the *Oracles* with regard to the *ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα*, which is similarly said to be 'indivisible' or, literally, 'without parts' (*ἀμιστύλλευτος*; fr. 152).⁵⁷ Among the Stoics, this language of 'indivisibility' was applied to their concept of *pneuma*. Hadot, however, is cautious, noting that none of the later Neoplatonists ever uses the name *pneuma* as a substitute for the Chaldean 'pater', and thus suggests that Victorinus' use of 'Spirit' in this instance may not derive from a Neoplatonic source.⁵⁸ Based on this observation, Abramowski suggests that Porphyry has borrowed the term 'Spirit' from the gnostics, noting in particular the expression *tripotens in unalitate spiritus* in *Adv. Arium* 1.50.4-5 (cf. e.g. *Zostrianos*, viii.87.13-14 and *passim*: 'triple powerful Invisible Spirit').⁵⁹ But is this likely? Although Porphyry was familiar with the term *pneuma*, he understood it principally in connection with the teaching of the *Oracles* on the role of the soul's 'breath' or 'vehicle' (*ὄχημα-πνεῦμα*), i.e. the quasi-material 'spiritual envelope' or 'astral body' acquired by the soul in its descent to earth.⁶⁰ That Porphyry would then have used this term as a descriptive expression for the First Principle, either as a 'Stoicisation' of Chaldean terminology (Hadot's initial suggestion) or borrowed it from the gnostics (Abramowski's suggestion), is doubtful. But even granted gnostic influence, Hadot's second objection still remains: if Victorinus found the term *pneuma* as an equivalent term for 'pater' in Porphyry's exegesis of the *Oracles*, why then is there no trace of this usage among the later Neoplatonists? Although *τριδύναμος* is attested by the later Neoplatonists, it is used infrequently and is never found in connection with the First Principle (see above). Unless Victorinus found this terminology in a source independent of Porphyry, the best explanation is that he has equated 'pater' and *pneuma* in *Adv. Arium* 1.50 in order to reconcile Chaldean and Christian concepts. This is the case, for example, in *Ad Candidum* 1.6-8 = Hadot ii, §1, where Victorinus equates the Chaldean 'Paternal Intellect' (*νοῦς πατρικός*) with the 'Spirit' who has 'sent forth symbols from all eternity which are engraved in the soul' ('sed quoniam si inditus est animae nostrae *νοῦς πατρικός* et spiritus de super missus figurationes intellegentiarum inscriptas ex aeterno in nostra anima movet'). This statement of Victorinus is a paraphrase of fr. 108 of the *Oracles*, where (in the version of the verse preserved by Psellus, *P.G.* 122.1141 a 12; cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.211.1-2) the 'Paternal Intellect' (*νόος πατρικός*) is said to have 'sown symbols in the souls' (*σύμβολα πατρικός νόος ἔσπειρα ταῖς ψυχαῖς*; cf. fr. 108: *σύμβολα γὰρ πατρικός νόος ἔσπειρεν κατὰ κόσμον*).

The evidence, then, in terms of any 'exchange of ideas' between Porphyry and the

⁵⁵ *Porphyre* i.296.

⁵⁶ Cf. Porphyry, *In Parm.* 5.21-2: *ἀχώριστον...ἐαυτ(οῦ)* (as cited by Hadot, *ibid.* 296 n. 10; cf. *ibid.* 2.81 n. 3).

⁵⁷ This Chaldean expression is taken from a context in which Proclus describes the 'Once Transcendent' (*ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα*) in terms very close to Victorinus' description of the 'Spirit': *In Crat.* 159.1-5: 'For he (*sc. ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα*) is, as the oracle says, "without parts" (*ἀμιστύλλευτος*), a simple unity (*ἐνοειδής*), indivisible (*ἀδιαίρετος*)...and he unifies all things and turns them toward himself while being purely separate from all things.'

⁵⁸ *Porphyre* i.297. Hadot suggests a Stoic-inspired source; see his comments on *Adv. Arium* 1.50.5-8 in *Marius Victorinus: Traités théologiques sur la Trinité* ii.851.

⁵⁹ Abramowski, *op. cit.*, p. 112 n. 27.

⁶⁰ See frs. 61, 104, 120, 129, 158, 201 and notes. On Porphyry's understanding of the *ὄχημα-πνεῦμα* see e.g. *Sent.* 29 Lambez; *de regressu an.* §7 Bidez (ap. Augustine, *De civ. dei* 10.27, 'anima spiritalis'); Hadot, *Porphyre* i.178-206.

gnostics would appear to be far more weighted in the direction of gnostic dependence on Porphyry than vice versa. If so, then the *terminus a quo* for *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, and *Zostrianos*, in the form we now have them, would be some time after the year 268 – or the approximate year of Plotinus' death.⁶¹

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⁶¹ Abramowski (op. cit., pp. 123–4) suggests this possibility in the case of *Allogenes* (cf. similarly A. Smith, 'Porphyrian Studies', p. 763 n. 282). Since the Nag Hammadi Library was probably buried in the Egyptian desert c. 350 (see J. Robinson, 'Introduction' to the *Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 16), the *terminus ad quem* for the Greek versions of these texts could reasonably be any time during the first quarter of the fourth century.