

PLATO'S *PSYCHOGONIA* IN LATER PLATONISM

In the long history of the interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* in antiquity few passages generated the same volume and intensity of debate as did his account in 35ab of the creation of the World Soul, the so-called *psychogonia*. From the beginning of the exegetical tradition it was clear to commentators on the dialogue what was at stake: an 'accurate' exegesis of this text had direct bearing on the exposition of such important doctrines as the incorporeality of Soul, its relationship to the intelligible and physical worlds, the causes for and nature of its descent into this world, and its connection, if any, to the principle of evil. Inevitably, sharp doctrinal divisions arose among various groups of interpreters, principally having to do with the constituent components of Soul's 'mixture.' Although there is some question both about the received text and Plato's meaning here,¹ it seems clear that in Plato's account Soul is the product of two mixtures, the first of which is the blending of a Nature that is indivisible (τῆς ἀμερίστου . . . οὐσίας) and another that becomes divided among bodies (τῆς αὖ περὶ τὰ σώματα γιγνομένης μεριστῆς). The product of this blending is a third kind of Nature (τρίτον . . . οὐσίας εἶδος) that is intermediate between the undivided Nature, or the Same, and the divided Nature, or the Other. The Demiurge took these three kinds of being and further mixed them into a single form, compelling (since they are of themselves 'difficult to mix') the Same and Other to become one form through the intermediacy of the third Nature. Among exegetes there was little disagreement over the interpretation of the ἀμέριστος οὐσία: most Platonists identified it with Intellect, the principle of changeless and eternal Being. But about the divided Nature (μεριστὴ οὐσία) there was no such consensus. Two related controversies concerning this Nature arose very early in the tradition and continued unresolved to the end of antiquity. There were, on the one hand, those Platonists who were accused of construing Plato's reference to an Essence that 'becomes divided among bodies' as confirmation that Soul's nature is in part corporeal. Reaction to this took different forms, the most radical being the position of later Neoplatonists that the divided Essence cannot truly be a constituent element of Soul, but is ontologically inferior to it, yet superior to the nature of bodies. On the other hand, the interpretation that inspired by far the most strenuous objections advanced a dualistic theory of Soul's nature by identifying or closely associating the divided Essence with the cosmic principle of evil, which then existed in opposition to the principle of reason and order introduced into Soul by the undivided Essence. The most extensive effort to counter the dualists came from the Neoplatonists, who in general considered any idea that there are opposing causal principles of the Soul and body of the cosmos to be a direct challenge to the concept of the absolute supremacy and exclusive power of the Good. No doubt believing themselves to be preserving the integrity of Soul, conceived as either the Soul of the universe or the souls of individuals, these philosophers variously argued both that Soul suffered no permanent effects from its connection with bodies and that its nature had nothing in common either with corporeal nature or with the first cause of evil. In what follows, I offer an

¹ See, for example, G. M. A. Grube, 'The composition of the World-Soul in *Timaeus* 35A–B', *JP* 27 (1932), n. 1, 80–2.

examination of the most intriguing and philosophically significant of these Neoplatonic responses, that of Plotinus to the Neopythagorean/Platonist Numenius of Apamea. For, while firmly opposed to the strongly dualistic features of Numenian doctrine, Plotinus nonetheless apparently believed that with respect to other elements of his doctrine—some of which, as we shall see, Plotinus appropriated for his own interpretation—Numenius was an accurate exegete of Plato's thought. Plotinus' unique relationship to Numenius can best be appreciated when seen in contrast to the critique by the later Neoplatonist Proclus' of the other important dualist interpretation of the *psychogonia* in the Middle Platonic period, that of Plutarch of Chaeronea and Atticus. It will be helpful, then, to begin with the latter. My hope is that such a comparative analysis will serve as a means of uncovering the arguments, and the presuppositions underlying them, that dominated the debate concerning the nature of Soul in the centuries following Plato's death.

PROCLUS ON PLUTARCH AND ATTICUS

In the middle of his long exegesis of the *psychogonia* (*In Tim.* 2.152.24–154.26 Diehl) Proclus turns his attention to competing interpretations of various individuals and their followers that preceded him, giving a brief description and critique of each position. In all, he discusses six views, including those of Eratosthenes, Numenius, Severus, Plutarch, Atticus, Plotinus, and Theodorus of Asine.² Although Proclus gives no overt indication of which, if any, of these positions he might have found especially objectionable, there is no doubt when one reads the whole of his exegesis that he is most concerned to refute the—by his time infamous—interpretation associated with both Plutarch and Atticus.³ Drawing extensively from Porphyry and Iamblichus, Proclus rejected their strongly dualistic exegesis of Plato's account of the creation of both the cosmos and Soul in the *Timaeus*. The Neoplatonic criticism focused on three of their most celebrated claims: (i) that the universe was created in time; (ii) that disordered matter pre-existed this creation; and (iii) that a pre-existent, evil World Soul, which Plato hypothesizes in *Laws* 896d–897d, introduced an irrational and chaotic movement into this disordered matter (*In Tim.* 1.381.26ff. and 391.4ff.). Thus there are two principles, matter and the World Soul or active force of evil, that exist independently of the supreme principle of the Good. Looking to *Timaeus* 30a, Plutarch and Atticus understood both the creation of the cosmos and the generation of the Essence of Soul as, in effect, the temporal process of the demiurgic god imposing rational order on a pre-existing, irrational principle of evil. This same dynamic is played out in the generated World Soul that, according to their interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a, is created through a mixture of good and evil Natures. The problems that these claims posed for all orthodox Platonists in their attempts to present what to them was a faithfully Platonic theory of the nature of Soul were of particular concern to Proclus as well as to his predecessors and much of his discussion of the *psychogonia* is fashioned as a reaction to them. We should, then,

² Proclus' sources for these descriptions are Porphyry and Antoninus, pupil of Ammonius. Cf. *In Tim.* 2.154.6ff.

³ Proclus also especially objected to the interpretations of Eratosthenes and Severus insofar as they expressed or implied that there is a divisible, bodily element in the nature of Soul. Cf. *In Tim.* 2.152.24–9.

begin with a look at the position of Plutarch and Atticus⁴ and then consider Proclus' answer to it.

Some [exegetes], regarding the divided Essence as physical (*φυσικὴν*), say that this Essence, being irrational, exists before the rational Essence, but the divine Essence is undivided, and they fashion the logical Essence (sc. of Soul) from these two Essences, the one regarded as the ordering principle and the other as the underlying principle, as do Plutarch and Atticus, and they say that this logical Essence is uncreated with respect to its substratum (*τὸ ὑποκείμενον*), but created with respect to its [mixed] form. (Proclus, *In Tim.* 2.153.25–154, 1)⁵

To this third [group of exegetes] we should say that he [Plato] does not want the illogical Soul to be older than the logical Soul. For as he said,⁶ the god did not think it right that what is older be ruled by what is younger. (*In Tim.* 2.154.15–18)

The doctrine to which Proclus here refers is presented *in toto* by Plutarch in his treatise *On the Creation of Soul in the Timaeus*. Acknowledged by Plutarch himself as heterodox (1014a, p. 147, 24ff.), it is rooted in his controversial theory of a precosmic evil Soul, to which Proclus alludes in his critical account. Plato, Plutarch saw, recognized, as others later would not, that in the creation of the physical world there was need of three principles: a good and rational Demiurge, Matter (*ὕλη*) or Nature (*οὐσία*), and Necessity (*ἀνάγκη*), which Plutarch conceives as the self-moved, that is, i.e. eternal, principle of movement and the motive force of matter. This triad of principles is in a real sense the result of a coalescence of the Aristotelian concept of matter as substrate with the fundamental Platonic ideas of the elements of creation. By Plutarch's time it had become standard practice to identify Aristotle's prime matter (*ὕλη*) with the Receptacle and Place (*χώρα*) of the *Timaeus*. Plutarch exploits this identification in a direct attack on the Stoic theory that the substrate of Soul is matter: if we are to understand matter to be the Aristotelian substrate that is formless, inert, and lacking all quality, then it cannot account for the disordered motion, and all that this phrase implies, which the Demiurge brings to order and rational harmony. And if matter cannot be the source of its own motion, then neither can it be the origin of the evil that Plato made part of the pre-cosmic *ἀνάγκη*. According to Plato's own doctrine such a principle must be a primal, ungenerated Soul. So Plutarch makes Necessity something entirely distinct from the Receptacle, recognizing it as a separate principle that he sees as Soul in its original state: irrational and chaotic, it is the evil World Soul whose existence, at least in Plutarch's view of the matter, Plato confirmed in *Laws* 896d–897d. Thus the state of *ἀκοσμία* which exists before creation of the world and upon which the Demiurge imposes order is the aftermath of the mixture of matter and this evil Soul, possessing both a formless corporeal element and an irrational kinetic—that is to say psychic—part (cf. 1014b, p. 148, 14ff.).

In the creation of the cosmos, then, Plutarch recognizes, in addition to the undivided Nature or *νοῦς*, two other cosmic causal principles: matter and the dis-

⁴ It should be noted that Atticus does not merely duplicate Plutarch's doctrine of Soul, but makes several not insignificant modifications to it. However, these changes are for the purposes of this study essentially irrelevant, and so it will not be necessary to distinguish the two exegetes or to consider Atticus' exegesis separately. Cf. W. Deuse, *Untersuchungen zur mittelpatonischen und neuplatonischen Seelenlehre* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 48ff.; J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, rev. edn (Ithaca, 1996), 444–5; M. Baltes, 'Zur Philosophie des Platonikers Attikos', in H.-D. Blume and F. Mann (edd.), *Platonismus und Christentum. Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie* (Münster, 1983), 46–7.

⁵ Cf. *In Tim.* 1.381ff. and 391.4ff. What results is the *πᾶν ὅσον ἦν ὁρατὸν . . . κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως* of *Timaeus* 30a3–4.

⁶ *Timaeus* 34c; cf. also *Laws* 714e and 89ab.

ordered World Soul, these latter existing in combination as the *ἀκοσμία*. For a Platonist like Plutarch, however, the generation of Soul cannot involve matter. The Nature of the generated Soul is a mixture of the primal World Soul, which Plutarch terms 'Soul in itself' (*ψυχὴ καθ' αὐτήν*) and identifies with the divided Nature,⁷ with the *ἀμέριστος οὐσία*, and the mixture is understood as the imposition of order by the undivided Nature on the chaotic Soul. The generation of the rational World Soul is the result of a subsequent blending of this generated psychic Nature with the Same and Other.⁸ Plutarch acknowledges that the divided Nature, which he refers to as the *οὐσία* of Soul,⁹ is, like matter in the case of bodies, the principle of its multiplicity, but Plato, he thinks, was careful to differentiate this from the multiplicity belonging to bodies and does so in the *Timaeus* by reserving such names as 'Nurse' and 'Receptacle' for matter, while referring to Soul's *οὐσία* by a quite distinct terminology: 'Necessity', 'what is divided among bodies', and the 'Indefinite' (*Philebus* 24a–25b), which is the deficiency of number and ratio (1014d, p. 149, 1ff.).

In an absolute sense, then, neither the corporeal world nor rational Soul is created; rather, both are brought to an ordered existence from a pre-existing chaotic movement by the demiurgic god. Plutarch thus separates the uncreated from the created Soul, the former being the 'Soul in itself' and the latter a compound of this primal Soul and a divine Nature brought about through the ordering power of god. In doing so he is guided by his opinion that the interpretations of competing exegetes have not sufficiently explained the origin of moral evil since none posits a substrate that could cause it. And he is well aware of the ramifications of his theory of the substance of Soul and even embraces them: the World Soul's share in divine Intellect or undivided Essence, he claims, is only derivative, resulting from the introduction into it of an external superior principle, while all irrationality and wickedness arise from its own nature. Therefore, in a paraphrase of *Phaedrus* 237d, he says that Soul is not wholly the work of god, but possesses a portion of evil which is of the same nature as itself (*σύμφυτον*) (1026e, p. 165, 4ff.).

Proclus' reasons—and, we may surmise, those of Porphyry¹⁰ and Iamblichus as well—for rejecting this view are various. First of all, it violates a basic rule that the principle of disorder cannot in any case precede in existence the principle of order (cf. *In Tim.* 2.154.15–18). And if both a disordered matter and a chaotic primal Soul existed before, and so outside, the creative activity of god, then we are forced to admit both that god is in need of matter for his creation¹¹ and that there is some eternal principle that exists beyond the purview of the Good and becomes the pre-existent substrate of the logical Soul.¹² Moreover, if we accept this last point, then there exists the possibility that Soul is evil by nature. Lastly, although Plutarch claims to have

⁷ On Plutarch's 'Soul-in-itself' see Deuse (n. 4), 12ff. and 42ff.

⁸ Unlike many Platonists, Plutarch distinguishes the undivided and divided Natures from the Same and the Other. The former, in mixture, serve as the necessary links between the latter which, as opposites, cannot of themselves enter into mixture (1025ab, 161, 5ff.).

⁹ Although the divided Nature is not a material substrate, it at least functions as a kind of substrate (*οἶον ὕλην*) of Soul. So to say that the divided Nature is the 'matter' of Soul is thus to use the term in a completely homonymous way, since Plato did not mean that, in the generation of Soul, the evil World Soul was mixed with matter in any sense (1022f–1023a, 156, 9ff.).

¹⁰ For Porphyry's opposition to the dualism of Plutarch and Atticus, see H. Dörrie, 'Die Lehre von der Seele', in *Porphyre, Fondation Hardt, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* (Vandoeuvres and Genève, 1965), 176ff.

¹¹ Cf. *In Tim.* 1.300.1ff., 383ff., 396.1ff.; 2.102.6ff.

¹² Much of Proclus' treatise *De malorum subsistentia* is devoted to a repudiation of this position.

distinguished adequately the generation of Soul from that of bodies by showing that Soul's divided Essence is immaterial, he interprets Plato's phrase 'divided among bodies' to mean that this Essence somehow comes to 'grasp' matter (1024a, p. 159, 9–10), and it is just this sort of exegesis, Proclus asserts, that in fact compromises Soul's incorporeality. To this doctrine, which for the reasons outlined above he regarded as less than sophisticated philosophically,¹³ Proclus responds with two claims: (i) neither of Soul's constituent parts is to be identified with either Intellect or the Essence that is divided among bodies, so that no part of Soul has contact with matter;¹⁴ and (ii) god creates all of the logical Soul—thus there is no pre-existing principle independent of god's creative power.¹⁵ In this way Proclus attacks the position of Plutarch and Atticus at its core by denying that any Nature that is in itself inferior to Soul can be a constituent of its creation, that there is a separate pre-existing principle that could challenge the supremacy of the Good, and that evil attaches itself to any of the constituent elements of the rational soul's Nature. Clearly these arguments are to be understood within the larger framework of Proclus' doctrine, formulated most extensively in his *De malorum subsistentia*, that there cannot be two first principles, one of which is good and the other evil, and that therefore, if all things are generated from a single principle that is the Good, nothing that exists can be absolutely evil (cf. *De mal. sub.*, c. 10, 30, pp. 210ff. Boese). He accepts Plutarch's argument (i) that the disordered motion of *Timaeus* 30a is the source of evil in the world; (ii) that, by its nature, matter cannot be the source of evil; and (iii) that therefore Plato's disordered motion is not to be identified with matter (cf. *De mal. sub.*, cc. 34–5). What he rejects is the idea that this motion is to be identified with some pre-existent Soul that operates in active opposition to the Good. For it is the hallmark of Proclus' theory of evil that even the principle of all evil must have a share in the Good.

NUMENIUS AND PLOTINUS

Numenius

Of those who preceded us some make the Essence of Soul mathematical insofar as it is intermediate between what is physical and what is above the physical; and of these some, claiming that it [Soul] is Number, create it from the Monad, [which they construe] as the undivided Essence, and from the Unlimited Dyad, [which they construe] as the divided Essence. . . . Proponents of [this view] are Aristandrus and Numenius and many other interpreters . . .

(*In Tim.* 2.153.17–25)

We must answer the first of these philosophers that if Plato were thus to have made the Soul Number it would be odd to seek the principles of Number from among those things that exist.

(*In Tim.* 2.154.9–12)

Attempting to derive a consistent psychology from the fragments attributed to Numenius has been a matter of great vexation for scholars, both because certain

¹³ As Proclus depicts it in *In Tim.* 2.154.1.

¹⁴ Cf. *In Tim.* 2.149.4ff., 152.24ff., and 155.3–156.24. See also J. Trouillard, 'Proclus définit l'âme contre Aristote', *Diotima* 3 (1975), 133–4. On the Proclan idea that the soul is a kind of analogy, see id., 'Übereinstimmung der Definitionen der Seele bei Proklos', in C. Zintzen (ed.), *Die Philosophie des Neuplatonismus* (Darmstadt, 1977), 313.

¹⁵ *In Tim.* 1.383.25ff.; 2.119.16ff. and 155.3ff.; *P.T.* 3.9, p. 37, 15ff.; cf. also *In Tim.* 2.126.26–7.

statements in the fragments seem to contradict others¹⁶ and because there is no unanimity about which fragments are to be taken as genuinely Numenian.¹⁷ Pertinent for us is the disagreement surrounding the question of the source for several early sections (cc. 27–31 and 51–5) of the Christian Calcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus*, where the author presents an extended exegesis of Plato's *psychogonia*. Although certainty is not possible in this case, two more recent commentators, Waszink and Van Winden,¹⁸ arguing against various explanations that locate the source of influence on this part of Calcidius' work in other exegetes, have offered convincing reasons for assuming that Calcidius is in these passages indebted to Numenius either directly through his knowledge of Numenius' works or indirectly through Porphyry, whose own commentary on the *Timaeus* Calcidius apparently used extensively. If we are to accept this exegesis as Numenian, then we must conclude that the concerns of Numenius in his interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a extended far beyond those mentioned by Proclus in his statements quoted above.¹⁹ According to Calcidius, Numenius praised Plato for recognizing two pre-existent²⁰ Souls, one the beneficent creator and sustainer of order in the world and the other evil and the source of all evil that comes into the world.²¹ The first of these Souls he identifies with the undivided Essence or Monad, which, being intelligible, is also Mind and Intellect, the Nature immune to embodiment, and the genus of all intelligible being.²² The second, which is co-eternal with the undivided Essence, he equates with the Essence that is divided

¹⁶ On the inconsistencies in Numenius' fragments and for various attempts to account for them, see J. H. Waszink, 'Porphyrios und Numenios', in C. Zintzen (ed.), *Die Philosophie des Neuplatonismus* (Darmstadt, 1977), 67–8 and 76–7; J. C. M. Van Winden, *Calcidius on Matter. His Doctrine and Sources* (Leiden 1959), 114; K. Alt, *Weltflucht und Weltbejahung zur Frage des Dualismus bei Plutarch, Numenios, Plotin* (Stuttgart, 1993), 38–9; M. Baltes, 'Numenios von Apamea und der Platonische Timaios', *Vigiliae Christianae* 29 (1975, n. 1), 268–9; Deuse (n. 4), 70ff.

¹⁷ Cf. Alt (n. 16), 31 and 40; Baltes (n. 16), 252–3.

¹⁸ J. H. Waszink (ed.), *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus. In societatem operis coniuncto P.J. Jensen. Plato Latinus IV* (Londinii et Leidae, 1962), xlix–liii (against Beutler's attribution of this section to Plutarch) and J. C. M. Van Winden, 'Supplementary notes to the photographic reprint', *Calcidius on Matter* (Leiden, 1965), 254ff. (against the view that Porphyry is the direct source for Calcidius). For a detailed refutation of Waszink, cf. Deuse (n. 4), 73ff. Deuse notes that Waszink somewhat modified his view in 'Porphyrios und Numenios' (n. 16), 74, n. 3. If Porphyry is the direct source for this section of Calcidius, then my analysis of Numenius' exegesis must be qualified by the admission of at least the possibility that in cc. 27–31 we have a Porphyrean blend of Numenian and Plotinian ideas, and this possibility makes it more than a little problematic for me to claim Numenian influence on Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended Soul. But, for reasons which I cannot go into here, I think it unlikely that what we have here is Numenian exegesis filtered through Plotinian psychology. I hope to consider this matter in more detail in another study. See also Van Winden, *ibid.* 249 and n. 1 and Baltes (n. 16), 247, n. 28.

¹⁹ It is odd that, when Proclus discusses those of his predecessors who had erred by making part of Soul's constitution corporeal (see n. 3), he does not include Numenius. On the possible relationship between Numenius and Severus, see Baltes (n. 16), 255.

²⁰ Numenius presents arguments for the pre-existence of the evil Soul at Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 31, p. 80, 19–81, 7 Waszink.

²¹ Cf. J. Mansfeld, *Heresiography in Context. Hippolytus' Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy* (Leiden, 1992), 295ff. Mansfeld notes that, in their dualistic treatments of good and evil, '... Plutarch and Numenius are (original and creative) representatives of a definitive development, or tradition, in Middle Platonism and Later Pythagoreanism' (298). Such a dualism, he adds, had already been attributed to Pythagoras (by Aëtius) and Plato (by Aristotle) before Plutarch and Numenius.

²² Cf. c. 27, p. 78, 4; c. 29, p. 79, 15; and c. 31, p. 80, 11–12 and p. 81, 8–9.

among bodies.²³ While his notion that the divided Essence is itself an evil Soul echoes the dualistic interpretation of Plutarch and Atticus, other aspects of his conception of this constituent element of the generated Soul represent a significant departure from their doctrine. Most importantly, he directly contradicts one of their fundamental tenets by identifying the Essence that is divided among bodies with pre-existent matter, which he also equates with Necessity²⁴ and the chaotic motion of *Timaeus* 30a. In contrast to Plutarch and Atticus, who distinguish the irrational motion from matter insofar as matter, lacking quality and potency, cannot be the cause of anything, Numenius makes them two aspects of the same entity: the Soul of matter is regarded as the power that gives matter its irrational movement and, as the active principle of life, lends to what would otherwise be a completely passive substrate the power to oppose the ordering activity of the Demiurge.²⁵ In turn, this ensouled matter becomes the causal principle of the irrational, that is, divided, human soul. We recall that Plutarch essentially rejects this view when he claims that the divided Essence can be called the matter of Soul only homonymously, since if the two are identified there is no way of distinguishing the creation of Soul from that of body. Whether Numenius might have been aware of this objection is a question we shall take up shortly. For the present we should note that it can be taken as evidence that Numenius was sensitive to the possible criticism of his idea of an ensouled primary matter and that he employs, perhaps as a response to his critics, a standard Platonic argument to justify it:

The same Numenius applauds Plato because he acknowledges two Souls of the world, one of the highest beneficence and the other evil, that is to say matter which, although its motion is chaotic, nevertheless, since its motion derives from its own interior movement, necessarily is alive and possesses the life of a soul according to the law governing all things that move through a natural motion . . .²⁶

Because the motion of matter, although irrational and disordered, is internal to it, primal matter must, by the law of natural motion, be alive, that is, it has the life-giving power exclusively associated with Soul.²⁷

Whether or not Numenius did in fact elsewhere respond more fully to Plutarch's objection, it is certainly one that Numenius should have felt the need to address. For, in part as a consequence of the identification of the divided Essence with matter, he advances the view that the two pre-cosmic Souls are the causal principles of all creation, including the generation of the World Soul, of human souls, and of physical bodies.²⁸ Souls and bodies alike, then, are created in the same way from the same

²³ Cf. c. 27, p. 78, 3–6; c. 31, p. 81, 9–10; and Proclus, *In Tim.* 2.153.17–25 (= fr. 39 des Places).

²⁴ Hence another disagreement with Plutarch, who identifies Necessity with Soul rather than matter. It is perhaps significant that Plotinus follows Numenius on this question. Cf. Baltes (n. 16), 248, n. 33; Alt (n. 16), 32; Waszink (n. 16), 68–9.

²⁵ There is agreement among a number of scholars that, rather than simply identifying them, Numenius regarded the evil Soul and matter as two aspects of the same principle, with matter as the dominating element. Cf. Baltes (n. 16), 247–8; Alt (n. 16), 32; Waszink (n. 16), 68–9. For the opposing view of Theiler, cf. Baltes (n. 16), 247.

²⁶ Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 297, p. 299, 14–18 Waszink (= fr. 52, p. 97, 64–70 des Places).

²⁷ The law of natural movement is to be found in Plato; cf. *Phaedrus* 245e5–7 and *Timaeus* 30a3–6; cf. also Plutarch *De an. procr.* 1014c and *Plat. quaest.* 1003a.

²⁸ That Soul and bodies share the same generative principles is, of course, implicit in Numenius' interpretation of Plato's second mixture as an account of the creation of the physical world, since both this and the first mixture through which Soul is created have the undivided and divided Essences as constituent parts.

constituent parts, that is, from a blending of the undivided and divided Essences. In each case the mixture forms a single nature which god then divides according to principles of harmony and mathematical ratios.²⁹ Souls and bodies are thereby intermediate beings sharing in both unity and diversity, although not in the same proportion. Like most Platonists, Numenius, when he expresses the intermediate status of Soul, lays special emphasis on Plato's statement that in the generation of Soul the mixture produced an independent Essence existing separately from, although in its activity still being largely determined by, its two constituent Essences. But in his interpretation of the nature of this new Essence we find once more a very different approach from that of Plutarch. As we have seen, Plutarch regarded the generated Essence merely as the substrate of the rational World Soul, which comes to be only as the result of the second mixture of this derived Essence with the Same and the Other. Numenius, however, regards it as the World Soul itself, which thus is generated in its entirety from the first mixture; in the second mixture of the newly created Soul with the Same and the Other described in *Timaeus* 36b Plato is, in Numenius' view, describing the generation of the physical cosmos.³⁰ The result is that the World Soul becomes part of the essence of all living things in the created universe. Moreover, because Soul contains within itself all of the Natures from which the cosmos is generated, because it is so constituted as to possess knowledge of all things from whose powers it is created, and because these powers are also the principles (*initia*) of all existing things, it follows that the rational Soul possesses universal knowledge, the range of its ability to make judgements extending to all things, both sensible and intelligible.³¹

As a mixture of the Monad and Dyad the generated World Soul manifests characteristics of both, and as such is a being divided in unity, participating in both the first god and matter. In its contact with matter it exhibits both active and passive aspects: on the one hand it unifies matter while on the other it is divided by it.³² These characteristics are to a large extent mirrored in the human soul, although there is divergent testimony concerning the extent to which at this level the soul's two component Essences are blended. To summarize from Calcidius, it was Numenius' view that in the creation of the divided human soul the blending of the two pre-existing Souls results in a third essence composed of two parts, one irrational and the product of primal matter (*In Tim.* c. 297, p. 299, 16–300, 3 Waszink) and the other rational, deriving from the divine undivided Essence which is transcendent to bodies. Moreover, we may assume from the description of the World Soul in c. 31 that, like the superior part of that Soul, the rational element of the embodied soul remains entirely undescended.³³ Iamblichus places Numenius among a group of proponents of a strongly monistic theory of the mixture, including him among those who maintained the complete union and undifferentiated sameness of Soul with both of its principles. Moreover, Numenius is said to have maintained that the incorporeal essence of Soul is homoeomerous, the same, and one, so that all of its parts are in each part; thus the divided Soul contains within its essence, again in undifferentiated sameness, the noetic

²⁹ Division of bodies: c. 28; division of Soul: c. 52.

³⁰ Numenius identified the Same with the undivided Essence and the Other with the divided Essence. Both essences, then, are ingredients in each of the two mixtures. Proclus' concern, that if both Essences themselves were used in the mixture of the rational Soul they would each be destroyed, does not seem to have been shared by Numenius.

³¹ Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 51–5.

³² Cf. Eusebius, *Pr. Ev.*, 11.17.11–18; p. 536d–537b V.; 2, p. 40, 9–41,5 Mras (= fr. 11, p. 53 des Places).

³³ For an analysis of Calcidius c. 31, see below.

cosmos, the gods, the daemons, the good, and all of the 'higher kinds'.³⁴ On the other hand, according to Porphyry, Numenius made the quite opposite claim that the divided Soul has no parts but is constituted of two separate souls, the undivided and divided Essences, which, we may assume, are in continuous and irreconcilable hostility to each other.³⁵ This would suggest that, in the case of the human soul, the control of form over matter is never complete. If Porphyry's account is the more accurate one, then Numenius' conception of the soul is significantly more dualistic than what we find in Plutarch and Atticus.

Thus Numenius' interpretation of the *psychogonia*, although by all accounts in agreement with the Plutarchan treatment in giving a basically dualistic account of Soul, is most notable for its direct violation of two of Plutarch's criteria: (i) the unqualified identification of the divided Essence with primal matter; and (ii) the view that this ensouled matter is the causal principle for generated souls and physical bodies alike. Numenius thus left himself open to the same attack that Plutarch levelled against Crantor,³⁶ that to give souls and bodies the same principles of existence fails to provide a determinative means of distinguishing the nature of the incorporeal from that of the corporeal.

It is difficult to accept that Numenius simply ignored or was unaware of this challenge to his doctrine of Soul, since we know that, like Plutarch a critic of the Stoa, he was a strong advocate of the complete incorporeality of Soul³⁷ and was no doubt sufficiently familiar with Plutarch's own interpretation to be able to anticipate such a charge. He may well have reasoned that Soul, being intermediate between the intelligible and corporeal realms, must share directly in the natures of both. If, indeed, this was his thinking, then we have a conception of Soul's intermediacy that stands in stark contrast to that of the Neoplatonists. Moreover, if Soul's capacity for universal knowledge is directly predicated upon the fact that it is composed of all *initia*, both intelligible and sensible, then how can its nature completely transcend the physical world? Plutarch was content to say that, although Soul was so constituted as to shun all that is bodily, it somehow, subsequent to its generation, 'grasps' matter and this accounts for its plurality and diversity. Numenius may have found this to be an inadequate explanation for Soul's multiplicity, yet he clearly was cognizant of the need to give primary importance to the ways in which Soul is distinguished from bodies. He emphasized, perhaps to a greater degree than did Plutarch, that the mixture of the two natures produced an Essence separate from each. And the desire to differentiate Soul from bodies may well be behind his idea, found in Calcidius, that primal matter is the *auctrix* and *patrona* of the irrational part of the human soul which is *aliquid corpulentum mortaleque et corporis simile*.³⁸ Much has been made of the fact that here Numenius does not strictly identify matter with the lower part of the soul, but makes

³⁴ Iamblichus, *Περὶ ψυχῆς*, ap. Stob. *Anthol.* 1.49.32; p. 365, 5–21 and 67; p. 458, 3–4 Wachsmuth (= frs. 41 and 42, p. 90 des Places).

³⁵ Porphyry, *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων*, ap. Stob., *Anthol.* 1.49.25a; p. 350, 25–351, 1. On the inconsistency in Numenius' doctrine of the unity/diversity of Soul, see Baltes (n. 16), 244ff. and Waszink (n. 16), 76–7.

³⁶ Cf. *De an. procr.* 1012d, p. 144, 19 and 1013b–d, p. 146. It is not, however, certain that Crantor identified the divided Nature with matter. Cf. P. Thevenaz, *L'âme du monde. Le devenir et la matière chez Plutarque* (Paris, 1938), 62.

³⁷ Cf. John Philoponus, *In Aristot. De anima*, p. 9, 35–38 Hayduck (= fr. 47, p. 93, 1–5 des Places). On the problem of the relationship of the natures of Soul and body in Numenius, cf. Alt (n. 16), 39–40 and Baltes (n. 16), 244.

³⁸ Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.*, c. 297, p. 300, 1–2 (= fr. 52, p. 97, 70–3 des Places).

it its creator and sustainer. Yet it is equally significant that the sense here is not simply that the irrational part of the soul is corporeal, but rather that it is merely 'like' the corporeality of physical bodies. Perhaps his meaning is that the irrational element of the soul is similar to the physical body to the extent that both share the same causal principle, but that this element is different in all other respects. If so, then we are dealing with the similarity of Soul's nature to that of body, not a sameness.

There is further evidence that it was Numenius' strategy to stress the similarity rather than identity of the natures of Soul and bodies. In his Numenian exegesis of *Timaeus* 35a ff. Calcidius makes the following statements:

... for each body that truly exists has an essence, and there are many bodies, while there is one divided Essence [*una dividua essentia*] that is found in all bodies; since, as a unity, it is found at the same time in many bodies [*quae igitur una in multis simul invenitur*], we can correctly say that it differentiates itself and that it is divided. (c. 27, p. 78, 6–9 Waszink)

Therefore let there be a Soul suitable to the sensible world, generated from one indivisible Nature that is Mind and Intellect, and another [Nature] that is divided and dispersed among bodies; let it come forth situated between the undivided and divided Souls, so that [part of it] might remain always in the intelligible world, unaffected by embodiment [*immunis quidem ab incorporatione in mundo esset intellegibili semper*], while its physical part might assist those beings that are mute and insentient;³⁹ thus this intermediate Soul, since it was necessary that there exist in the world a race of animals that employ reason, could provide life and breath to this race; and, situated between two Natures, the Same and the Other, it could on the one hand contemplate the divinity of the Nature of the Same by raising its vision toward the higher regions, and on the other, turning to the lower sphere and realm of the Nature of the Other, it could equally distribute the decrees of the Demiurge and impart providence to the beings of this world. (c. 31, p. 81, 7–18 Waszink)

We note first of all the emphatic statement in c. 27 of the unity-in-diversity of the divided Soul that effectively differentiates the *dividua essentia* of Soul from the dividedness of all corporeal entities. Like the majority of Platonists, Numenius was doubtless aware that most doctrinal problems in the interpretation of the *psychogonia* result from imprecision in explaining what Plato means by the Essence that is 'divided among bodies' (περὶ τὰ σώματα . . . μεριστῆς). Both of the statements above show that Numenius wanted to qualify the sense in which we can say that the lower part of the World Soul is divided in its association with bodies. He is making the strong claim that this *essentia* is not itself divided but remains one; what Plato means by 'divided among bodies' is merely that it is a 'one in many' (*una in multis simul*), a single nature among, that is, in, the many bodies of the world. We may well wonder how Numenius could consistently maintain that that part of the World Soul that is closely linked to primal matter and in the individual soul is similar in nature to corporeal matter could in any way be considered a unity. But we must remember that what is divided among bodies is nonetheless Soul, and as Soul it cannot itself be divided, but retains its single nature even in its presence in many bodies. To say that the *dividua essentia* is divided, then, is to say only that it is a one-in-many. Thus the World Soul is a mixture of two primal Souls that are themselves essentially unities.

It is also clear from c. 31 that the Numenian World Soul—and, we may surmise, the Numenian human soul—is engaged in a double activity, directing its contemplation at the same time upward and downward toward its two constituent Essences. It is fair to

³⁹ Of course, Soul inherits these characteristics from the constituent ingredients of its mixture, the undivided Nature being a *immunis ab incorporatione anima* and the divided Nature a *inseparabili corporum comite, id est stirpea* (c. 31, p. 80, 11–12).

conclude from this that Soul's superiority to the corporeal it administers is guaranteed by that part of it that remains undescended and in constant touch with the intelligible *mens*. And it is probably this double activity that further separates the constitution of Soul from that of bodies. Correspondingly, in the same passage we find reference to two different but simultaneous states of the World Soul, one in which it resides in the intelligible world and another in which it is part of the physical world. We may infer that its ability to sustain its higher unity in its immersion in diversity is dependent on the divine aspect of its nature that remains eternally undescended and therefore unaffected by embodiment, for it is toward that Essence that resides in the intelligible world that Soul constantly looks and to which it remains tied even in its contact with the differentiation of the physical world. We may suppose, too, that before embodiment the divided element of the generated Soul remains itself an unalloyed unity in its participation in Intellect; that only subsequently, in the creation of the cosmos, is it 'divided' among bodies; and that even when so divided this participation remains entirely intact to the extent that the superior part of Soul remains undescended. The difference between the World Soul as undescended and as descended, or divided among bodies, is that in its former state it is a 'pure' unity and in the latter it is a unity-in-diversity. Numenius could thus argue that souls and bodies may share principles of existence that are the same in kind—for how else could Soul have intercourse with the material world?—but different in aspect. All of this suggests that what we have in these passages is part of Numenius' effort to save his account from the charge that he has in effect confused the natures of souls and bodies.⁴⁰

Plotinus

Others, adopting a more philosophical argument [sc. than Plutarch, Atticus, and their followers], say that it [sc. Soul] is intermediate between Intellect and perception, the first being the undivided and the latter the Nature that is divided around bodies, as Plotinus says.

(*In Tim.* 2.154.1–3)

To the fourth group of thinkers we must say that [Plato's] argument does not concern Soul's knowledge, but its Essence. It should not be said, then, that it is intermediate between the powers of knowledge, the intelligible and sensible.

(*In Tim.* 2.154.18–21)

Because Plotinus neither wrote a commentary on the *Timaeus* nor included an extended discourse on the *psychogonia* in his works, it is necessary, if we are to find a coherent exegesis in the *Enneads*, to look for it in comments and short discussions scattered throughout his treatises. Certainly Proclus is no help, his comments above, which suggest that Plotinus' interests in the *psychogonia* fall roughly in line with those of Crantor, finding no support in what is found in the *Enneads*. What we do find there is that, as with the exegeses of all Platonists, much of Plotinus' interpretation is derivative. But, although like other Neoplatonists Plotinus had as a primary interest to oppose the dualism of earlier Platonists, there is strong reason to conclude, if indeed chapters 27–31 of Calcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus* are genuinely Numenian, that somewhat paradoxically the source of greatest influence on Plotinus' interpretation is likely to be Numenius. Plotinus' exegetical method is quite interesting: although never mentioning Numenius by name, Plotinus, it seems, selectively

⁴⁰ This may have been one of the arguments that Numenius used against those, like the Stoics, who held that the soul is corporeal. Cf. Nemesius, *Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου*, 2, 8–14; pp. 69–72 C. F. Matthaei (= fr. 4b, pp. 46–7 des Places).

employs his ideas, winnowing out the characteristically dualistic features of his doctrine which he occasionally holds up for particular criticism, while retaining others that he apparently found compatible with and useful in the formulation of his own psychology.

What we can piece together of Plotinus' treatment of the *psychogonia* reveals the great importance that he attached to his exegesis of *Timaeus* 35a insofar as it buttressed his theory of the unity of souls⁴¹ and was the most important Platonic text for his explanation of the extent and nature of Soul's descent from the intelligible world and its division in the physical world. For Plotinus, as for Numenius, that Plato makes Soul a mixture of the undivided and divided Essences demonstrates that Soul is both one and many; more specifically, Plotinus' view of the nature of this mixture provides the framework for his discussion of the problem of how Soul retains its unity when it is divided in its relation to bodies.

As Proclus relates, Plotinus identifies the undivided Nature with his eternal Intellect. Although it is possible in a sense to speak of parts of Intellect, its multiplicity is wholly internal (cf. 4.3.4). External diversification begins with the hypostasization of Soul, whose Nature, as a composition of both the undivided and divided Essences, is a separate 'third Essence' occupying an intermediate position between intelligibles that are absolutely indivisible and physical bodies that are primarily divisible.⁴² Plotinus' description of the constituent elements of this third Essence is essentially the same as that which is found in the Numenian exegesis of Calcidius' commentary: the undivided Nature is the undescended Soul and the divided Nature is that aspect of Soul that descends.⁴³ Thus Numenius' view of the intermediate status of Soul becomes a key feature of Plotinus' controversial theory that it does not completely descend from the intelligible world, for although Soul has 'a nature to be divided'⁴⁴ and does in fact experience a kind of division in its relation to bodies upon its descent, its unbroken contact with, and so continued participation in, the indivisible Nature of Intellect guarantees that it does not entirely come down into the corporeal world; that is, it is never divided into parts in the way that bodies are. With respect to his concept of Soul's nature, then, Plotinus defines the descent of Soul largely in terms of the sort of 'division' that Soul experiences when among bodies. Plotinus certainly realized that the role that Plato gives to the divided Essence in the generation of Soul might be thought to cause problems for his own theory of the unity of souls and so is quite careful to qualify the sense in which it can be said that soul is divided. In his treatise *On the*

⁴¹ Cf. Deuse (n. 4), 117–18, who notes without explanation the importance of Plotinus' interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a in his accounts of the unity of Soul. See also P. P. Matter, *Zum Einfluss des platonischen 'Timaios' auf das Denken Plotins* (Winterthur, 1964), 26–7 and 57–8.

⁴² On the intermediate status of Soul in Plotinus, cf. J. Trouillard, 'L'âme du *Timée* et l'un du Parménide dans la perspective néoplatonicienne', *Rev. Int. Philos.* 24 (1970), 239.

⁴³ Cf. 4.1.1.40ff.; 4.2.1; 4.3.4 and 19; 4.9.2–3. The terminology is quite similar; compare Numenius' descriptions of the undivided Soul (*immunis ab incorporatione in mundo intellegibili semper*) and the divided Soul (*modo eiusdem naturae contempleretur divinitatem attollens aciem ad sublimia, modo ad ima sedemque diversae naturae vergens*) with Plotinus' references to the All-Soul: τὴν μὲν τοῦ παντός [ψυχὴν] ἀεὶ ὑπερέχειν τῷ μηδὲ εἶναι αὐτῇ τὸ κατελθεῖν (4.3.4.23ff.) and to the descendant Soul: ἐκ τῆς ἀνω οὐσης [ψυχῆς] καὶ τῆς ἐκείθεν ἐξημμένης, ῥυεῖσθαι δὲ μέχρι τῶνδε (4.2.1.15–16). On Bréhier's emendation of the last passage, cf. P. Henry, *Études Plotiniennes I. Les états du texte de Plotin* (Paris, 1961), 38–9. On the geometrical metaphor in the same passage, cf. M. A. Elferink, *La descente de l'âme d'après Macrobe* (Leiden, 1968), 27.

⁴⁴ 4.2.1.1ff.: νοῦς μὲν οὖν ἀεὶ ἀδιάκριτος καὶ οὐ μεριστός, ψυχὴ δὲ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκριτος καὶ ἀμεριστος. ἔχει δὲ φύσιν μερίζεσθαι. Cf. also 4.1.1.50ff.

Essence of Soul (4.1) he suggests that this division is a condition (πάθημα) of bodies rather than of Soul itself in that bodies are not capable of receiving Soul in its unified state (4.1.1.73ff.), a view that apparently contradicts—or only with great difficulty can be thought to be compatible with—other claims in the *Enneads* that descent, and so division, are matters of soul's deliberate choice.⁴⁵ But whatever doubts he may have had about the intentionality of Soul's descent, it is clear that Plotinus understands Plato in the *psychogonia* to mean that the World Soul is divided (or divides itself) in such a way that it nonetheless remains essentially a unity. It is in his argument for his theory of Soul as a one-in-many that we again see marks of the influence of Numenius.⁴⁶

Plotinus maintains that when Plato refers to the undivided Essence he is using the term 'undivided' (ἀμερίστη) in an unqualified (ἀπλῶς) sense: the undivided Essence is completely indivisible and entirely one. The same is not the case for his use of the term 'divided' (μερίστη), for in saying that Soul becomes 'divisible among bodies' Plato means not that it is divisible at the point of its creation but that it becomes divided 'later', in its descent into bodies (4.3.19.6ff.). Hence his peculiar expression that Soul does not have a divided nature, but rather has a nature 'to be divided'. So in Plotinus' interpretation of Plato that part of the Soul that is 'divisible among bodies' is in itself one and becomes divided only through its contact with the corporeal sphere, wherever the responsibility for the division might lie (4.9.3.13–14). This principle, which Plotinus certainly regarded as central to his theory of the unity of souls insofar as it represented corroboration from Plato himself, is very close to Numenius' interpretation and is probably an adaptation of it, for, as we have noted, it was Numenius' position that what Plato meant by referring to the divided Essence of Soul is that subsequent to its generation Soul does in fact become divided among bodies, not that it is in its nature a divisible entity, and that even then it remains a unity-in-diversity. For both Numenius and Plotinus, then, to say that Soul is divisible by nature is to say only that Soul is such as to be divided when in contact with bodies and then only in a strongly qualified way; before such contact, even as a compound of indivisible and divisible parts, it remains in both of its parts, whether taken singly or in combination, a unity—although the unity of the divided Essence is not simple and unqualified. Moreover, Plotinus thereby in a general sense embraces the view held by both Plutarch and Numenius that Plato uses the special phrase 'divided among bodies' in such a way as carefully to circumscribe the nature of psychic division, thus distinguishing it from the partitioning characteristic of bodies (cf. 4.3.19 and 4.9.3.13–14). We surmised that Numenius made the same distinction in an effort to reconcile the conflict between, on the one hand, his assertion that one of Soul's constituent elements is matter and, on the other, his theory of the intermediate status of Soul. We now see that Plotinus, for whom the need to demonstrate that Soul is not corporeal is of secondary importance, employs the distinction primarily in the service of a more rigorous doctrine of psychic unity. His interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a is thus a two-tiered proof of the essential unity of souls: by virtue of their uninterrupted contact with a completely undescended unity through that part of them that is by nature indivisible; and by virtue of the fact that even the 'divisible nature' of Soul is yet, before its descent, undivided.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For the idea that Soul gives itself to bodies, cf. 3.9.1.32–3; 1.1.8; 4.3.5.13–14.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1.1.8: Soul is divided in the sense that it gives itself proportionately to bodies throughout the universe, although it remains one. This is Plotinus' way of explaining what Numenius terms Soul's *eadem et item diversa natura* (Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. 53, p. 101, 17).

⁴⁷ The idea that Soul is essentially indivisible and experiences division only after contact with

It should be clear, however, that both Numenius and Plotinus, to a significantly greater extent than Plutarch, qualify the sense in which it is proper to understand Plato's reference to the Essence that becomes divided among bodies by distinguishing the unity-in-diversity of the divided Essence from the more complete division of bodies. Yet it is in Proclus first that we find the complete severance of the entire Soul from the material world.

Failure to appreciate fully the significance of Plotinus' qualified interpretation of the divided Nature has led one prominent scholar to misconstrue his exegesis of Plato's *psychogonia*. In his essay on Plotinus' interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a,⁴⁸ Schwyzer argues with Müller and Bréhier and against Harder and Bouillet that, as Plotinus begins his discussion of the essence of Soul in 4.1.1, he does not follow the traditional Platonic exegesis by locating Soul's οὐσία as a 'third kind of Essence' intermediate between what is completely undivided and what is completely divided in that it is a mixture of those two extremes, but goes beyond that tradition in establishing Soul as an uncompounded fourth Essence. The disputed passage is as follows:

So there is this primarily indivisible Being that is chief among the intelligible and real beings and, in turn, that being among perceptible things that is entirely divisible, and there is another Nature before the perceptible and, in a way, near it and in it that is not primarily divisible, as are bodies, although it becomes divisible when among bodies. So that when bodies are divided the form in them is also divided, although as a whole among each of the divided parts it becomes many while remaining the same, and each of these many parts is isolated from every other since it becomes entirely divisible. Examples would be colours and all qualities and each shape that can at the same time be whole while existing among many separate things and containing no part that experiences exactly what another does. Thus we must maintain that even this is wholly divisible. But in addition to that wholly indivisible Nature there is another Essence coming after it and deriving from it (ἄλλη ἐξῆς οὐσία ἀπ' ἐκείνης οὐσα); hastening in its movement from one Nature to the other it establishes itself as a Nature intermediate between both the indivisible and primary and 'the divisible among bodies' that is in association with bodies (τοῦ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν). (4.1.1.29–46)⁴⁹

matter is not unique to Numenius and Plotinus and may well have been common in the commentaries of Middle Platonism. Cf. H. Dörrie, *Porphyrios' 'Symmiktá Zetēmata'* (Munich, 1959), 187–98 and Elferink (n. 43), 29–30. What particularly connects Plotinus to the Numenian exegesis of *Timaeus* 35a ff. in Calcidius' commentary is the fact that only in these two Platonists do we find this idea extended to include the concepts (i) that Soul's descent into bodies is not complete, so that it maintains its higher unity, and (ii) that Soul's essential indivisibility is grounded in its uninterrupted contemplation of the unqualifiedly indivisible Intellect. Moreover, in both of these accounts each of these concepts is formulated in the context of an interpretation of Plato's *psychogonia*.

⁴⁸ H.-R. Schwyzer, 'Zu Plotins Interpretation von Platons *Timaeus* 35A', *RLM NF* 84 (1935), 360–8. For the influence of this misconceived hierarchy on more recent scholarship, see Elferink, (n. 43), 27 and 53, n. 75.

⁴⁹ τούτου δὴ τοῦ πρώτως ἀμερίστου ὄντος ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς καὶ τοῖς οὖσιν ἀρχηγού καὶ αὐτὸ ἐκείνου τοῦ ἐν αἰσθητοῖς μεριστοῦ πάντη, πρὸ μὲν τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ ἐγγύς τι τούτου καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἄλλη ἐστὶ φύσις, μεριστὴ μὲν οὐ πρώτως, ὥσπερ τὰ σώματα, μεριστὴ γὰρ μὴν γιγνομένη ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν. ὥστε διαιρουμένων τῶν σωμάτων μερίζεσθαι μὲν καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς εἶδος, ὅλον γὰρ μὴν ἐν ἐκάστῳ τῶν μερισθέντων εἶναι πολλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ γινόμενον, ὧν ἐκαστον πάντη ἄλλου ἀπέστη, ἅτε πάντη μεριστὸν γινόμενον· οἷα χροαὶ καὶ ποιότητες πάσαι καὶ ἐκάστη μορφή, ἥτις δύναται ὅλη ἐν πολλοῖς ἅμα εἶναι διεστηκόσιν οὐδὲν μέρος ἔχουσα πάσῃ τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ ἄλλῳ πάσχειν· διὸ δὴ μεριστὸν πάντη καὶ τοῦτο θετέον. πρὸς δ' αὐτὴν ἐκείνην τὴν ἀμερίστῳ πάντη φύσει ἄλλη ἐξῆς οὐσία ἀπ' ἐκείνης οὐσα, ἔχουσα μὲν τὸ ἀμερίστον ἀπ' ἐκείνης, προδὼν δὲ τῇ ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἐπὶ τὴν ἑτέραν σπεύδουσα φύσιν εἰς μέσον ἀμφοῖν κατέστη, τοῦ τε ἀμερίστου καὶ πρώτου καὶ τοῦ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν... The translation is mine.

The reference to ἄλλη ἐξῆς οὐσία ἀπ' ἐκείνης οὐσα Schwyzer sees as manifest evidence that Plotinus is referring to a Nature which proceeds directly from the completely undivided Essence but is distinguishable from and superior to τοῦ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ, by which Plotinus refers to the qualities of bodies and the forms in matter, which, in turn, are themselves distinguishable from what is 'primarily divided' (πρώτως μεριστά), or bodies. In what follows this passage, Schwyzer believes, Plotinus shows that, although Soul occupies an intermediate position between the undivided and divided Natures, it is not the product of a mixture. He points to the fact that, in describing Soul's constitution, Plotinus here opts not for Plato's συνεκράσατο, the verb he employs at *Timaeus* 35a3 to refer to the blending that produced the third kind of Essence, but instead uses the neutral κατέστη. So, revising Plato's text, he takes a new and quite unorthodox approach to the *psychogonia*, asserting that Soul, although intermediate between the undivided and divided Essences, is not a blending of the two but is in nature separate from each. Thus between the two extremes there are two intermediate Natures, one of which, the Nature divided among bodies, is nearer that which is wholly divided (bodies), while the other, the Soul, is closer in nature to that which is wholly undivided (Intellect). Through this kind of gradation of Essences, according to which Soul is not a blending of polar Natures, Schwyzer feels, Plotinus construes the hierarchy of being as ultimately monistic, thereby overcoming the strong dualism between the worlds of being and becoming found in the *Timaeus*. That the Plotinian Soul is not to be identified with the Nature that is divided among bodies is corroborated by Porphyry's hierarchy in *Sententiae* 5 where, following Plotinus' division at the end of 4.1.2, he distinguishes Soul from the περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστά and equates the latter with bodily qualities and enhylic forms. All of this serves to explain why Plotinus omits any reference to Plato's mixture in this passage: ignoring key facets of the text of *Timaeus* 35a, he construes the *psychogonia* to mean that Soul, while an intermediate being having a nature that is at once indivisible and divisible, does not—perhaps because it cannot—have as one of its causal principles an Essence that is inferior to it. This interpretation, Schwyzer notes, is not only repeated by Porphyry, but—as we also have seen—is also essentially the same as that of Proclus, although, unlike Proclus, Plotinus provides no explanation for his position.

But Schwyzer overlooks a decisive phrase in Plotinus' discussion. The distinction drawn by Plotinus in this passage is not between one Nature that follows immediately upon the undivided Nature and supersedes any division among bodies, and another that is divided among bodies *per se* construed as a separate Essence—for twice in this passage alone he refers to Soul itself as μεριστή περὶ τὰ σώματα—but between two Natures, Soul and the enhylic forms, which are 'divided among bodies' to different degrees. The key to Plotinus' meaning in this passage is the phrase τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς σώμασιν, which, with its repetition of the definite article, is clearly intended to be emphatic: the 'divisible among bodies' here are specifically and exclusively those entities that are in fact associated with bodies, that is, the enhylic forms; it is thereby differentiated from Soul, which only 'happens' to become divisible upon its descent into bodies (μερίζεσθαι αὐτῇ συμβαίνει, 56). Although their divisibility is not as extensive as that found in bodies, the enhylic forms are nonetheless categorized with bodies as 'entirely divisible' (4.1.1.41). Plotinus' point, then, is that the unity-in-multiplicity of Soul, even in its divided state in bodies, is nearer the complete oneness of Intellect than is that of forms divided within bodies. The divisions of Soul and the enhylic forms are the 'affections' of body and thus do not stem from their own natures,

so that both can correctly be called 'divided among bodies'. But within this 'class' of divisibility a further subdivision is necessary insofar as the unity of Soul, as 'one and many', is superior to that of the forms in bodies that are 'many and one' (4.1.2). So the Plotinian Soul is, indeed, *contra* Schwyzer, a mixture of the undivided and divided Essences. In fact, the privileged position that Plotinus argues for Soul is entirely dependent upon such a mixture in that even in its descent into bodies as a result of its divided nature it maintains contact with Intellect through that part of itself that comes from Intellect, that is, its undescended, undivided Nature.⁵⁰ Indeed, we might well ask how, if its nature has the exalted status granted to it by Schwyzer, Soul could be said to descend at all.

Thus the origin of the Neoplatonic refinement of the *psychogonia* found in its fullest form in the exegesis of Proclus where, as we have seen, Soul becomes fully differentiated from and superior to the Essence that is divided among bodies, can be traced to Plotinus, but only with qualification. In the *Enneads*, Soul does possess a divisible nature the origin of which Plotinus explains by reference to the mixture of *Timaeus* 35a, but, guided in 4.1.1 by his own theory of the unity of Soul expressed through his central ideas (i) that Soul becomes divided only after its descent into bodies, and (ii) that even then it remains primarily a unity by virtue of its continued participation in Intellect, he more precisely delineates the sense in which we can say that Soul is *μεριστή περὶ τὰ σώματα*, so that the divisibility of Soul when in contact with bodies is shown to be more conditional and circumscribed than that attributed to it by most earlier Platonists. Although it is not clear whether Numenius was making as strong a claim for the unity of the descendent Soul in his own exegesis, Plotinus, at least in this aspect of his interpretation, is almost certainly moulding Numenian doctrine to his own.⁵¹

To be sure, Plotinus is selective in what he borrows from Numenius. In addition to the points of agreement already discussed, he shares with both Plutarch and Numenius the view, later opposed by Proclus, that the divided Essence belongs to Soul *qua* Soul,⁵² but only insofar as it is both incorporeal and undivided before Soul's embodiment. And he agrees with Numenius *contra* Plutarch both that the primal Soul cannot be solely a completely undefined and amorphous power that is the cause of evil and that the undivided Essence is not something introduced into Soul as a controlling power foreign to it. But he rejects Numenius' identification of the divided Essence with matter, as well as the idea that either should be considered in some sense to be Soul's substrate.⁵³ Moreover, he could not, of course, go so far as to agree with Numenius—at least the Numenius described by Porphyry—that the undivided and divided Essences are distinct Souls permanently opposed to each other. By interpreting Plato's *psychogonia* to mean that the *μεριστή οὐσία* has a fundamental connection neither with

⁵⁰ In 4.1.2 Plotinus is explicit that Soul is the 'third' Essence; cf. also 3.9.1.30ff.

⁵¹ It is interesting to contrast Numenius' and Plotinus' view that the unity of Soul is preserved through its unceasing participation in the undivided Essence with that of Proclus, who, having abandoned the idea of a permanently undescending phase of Soul, maintains that this unity is due to the fact that Soul is not generated from the same corporeal Essence as that found in bodies.

⁵² Schwyzer ([n. 48], 364) therefore misses the mark when he says that the divided Essence is a 'freilich farblose bloss *φύσις*', since only the undivided Essence *per se* is true being. It is probable that Plotinus felt that Numenius' explanation answered any objections to making the divided Essence part of Soul's nature.

⁵³ Soul's association with matter is one of 'proximity', not of intrinsic connection. Soul and matter are not to be identified, nor is Soul the substrate of matter. Cf. 3.3.4.37ff.; 3.6.7.8–9; and 1.8.14.34.

matter nor with the irrational and chaotic motion that is brought to order by the principle of divine reason, he can claim that Soul in no way possesses a portion of evil as part of its nature. Thus Plotinus circumvents the strong dualism of Plutarch, Atticus, and Numenius.⁵⁴

Certain common doctrinal features emerge from these Neoplatonic criticisms of the earlier exegetical tradition. Perhaps the most pronounced is the Neoplatonists' careful circumscribing of the extent of Soul's participation in the corporeal world. The question of Soul's relationship to body had been a basic concern of commentators throughout the history of Platonic interpretation, but it is in the Neoplatonists that we find the most complex account of their differentiation from each other. Yet from a broader perspective the more significant common element is their shared emphasis on the unity and continuity of the hierarchy of hypostases, for in part through this concept they attempt to demonstrate that there is no maverick cosmic principle opposing the ordering force of reason and that the governing power of the Good extends throughout all levels of being.

As for Plotinus, who was, to be sure, less intent than later Neoplatonists on characterizing his exegesis through contrast with his philosophical opponents, we should consider it a notable example of his characteristic eclecticism that he draws key components of his own psychology from an exegete whose dualism he fundamentally rejects. Porphyry tells us of the influence of Numenius' ideas in Plotinus' school, although he makes it clear that Plotinus did not simply expound these ideas to his students, but rather recast them in the light of his own philosophical principles.⁵⁵ It would seem, then, that what we have presented above is an excellent example of the practice to which Porphyry alludes, for Plotinus evidently saw nothing inconsistent in adapting to his own exegesis the monistic features of Numenian doctrine while at the same time repudiating its defining concept.

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⁵⁴ There are several other passages in the *Enneads* where Plotinus seems to have the dualist interpretations of the *psychogonia* in mind. His argument in 3.6.11.19ff. against that idea that matter can be brought from disorder to order may well be in response to Numenius. His related claims that there can be no purely evil Soul since it could not exist apart from matter (1.1.12; 1.8.4 and 11–13] and that evil must come to Soul from an external principle since what is Soul essentially must be absolutely good (1.1.12 and 1.8.5.20ff.) appear to be directed against both Numenius and Plutarch or their followers. Plotinus agrees with Numenius against Plutarch that the Necessity of *Timaeus* 47e is matter (3.2.2 and 3.3.6–7). However, Plotinus' argument that, although Soul has 'contact' with matter, there is nothing in its constitution that is even similar to the corporeal nature (1.2.2; 1.8.14–15; 3.6.7) basically echoes that of Plutarch against Crantor, and may well have been stated with Numenius in mind.

⁵⁵ Cf. *VP* 14, 10ff.; see also 3, 44ff. Certain Plotinian concepts or doctrines were seen to touch so closely on those of Numenius that some Greeks accused Plotinus of plagiarizing, prompting his student Amelius to write a treatise in defence of his teacher (*VP* 17 and 21). On the influence of Numenius on Plotinus and Plotinus' strong reaction against Numenian dualism, see E. R. Dodds, 'Numenius and Ammonius', in *Les sources de Plotin, Fondation Hardt, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* (Vandoeuvres and Genève, 1957), 18ff.