CHAPTER IX

The Final Capitulation

ONE WOULD BE TEMPTED to end this study with Philo Judaeus, for in him are the seeds of medieval philosophy and the withering of classical rationalism. When philosophers accept sacred texts as final authority, their task is at most exegesis and the reason as an explorer of possibilities has laid down its arms. There was no way of justifying the fantasies of the Gnostics and Hermetists except by dogmatic assertion, or, if one prefers a nobler name, by faith. But chronologically ancient philosophy did not die out with the coming of oriental cults. Both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, to say nothing of Seneca, survived the advent of Christianity, and it goes without saying that the encyclopedic work of the Alexandrine scholars continued until persecution killed them. But no one of major importance appeared after Philo until the third century when the so-called father of Neoplatonism, Plotinus, opened his school in Rome.

Though Plotinus had no sacred text corresponding to the Bible, which was directly inspired by God, he did have the works of the ancients, and particularly those of Plato and Aristotle, whose in-
RATIONALISM IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY

interpreter he was proud to be. But I find no passage in which he disagrees, as he believes, with Plato, although modern scholars would, I think, find his interpretation sometimes questionable. He is more inclined to disagree with Aristotle, though here too one might question his interpretations. He lived after all about six hundred years, more or less, after the time of Plato and in that time philosophic method had changed, as we have seen, for the very accumulation of philosophic literature had made it difficult, if possible, for any man to start afresh. Moreover Plotinus grew up in Alexandria, not in Athens, and came in contact with Orientals, Egyptians, as well as with Greeks. His contemporary, Origen, was a Christian and both are said to have studied under the same master, Ammonius Saccas, of whom next to nothing is known. But, be that as it may, no one studying in Alexandria at the end of the second century or the beginning of the third could fail to be influenced by the existence of doctrinal diversity and methodological confusion. No one studying philosophy in the United States today can avoid the influence of Kant, though he may never have read a line of Kant. He will inevitably start with epistemological questions as if they were the primary questions. So a philosopher living in Alexandria at that time would have begun with an intellectual stock of metaphysical ideas, including the distinction between the world of ideas and the sensible world, the existence of a supreme god in some form or other, and intimations that between the two worlds was a graduated scale of beings. They might differ on their interpretation of these terms and on the proper solution to the problems which they believed to be implicated in them. But whether one is reading Clement of Alexandria or Origen, one sees the same topics appearing in each.

1 Ennead v. 1. 8, 10. I use the text of Henry and Schwzyzer as far as possible, that is, through Ennead v. For Ennead vi, I use that of Bréhier. Only the first line of each reference is given, and in the body of the text I shall omit the title Ennead. Thus, v. 1. 8, 10 means Ennead v, tractate 1, section 8, line 10. On the wisdom of antiquity, see also ii. 9. 6, 35.

2 There is some question whether the professor with whom Origen studied was really Ammonius Saccas. The datum comes from Porphyry. See Charles Bigg, The Christian Platonists of Alexandria (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 156.
I

To fill the gap between the two worlds seems to have been one of the most important of their problems. Philo filled it with angels and powers, the Gnostics, whatever their individual differences, filled it with other supernatural creatures begotten by their chief god. Origen filled it with Intelligences, created and corporeal spirits, who rose or fell according to their sinfulness. But no one before Plotinus developed a complete hierarchy which would be at one and the same time a hierarchy of reality, value, and logical concreteness. Since his metaphysics survived well into the Middle Ages, was fortified in the Italian Renaissance, and gained a certain vogue in post-Renaissance England, one would do well first to expound the meaning of the terms before proceeding to develop the ideas which it names.

Though the word "hierarchy" is Greek, it is not found in classical literature and first occurs in Pseudo-Dionysius, that is, in the fifth century A.D. There it appears in the titles of two of his works, *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Both of these books, as far as our immediate interests are concerned, expound a system of power or governance running from the most powerful to the least. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is modeled on the celestial. As the latter runs from God down to men through the various choirs of angels, so the former runs from the head of the Church down to the catechumens. We are familiar with this idea in secular life in our armed services. A general commands armies, army corps, divisions, brigades, and so on, down to privates, and as one descends the hierarchy of rule each rank has more ranks above and fewer below it, and naturally official or legal power grows weaker the lower one goes. Hierarchical rule obtains in the Church today as it did in the beginning.

---

3 In Boeck's *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. I, p. 749, we find it in a Boeotian inscription. But it there means simply a man who presides at sacred ceremonies and has no metaphysical implications. The date of Ps-Dionysius can be determined by the date of Proclus whom he must have used. His definition of hierarchy is given in *De Coelesti Hierarchia* iii. 1 (Migne, *PG*, iii).
At the session, July 15, 1563, of the Council of Trent, in the canons on the sacrament of ordination, we find the words, "If anyone should say that in the Catholic Church there is not a hierarchy instituted by divine command, which consists of bishops, presbyters, and ministrants, let him be anathematized." It is essential to this type of hierarchy that the individuals on each rank be fewer and fewer as one moves toward its apex until at the summit there is only one. But that does not prevent there being several hierarchies in existence at the same time. For instance, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia (art., "Hierarchy"), we have two hierarchies within the Church, the hierarchia ordinis, running from bishops, through priests, to deacons, and the hierarchia jurisdictionis, running from cardinals down through nuncios, delegates, patriarchs, primates, metropolitans, archbishops, vicars-general, archdeacons, deans, parish priests, to curates. So we have three hierarchies in the army, navy, and air force, but they are all under the command of the President of the United States according to the Constitution, just as both ecclesiastical hierarchies are submissive to the Pope. The Greeks had no ecclesiastical hierarchy. They had no single church as we have churches. They had temples dedicated to the service of their various divinities, but they were not organized into a single cult with various branches. The priest of Zeus or of Athena had no jurisdiction over the priest of Dionysus and similar conditions obtained in Rome. The individualism which the Greeks practiced in their civil and social affairs was duplicated in that of the gods. Indeed the gods as early as Homer squabble among themselves, and though Zeus is their Father, his parenthood seems to give him little power to settle their squabbles. The two goddesses who were affronted by the judgment of Paris are not made to sit down with

---

*Denziger's Enchiridion* 966. See also the Index systematicus IIa. But as early as the third century, in the Epistle of Cornelius I, ἐνεπὶ γαῖας έγκατέλησεν, to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch, it is stated that there is one supreme bishop, the Bishop of Rome, with presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, and so on, beneath him. For suggestions leading to the tradition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, see the Enchiridion 42, 45, 272.
Aphrodite and talk things over, nor are they ever commanded by the Father of Gods and Men to cease interfering on the battlefield before Troy. Each goes his own way, as the Greeks themselves did, and it probably never occurred to any pagan that he ought to organize the priesthood into a hierarchy. But the Jews did have a hierarchy with the High Priest at the summit, and the Egyptian priesthood was also hierarchical. The Egyptian King was also the high priest, as Queen Elizabeth II is head of the Church of England. He was a manifestation of the god Horus. Local priests, who were the King's deputies, and lower priests filled out the Tables of Organization. One can only guess at why there should have been this difference between Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian religious institutions. But it is to be noticed that the Old Testament records a parallel political organization as early as Judges and the history of Egypt shows that the Nile Valley came under the sway of a single absolute monarch very early. The Greeks on the other hand, living on a stretch of country almost unbelievably small as compared with the countries of Asia Minor and Egypt, retained their city-states up to the time of the Macedonian Conquest. The economy of Heaven often is modeled on that of Earth and that may be the reason why no Greek before the Macedonian Conquest shrank from theological pluralism.

Since the first clear intimation of a supernatural hierarchy comes from Alexandria and survives largely through the writings of Philo, it is likely that the metaphor of a cosmic hierarchy was suggested by the organization of the priesthood and of the state in Judea and Egypt. If the representatives of the divine power were organized hierarchically, it was easy to transfer the scheme to that which was governed by the powers which they represented. This connection cannot be proved, for how can one prove the origin of a figure of speech? Such things come into the mind without reflection and usually centuries before they enter philosophy. Did anyone calculate the chances of our God being a

---

5 For details of the Egyptian hierarchy, see Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, art. "Priests, Priesthood (Egyptian)," p. 293.
Father rather than a Mother? Of Heaven being above rather than beneath? The power of both the High Priests and Kings is transmitted orally of course, but how the power of the Supreme Being is transmitted is usually left vague. In the De mundo, which we have already cited, "God has the highest place in the cosmos," and "the body closest to him most enjoys his power, and then the one after that one, and so in succession down to the regions where we are." For this reason, says the author (397b), "earth and the things upon the earth, being farthest away from the benefits of God, seem to be weak and confused and full of disorder." God's power in this work extends through space and grows weaker the farther it extends, as the force of a magnet grows weaker the farther one gets from it.

In Aristotle the power of the first and outermost sphere is not transmitted to the next sphere by contact nor is the Unmoved Mover a God who gives commands. But there was one thing which moved through space and did grow weaker as it moved and that was light. As the beams of light spread, they reach out on all sides in spheres of decreasing luminosity. Professor Goodenough has traced the symbol of the sun as the source of light from Plato’s Cave down through the Gnostics and also finds that though "the figure of royalty was certainly a source of the hierarchy of Power," "The light mysticism of the mystery religions" was another source "equally apparent." Plotinus, as is well known, seized upon this metaphor and made it central to his system. The sun became a symbol both of the instantaneous spread of the divine power, and of its weakening as it penetrated into darkness (v. 3. 12, 39). The whole intelligible nature is compared to light emanating from its source, the Sun, a symbol for the One which is at the summit of the Intelligible World. The stream

6 Erwin R. Goodenough, By Light, Light (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 41. Cf. p. 11: "The sun was taken as a figure, that orb which burns, to all appearances, eternally, yet without need of fuel from outside itself. Independent of the world, a self-sufficient existence, it sends out its great stream of light and heat which makes life possible upon this earth. This stream may be called a stream of light, or of heat, or of life, or of creation."
of light, he says (v. 3. 12, 44), is not cut off from its source nor is it less real in spite of its not being identical with it, "nor is it a blind thing, but it sees and knows and is the primary knower" (v. 3. 12, 46). The congruence between seeing and knowing, even etymologically, seems to have been striking to those ancients to whom the problem of divine power was puzzling. Light is used by Plotinus as a symbol of intelligence (ii. 4. 5, 7), of the hierarchy of reality (iv. 3. 17, 12), of the vitality of seeds (v. 9. 6, 20), of the beatific vision (v. 3. 17, 28). It is absolutely immaterial (iv. 5. 4, 6, iv. 5. 4, 41, vi. 4. 8); it travels in straight lines (iv. 5. 2, 10); it is indivisible (vi. 4. 7, 23); and it travels instantaneously (iv. 5. 4, 31). If one adds to this its radiation from the Sun which is in the heavens, one can understand why Plotinus, and others, argued as often from the symbol as they symbolized their logical conclusions.

In the De mundo, as I have suggested, the transmission of divine power was spatial and God was thought of as inhabiting a point in space. This point was literally, not figuratively, higher than any other point. The outer heaven was His home and therefore, though there may have been other reasons as well, that region of the cosmos was the best region, and as one moved downward to the center, one moved from better to worse. To us it may seem strange that heights should be any better than depths, for though we locate God in Heaven, we also prefer profound thoughts to superficial ones. But even in Aristotle one finds that some directions are inherently better than others, up being better than down, to the right being better than to the left, forward being better than backward. How much folklore remains in this and how much inference was in it I cannot pretend to say, but that the fusion of literal spatial position and deontological "superiority" exists is undeniable.

7 See also i. 8. 14, 38; ii. 4. 5, 35; iii. 3. 4, 8; iv. 4. 29, passim; v. 3. 8, on self-knowledge; vi. 4. 3, 3. But these are only a few samples.

8 For a discussion of the relation between height and goodness, see E. R. Bevan, Symbolism and Belief (Boston: Beacon Press).

9 See De caelo iv. 4 and De incessu 705a 26.
The metaphor which inspired the fusion of height and better-ness was developed in several ways, but one of the most influential was the famous Tree of Porphyry. The series of logical classes, as given by him in his *Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle* runs "upward" from the least inclusive class to the most inclusive. Porphyry had the advantage of being a pupil of Plotinus and it is probable that he failed to see how unfaithful he was to the book to which he was introducing his readers. The Tree of Porphyry resembles the *tetraktys* in that in both a single idea generates a multiplicity of other ideas and in both cases the generated have properties which their sources do not have. In Aristotle there is, to be sure, material out of which the Tree could have been constructed, but it was not constructed by the author of the *Categories*. If it had been, what would have happened to the ultimate distinctions between the ten categories? The Unmoved Mover might be called God and the Form of the World, though the latter is a non-Aristotelian term, but he was not an all-inclusive class and only in a figurative sense a logical being. It is also true, as we have said above, that there are passages in Plato in which the idea of the good is said to be that toward which all things are striving, but that does not prevent each class of things from having its own good. But the moment when the Good, with an initial capital, is identified with God and God identified furthermore with the Unmoved Mover and the three of them are fused together into an unknowable, ineffable being to which only the arithmetical name, *The One*, could be given, then the hierarchy which began as a hierarchy of power could become also a hierarchy of logical classes and of goodness and beauty. For when one reached the apex of the figurative pyramid in one's thoughts, one had a being from whom all beings flowed as light from the sun, but also a being with a logical name so that logical classes could be grouped under it, and also a being whose attributes of stability, *autarky*, unity, and the like, were precisely the marks generally agreed upon as the marks of supreme goodness.\(^{10}\)

\(^{10}\) It is amusing to observe the residues of this kind of thinking in the
THE FINAL CAPITULATION 443

The identification of value with metaphysical status was fortified by certain precedents, as I have tried to point out in preceding chapters. From the early days of pre-Socratic philosophy the belief in two worlds was not merely the belief in a real and an apparent world, but also a belief in a good and less good world, respectively. The real world was not only more real than the apparent; it was better. The world seen by the senses was worse than that grasped by the reason; the flux was worse than the world of law, the unnatural worse than the natural, the particulars as a collection were worse than the universals. In a time of great change, one imagines, men who do not profit from the change seek that which is permanent. Moreover the very character of science demands that one try to understand and organize the chaos of perceptions which flow by one's sense organs. Whether the early philosophers had more to lose than to gain by the revolutions of the sixth century B.C., we cannot say for we have nothing but legends to go on. But in any event most of them seemed to prefer a world of stability to one of impermanence and they found it in their science. But the pre-Socratics gave us two worlds which were in sharp opposition, not a graded series of levels of being. There was nothing between the two worlds and the only thing that held them together was human understanding. The discovery of a general law explaining the generation of multiplicity is not a denial of multiplicity. To discover that both molecular oxygen and ozone are composed of atomic oxygen does not deny their difference in anything except their substantial composition. Again, though the Logos of Heraclitus is a law which describes the flux, it is not a denial of the flux. It seems at least probable that if these
men had felt the need for intermediaries between appearance and reality, the men whose quotations from them are our only source of information about their ideas would have pointed it out. For aside from the special interests of Aristotle in reporting the ideas of his predecessors,\textsuperscript{11} men like Hippolytus and Eusebius would surely have been glad to find anticipations of Christian theological theses in these early thinkers. The Fathers had no hesitation in profiting from Plato, Aristotle, Philo, and later, Plotinus. Why would they have shrunk from using the works of the pre-Socratics if they could have done so?

As far as the hierarchy of power is concerned, there is also a possible causal relation between astrology and the cosmic hierarchy. We have already spoken of the influence of solar theology. But also if the planets spread their influence downward, how was it carried? Through their light? As Seneca said, it is easier to doubt whether the stars have any power than to know what power they have.\textsuperscript{12} Cicero, in the \textit{De divinatione} (ii. 14. 33), explains mantics on the basis of cosmic "sympathy," a union and, as it were, a consensus of all the parts of nature. And this may indeed be the theory behind the use of astrological predictions. But in spite of this, the sympathy must be propagated somehow or other, for, as many ancient critics of astrology saw, the thousands of people who are born at the same moment do not all have the same fate, and one might well wonder why a given planet should select one individual for its benefactions or maleficence rather than another, if the cosmos as a whole behaves as a unit. One might also ask the question why the astral influences determine temperaments only at the moment of a person's birth, if sympathy be the explanation of their power. These are questions to which we have no answer, but the possibility remains that belief in astrology may well have suggested the cosmic hierarchy of power since it too

\textsuperscript{11}For a full discussion of Aristotle's handling of the pre-Socratics, see Harold Cherniss, \textit{Aristotle's Criticism of Pre-Socratic Philosophy}.  
\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Non magis autem facile est seire quid possint, quam dubitare an possint, Quaestiones naturales} ii. 32. 8.
THE FINAL CAPITULATION 445

was based on the transmission of power from the heights of the universe to the center.

Such then are the main characteristics of the cosmic hierarchy in all its threefold aspects.

II

The first full-fledged hierarchy of being is found in Plotinus. At the summit of his hierarchy is the One. The One is absolutely unknowable in the sense of describable. “How then can we speak of it? We do indeed say something about it, but we do not express it itself, for we have neither direct knowledge (gnosis) of it nor conceptual knowledge (noesis). . . . We speak about what it is not. But what it is, we do not say” (v. 3. 14, 1). The One then is above all things, like the Propater of Valentinus, though differing from Him in almost all other respects. But since to know something directly is to be like it, we must make ourselves like the One in order to know Him. We must consequently divest ourselves of all particularity, of all sensation, of all self-directed thoughts, pay no attention to the demands of our body, 13 and in a beatific vision we shall come face to face with Him, or better, unite with Him. This can occur only infrequently—in his case it occurred four times—and, when it does occur, one is not necessarily aware of what has happened. “But just as those who are inspired and have become possessed would know that they have something better within themselves, even if they do not know what it is, something by which they have been moved, and they talk of it, from these things they derive some perception of the moving power, though the things themselves are different from the moving power. And so we are in danger, in relation to that power, when we have a pure Nous, of declaring that this is the inner Nous which has produced substance and the rest such as are of this rank, but it itself is such that it is not at all the same,

13 For an account of Plotinus’ asceticism and mystic visions, see Porphyry’s Life ii, viii, and xxiii, in Henry-Schwyzer, Vol. I.
but something mightier than this which we call Being, but also
greater and better than has been said, because He is superior to the
Logos and the Nous and Perception, since He produced these
things but is not any of them” (v. 3. 14). This gives rise immedi­
ately to the question of how the One produces (v. 3. 15).

It is laid down as a general principle in the tractate on the
descent of the soul (iv. 8) that everything has to administer and
govern something which is lower than itself. Since everything
engendered is worse than its progenitor, the soul administers and
governs a body. Hence the One, like everything else, has to pro­
duce. That much is clear. But now how does He produce? The
first possibility is that He possesses all things within Him; but in
that case how could He be simple? But if He does not possess
them, how does multiplicity come from Him? Could it come
about from His very simplicity? Plotinus sees this problem clearly
(v. 3. 15) and sees also that the metaphor of stream of light may
solve the problem of the One's productivity but does not
solve that of the multiplicity of what He produces. What comes from
the One cannot be identical with the One (v. 3. 15, 7) and must
furthermore be inferior to Him. But the only thing that is in­
ferior to the One is the Many. Thus, once one admits that the
One does produce, the multiplicity of the product is proved in a
purely dialectical manner. But in arguing thus, Plotinus abandons
the principle ex nihilo in the literal sense of that phrase—which
would signify that what comes out of the cause must have pre­
existed in the cause—and reverts to the ancient dialectical princi­
ple that there are alway s antitheses in change, of which one is the
source of the change, the other its consequence. As in Aristotle
all change is from affirmative to negative, from one opposite to
another, so here, meditating on the unity of the One, Plotinus con­
cludes that anything which emanates from it must be its antithesis,
the Many. Yet he modifies the multiplicity of what is produced
by asserting another of his cardinal theses, that though all things
produce, they also strive to return to their source. This permits
him to say that (vi. 4), considered as really existent beings, all
things are one, or inversely, that the One is omnipresent. He would have to be omnipresent, for, as Plotinus also points out (vi. 8. 18), there was no time when the One was not emanating His influences; He is both Himself and the emanations. In short this is an attempt to deny the distinctness of that which is a subject's activity from the subject itself. One can in words distinguish between the sun and its rays, but in reality they form one whole. The distinction exists in thought and Plotinus does not deny that if one thinks exclusively of the nature of the One, one does not include in His nature all the beings which flow from it.

The reduction of all to the One and the encompassing of all by the One is a logical matter. In all probability Plotinus reached unity by arguing that all things are individually units, and that for that reason alone unity must be the most inclusive of all classes, or, if the phrase be preferred, the universal predicate. As far then as His unity is concerned, He is indeed in all things, just as red, the color itself, is both a separate color and also found in many objects. Unfortunately he also says (vi. 2. 11) that the unity of objects, such as a chorus, a ship, a house, or a military camp, is not the same in all cases and that moreover (vi. 2. 11, 11) the unity of the continuous is not the same as that of discrete objects. This of course destroys his former argument for unity has to be self-identical if it is to be both the most general idea and the most universally present in things. Plotinus here switches his point of view and relies now on the tendency of all beings to fuse together and form units (vi. 2. 11, 26). And this tendency, since it is a movement toward the One and since it is the goal of existence and since the goal is the good, also permits him to assert that the One is the Good in a transcendent sense. But the unity which is sought is not that of a collection; it is that of the absolutely homogeneous, the simple (v. 4. 1). "Everything born of another is either in that which made it or in another, even if it be in something which comes after that which made it" (v. 5. 9, 1). In other words things are not really cut off from their origins; there are no ontological gaps. So while the One produces the Nous and the Soul of the
World, they participate in His unity and reality and goodness. Just as the light streams forth from the sun, while the sun itself remains stationary, so the Nous emanates from the One, is inferior to the One, but "looks back" at the One and "has need of Him alone, though He has no need of the Nous" (v. 1. 6, 42).  

It is perhaps obvious that Plotinian emanation is very different from Gnostic generation. The Gnostic passages which we have cited all cut off the inferior beings from their progenitors and their inferiority gives evidence of the evil which characterizes this world. But Plotinus will have none of this. We need not point out that he wrote a whole tractate against the Gnostics (ii. 9), but it may be worth pointing out that his objections against Gnosticism were first the multiplicity of first principles which they set up, second the inherent evil of creation, and third the senselessness of the Fall which they posit. Throughout his attack upon them, one sees his impatience with their anthropomorphism which leads them to assert creation in time (ii. 9. 8).  

There are only vestiges of anthropomorphism in Plotinus and they consist largely, though not entirely, in his accounts of the Soul of the World. He is very anxious to demonstrate the effortlessness of emanation: the One gives rise to the Nous, for instance, without an act of will (v. 3. 12, 28).  

Turning to another of Plotinus' basic metaphors, we

---

14 Where Plotinus uses demonstrative pronouns, I have substituted their antecedents.

15 He is also outraged by their discourtesy toward their opponents. See especially ii. 9. 6, 43, where he admits that they do well to borrow ideas from Plato, but should not be insolent to their Greek predecessors. They should establish their doctrines "graciously and philosophically" and not by abuse. The passage is worth reading to see the effect which Christian propaganda had upon a sophisticated Pagan, though apparently he was not hostile to all Christians for, says Porphyry (Vita 16), there were many Christians who attended his discourses.

16 See the English translation (by Geoffrey Lewis) of the Arabic Epistola de scientia divina, in Henry-Schwyzer, Vol. II, p. 321: "It is not that He wished to originate mind and then mind came into being, after the volition, nor that He wished anything else to come into being and then it came into being. Were it so, and were His acts preceded by volition, He would be defective, if volition came between Him and His act. He does not proceed from doing one thing to doing another. He makes and originates things all at one go..."
see that the generation of the lower orders is as the generation of inferences out of theorems. He has a notion that there is a kind of cognition which contains in one theorem all the others \textit{in potentia} (iv. 3. 2, 50).\footnote{See also iii. 9. 2 and iv. 9. 5, both of which are earlier, according to Porphyry, than iv. 3.} The actualization of potentialities may of course take place in time and those of which we are aware do so. But the generation of theorems out of a given theorem does not take place in time if one encloses oneself within the system. So the multiplicity of ideas could be thought of as resident in a single idea and that seems to have been Plotinus' way of envisioning the situation.

This way too gave him a clue to another essential and novel aspect of his metaphysics. The stream of light could be used as a symbol of generation, but once it had reached the frontiers of darkness and its power had faded, what was to happen to the cosmos? Was one to think of an eternally enduring radiation which would have made man's life simply unending activity without a goal? All things flow from higher levels to lower, but Plotinus wanted a cosmos in which perfection as a process would be as important as emanation. For on the way down things got progressively worse, the creator being always better than the creature, and Plotinus wanted also a way up, moving along which things would get better. Everything aspires to return to its source, he says. "By a natural necessity all start from unity and return to unity" (iii. 3. 1, 9). The suggestion of an anabasis to balance the katabasis could not in all probability have been involved in the metaphor of radiation unless Plotinus had thought of the light as being reflected from a plane surface in the realm of matter. There is, however, no intimation of that as far as I know. On the contrary the anabasis is suggested by the aspiration of men toward the good and by extension that of all things. It is through the anabasis that men liberate their souls from their bodies. There is, says his pupil Porphyry \textit{(Sententiae 9)}, a double death, the corporeal death and philosophic death. In the latter the soul through contemplating the intelligibles is liberated from the body.
while still alive. Plotinus gives us a description in his second tractate on *Forethought* (iii. 3) of how individuals, regardless of their diversity and antagonism, form a single and unique genus which constitutes their unity and of how this must be reproduced in our thinking. "One must combine all species into one species, that of animal; then again those which are not animals into one species; then once more the [animal] and the nonanimal; and then similarly, if desired, reduce them both to being; and then into that which possesses being" (iii. 3. 1). This is the logical anabasis. After it has been accomplished, one should begin the descent "by division." Here one sees unity dividing itself, analogously to the outpouring of the fullness of the One. But by what principle of division the descent is made is not told us, though from the example given in the text it would seem to be that of dichotomy.\(^\text{18}\) So far so good, yet why anything should divide itself into two antithetical parts, instead of three or more parts, remains obscure, though there may be an echo here of the use of the Monad and the Indefinite Dyad as the two *archai*.

The One itself gives rise to two other hypostases which if, as some writers believe, they are "aspects" of the One and not effluences from it, would be evidence of a triple logical division within the nature of the One.\(^\text{19}\) I am not sure of the meaning of an aspect as contrasted with a hypostasis, but I gather that the distinction rests on answering the question of the relation of the hypostases to the One. It is true that the One is omnipresent (iii. 8. 10) and yet the hypostases are posterior to it. It is all things and no particular thing (v. 2. 1, 1). It is self-sufficient (v. 3. 13, 17) and yet the potentiality of all things (iii. 8. 10) like "the life of a great plant permeating the whole while its vital principle remains stationary and not scattered through the whole but, as it were, established in the root" (iii. 8. 10, 10). At the same time Plotinus has no doubt of the distinction between the first three hypostases.

\(^{18}\) This passage could be used as the literary source of the Tree of Porphyry, if any such source is needed.

This comes out clearly in his tractate against the Gnostics. After the One "comes the Nous and thinking first of all; then the Psyche after Nous, for this order is in accordance with nature" (ii. 9. 1, 14). There follows a passage (ii. 9. 1, 15) which states flatly that there can be neither more nor less than these hypostases.

Neither more than these are located in the Intelligible World nor less. For if there were less, either the Psyche and the Nous would be the same or the Nous and the One. But that they differ from one another has been frequently shown. It remains then to see whether there are more than these three. Might there then be some natures besides these? Should the source of all things be said to exist in that fashion [that is, as a multiplicity of hypostases] no one could find anything simpler or higher. For after all they [the Gnostics] do not say that this exists potentially, but in actuality. For it would be absurd that in beings which are in actuality and are immaterial there be made more different natures both potentially and actually. Nor would this be true of things inferior to these. Nor must it be thought that some Nous is somehow or other at rest while some is as if moved. For what would be rest and what motion and utterance of the one Nous or idleness or work of the other? The truth is that Nous is always remaining self-identical in actuality. But motion toward it and in it is in fact the world of Psyche, and the Logos put by it [Nous] into the soul causes the soul to think, not some nature between Nous and Psyche. There is absolutely no possibility of making several Nous on this account, namely that one thinks and the other thinks that it thinks. For if one thing is thinking and another is thinking that one is thinking, then in that case a single sensory experience would not be unconscious of its own operations. For it would be absurd to burden the true Nous with this, but on the contrary it must remain entirely itself, whatsoever thinks when thinking that it thinks. If this were not so, then it would exist only while thinking; when it thinks that it is thinking it would be different, and furthermore it would not be the same that has thought in the past.

In short, there is no need for a separate subject for every act of a given type. All noetic acts are performed by Nous, all psychic operations by Psyche. The proliferation of Aeons which is found in Gnosticism is superfluous.

Purists may substitute Noi.
RATIONALISM IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY

But there is a further implication of this doctrine. The Nous is the source of all intelligence that exists, the Soul of all souls and hence of all things done by souls. A distinction therefore is made between the ideas, which are the property of Nous and the sensations, feelings, and aspirations which are those of the Psyche. But below the three hypostases there is the world in which we live, the world in a word of bodies and matter. That world contains the three animate kingdoms and the minerals as well, the distinction between animation and inanimation being one of degree, for even the stones grow (iv. 4. 27, 9). Hence Psyche, as one of the three hypostases, gives rise to a series of lesser souls beginning with the Soul of the World, the souls of men, and descending gradually to the purely material world. This diversity is explained (iv. 8. 3, 6) as follows.

Since all Nous as an entirety is in the place of thinking which we call the Intelligible World, and since also all the intelligible powers included in it there and the intelligences individually as well—for there is not only one intelligence but many, and there must be also many souls and one too, and from the one proceed the many differences, just as from genus there are species both better and worse, on the one hand and the more intellectual, on the other such as are less so in actuality. For yonder in the Intelligible World the Nous encompasses all the rest potentially like a great animal, but every other in actuality which it encompasses in potentiality. So if a city were animate and included other animate beings, it would be more perfect and more powerful, but nothing would prevent both its own nature and that of the others from existing. Similarly from all fire there would be great fires and small. And the whole being—or essence—of fire as a whole exists or rather both the being of that fire and the being of the whole. But the task of the more logical soul is to think, to be sure, but not merely to think. For in that case how would it differ from Nous? For when it has come into contact with the Nous, it is both intellectual and otherwise, to the degree that Nous has not remained inactive.

Difficult as this and similar passages are, the most plausible conclusion they permit us to draw is that the logically possible divi-
sions within a genus or species are equivalent to existential divisions. The class is cut at the joints by nature, as in Phaedrus. Hence if any being is logically divisible into two parts, that division will be exemplified. And its exemplifications will be emanations from the ideas which are its source. Since time is the moving image of eternity, generation is the moving image of logical inclusion. And since (iv. 8. 6) the thing created is always worse than its creator, the temporal katabasis will always be degeneration. But the process stops when the absence of all reality is reached. And that is the world of matter, evil, and ugliness. At that point the anabasis begins, each type of being longing for perfection in the type above it with the ultimate purpose of being absorbed in the One. And since Plotinus believed that there were ideas of individuals, and not merely of classes (v. 7), the individuals can aspire to higher, better, and realer levels. Concretely this means that the purpose of a human being is to realize his humanity, not simply his individuality, just as it is the problem of an artist to imitate not the peculiar characteristics of that which he is depicting, but the essence of that class to which it naturally belongs.

In the tractate on the Descent of the Soul into Bodies (iv. 8. 6) the Principle of Plenitude is stated in so many terms:

The One must not remain alone. For if He did, all things would be buried in Him without form, nor would there exist any of the beings which are within Him, nor would the multitude of those beings which are generated by the One exist if they did not take their path downward from Him, those beings which have the rank of souls. Similarly the souls must not remain alone with the beings whom they might generate hidden within them, for it is inherent in each nature to produce something lower than itself and to unfold as from a seed out of some indivisible source, proceeding finally to the Sensible World, the prior meanwhile always remaining in its own place, but the posterior coming into being from a nameless power. However great it was in the Intelligible World, it must not stand still as if enclosed in jealousy, but must always proceed until all has come to the ultimate limits of the

21 For an excellent and neglected account of this, see B. A. G. Fuller, The Problem of Evil in Plotinus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912).
Plotinus, as if he saw the problem of making the possible real, of deducing existence from possibility, lays it down as an axiom that all possibilities must be realized. This, moreover, probably lies behind his strange doctrine that there are ideas of individuals, though he does not state it overtly in the tractate which takes up the problem. There the argument is that there are so many differences between individual souls that one archetypal soul would not account for them (v. 7. 1). The differences between two men are so great that they must be traced back to the source of all souls, even though in the strictly ethical treatises the good, which is of course the end of all action, is the same for all. It will be observed that in Plotinus' hierarchy there is a loss of individuality as one goes down toward matter, matter being a complete loss of all characteristics. In that respect it has a curious similarity to the One who is its antithesis. The One is absolutely prior to everything, to Nous and to ideas and to being (vi. 9. 2). It has neither quality nor quantity nor intelligence nor soul, is neither in space nor in time, but is absolutely sui generis, "or rather without genus since it is prior to all genera" (vi. 9. 2, 3), to change (motion) and to rest. Consequently on the principle that only similars can sustain the cognitive relation, we must become like the One in order to know it, but when we succeed, we shall have lost all specificity, all individuality. To become like the unique is impossible unless one becomes merged with the unique, for how can one become like something which is like nothing else and yet remain outside it?

22 It was this principle which differentiated Aristotle's thought from Plato's in the sharpest manner. See Metaphysics 1050b 8: "That which is capable of being may either be or not be. . . . And that which is capable of not being may possibly not be." See also 1071b 13: "That which has a potency need not exercise it."
III

So far we have tried to expound the philosophy of Plotinus as a sample of rationalism with axioms and inferences, with dialectical distinctions, with the Law of Contradiction utilized to produce consistency. But there is another side to the man which should not be obscured. We have already pointed out how he relies on Plato and some of the pre-Socratics as if their writings were sacred texts.23

But he also accepted the traditional myths and gave them the same kind of allegorical interpretation which Philo gave to the Biblical stories. Since this became an integral part of the Neoplatonic tradition, lasting into our own times via Ficino, Leone Ebreo, and the English Platonists, not to mention scores of others, it may be well to cite a few examples. The Theogony is mentioned in the tractate on Intellectual Beauty (v. 7. 12) with Zeus as a symbol of the visible world, Zeus the youngest child of Cronus. This is followed (v. 7. 12, 13) by what later became typical Neoplatonic allegory:

The god who had been bound so as to remain as he was and who had conceded to his son the rule of this universe—for it was not in his character to abandon the rule over yonder and to seek a younger and later sphere of sovereignty as if he had a surfeit of beauty—leaving such things he both established his own father in his place and over his province extending upward. But he also established what lay in the downward direction to be ruled over by his son after him, so that between them both there would be constituted a difference between that which was severed from above and that which linked him to the region below him, between both his better father and his worse son.

It is with some surprise that one learns the meaning of the successive castrations of divine fathers by their sons. Uranus turns into the One, beyond the highest realm of being, Cronus the realm

23 There are also curious parallels to Philo which Bréhier has pointed out. See, for instance, iii. 6, 65; iii. 3. 7, 10; v. 4. 4, 30; and the argument against the destruction of the cosmos in ii. 1. 1, 12.
of the *Nous*, and Zeus the god of the visible world. But sometimes the interpretation depends on what Plotinus believes to be the etymology of the divine names. Thus (v. i. 7) Rhea becomes the flux, though in most mythographers she was the wife of Cronus; Cronus is the father of Zeus because, by a play upon words, *Nous* has such a fullness of being that he overflows into Psyche.\(^{24}\)

In the tractate on the *Impassivity of the Incorporeals* (iii. 6. 19) we find Plotinus taking over Plato’s phrase from *Timaeus* (50d) that matter, “the recipient,” is similar to the Mother, the source of things to the Father, and what comes from the two, to the Offspring. But he cannot bring himself to leave this figure of speech as it stands. Mothers in Greek science were passive receptacles. Hence the priests of the Great Mother were castrated to show that Matter was incapable of generation.

If the Mother should give anything to her offspring, it would not be in her status as matter, but that she also is somehow a form. For only the form is generative, but the other nature is sterile. Wherefore, I think, the ancient sages, speaking darkly in mystic symbols and rites, made the archaic Hermes with his organ of generation always erect for generation to show that the things in the Sensible World are the offspring of the Noetic *Logos*, but the sterility of Matter, always remaining itself, they showed by the eunuchs surrounding it.

We have seen that Zeus stands for the cosmic Psyche. But in the second tractate on problems concerning the soul (iv. 4. 10), he acquires an additional meaning. Here he is said to stand both for the Demiurge and also for the guiding principle of the cosmos. But in the tractate on Love (iii. 5. 8), he becomes the *Nous* and his daughter Aphrodite becomes his soul. “And this is understandable for if we make the male gods symbols of the *Nous* and the female their souls, so that to each *Nous* there will be an accompanying Psyche, then again Aphrodite would be the soul of Zeus to which account the priests and theologians bear witness when

\(^{24}\) Henry-Schwyzer in a note on this passage refers to Saint Augustine’s *De consensu Evang.* i. 33. 35 (PL XXXIV, 1058) for a Latin interpretation of the etymological pun.
they identify Hera and Aphrodite and call the star of Aphrodite in the heavens Hera." It would seem, as a matter of fact, that the priests and theologians did not bear witness to this, since Hera, though the wife of Zeus and his sister, was never said to be also his daughter. But one must not be too critical of such interpretations. Moreover, earlier in the same tractate (iii. 5. 2, 15), Plotinus had made Plato's distinction between the two Aphrodites, the Earthly and the Heavenly, and Zeus was the father only of the former.

The habit of allegorical interpretation began early in his career, if we may trust Porphyry's chronological order of the tractates, for in the first of them all, *On Beauty* (i. 6. 8, 16), he interprets Odysseus' flight from Circe and Calypso as the return of the soul to its celestial home.

'Let us flee to our beloved fatherland,' someone would order more wisely. What then is this flight? How shall we escape? This is what Odysseus means by the flight from Circe or Calypso, not satisfied to linger even though he enjoys the pleasures of eye and great sensual beauty. Our fatherland then, whence we have come, and our Father are yonder. What then is the journey and the flight? It is not a journey on foot, for feet can do no more than bear one from one land to another. Nor need you prepare a horse-drawn carriage or a little ship, but rather must you abandon these things as a whole and refuse to look, but close your eyes and seek another kind of vision and wake up to its sights, which all men possess but few make use of.

The story of Pandora (iv. 3. 14) is said to mean that Epimetheus' rejection of her is the wisdom of remaining in the Intelligible World and that Prometheus' enchainment means that the creator is bound by what he creates. The River of Lethe (iv. 3. 14, 26 and 55) is the body which is fleeting and therefore cannot remember, whereas the soul, which is stable, alone has memory. Heracles (i. 1. 12) leads a twofold existence: he was as a shade in the lower world, but as himself among the gods; by his services he was worthy of divinity, but since his merit was earned in action rather than contemplation, something of him remained here below the
Intelligible World. These will suffice as samples of Plotinus' use of ancient myths.

The reversion to mythology, anticipated by Philo and exaggerated by the Gnostics, was obviously a rejection of rationalism. For the best that one can do is to absorb the old stories into what one has already constructed as a philosophy. It is in essence an expression of the belief that the ancients had a kind of wisdom which they either could not or would not express in literal speech. That the ancients had greater wisdom than one's contemporaries has been frequently maintained in the intellectual history of Europe. It is a species of epistemological primitivism analogous to that suggested by the myth of recollection in Plato's Meno. Just as the newborn child comes into this world with a stock of ideas untarnished by sensory experience, so our earliest forefathers were created wise and had no need of science or reasoning to discover the truth. Why they expressed their wisdom in myths was perhaps more difficult to explain, for if they were wise there seems to have been no reason for them to conceal their wisdom. One could not say that they resorted to myth because they were unable to express themselves literally. For that would imply that they lacked one of their descendants' most prominent traits. On the contrary, one usually said that there was a kind of superior wisdom in myth, perhaps because of its concreteness, perhaps because of its emotional efficacy. In Ennead v. 8. 6, Plotinus praises the Egyptians for expressing their wisdom, "whether by accurate knowledge or innate insight, not in letters which express words and propositions nor by imitating sounds and the pronunciation of sentences, but drawing pictures and carving an image of each thing for each thing in their temples as a declaration that [the ideas] do not leave the world over yonder, and these images are a sort of understanding and wisdom and underlying substance and undivided unity and not discursive reasoning and willing." In short, the image is a kind of compact visual presentation of an

25 Cf. iv. 3. 27, 7.
26 For a sketch of the subsequent fortunes of this idea, see G. Boas, The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo, Introduction.
THE FINAL CAPITULATION

idea which spares the image maker the use of language. Similarly the dream has a meaning which is not limited to the appearances which one sees but requires interpretation.

The knowledge which is conveyed in a myth or a vision or a hieroglyph is analogous to what one experiences in the mystic vision. There too there is nothing discursive and indeed every attempt to translate it into words is to fail. It is of course impossible to do more than name what one sees or hears or feels and the name suffices to communicate colors and sounds and textures. And, it goes without saying, nothing will be communicated to the person whose eyes are blind, whose ears are deaf, and whose feelings are anesthetized. If then one values direct experience above scientific thought, and Plotinus did so, one will ask for direct experience of the Platonic ideas as well as of normal sensory objects. But the closest one can come to a face-to-face encounter with such ideas as Justice, Goodness, and Beauty, is through myth. For myths, like parables, present one with concrete cases illuminating that of which one is trying to give a description. Even so abstract a document as Newton’s *Principia* gave examples to clarify, if not to prove, its deductions.

One could then say that Plotinus’ reversion to myth and allegory was an attempt to render the abstract concrete, though in practice he was rendering the concrete abstract. It would be better, he seems to be saying, to see the truth, rather than to hear it. And he turns to the ancients as people who did see it. We, he seems to continue arguing, have lost that power and the Sage will strive to revive it in his discourses. But he had no proof that the ancients were any wiser than we, had minds any the more penetrating, or had any ulterior motive in writing their stories beyond the telling of them. The attribution of such a capacity to his forebears was simply that nostalgia for a happier past which affects men in troubled times. And no proof is needed that the third century A.D. was troubled. When one thinks of the Roman Empire under Gallienus, one understands a man’s re-echoing the cry of Odysseus, “Let us flee to our beloved fatherland.”
1. Though the idea of a cosmic hierarchy is complete in Plotinus, it is worth indicating, no matter how roughly, the subsequent history of the idea. In Neoplatonism we first find his pupil, Porphyry, carrying on his master's main tenets, as well as writing elaborate allegorical interpretations of mythology and quasi-biographical studies. One of his best-known surviving works is the *Sententiae*, a series of apothegms on philosophical subjects. He is, as might be expected, closest to Plotinus of all the school, although he also wrote an introduction to the categories of Aristotle, a work which became a textbook in the Middle Ages. Plotinus had maintained that Aristotle's categories held good only of the Sensible World; the four categories of Plato alone pertained to the Intelligible. Porphyry, however, re-established the Aristotelian categories as generally applicable. Though the work in which he expounded his position is superficial and of no inherent importance, it was translated into Latin by Boethius and that translation carried on the tradition for the Christian philosophers.

In the *Sententiae* we find certain passages which are relevant to the cosmic hierarchy. For instance, we find (Sent. 10) that the kinds of cognitive objects are four in number and that there are four manners consequently of knowing them. We know intellectually whatever is in the Nous; logically, whatever is psychical; "spermatically," whatever is vegetative; by images, whatever is in bodies; but when it is a question of knowing the things that are over Yonder, these we know without thought and, magic word, superessentially. It is probably futile to try to reduce this to anything intelligible, though one can understand why we use images to know material things and why we must have a mystic vision to know the superessential. But what is meant by the distinction between noetic and logical knowledge, I leave to men more skilled in mysteries than I can hope to be. To know vegetative life spermatically might easily mean that since we too have a vegetative soul (*vide* Aristotle), so by a kind of sympathy we understand
growth and vitality. But it is by no means sure that this suggestion is right.

There are other principles enunciated in this work which were carried over almost without alteration into medieval philosophy. As the incorporeals descend from on high, they are divided and multiplied until they reach the individuals, but going upward they unite and coalesce (Sent. 11). Now, as was pointed out above, one cannot deduce by any logical means the existence of individual exemplifications of any idea, or class concept, whatsoever. But in his Introduction to the Categories Porphyry places individual men immediately after rational animality as if their existence could be deduced from their essence. This may be attributable to his acceptance of the Principle of Plenitude, in that, since there is no inner contradiction in the idea of rational animality, and since all possibilities must be realized, exemplifications of rational animality must exist. Again, he carries on the Plotinian theory that the product is always worse than the producer, being lower in the scale of beings, and that everything turns back toward its source. Matter, moreover, as in Plotinus, is nonbeing (Sent. 21), and the cosmos is produced through emanation (Sent. 25). Knowledge is achieved by becoming like one's object of knowledge (Sent. 26) and consequently not only virtue, but also knowledge itself, depends on our becoming like God (34).

The process of becoming like God, or of uniting with the Cosmos, as he puts it in one place (Sent. 41), is not available to everyone. Seeking this union you may be distracted into contemplating something else. But if you seek for nothing, standing firmly in yourself and your essential nature, you will become like the whole and will not descend into anything lower than yourself. "Say not then, 'I am such and such.' If you leave out 'such and such,' you become all. For before this [before birth?] you indeed were all." The argument here seems to be based on the alternative of specificity or generality. If specificity is asserted, generality is denied; if generality is asserted, specificity is denied. But precisely in what does the assertion consist? Porphyry seems elsewhere to suggest
that it consists in practicing asceticism, as in his treatise on abstin-
ence from flesh. This would resemble a withdrawal from the
body. But as a matter of fact, the body is not his principle of in-
dividuation; the soul was an individual before birth and may con-
tinue to be one after death. But since he previously had said (Sent.
31) that God is both everywhere and nowhere, that Intelligence is
in God and the Soul in both Intelligence and God and nowhere in
the body, its existence is already predicated upon its being distinct
from and detached from the body. Hence its apostasis, or with-
drawal from the body, can be brought about exclusively by some-
thing which is only metaphorically spatial withdrawal. There are,
he says (Sent. 32), four kinds of virtue, the theoretical which leads
to apathy, the end of which is likeness to God; the purgative,
which is in gnosis; the intellectual, which is wisdom and prudence;
and the "paradigmatic" which is in the Intelligence and apparently
consists in contemplating eternal ideas. All of these vaguely de-
"yed kinds of virtue assist in elevating the soul, while still this side
of the grave, beyond the body or, what amounts to the same thing,
in giving it a vision of "true being." Since true being is neither
quantitative (Sent. 36), nor spatial nor material nor multiple nor
made up of parts (38), the problem, if virtue is to lead to knowl-
dge of true being, is clearly to find a discipline which will lead
one to thinking in independence of the usual categories. Moreover,
true being is both one and many, being unity in variety (Sent. 38).
It is clear then that the human mind must be purged of its feelings,
in so far as feelings make it conscious of its difference from other
souls, and it must also be purged of anything which will cause it
to assert multiplicity in its objects. But this is a discipline which
runs counter to the use of the laws of logic, for nothing in true
being can be asserted to be identical, in so far as identity is based
on difference from other things; to be in contradiction with others,
for true being is continuous harmony; to exclude alternatives, for
it has no alternative. But such a being can be only seen, intuited,
contemplated, not talked about (Sent. 44). In intelligence, as
Aristotle had said, the intelligence and its objects are one. In Por-
phyry, as in Plotinus, the union is expressed as follows: "If the Nous is what is known to the Nous, then the Nous would be that which is known to itself. . . . It is itself both the knower and the known, the whole of the whole." The paradox that self-knowledge is also knowledge of true being runs parallel to the other paradox that true being is everywhere and nowhere.

2. One might imagine that we had by now reached the end of the road and that mystery could gain no further ground. But the successors to Plotinus and Porphyry won more victories over the claims of evidence and logic. For just as the Christians defeated every attempt to produce a system of theology in which the Law of Contradiction would be the thinker's guide, so the Neoplatonists juggled with concepts, allegories, intuitions, revelations, and Pythagorean number symbolism in order to construct a system in which piety might take the place of truth and religion that of science. The old words, logos, nous, sensation, might be used, but they were given meanings foreign to their origin and requiring reinterpretation. To call the Logos the son of God, as in Philo, might have been a figure of speech indicating Philo's high regard for rationality, but it did not take very long for the metaphor to become literal truth in the Fourth Gospel. Similarly if the nous in Aristotle was the power which we had of systematizing logically the data of sense and of contemplating the results of the system, in Plotinus it was something so far removed from sense that it was useless to appeal to it if one was engaged in natural science. The nous in Aristotle had been active as well as passive, and the active reason had a genealogy which went back to Anaxagoras. But where Socrates could say that it did nothing whatsoever to enlighten men who wanted enlightenment, in Plotinus it was the only faculty which we had, for enlightenment. Its detachment from all sensory knowledge was the sign of its importance. Again, where the Stoics and Epicureans as well could base their philosophies on their observation of the elements, the plants, animals, and

27 This whole section (44) contains an excellent account of nondiscursive thought.
human beings, and construct "reality" out of the conclusions of natural science, by the time of Epictetus natural science was at best only a lower form of knowledge and the great poem of Lucretius was a futile gesture which few cared to follow. If one wished to depict the intellectual situation in dramatic terms, one could imagine Lucretius and the later Stoics engaged in a battle in which magic got the upper hand over scientific reason. There is no indication in the first Christian centuries of anyone's dreaming of the possibility of a scientific philosophy. Marvels, mysteries, miracles, and magic—the alliteration is inevitable, if regrettable—were accepted not as something to be explained away, but as something which refuted science. Philosophy was no longer the love of wisdom, but a guide to life. Its fruits were to be ethical, not intellectual. Apparently no one saw that one human problem was to accept the truth, however bitter, and to adjust one's life to it. For the truth was now revealed by insight, not painfully acquired by observation and logical discipline. Ironically the attacks of the Skeptics led not to a rejection of mystery but to a rejection of the reason.

A fair sample of the kind of thinking which was to reign in the early centuries of the Christian period is seen in such Neoplatonists as Iamblichus and Proclus. Seven centuries, roughly speaking, separate Euclid, the geometer, from Iamblichus. In spite of twentieth-century criticism of the logic of Euclid's Elements, no one, as far as I know, has ever maintained that they were full of mystical symbols. But when one comes to Iamblichus, one sees that mathematics was to serve as a religious initiation. Take the following from his Protrepticus. The divine doctrine of Pythagoras "instructs us to mistrust nothing said about the gods. . . . For the fact that the same things are proved to be true both by mathematics and by contemplative insight and to be alone lacking in deceit, proves decisively that they stand fast in all their applications and as a complex whole. And these same studies can direct one to the knowledge of the gods. They lead to the possession of such un-

derstanding that we mistrust nothing of the theories about the gods or of the divine doctrines.” Again, the study of mathematics will transmit to us a knowledge of the “great mysteries” instead of the minor ones and of philosophy instead of elementary education (p. 10, l. 4). Nor must one think that one can learn the significance of mathematics by ordinary rational means. Quite the contrary. Insight into it is transmitted to us by the gods. But when one asks what these mysteries are and how one learns them, one finds the answer in allegory.

Thus, if the Theologoumena arithmeticae is an authentic work, we find each of the numbers from one to ten described as symbols of various theological attributes.29 The Monad is the arche of number and “has no local position,” that is, is not really a number at all, a belief which was common to the ancients. It gets it name, Monad, from the fact that it remains [unchanged], a pun on the Greek verb μένειν. “For the Monad, from which number is generated, keeps the same form, just as every three remains three, every four remains four” (i. 4, p. 1). So far so good. But soon (vi. 6, p. 6) we learn that it is called “essence [or substance], the cause of truth, simple, paradigm, order, unison, the equal in matters of quantity, the mean between increase and diminution, the measure in magnitude, the present moment in time, and again a ship, a chariot, a friend, life, and happiness.” It lies between the two upper elements and the two lower as a fiery cube, at the middle point of the cosmic order, “as Homer is known to say, ‘So deep is Hades, as great a distance below as Heaven is from Earth.’ ” It is also called, we find (x. 19, p. 81), Mnemosyne, who it will be recalled, was the mother of the Muses. But it would be folly to continue, not only because little sense can be made out of such a jumble of attributes and symbols, but also because they are easily found in de Falco’s Index. In spite of the absurdity of it all, such symbols were constantly used throughout the Middle Ages, transmitted by writers like Martianus Capella and Isidore of Se-

29 I use the edition of V. de Falco (Leipzig: Teubner, 1922). Whether the work is really by Iamblichus or not, it is typical of his kind of thinking.
ville. Each of the first ten numbers was treated similarly and historians of numerical symbolism will find the little compilation of the greatest utility. When one remembers the awe in which numbers like three and seven were held, one realizes that men given to Pythagoreanism were not without influence. Much of what is in this work is also to be found in Philo, and Philo undoubtedly derived it from earlier writers. But after all the emotional aura which surrounds Unity even today is no less irrational.

Iamblichus also began to fill in the cosmic hierarchy with additional levels. Whereas Plotinus was satisfied with three hypostases, Iamblichus located an "ineffable arche" before the One, for if one calls the beginning of things "the One," something has been said about it. After this Arche come the three hypostases. In the De mysteriis (viii. 2; Berlin, Nicholaus, 1857) we discover that "before the really real and the universal archai is one god, prior both to the primary god and king, remaining immutable in the unity of his oneness. For neither thoughts nor anything else must be associated with him. For he is established as the paradigm of the self-begotten, self-generated, and solely paternal god of the really good. For something is best and first and a source of all things and root of the primary intellectual ideas. And from this one the autarkic God radiates Himself, wherefore He is His own father and is independent [of all else]. For He is the arche and God of gods, a monad out of the One, superessential and the source of being. For from him come substantiality and being [or essence], wherefore he is called the father of being. For he is pre-essential being, arche of the intelligibles, wherefore he is also addressed as the source of intelligence. Accordingly these archai are the oldest of all things, which Hermes [Trismegistus] placed before the gods of the ethereal regions and the empyrean and the upper heaven." This is the result of a struggle to find an absolute beginning for all things, a beginning which will be only a beginning and nothing

---

80 This comes from the Dubitationes et solutiones of Damascius, a sixth-century figure of the Athenian school. As his text is unavailable to me, I use the quotations as given in De Vogel.
else. The scientific principles of an earlier period had maintained that nothing could come from nothing, and this would push back the arche into infinite recesses. Iamblichus does not want a temporal beginning for things; he wants a logical beginning, for emanation does not go on in time. But if one takes the Plotinian triad as the summit of one's hierarchy, each member must share in some common property to be there. This common property must be the most general of all characteristics, a characteristic such as "pure being." But as soon as anything is asserted of being, it falls from its supreme position. It is probably for this reason that Iamblichus insists on its ineffability. The monstrous terms by which he names it, self-father, self-begotten, and so on, are inventions whose monstrosity does not bother him, for he would admit the impossibility of finding a suitable vocabulary to name that which is unnamable. But perhaps enough has been said to illustrate the intellectual technique of Iamblichus and to show how philosophy was turning into religion.

3. The last Neoplatonist whom we shall mention is Proclus, for he too in his metaphysical writings was more occupied with constructing a continuous series of beings than in anything else. His commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus* and some of the other dialogues are still extant and contain material which is invaluable to anyone who would see how such works could become by the fifth century A.D. works of esotericism. But we are more interested here in his *Elements of Theology*, for it supplies us with a sample of a cosmic hierarchy which is fuller than any upon which we have touched so far.\(^{31}\)

Dodds has pointed out that the importance of Iamblichus in the development of Neoplatonism lay in his triads, since they all involved a mean term between extremes, and in the triadic scheme of that which is alone, that which proceeds out of the alone, and of the notion of a return to the alone. Thus he preserved from Plotinus the ideas of the katabasis and the anabasis. There was also in

him a mirroring at successive levels of identical structures, so that each level of the hierarchy reproduced the level above it. But, as we see from the Elements themselves (Prop. 25), that which is most remote from the arche of all things is sterile and consequently there is a terminus to the emanations. There is also in Proclus (Prop. 55) a hint of a distinction between eternal, or logical, and temporal duration, and this is important. For the eternal has logical duration in the sense that its inner relations are timeless and the priority and posteriority of its beings are logical. The conclusions of a logical deduction come after the premises only in a special sense, since they are implicit in the premises and it is only when human beings draw them out that they take on temporal posteriority. Temporal duration is seen in "things which are becoming." The world of time is a world of process. The child is not implicit in the father but is born later than the father. Moreover, there is clear evidence in Proclus that he was thinking of his hierarchy as a series of logical classes, for (Prop. 62) "every manifold which is nearer to the One has fewer members than those more remote, but is greater in power," or it may be that he means in potencies. There are more "somatic natures" than souls, more souls than intelligences, more intelligences than "divine units." This agrees not only with observation but also with the old rule of the inverse ratio between connotation and denotation. The more inclusive class contains more members than the less inclusive: there are more animals than men. But the more inclusive class has fewer qualifications than the less inclusive: one can say more things which will be true of men than will be true of animals as a whole. But this rule in itself does not entail any conclusions about power. If the power of the upper levels is greater than that of the lower, then we have at last found the principle of the original hierarchy.

If geneticists were interested in such problems, they might raise the question of the pre-existence of the genes, for, though we get them from both of our parents, each gene appears to go back in time to the beginning of the human race, though radioactive matter may have caused changes in them, as it may also do in the future. Furthermore, if a gene is simply a chemical substance, the elements in it are also everlasting. But none of this is relevant perhaps to Proclus.
of priests embedded in the cosmic hierarchy. If the upper levels are the source of the lower, and plurality increases as one descends, then clearly the range of the superior powers is greater than that of the inferior. In Christian terms, God has power over everything; the Pope, His vicar on earth, has power over the entire Church; the bishops over their dioceses, the parish priests over their parishes. And since the word for power was also the word for potentiality, and one never knows in just which sense it is being used, for both senses will appear whenever the word appears, one can see that by playing upon power as potentiality the generation of the hierarchy could be clarified. When one finds Proclus saying (Prop. 86) that the infinitude of the really real resides not in quantitative terms but in power, one can understand somewhat why the really real could be the source of all else.

It may also be true that such statements, found in Plotinus as well as in Proclus and other Neoplatonists, as “everything is in everything” (Prop. 103), ultimately rest upon the principle *ex nihilo nihil*. For since the hierarchy is a logical hierarchy, the specific traits must have been implicit in the generic traits, though not exemplified there. The rationality of man, for instance, could not have come from his animality, for some animals are not rational. Yet there must be a potency of rationality in animality, if it was to be explained, and the principle of *omnia in omnibus*, if interpreted as potentiality, would serve as an explanation. In *Being*, says Proclus (Prop. 103), are both Life and Intelligence; in Intelligence both Being and Life; and in Life both Being and Intelligence. But “each of these exists upon one level intellectually, on another vitally, and on a third ontologically.” The levels here would appear to mean what we should call contexts, but in a hierarchical scheme the contexts are also graded in relation to their proximity to the “really real,” and it is not a matter of indifference whether we think of a person as an animal, a soul, or an intelligence.

But of course some principle would have to be introduced to explain why so many of these potentialities are not realized. For, as Aristotle had pointed out, everything does not come out of everything indiscriminately, but oak comes from acorns, not from wheat seeds.
It is hard to see how Proclus' hierarchy could be extended any further. If the Principle of Plenitude had not been accepted, then it would not have been plausible to infer that every possibility must be exemplified. Consequently there might have been some ranks which would have existed in the logical hierarchy but not in the ontological. If the idea of a king and ruler, governing in secret, had not seemed the proper way to imagine a government, exemplified not only in the governance of the Great King but also in that of the Roman Emperors, one of the fundamental metaphors of the system would have been missing and the Lord of Creation might have been more anthropomorphic. But as Professor Goodenough has said, the figure of royalty while certainly the source of the hierarchy of powers, in Philo "another source is equally apparent, the light mysticism of the mystery religions." The use of the Sun as a symbol for the One, or for God, and the radiation of light from it, gave the Neoplatonists, as it gave Philo, a figure of speech which could easily lose its figurative character. To quote Professor Goodenough (p. 11) again, the sun was "that orb which burns, to all appearances, eternally, yet without need of fuel from outside itself. Independent of the world, a self-sufficient existence, it sends out its great stream of light, or of heat, or of life, or of creation." Here then was a perfect symbol for the kind of creation which was needed and it seems only natural that when Julian the Apostate wanted to restore the polytheism of his ancestors, he should have placed Helios at the apex of his divine hierarchy.

34 By Light, Light, p. 41.
35 Cf. A. H. Armstrong, The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus (Cambridge: Classical Studies, 1940), p. 54. For the use of light as a metaphor in Ps-Dionysius, see the Celestial Hierarchy i, following Jas. 1:17, where God is called the Father of Lights, and On the Divine Names i. 6, ii. 4, and iv passim. It is curious, in the face of this and similar evidence, that E. Zeller, in his Philosophie der Griechen (5th ed.; Leipzig, 1923), pt. 2, sect. 1, Vol. VI, pp. 560 f., should deny that Plotinus believed in emanationism. He prefers to call the system "dynamic pantheism." He distinguishes between emanationism welche die Emanation als Mittheilung des Wesens [ist] and one welche sie nur als Mittheilung der Kraft fassen. And he concludes that nur in letzteren Sinn kann Plotins Lehre emanatisch genannt werden. But it would seem as if the distinction in Plotinus himself was not existential but purely verbal.
There is still one more peculiarity about philosophy from Philo which deserves a word or two. In our earlier chapters we wrote sections on the appraisal of life, in which it appeared that few if any philosophers thought that human life could be justified without examination or criticism. But all nevertheless up to the time of Philo thought that the saving grace could come from man himself. One lived the rational life; one avoided excess and was temperate; one sought simple pleasures and avoided pain; one gave up everything that was not strictly necessary; one recognized one's place in the Cosmopolis and lived as a citizen of the world. But as soon as the Bible became a sacred text, agreement with which was the ultimate test of truth, then salvation could come only through supernatural aid. Philo's interpretation of man's redemption through divine instruction, endurance, and grace, was, if not the first, at least the first on record of successive essays on the need for salvation through God's intervention. Now it is true that as early as Homer the records show Greeks being aided as well as hindered by the gods, initiations into the various mystery cults, metamorphoses, the nonrational working of fate, and, as in the case of Socrates, a genuine distrust of pure rationality. Dodds's book on *The Greeks and the Irrational* is eloquent proof that not all Greeks followed the way of the geometer. But no one has as yet exhibited a philosopher following any other path and, as we have tried to show early in this book, even the gods could be asked to prove their point on certain occasions. Aeschylus' *Eumenides* is not post-Aristotelian. It was addressed after all to the Athenian people, not to a small élite. The debate between the Furies and Apollo is the presentation of a genuine conflict of ideas. And something similar appeared in Sophocles' *Antigone*. A purely rational philosophy is to be sure impossible, since the premises of the most rational systems have to be taken for granted and certain metaphors will be used as a mold for the whole system. But at the same time, once the basic metaphors were accepted and the premises laid down, the rest proceeded as if it were rational discourse.
Moreover the earlier philosophers were interested in the whole range of the sciences. Aristotle was not the first to write on physics and biology, government, ethics, and art. Everything goes to make it probable that this sort of thing was typical of philosophy before his time. Indeed it was one of the peculiarities of Socrates that he had no interest in cosmic questions. The early Stoics and certainly Epicurus were as occupied with what we would call science as with metaphysics. But when once Philo began his interpretation of a sacred text, interest was oriented toward the supernatural. What goes for science in Seneca and Pliny is pitiful. Their scientific writings are an uncritized mass of legend and myth. It is only in Lucretius that one finds a philosopher who is also a scientist, not one to be sure in his own right, but a man who felt the need of basing his philosophic conclusions on science. And the very fact of his ineffectuality is proof enough of the decline of reason at the end of the Pagan period.

One of the nonlogical causes of the differences in temper between the classical and the postclassical philosophers may well be that the former lived in small communities and the latter in amorphous empires. When a city of 50,000 is the world, the philosopher does not feel the invasions of large crowds with their strange ideas as a menace. But when the center of civilization shifted from Athens to Alexandria to Rome, too much was known of conflicting methods of thinking and conflicting aspirations to give a philosopher who lived "in the world" any peace of mind. At the present time we are in a similar situation, for our consciousness of Indian and Chinese philosophies shakes our confidence in both the logical and the scientific methods of thought. We have been made aware of the nonlogical sources of the reason, be they economic, psychodynamic, or religious. But the fact that we articulate our ideas in symbols which are prompted by the Unconscious does not compel us to refuse to submit them to the test of fact, to the Law of Contradiction, to experimentation. The fact that we talk of square and cubic numbers does not force us to think of four as a plane figure bounded by four equal sides, nor of eight as a solid
each of whose edges is two units long. The stimuli to our systems may be as unconscious as one please; the system itself may be conscious and constantly submitted to rational criticism. If we speak of a melancholy person, we are not committed to the theory of the four humors, temperaments, and elements. But we seem to feel that if Indians or Chinese or Japanese or North American Redskins think in ways which are fundamentally different from ours, either we must be wrong and they right, or, what is worse, that an amalgam of all the ways of thinking must be melted together and accepted by us. There is little doubt that as long as a people lives in a small enclosed community, it will look on outsiders as inferiors, and that is of course stupid provincialism. But the fact that two people disagree does not in itself prove that either of them is right or wrong, that they can and should be "reconciled"—for both may be wrong—and, if the words which they use only seem but are not ambiguous, both may be right. But there simply is no way of reconciling inconsistent ideas. One can explain the cause of the inconsistency historically. It may reside in the choice of different premises determined by cultural traditions. But that is no more reconciliation, if I understand the term, than showing that the difference between molecular oxygen and ozone lies in the latter's possessing an extra atom of oxygen destroys the difference between them. Their differences remain real, but they are now understood.

If I speak of a decline of the rational spirit in Pagan philosophy, I mean by "decline" the submission of reason to dreams, allegory, mysteries, and mythology. To say that Neptune "means" water and Pluto earth is not submitting science to mythology; it is rather giving a scientific meaning to mythology. The two gods in question did not mean anything of the sort, it goes without saying, and as an explanation of mythology, it is incorrect to say that they did. But it is not quite the same thing as identifying the creation of the world as the overflowing of the One. For one can at least prove that the names of the gods were not names of the elements whereas there is no way of verifying or disproving the theory of
emanation. One cannot verify metaphors, though one can distinguish between those which are apt and those which are inapt. But to do even this requires a knowledge of some literality which is expressed figuratively in the metaphor under examination. If one were to compare the earth to a running brook, or fire to a stolid rock, most of us would think the comparison inept for the simple reason that we have a pretty good idea of what the two elements look like and they do not look like brooks and rocks respectively. But we have no way of knowing what emanation would be and when it is compared to streams of light coming from the sun, we still do not know how streams of light could turn into people, beasts, and minerals. When a rationalistic philosopher wishes to explain the origin of the universe, he is expected first to ask on what grounds it is believed to have had an origin. If to avoid an infinite regress of causation, he posits a first cause, he will then be expected to endow the first cause with only those traits which are needed to explain its effectiveness as a cause. If he proceeds by abstraction to reach a concept such as pure being, then he can reasonably be asked to explain its assumption of traits which are not inherent in its nature, such as materiality, sensory qualities, multiplicity, temporality. For since he is sticking to dialectical devices, he must show that the gap between a concept and that which is subsumed under it can be bridged by the same devices. If it cannot be bridged, then his technique is faulty at that point and he must either accept at least a duality of beings or try another technique.

But one has only to turn to Plotinus to see how little he cared for such enterprises. The emanation of the three hypostases may be a beautiful vision and many later philosophers have thought it to be one. But why should the One not remain the One forever? Plotinus evokes the principle of the necessity of production and he certainly has a right to introduce such a postulate. But why should the second hypostasis be the Nous rather than something else? His tractate against the Gnostics does indeed try to prove that there can be neither more nor less than three hypostases (ii. 9.
1) but it does not tell us how one deduces Nous from the One. He knows somehow or other that Unity, Intelligence, and Soul are "over Yonder," and that they exist there in actuality, not in potentiality, but one can only conclude that he knows this because the ancients have said so. Once that much is granted, the inference becomes plausible that no more than these three are needed. But just to meditate upon the nature of Unity or Being would provide no evidence whatsoever that it implies either Intelligence or Soul. Even if one make the further assumption of the inevitability of emanation to lower levels of reality, that in itself would not prove that the level below the One would be Intelligence, rather than anything else. Here what the modern mathematician calls intuition enters. And the business of the Reason is organizing what one intuits into systematic order.

The intuitions of Plotinus come in the main from Plato as he understood him. It is because of his reading of Plato that he identifies the One with the Good. Having then accepted the supremacy of the One, he attempts to organize Intelligence in relation to it. And since he had also taken over the theory of ideas and inferred that all ideas must be the objects of an Intelligence, he situates a collective Intelligence in the Intelligible World. He may have argued that since all beings participate in some idea, and since all ideas must be the objects of an intelligence, the Nous must rank highest in the hierarchy after the One. But the reverse process, of drawing the cosmic Intelligence out of the One with no other evidence of its existence is quite a different matter. By the process of abstracting common properties one can of course mount the Tree of Porphyry, but to climb down the Tree before one has climbed up is bound to be frustrating, since one has no way of knowing a priori that it is a tree, to say nothing of the location of its branches. The procedure permits one to imagine all sorts of possibilities and on the basis of the Principle of Plenitude to infer that all which are not inconsistent must be realized.

The use of reason, it may not be amiss to point out, is at least twofold. First, it is a technique of drawing inferences out of
premises, as in the syllogism, or in geometry, usually by substitutions of terms which are equivalents. The premises are taken for granted, either because they are supposed to be self-evident or because they give one the conclusions which one needs or which seem to be true according to observed facts or which have been accepted by men working in the field whose authority is unquestioned. The only premises which are self-evident in the strict sense are tautologies, though they may not look like tautologies. For instance, definitions do not look like tautologies, but since by agreement the predicate means the same thing as the subject, they are nevertheless tautological. One sometimes works backward from beliefs which for one reason or another are accepted as true to fact by means of accepted laws of causality or statements of natural rhythms and cycles. Thus if the cause of a disease is known and the symptoms are present and are uniquely the symptoms of a stateable disease, then one can infer that the disease’s cause must have been present to cause the symptoms or is still present. If one knows the cause of typhoid fever and a patient shows the symptoms of typhoid fever, then one can argue backward from the symptoms to the cause. (In this case to that which transmitted the bacilli in question.) But there are also certain beliefs which at a given time in the history of a science have been checked by observation and experiment. These when properly phrased can and do become premises from which inferences are legitimately drawn. By the time of Plotinus, it is true, it was generally believed that the human soul had the two faculties of intelligence (nous) and the “lower” faculties of sensation, imagination, desire, memory, and volition. The lower faculties, with the possible exception of volition, were shared by the higher animals. If then everything in an effect could be, indeed must be, traced back to its cause and the lower faculties were all grouped as psychic rather than as intellectual (or noetic), one could infer that they must come from a source of psychic faculties to which one could give the name of Soul with an initial capital. And if one has already assumed the hierarchical arrangement of all beings, it was reasonable to infer
that the source in question must be present close to the summit of the hierarchy. The main question remaining was how the effects emerged from the cause and the metaphor of emanation took care of that. In this way the logical hierarchy gave one the taxonomy of beings, and the Principle of Plenitude took care of their origin. As Lovejoy has pointed out, the temporalizing of the principle was based on a logical surd: one simply could not deduce from any taxonomical order a temporal order. T. H. Morgan, for instance, showed how in spite of the possibility of arranging the mutations of the fruit fly in easily recognizable orders, from, for instance, vestigial wings to full-sized wings or the reverse, they did not occur in time in any such order.36 We do have a tendency, it seems, to believe that events must occur in orders which are easily named, the order of simple to complex or complex to simple, good to bad or bad to good, little to big, ignorant to intelligent, and so on. What induces us to think in this way is unknown, but it may be that the observation of the growth of plants and animals had some influence here, for seeds and eggs look to the naïve eye simpler and actually are smaller, and most people would agree “worse” than the adult creatures. But this is merely a guess on my part. Whatever the reason, philosophers who believed in a cosmic hierarchy also believed in both the absolute simplicity and the infinite potentiality of the source of all things and both terms were terms of praise. But the gap between eternity and time was never bridged by such men except in symbols.

The attribution of goodness and beauty to the hierarchy was another logical surd. But from the time of Plato on the immutable and the unified were believed to be better than the changing and multiple. This could only be an assumption. But once the assumption was made, one could assert that as one went up the hierarchy one proceeded toward the better. This was the logical source of the notion that the return to the Intelligible World was progress toward the good. And though the One was both producing and

also unchanging, in spite of the apparent contradiction in terms, human beings were urged, as we have seen, to pursue the anabasis in place of the katabasis. I say that this was the logical source of the notion. But I do not maintain that men looked upward because of any logical motives whatsoever. Otherworldliness, the desire to flee to one's beloved fatherland, renunciation of terrestrial life, may come about as the result of the weariness of living. And one suspects that the most metaphysical arguments can do in relation to this problem is what theology can do in relation to religion.

The coincidence in history between Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and Christianity, their success in conquering the souls of Western Europeans, regardless of their differences, prevents anyone from denying the satisfaction which they conferred upon people. Men seemed to be capable of sacrificing the Law of Contradiction for the sake of comfort. When one reads such a work as the De mysteriis of Iamblichus, a work which is written soberly and carefully, and realizes that it defends everything which modern man would call superstition, divination, sacrifices, revelations from supernatural powers of various degrees of sanctity, auguries from dreams, and so on, one can only wonder why it should have been preserved intact, if it is intact, and so many tough-minded scientific works should have been lost. I find it hard to believe that Cicero, Epictetus, and Seneca were as intelligent as Theophrastus, not to speak of his teacher, and yet they were preserved almost in toto and used by later Christians as authorities. But then Vergil was used as a prophet and Pliny and Aelian as zoologists.

The second role of the reason is that of the critic. And here we find that the postclassical writers were as sharp as their predecessors when it was not a question of their own beliefs. Their beliefs, as early as Philo, were fixed and it was sinful to modify them. When it became a sin to scrutinize one's ideas for logical flaws, philosophy had made the final capitulation. The Skeptic might criticize the operations of the reason, but he did it not in the interest of faith or revelation; he did it in the interest of consistency.
Nevertheless there was also that element of peace of mind which skepticism was to bring about, as noxious an element as the desire for fame or good repute. When faith, hope, and charity took the place of wisdom and prudence, what are called spiritual values took the place of epistemological values. The ancients took it for granted that disagreement would exist among men, though each philosopher undoubtedly did his best to make disciples and form a school. And we do have the case of Socrates’ fate to confute the idolater of everything Greek. Whether the attitude of the ancients be called indifference or tolerance, they did not succeed in imposing any body of philosophic doctrine on the population as a whole. To do that was the work of the Church aided of course by the State.