

A Man of Many Interests: Plutarch on Religion, Myth, and Magic

Essays in Honor of Aurelio Pérez Jiménez

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The Myth of Human Races: Can Plutarch Help Us Understand Valentinian Anthropology?

Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta

In spite of having been repeatedly contested in various important works over the past fifty years or so,¹ the biased heresiological interpretation of Valentinian anthropology continues generally to be held as *the* Gnostic position regarding human origins, condition, and destiny. Taking complex mythological expositions as a starting point, heresiologists not only managed to distil and fabricate a coherent whole they could easily attack but were also persuasive enough to perpetuate their interpretation for centuries to come. Indeed, according to several modern scholars, the so-called Valentinian theory of the three human races not only provides an ontological explanation of man's origin and nature, but also a sociological view that divides humanity into three known groups, namely *pneumatics*, *psychics*, and *hylics*.² This human taxonomy, besides implicitly attributing to each of these races a fixed hierarchical position in their social universe according to their origin and character, allegedly had both ethical and eschatological implications.

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- 1 L. Schottroff, "*Animae naturaliter salvandae*. Zum Problem der himmlischen Herkunft des Gnostikers," in W. Eltester (ed.), *Christentum und Gnosis* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1969) 65–97; E. Pagels, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology," *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974) 35–53; M.A. Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 189–212; M.R. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); W.A. Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992) 381–390; G.P. Luttikhuisen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 83–86; idem, "Eve's Children and the Salvation of Humanity," in idem (ed.), *Eve's Children. The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 203–217 at 203–207.
 - 2 See, for example, J.F. McCue, "Conflicting Versions of Valentinianism? Irenaeus and the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*," in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, 1: The School of Valentinus* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 404–416; K.W. Tröger, "Die gnostische Anthropologie," *Kairos* 23 (1981) 31–42 at 41; G. Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (transl. A. Alcock; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 129; H.A. Green, *The Economic and Social Origins of Gnosticism* (SBLDS 77; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 213–214; J.A. Trumbower, *Born from Above. The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) 22–30; A. Magris, "Augustins Prædestinationslehre und die manichaischen Quellen," in J. van Oort et al. (eds.), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 148–160, at 149–151.

The past few decades have seen numerous and important studies on the theme, but much of the scholarly discussion on Valentinian anthropology has centered on trying to redefine its contours, revisiting various heresiological expositions, and comparing them to the testimonies provided by texts of Valentinian affiliation from the Nag Hammadi collection. This means that up to very recently the discussion has been governed by the same old questions that marked the Church Fathers' understanding of Valentinianism, such as its alleged determinism, whether the races were conceived of as congenital or as acquired, whether eschatology was inclusive or not, and whether the latter resulted in an elitist sociology.³

Today I intend to advance the discussion in another direction: instead of focusing on the internal Christian discussion, I will attempt to go beyond the Church Fathers and Valentinian texts in search of a clue to a sound understanding outside the strict world of early Christianity. In my view, a good interpretation of Valentinian anthropology can only be reached by placing it in the wider religious and philosophical context to which it belongs. In order to do so, I will compare the Valentinian conception of the human being with Plutarch's anthropology. As is well known, Plutarch's eschatological myths in *De sera numinis vindicta*, *De genio Socratis*, and *De facie* widely, albeit not in a systematic fashion, expose his views on the human being. It is the latter treatise, however, that interests us the most, since, besides providing a clear exposition of the tripartite constitution of the human being, *De facie* delves into the cosmological, eschatological, soteriological, and, of course, ethical implications of this conception, in this way providing suitable comparable material to that of Valentinian ideas on the theme.

In the following pages in honor of my dear mentor, colleague, and friend, Prof. Aurelio Pérez Jiménez, my intention is to compare Valentinian anthropology with the views that transpire in Plutarch's myths. Once the discussion regarding the correctness or incorrectness of the heresiological cliché has been settled, and a reliable reconstruction of Valentinian ideas based on comparative analysis of the materials emerges, we need to move forward and position Valentinian views in the wider cultural world they belong to. My intention will be to show, first, that, albeit in mythological form, Valentinian anthropology relies on the widespread tripartite anthropological view we find in

3 See, for example, two recent studies: I. Dunderberg, "Valentinian Theories on Classes of Humankind," in Ch. Marksches & J. van Oort (eds.), *Zugänge zur Gnosis. Akten zur Tagung der Patristischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft vom 02.–05.01.2011 in Berlin-Spandau* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013) 113–128; E. Thomassen, "Saved by Nature," in Marksches & van Oort (eds.), *Zugänge zur Gnosis*, 129–149.

various contemporary religious and philosophical texts of the first two centuries CE. Second, that Plutarch's myth in *De facie* offers the best possible parallel for understanding Valentinian anthropology. The analysis of Plutarch's views will show not only that the polygraph from Chaeronea provides the best precedent for Valentinian anthropology, but will also demonstrate that both myths are conceived to convey a philosophical, holistic view of human life in which cosmology, theology, anthropology, and ethics are intrinsically connected.

This study consists of three parts. While the first provides an overview of Valentinian anthropology that includes the main aspects discussed in previous scholarship, the second will analyze Plutarch's anthropology, mainly as found in the myth of *De facie*. The third and final section will in turn provide some conclusions reached by the previous analysis.

An Overview of Valentinian Anthropology

Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and the Tripartite Tractate of Nag Hammadi all bear sufficient witness to the existence of three human classes or sorts among human beings.⁴ In this sense, along with Einar Thomassen, we can affirm that the distinction of three human classes was a rather stable element of Valentinian anthropology.⁵

These three classes seem to correspond to the three states of *Sophia* (in Irenaeus and Clement) or the *Logos* (in Tripartite Tractate), namely passion, conversion, and joy.⁶ As the latter document affirms: "Mankind came to be in three essential types, the spiritual, the psychic and the material, conforming to the triple disposition of the *Logos*, from which were brought forth the material ones and the psychic ones and the spiritual ones."⁷ This Valentinian trichotomous view of humankind is based on an anthropological conception that discriminates three elements in human beings, body, soul, and spirit.⁸

4 See Iren., *Haer.* 1.7.5; Clem., *Exc. Thdt* 54; *Trip. Tract.* (NHC 1,5) 118.

5 Thomassen, "Saved by Nature," 129–149.

6 Thomassen, "Saved by Nature," 131.

7 *Trip. Tract.* (NHC 1,5) 118.15–21. English Translation according to H.W. Attridge & E.H. Pagels, *The Tripartite Tractate*, in H.W. Attridge (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex). Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 159–337.

8 See, in general, L. Roig Lanzillotta, "One Human Being, Three Early Christian Anthropologies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 1–30. On the tripartite division of humanity according to

According to Irenaeus, all three elements were present in Adam, even if he obviously did not transmit them equally to his sons.⁹ The first (Cain) is the material, physical, or terrestrial aspect, which is related to the human body and is liable to destruction.¹⁰ The second (Abel) or psychic element is the animate constituent of the human being, and, since it partakes of rationality, the human soul enjoys the possibility of choice. Midway between body and intellect, the soul is open to the influence of both: If it chooses for the body, the soul is liable to perdition, but if it follows the intellect, it may reach the intermediary region where it can achieve the transformation necessary to attain salvation. The third element (Seth) is the spiritual, which is related to spirit (*pneuma*) or intellect (*nous*), and is conceived of as both divine and eternal.¹¹

So far so good. As we will see in the second part of this study by means of Plutarch, up to this point Valentinian anthropology is consistent with the tripartite view of the human being that was rather widespread in late antiquity. Closely connected to a three-tiered cosmological view that distinguished sublunary, astral, and transcendent regions (below), this view related the body to the elements, the soul to the astral region, and the intellect to the divine transcendent region.

Ethical, Eschatological, and Soteriological Implications of the Tripartition

As far as the ontology of this conception of the human being is concerned, the tripartite anthropology at work clearly reflects a form of Platonism influenced by Aristotle: not only human tripartition but also the mortality of both

the heresiologists, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.7.5; Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 54; Tert., *Contra Valent.* 29; Ps. Hipp., *Ref.* 6.31.9; Epiph., *Haer.* 31.23.1–4.

- 9 Iren., *Haer.* 1.5.6. According to Clem., *Exc. Thdt.* 56.2, “this is the reason why there are many material ones, not so many animate ones, and only a few are spiritual ones,” but the uneven distribution of Adam’s qualities hardly explains the different number of individuals in each class.
- 10 On Cain, see L. Roig Lanzillotta, “Cain, Ruler over the Cave: Gnostic Views on Cain in Anti-Heretical Writings and Nag Hammadi Texts,” in E. Koskenniemi & P. Lindqvist (eds.), *Studies in Rewritten Bible vol. 3: Rewritten Patriachs* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 237–252.
- 11 According to Clem., *Exc. Thdt.* 54.1, for example, the implicit hierarchy of this human taxonomy is visible already in the genesis of the ancestors of these races. Cain or terrestrial man (χοϊκός) was created “in the image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα) of God; Abel or ensouled man was created “after the likeness” (καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν); while Seth was of the “same substance” (κατ’ ἰδίαν) as God.

body and soul seem to point in this direction. The strict monism that dominates both the origin and eschatology of the human being, however, indicates that Platonic-Aristotelian anthropology has been adapted to a system of clear Neopythagorean ascendant.¹²

The ethical dimension of this ontological classification is clear: while people in the first group are overwhelmed by bodily drives and simply live according to the dictates of their physiological needs, those in the second, ensouled class move within the realm of the soul and need to focus on the rational control of the passions and drives. Those of the third group, finally, live according to the dictates of the spirit, continuously engaging with things immaterial and completely removed from the world of the senses and the soul.¹³

In terms of the eschatological implications of the classification, given the closest of connections with the body and matter of the lowest group, *hylics* remain chained to physical existence and are consequently destined to dissolution in the elements of the lower realm. As for the second or middle group, given their position between the physical world and the divine region, their region is the *mesotes*, the middle celestial region, although they may attain the divine region, thanks to the help of *pneumatics*. Only those in the highest status are, strictly speaking, said to reach *pleroma* or *fullness* without any problem.¹⁴

As far as soteriology is concerned, while salvation is obviously denied to the *hylkoi*, it is granted to the *psychikoi*—midway between body and spirit, they may move in either direction. Too close an involvement with the body implies the loss of their spiritual share and consequently their demotion from the middle to the lower group, which leads to perdition and dissolution. However, close involvement with the spirit may produce the opposite results: the ethical path mentioned above helps psychics cancel out their passions and, with this, the dangers for the spiritual part. After the transformation enacted by the ethical process of purification, psychics divest themselves of their souls in order to proceed as pure pneumatics to the *pleroma*. As far as the *pneumatics* are concerned, their salvation is granted, provided that they follow a pious life centered on the spirit, overcoming the influence of both body and soul, and, after reaching the middle region—as in the previous case of the pneumatics, they are able to divest themselves of the psychic envelope. As Irenaeus puts it:

12 See L. Roig Lanzillotta, “Valentinian Protology and the Philosophical Discussion Regarding the First Principles,” in J. van Ruiten & G.H. van Kooten (eds.), *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity: Politico-Cultural, Philosophical, and Religious Forms of Critical Conversation in the Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, Graeco-Roman, and Early-Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). Forthcoming.

13 Iren., *Haer.* 1.6.2. See the text below on p. 193.

14 See Irenaeus's text in previous note.

Quemadmodum enim choicum impossibile est salutem percipere—non enim esse illum capacem salutis dicunt—, sic iterum quod spiritale—quod semetipsos esse uolunt—impossibile esse corruptelam percipere, licet in quibuscumque fuerint factis.

For just as the earthly element cannot partake of salvation—for they say it is incapable of receiving salvation—so, on the other hand, the spiritual, which they maintain they constitute, cannot take on corruption, regardless of what practices they may have engaged in.¹⁵

Consequently, Cain, as a prototype of the bodily or material man, is ontologically related to matter; eschatologically, he is destined to disappear in the physical realm and consequently cannot attain salvation. Abel, considered as the ancestor of the animate or psychic nature, appears endowed with reason and occupies a middle position between the material and spiritual races. From the eschatological point of view, he occupies the middle region of the *mesotes*, and soteriologically he is liable either to salvation or dissolution.¹⁶ Finally, Seth, as the representative of the spiritual seed, is by nature related to *pneuma* or *nous*, which means, eschatologically, that he reaches the highest region and, soteriologically, that he is *by definition* saved.¹⁷

As mentioned, however, according to the report of these anti-heretical writers, this tripartition was not merely ontological but also had important sociological consequences. As Irenaeus explicitly points out in *Against Heresies* (1.7.5), the three natures are considered “no longer as individuals but as a class.”¹⁸ To complicate matters, the particulars of the heresiologists’ exposition are mixed in with stock accusations that form the backbone of the attack against the Valentinian heresy, namely determinism, elitism, and lack of ethical concern.

15 Iren., *Haer.* 1.6.2.

16 Iren., *Haer.* 1.6.1; Cf. 1.7.5; Clem., *Exc. Thdt.* 56.3; *Trip. Tract.* (NHC 1,5) 119–121; 130–136.

17 The above description is not meant to establish a deterministic differentiation of human types. Even if Nag Hammadi texts do not seem to grant the lowest human race the possibility of salvation, the same cannot be said of the middle or psychic race, which, in fact, appears to be able to evolve and might thereby achieve salvation. This obviously means that behind the apparently trichotomous scheme there is a more basic anthropological dichotomy at work that, on the basis of their respective eschatological perspectives, distinguishes two basic groups—material or hylic and psychic-pneumatic.

18 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.7.5. The English translation follows Dominic J. Unger & John J. Dillon, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies* (New York, N.Y., etc.: Paulist Press, 1992).

Determinism?

The first problem we encounter in the heresiological exposition of Valentinian anthropology is determinism, which, in the context of the heresiologists' synthesis, Winrich Alfried Löhr has sufficiently assessed.¹⁹ As he noted, in spite of the heresiologists' claim, Plotinus, on the one hand, never mentions the accusation of determinism in his criticism of Gnosticism,²⁰ while, on the other and more importantly, the alleged determinism cannot be found in the Nag Hammadi texts either. In his view, consequently, determinism is a heresiological construction that was first applied by Irenaeus to Valentinus,²¹ was further developed by Clement of Alexandria in his polemics against Basilides and Isidorus,²² and was perfected by Origen in his attack on Marcion.²³

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- 19 Löhr, W.A., "Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992) 381–390.
- 20 Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 385.
- 21 Irenaeus made wide use of arguments furnished against Stoic determinism to refute Valentinian anthropology and eschatology, mainly Platonic-Sceptical arguments, such as those attested to by Origen (*Cels.* 2.20), Pseudo-Plutarch (*De fato* 574E) or Cicero (*De fato* 28–29). Interestingly, according to Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 382, 383, he never compared it to the Stoic doctrine of the *heimarmene* but rather claims a Stoic descent for Valentinian eschatology. Based on the principle of *like to like*, this naturalistic principle (Stoic according to Irenaeus) seemed to make both faith and the salvific action of Christ superfluous. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.14.4, with K. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) 21–50.
- 22 Clement of Alexandria and Origen not only inherited this cliché but also developed it by broadening the arguments arrayed against it. Clement (*Str.* 2.115.1; 3.3.3) uses the bishop's view as a framework for the heresiological expositions of Basilides' and Isidorus' thought (see for Basilides, also *Str.* 4.81.1–88.5, with Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 388, note 16). However, he adds new arguments against determinism, such as the notions of *προαίρεσις* or "choice" (*Str.* 2.11.1) and *συγκατάθεσις* or "assent" (*Str.* 5.3.3). In addition to Irenaeus's argument that determinism annuls faith and the descent of the Saviour, Clement now affirms the freedom and moral responsibility of the believer, which is safeguarded by the soul's faculty of assent.
- 23 Origen, in turn, further elaborates the arguments used by his predecessor. After ascribing determinism to Marcion, he not only takes up the notions of *προαίρεσις* and *συγκατάθεσις*, but also adds his own conception that pedagogical training might be of help in combating external influences that might pose a threat to the soul's capacity for choice (Or., *Princ.* 3.1.5). See on Origen's accusation of determinism against Marcion, A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe–IIIe siècles*, t. 11: *Clément d'Alexandrie et Origène* (Études augustiniennes; Paris: Brepols, 1985) 510–551; see also Or., *Comm. in Rom* 4.12; *De princ.* 2.9.5 with Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 389 with note 27. See also 383–384 in reference to previous studies by A. Le Boulluec, "La place de la polémique antignostique d'Irénée dans le *Peri Archon*," in *Origeniana* (Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum 12) (Bari: 1975) 47–61; idem, "Y a-t-il des traces de la polémique antignostique d'Irénée dans le *Peri archon* d'Origène?," in M. Krause (ed.), *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) 138–147.

And, in fact, Irenaeus himself seems to speak against this deterministic understanding of Valentinian anthropology when dealing with eschatology:

Hominum autem tria genera dicunt, spiritalem, psychicum, choicum, quemadmodum fuit Cain, Abel, Seth, ut ostendant et ex his tres naturas, iam non secundum unumquemque, sed secundum genus. Et choicum quidem in corruptelam abire; animale uero, si meliora elegerit, in loco Medietatis refrigeraturum, Si uero peiora, transire et ipsum ad similia; spiritalia uero inseminat Achamoth ex illo tempore usque nunc, propter quod et animae erudientur quidem hic: et semina enutrita, quoniam pusilla emittantur, post deinde perfectione digna habita, sponsas reddi Saluatoris Angelis respondent, animabus eorum ex necessitate in Medietate cum Demiurgo refrigeraturis in aeternum. Et ipsas autem animas rursus subdiuidentes, dicunt quasdam quidem natura bonas, quasdam autem natura malas et bonas quidem has esse quae capaces seminis fiunt, alias uero natura nequam numquam capere illud semen.

They suppose that there are three classes of people—the spiritual, the ensouled, and the earthly—as Cain, Abel, and Seth were; and from these [one arrives at] the three natures by considering them no longer as individuals but as a class. The earthly indeed goes into corruption; but the ensouled, if it chooses the better things, will rest in the intermediate region; if, however, it chooses the worse things, it too will go to regions similar [to the worse things]. Moreover, they dogmatize that the spiritual people whom Achamoth has planted as “seeds” from then until now in just souls, and which **have been disciplined and nourished here below—because they were sent forth immature—and have finally become worthy of perfection**, will be given brides (*sic*) to the Angels of Savior, while their souls will of necessity rest forever in the intermediate region together with the Demiurge. Again, subdividing the souls, they say that some are good by nature and some evil by nature. The good are those that are capable of receiving the “seed,” whereas those evil by nature are never capable of receiving that “seed.”²⁴

Indeed, in spite of his accusation of determinism, Irenaeus’ description leaves the impression that the human races are not as fixed as he apparently first sug-

24 Iren., *Haer.* 1.7.5. English translation follows Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies* (New York, N.Y., etc.: Paulist Press, 1992).

gests, since here he clearly allows for the possibility of growth. While the first part affirms a narrow, deterministic view of the human races, the second section exposes an evolutionary scheme, in which one even perceives echoes of the First Letter to the Corinthians (below). Following up on Le Boulluec, Löhr therefore states that determinism was probably unknown to Justin,²⁵ and, in any case, was not important for (Pseudo-) Hippolytus, who further plagiarized Irenaeus' work.²⁶ For Elaine Pagels, comparative analysis between Irenaeus' exposition and Clement's version (*Excerpts from Theodotus*) allows us to see how Irenaeus changes his source in order to create his heresiological framework and to accuse Valentinians of a determinism that was not in the texts.²⁷

Elitism?

Closely connected to determinism, another important aspect of Irenaeus' stock accusations is the question regarding the exclusiveness or inclusiveness of Valentinian anthropology, namely elitism. As Ismo Dunderberg noted in the specific context of Christianity, Valentinian tripartition, according to Irenaeus, resulted in the distinction of two groups. In his view, the issue at stake was the discrimination between those who were more advanced in the moral progress that gave access to salvation and those who were less developed. In the same way that Paul speaks in 1 *Corinthians* of "infants" (*nepios*) and of Christians "more advanced" (*teleioi*) in the faith,²⁸ Irenaeus refers here to the Valentinians as undergoing a process, in which they first become righteous, later on worthy of receiving the seed, and only then are they able to bring it to perfection:

Consummationem uero futuram, cum formatum et perfectum fuerit scientia omne spiritale, hoc est homines qui perfectam agnitionem habent de Deo et hi qui ab Achamoth initiati sunt mysteria esse autem hos

25 Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 386, in reference to Le Boulluec, *La notion*, 36–91.

26 Most interestingly, (Pseudo-) Hippolytus does not endorse the idea of deterministic eschatology with all three elements coming back to their roots. See Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism," 386 and note 36.

27 Against the view that considers that Irenaeus' and Clement's expositions are nearly the same, Pagels, "Conflicting Versions," *passim*, has shown that this is not the case and that it is possible to see how Irenaeus tendentiously transforms his source in order to make it fit his heresiological intentions.

28 1 Cor. 3:1 and 2:6, respectively. On Paul, see T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000) 70–72; C.S. Keener, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: CUP, 2005) 39–40; and idem, "Milk," in C.A. Evans & S. Porter, *Dictionary of the New Testament Background* (Leicester—Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000) 707–709.

semetipsos dicunt. Erudiuntur autem psychica, id est animalia, psychici, id est animales, homines, qui per operationem et fidem nudam firmantur et non perfectam agnitionem habent esse autem hos nos, qui sumus ab Ecclesia, dicunt. Quapropter et nobis quidem necessariam esse bonam conuersionem respondent aliter enim impossibile esse saluari, semetipsos autem non per operationem sed eo quod sint naturaliter spiritalesomnimodo saluari dicunt.

The consummation will take place when every spiritual element has been formed and perfected by knowledge. The spiritual element is the spiritual persons who possess the perfect knowledge about God, and have been initiated into the mysteries of Achaem; and they assume that they themselves are these. Really, the ensouled persons are disciplined by ensouled measures; they are the ones who are made steadfast by works and bare faith, and so do not have perfect knowledge. They claim that we of the Church are these persons. So they declare that good conduct is necessary also for us; otherwise it is impossible to be saved. They themselves, however, so they dogmatize, are spiritual, not by conduct, but by nature, and so will be saved entirely and in every case.²⁹

Interestingly, in this passage Irenaeus indeed discriminates between two groups, but rather than fixed categories, they are presented as stages of development. It could not be otherwise, since both Paul and the Valentinians were aware of ancient philosophical theories on moral progress³⁰ and accordingly distinguished groups depending on their progress towards the goal of becoming worthy Christians.

Ethics

Closely connected with the charge of elitism is the accusation that the Valentinians despised ethics. The Valentinian elitist attitude only merits Irenaeus's irony in response. The reason for this is that the Bishop uses elitism as a basis for a more serious accusation: in fact, according to Irenaeus, elitism is a way of covering their lack of moral principles and of indulging in the alleged libertinism that marked their behavior. Indeed, if one of the races has in fact an unchangeable nature, which is from the beginning destined for salvation, he implies, it seems clear that everything else becomes irrelevant.³¹ The begin-

29 Iren., *Haer.* 1.6.1–2.

30 On Valentinians, see Dunderberg, "Valentinians," 117.

31 Iren., *Haer.* 1.6.2, "For just as the earthly element cannot partake of salvation—for they

ning of the subsequent section is clear about this: “Because of this doctrine, the most perfect among them shamelessly do all the forbidden things, about which the Scriptures give *guarantee that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.”³² There follows a long list of vices that includes sacrifice to idols, visiting wild beast spectacles, carnal pleasures, abuse of authority, and defilement of female disciples, adultery, and libertinism.

These accusations are also problematic in the light of Irenaeus’ exposition. Not only does the idea of spiritual growth that transpires in the text—with its vocabulary including notions such as righteousness, education, and nourishment—seem to speak against it, but the Bishop’s own statement that Valentinians lead exemplary lives also seems to contradict it.³³ Despite some recent voices to the contrary,³⁴ it consequently seems that Irenaeus’ intention is simply to slander his opponents.³⁵

Plutarch’s Tripartite Anthropology

The tripartite conception of the human being at work in Valentinian anthropology is rather widespread in the first centuries CE, and appears in both philosophical and religious texts, such as Philo of Alexandria, Plutarch, and Alcinous, or the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Chaldaean Oracles.³⁶ It also shows up in several apocryphal *Acts of the Apostles*, such as the *Acts of Andrew*, and is well represented in the Nag Hammadi writings.³⁷

say it is incapable of receiving salvation—so, on the other hand, the spiritual, which they maintain they constitute, cannot take on corruption, regardless of what practices they may have engaged in. By way of illustration, gold when deposited in mud does not lose its beauty, but preserves its own nature, since mud can in no way injure gold. In the same way they themselves, so they indeed claim, neither suffer harm nor lose their spiritual substance regardless of what material practices they may be engaged in.”

32 Iren., *Haer.* 1.6.3. Emphasis in the original.

33 As Dunderberg, “Valentinians,” 116, in reference to Iren., *Haer.* 3.15.2.

34 C.E. Hill, “Silencing the Bishop. The Ugly Irenaeus,” *Reconsiderations* 10/1 (2010) 1–4. On the slanders of libertinism and other vices against Christians in general, and against sectarians by proto-orthodox, see L. Roig Lanzillotta, “Early Christians and Human Sacrifice,” in J. Bremmer (ed.), *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007) 81–102.

35 On Irenaeus’ rhetoric of vilification, see Dunderberg, “Valentinian,” 115–116 and note 7 and 116 note 8.

36 I analysed the issue in Plutarch in L. Roig Lanzillotta, “Plutarch’s Anthropology and its Influence on His Cosmological Framework,” in M. Meeussen & L. Van der Stockt (eds), *Aspects of Plutarch’s Natural Philosophy* (Plutarchea Hypomnemata. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015) 179–195.

37 On the Apocryphal *Acts of Apostles*, see L. Roig Lanzillotta, *Acta Andreae Apocrypha. A*

Most interesting for the theme we are dealing with is the exact parallelism with the anthropological views we find in Plutarch, in general, and in his treatise *De facie*, in particular. In a famous section of the myth included in this text, Sylla corrects the widespread bipartite conception of the human being and, in so doing, for the first time in ancient literature defines a tripartite view of man.³⁸ Even if frequently implied in numerous ancient sources,³⁹ Sylla's assertion in *De facie* is our first explicit mention of the human trichotomy.⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, Sylla's tripartition also assumes a clear hierarchy among the parts of the human being, such as Valentinian texts will also do: "[I]n the same degree as soul is superior to body, so is mind better and more divine than human soul." Hierarchy, however, is not Sylla's main goal. As is also the case with Valentinian anthropology, the focus is on the soul's dual nature, the rational and irrational parts of which account for its contact and commerce either with the intellect or with the body.⁴¹

New Perspective on the Nature, Intention and Significance of the Primitive Text (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 2007); On the Nag Hammadi library and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, see now L. Roig Lanzillotta, "Spirit, Soul and Body in Nag Hammadi Literature: Distinguishing Anthropological Schemes in Valentinian, Sethian, Hermetic and Thomasine Texts," *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 2 (2017) 15–39.

- 38 Plu., *De facie* 943A. For this passage see, L. Roig Lanzillotta, "Plutarch's Anthropology", 179–195, and the abundant literature quoted at 180 and notes 7 and 8.
- 39 The tripartite view of the human being arises from Aristotle, who considered that only the intellect is divine and immortal, while soul and body were mortal. As to the former, see *De an.* 408B18–26; 413B24–28; 429A24–429B6; 430A17–25; as to the soul and body, *De an.* 412A19–30; 413A3–10; 414A19–25. See H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1944) 605 ff., for Aristotle's criticism of Plato's bipartition of the soul. However, H. Dörrie & M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, Vol. 6.1: *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus: von der "Seele" als der Ursache aller sinnvollen Abläufe* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002) 204, point out that the *corpus Platonicum* provides enough passages—such as *Tim.* 42D5; 69C–70E; 30B; 46D5–6; *Phlb.* 30C; *Legg.* 897B1–2; 961D7; *Epin.* 982B5—to allow Aëtius (*Dox. gr.* 392) to affirm that, despite Aristotle's criticism, the view of the *nous* "coming in man from without" can already be found in Plato, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Xenocrates, and Cleanthes.
- 40 Besides Plutarch's *De facie*, also *De genio* 591D–F (below) mentions this trichotomy explicitly. Other passages, such as *De genio* 592C1; *De sera* 563E; 564C; 566 D, simply imply it. See, however, also *CH* 10.13; 17–18, which explicitly mentions the same tripartite view: on which, J. Dillon, "Plutarch and the Separable Intellect," in A. Pérez Jiménez & F. Casadesús (eds.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco. Misticismo y religiones místicas* (Madrid-Málaga: Ediciones Clásicas & Charta Antiqua, 2001) 35–44 at 42–43.
- 41 Plu., *De facie* 943A5–6; see also *De an. procr.* 1014E; 1016C; 1023D; 1024CD; 1026E; *Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001C; 4.1003A and, on the issue, Dörrie-Baltes, *Der Platonismus* 6.1, 205–206, with notes 27–31.

In line with the Valentinian etiological myth, anthropology in Plutarch also seems to reflect cosmology. The close correlation between man and cosmos is explicitly stated in *De facie*:

τριῶν δὲ τούτων συμπαγέντων τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἢ γῆ τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἢ σελήνη τὸν δὲ νοῦν ὁ ἥλιος παρέσχευεν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν (τάνθρώπων) ὡσπερ αὐ(τῆ) τῆ σελήνη τὸ φέγγος. ὃν δ' ἀποθνήσκομεν θάνατον, ὁ μὲν ἐκ τριῶν δύο ποιεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὁ δ' ἐν ἐκ δυεῖν,

In the composition of these three factors earth furnishes the body, the moon the soul, and the sun furnishes mind (to man) for the purpose of his generation even as it furnishes light to the moon herself. As to the death we die, one death reduces man from three factors to two and another reduces him from two to one ...⁴²

But let us take a closer look at the different constituents of this tripartition. The lowest part of the triad is, for Plutarch, clearly the body, which provides the material substrate for both soul and intellect, and tends to overwhelm them due to its physical nature: the body's weight, disorderly nature, and needs incline human beings to passions, and this forms the most important obstacle to the human achievement of higher goals, so much so, that *De facie* even conceives of incarnation both as a "prison" for the soul⁴³ and as punishment for the misbehavior of Spirits.⁴⁴ Plutarch conceives of the physical body in such a negative way that he even equates the soul's incarnation with its death.⁴⁵ In this sense, despite a couple of passages adduced to the contrary, Plutarch's attitude toward the body is, in general, one of contempt.⁴⁶

As far as the soul is concerned, it occupies a central place in Plutarch's thought and, consequently, he deals with it not only in the myths of *De facie*

42 Plu., *De facie* 943A.

43 Plu., *De facie* 926C: αὐτῆ δ' ἢ ψυχῆ, πρὸς Διός' εἶπον 'οὐ παρὰ φύσιν τῷ σώματι συνείρκεται βραδεί ταχεῖα καὶ ψυχρῶ πυρώδης, ὡσπερ ὑμεῖς φατε, καὶ ἀόρατος αἰσθητῶ; See also *De an. procr.* 1023C; fr. 177 Sandbach with H.D. Betz, *Plutarch's Theological Writings and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1975) 323–324; H. Dörrie & M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, Vol. 6.2: *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus: von der "Seele" als der Ursache aller sinnvollen Abläufe* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002b) 225.

44 Plu., *De facie* 944C; *De defectu* 417B; *De Iside* 361C.

45 See Fr. 178, 68–93 Sandbach, a fragment from his *On the Soul* preserved by Stob. 5.1092, 1–25 W.-H. On the issue, Dörrie-Baltes, *Der Platonismus*, 6.2, 225–226.

46 J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. A Study of Platonism 80 BC to AD 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) 197–198, refers to fragment 144 Sandbach, which includes a fragment of the lost treatise *In Defence of Beauty*.

and *De genio* but also from different perspectives in *On moral virtue*,⁴⁷ in *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, and in *Quaestiones Platonicae*. Midway between the intellect and the body, the soul occupies an intermediary position in human beings. As such, it functions as a bridge between immaterial and material realities, something that, as mentioned, is possible thanks to the soul's inner bipartite structure that includes rational and irrational parts.⁴⁸

Of the two parts it consists of, Plutarch describes the rational one as divine,⁴⁹ impassible (ἀπαθής), and simple. It is intellectual⁵⁰ and is therefore in charge of controlling the complex of the soul.⁵¹ The irrational part, in turn, is prone to the body, is passible, and is therefore mortal.⁵² Moreover, due to its overbearing nature, it always tends to distort the original, internal balance of the soul, putting the former, rational part under pressure. This is the reason why Plutarch describes it as “variable and disorderly, and has need of a director.”⁵³ The lead taken by the intellect or the lack of it, and the subsequent resisting or yielding to the influence of the body, consequently determines whether the irrational part remains stable or rather grows and develops, finally eclipsing the rational one completely. This is because both parts are in fact intrinsically intermingled. As *De animae procreatione* puts it: “There is no part of the soul which remains pure and unmixed, or separate from the rest” (τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς οὐδὲν μὲν εἰλικρινές οὐδ’ ἄκρατον οὐδὲ χωρὶς ἀπολείπεται τῶν ἄλλων).⁵⁴

47 Plu., *De virt. mor.* 441DE. English translation by W.C. Helmbold, *Plutarch's Moralia: in Sixteen Volumes*, Vol. VI: 439a–523b (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939).

48 Plu., *De an. procr.* 1025D: “... but the soul is a mixed and intermediate thing, even as the moon has been created by God, a compound and blend of the things above and below and therefore stands to the sun in the relation of earth to moon.” Translations of *De an. procr.* according to H. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia: in Sixteen Volumes*, vol. 13, part 1: 999c–1032f (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976). According to Plu., *De virt. mor.* 448D, the soul's halves are so different that seem to respond to two different principles or ἀρχαί, namely the ‘rational principle’ (ἡ λογιστικὴ ἀρχή) and the ‘passionate principle’ (ἡ παθητικὴ ἀρχή).

49 Plu., *De an. procr.* 1026E.

50 Plu., *De virt. mor.* 450E.

51 Plu., *De virt. mor.* 442A.

52 Plu., *De an. procr.* 1026D: ἔκ τε τῆς θνητῆς καὶ περὶ τὰ σώματα παθητῆς μερίδος; see also 1023D: τὸ παθητικὸν ὑπὸ τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα ποιότητων. See, however, M. Baltes, “Plutarch's Lehre von der Seele,” in idem, *Epinoemata. Kleine Schriften zur antiken Philosophie und homerischen Dichtung* (edited by M.-L. Lakmann; Leipzig: De Gruyter, 2005) 77–99 at 80 note 29.

53 Plu., *De virt. mor.* 442A.

54 Plu., *De an. procr.* 1025D; 1026C: “There is no part of the soul which remains pure and unmixed, or separate from the rest ... Nevertheless, there appears in the irrational part a

The central place the soul occupies in this anthropology lies in the fact that it may determine human success or failure in living the correct life on the path towards the final achievement of likeness to god. Timarchus' myth in *De genio* might help us shed some light on this process.⁵⁵ After asserting from the outset that every soul partakes in *nous* or rationality, the *De genio* affirms that this aspect might be eclipsed by the soul's excessive exchange with the body: "[E]very soul partakes of understanding; none is irrational or unintelligent. But the portion of the soul that mingles with flesh and passions suffers alteration, and becomes irrational in the pleasures and pains it undergoes."⁵⁶ While souls that sink entirely into the body become disordered and distracted by passions, human tripartition is preserved if the rational part is not completely subdued.⁵⁷ Ethics, in this context, provides the necessary training to keep the rational part in shape, keeping humans from indulging in excessive pleasures and passions, and revitalizing the rational part by the choice of a proper way. It is thanks to this rational part that the individual is receptive and sensible to the third, extrinsic element, namely the *nous* or intellect.⁵⁸

turbulent and boisterous temerity; in the rational part, an orderly and well-marshalled prudence; in the sensitive part, the constraint of necessity; but in the understanding, entire and perfect command of itself. The limiting and bounding power sympathizes with the whole and the indivisible, by reason of the nearness of their relations; on the other side, the dividing power fixes itself upon particulars, by virtue of the divisible substance ..."

- 55 On the myth included in Plu., *De genio* 591D–592C, see W. Hamilton, "The Myth in Plutarch's *De genio* (589F–592E)," *Classical Quarterly* 28 (1934, 3–4) 175–182; Y. Vernière, *Symboles et mythes dans la pensée de Plutarque: essai d'interprétation philosophique et religieuse des Moralia* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977) 126–127; D. Babut, "Le dialogue de Plutarque, Sur le démon de Socrate. Essai d'interprétation," *Bulletin du l'Association G. Budé* 1 (1984) 51–76; 69–70; K. Döring, "Plutarch und das Daimonion des Sokrates (Plu. *De genio Sokratis* Kap. 20–24)," *Mnemosyne* 1V 37 (1984) 376–392, at 382–384; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 212–214; Dörrie-Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike* 6.2, 228–234; W. Deuse, "Plutarch's Eschatological Myths," in H.G. Nesselrath (ed.), *Plutarch. On the Daimonion of Sokrates* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 169–197.
- 56 Plu., *De genio* 591DE, ψυχὴ πᾶσα νοῦ μετέσχευεν, ἄλογος δὲ καὶ ἄνοος οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ὅσον ἂν αὐτῆς σαρκὶ μίχθῃ καὶ πάθεισιν, ἀλλοιοῦμενον τρέπεται καθ' ἡδονὰς καὶ ἀλγυδόνας εἰς τὸ ἄλογον. English translation by P.H. De Lacy & B. Einarson, *Plutarch's Moralia: in Sixteen Volumes*, Vol. VII: 523c–612b (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).
- 57 Plu., *De genio* 591DE: "... others mingle in part, but leave outside what is purest in them. This is not dragged in with the rest, but is like a buoy attached to the top, floating on the surface in contact with the man's head, while he is, as it were, submerged in the depths; and it supports as much of the soul, which is held upright about it, as it is obedient and not overpowered by the passions."
- 58 See my forthcoming study "Plutarch's *Moralia* and Second-century Gnosticism on the

The highest element of the trichotomy is the intellect, which controls and guides the soul, assuring the direction and sound functioning of the individual.⁵⁹ Plutarch describes the intellect as impassible and sovereign,⁶⁰ and he is clear about its separated nature: intellect is not a part of the soul, namely its rational part, but rather something detached, an entity in its own right. The *De facie* emphasizes this separateness by an analogy with the status of the soul within the body: in the same way that the soul is not the body but is located in the body, the intellect is not a part of the soul but is housed by it. The *De genio*, in turn, underlines its separable—even extrinsic—nature,⁶¹ and, in the wake of the *Timaeus*,⁶² presents it as a *daimon* that guides the individual.⁶³ This extrinsic nature of the intellect betrays the influence of Aristotle's *intellectus extrinsecus* from the *De generatione animalium*.⁶⁴

It is easy to see that, from an ontological perspective, the tripartition of the human being at work in Plutarch's *Moralia* coincides point by point with the Valentinian conception dealt with above. Let us now take a look at the ethical, eschatological, and soteriological implications of this conception in order to see the extent to which both views also overlap here.

Ethical, Eschatological, and Soteriological Implications of the Tripartition

From an ethical perspective, the implications of Plutarch's human trichotomy are clear. Human ontology implies that those willing to fulfill the human *telos* of leading a life devoted to philosophy and virtue should try to overcome the grievous influence of the body, which, due to its material nature, overwhelms

Importance of Ethics," in R. Hirsch-Luipold & L. Roig Lanzillotta (eds.), *Plutarch in the Ancient Religious Landscape*. Forthcoming.

59 Plu., *De genio* 588EF.

60 Plu., *De an. procr.* 1025D.

61 Dillon, "Plutarch and the Separable Intellect," 35–44.

62 Plu., *De genio* 591EF: "Now the part carried submerged in the body is called the soul, whereas the part left free from corruption is called by the multitude the understanding, who take it to be within themselves, as they take reflected objects to be in the mirrors that reflect them; but those who conceive the matter rightly call it a daemon, as being external."

63 See on the issue, *De genio* 588DE: "Socrates had an intelligence, which being pure and free from passion, and commingling with the body to a minimal extent, for necessary purposes only, was so sensitive and delicate as to respond at once to what reached him"; see also Pl., *Timaeus* 90AB, with Dillon, "Plutarch and the Separable Intellect," 39–40.

64 Arist., *GA* 736B27–29; *De an.* 408B18–26; 413B24–28; 429A24–429B6; 430A17–25. So too (albeit with hesitation) in Dörrie-Baltes, *Der Platonismus* 6.2, 233.

soul and intellect impeding its freedom of action. Those who are either not interested or capable of doing so will be doomed to a series of reincarnations in the realm of corruption and decay. Philosophy and ethics can then help the soul to maintain the balance in the internal structure of the soul, with a view to avoiding its inclination to the body and assuring its contact with the intellect. The latter is essential, since a sound philosophical life assures the exercise of man's most divine element, the intellect.

From an eschatological angle, while the body returns to the elements after the first death, soul and intellect leave the body behind and ascend to the moon, which equates in Plutarch's myth to the intermediary region or *mesotes* in the Valentinian one. This is the place where the soul has to fight the decisive battle. If the soul succeeds in shunning everything that bothered its existence—be it the body's remembrance or the passions that accompanied it during life—it will finally dissolve in the moon, the so-called second death according to the myth of the *De facie*. As far as the intellect is concerned, when exercised in the proper way during life, that is, by controlling both body and soul, it will naturally ascend after the second death to the sun.

The soteriological implications are also clear: while the body is doomed to perdition and corruption, dissolving as it does in the physical realm, the soul survives the first death and reaches the region of the moon where it belongs. However, as is also the case in the Valentinian myth, the soul cannot transgress this region: if it managed to lead a life directed by philosophy and ethics, it will happily dissolve in the moon, allowing the intellect to continue its journey. It is only the intellect that attains salvation. If it has succeeded in leading a righteous and spiritual life—governing the soul to keep it away from the passions and the body, the intellect finally frees itself from all physical and psychic accretions and speeds towards its origin in the sun.

Conclusions

In my view, the comparative study of the anthropological frameworks at work both in Valentinianism and in Plutarch allows us to reach the following conclusions:

1. To begin with, it should be clear that Valentinian and Plutarchan anthropology are mainly conceived of as ontological accounts. Admittedly, the etiological nature of the myths that include them complicate matters, since their main goal (cosmogonical in the case of Valentinians, eschatological in that of Plutarch) implies also dealing with other aspects more or less related to the anthropological aspect we are investigating, making

the exposition intricate and complex. In both systems, the appearance of the different parts of the human being is explained differently, but this is due to differences at the protological level of the worldviews they imply, which in the case of Valentinians is Platonic-Pythagorean and in Plutarch Platonic influenced by the *Peripatos*. The resulting three constituents of the human being, however, are at any rate the same.

2. Both among Valentinians and in Plutarch, anthropology is intrinsically connected to cosmology. The three constitutive parts in the human being in fact reflect the three constitutive elements of the cosmos. While Valentinians distinguish earthly region, the *mesotes*, and the *pleroma*, to which they associate the *hylics*, *psychics*, and *pneumatics*, respectively, Plutarch differentiates three regions associated cosmologically with earth, moon, and sun, and anthropologically to body, soul, and intellect. Tripartite anthropology consequently implies tripartite cosmology.
3. This means that, in both systems, after death the single elements of the individual return to the respective original abode they belong to. The eschatology of both systems describes how the physical body returns to the lowest cosmological region, how the soul remains in the middle one—the *mesotes* according to Valentinians, the moon according to Plutarch—and how only the highest element (either *pneuma* or intellect) reaches the highest cosmological region, the *pleroma* or the sun, respectively.
4. Despite the modern discussion as to whether or not Valentinian anthropology is deterministic, I think that the comparison with Plutarch's anthropology makes clear that there is no such thing as Valentinian determinism. When distinguishing *hylics*, *psychics*, and *pneumatics* among human beings on the basis of the three human components, Valentinians seem to point rather to inclinations or tendencies in certain human beings. This is also the case in Plutarch: while the philosopher is led by the intellect and always makes the right choice, those who are controlled by their souls, even if originally incapable due to the influence of both body and soul, might in the long run nevertheless achieve the same results by means of determination and ethics. Some might object that character in antiquity was seen as rather stable during human life and not liable to change. This latter view did not preclude, however, the possibility of change, witness the Platonic-Peripatetic motto, *to pan ethos dia ethos* "character is formed by habit," along with the wider nature-nurture discussion among philosophical schools. In this line, both Valentinian texts and Plutarch document very well the possibility of migrating from one group to another.

5. This said, it seems clear, however, that both Valentinians and Plutarch grant salvation to the highest element and to those led by it alone, namely *pneumatics* or philosophers, respectively. Does this mean that Valentinians envisaged an exclusivist or elitarian view of salvation? I don't think so: both among Valentinians and in Plutarch this view is the corollary to the ontological basis of the myth, since the different human elements cannot be found outside the cosmological regions they belong to. Given that souls cannot enter the *pleroma* (Valentinians) or reach the sun (Plutarch) and must necessarily remain in the intermediary region, it seems obvious that *psychics* cannot reach salvation as *psychics*. In the same manner, according to Plutarch, those who are still dominated by the passionate part of the soul either stay on the moon for purification or are sent back down to earth for reincarnation. Both systems consequently grant salvation to individuals in the middle category, if and only if they manage to transform their nature by means of either *pneuma* or intellect. Consequently, even if only the highest element can receive salvation, there is no exclusivism, since both systems allow migration among the categories.
6. Ethics plays a very important role in this process, since salvation is granted at the end of the path: none are said to be saved in advance. Both Valentinians and Plutarch were probably elitist, but not in the sense we understand this today. We may explain this elitism as arising from the ancient concept of *antakolouthia agathon*, or "mutual implication of the virtues," namely that those who had privileged knowledge should also exteriorize this accordingly.⁶⁵ It seems clear therefore that ethics was necessary for all different stages of development. As the *Origin of the World* (NHC 11,5 127.15–17) affirms: "[E]ach one shall manifest his nature through his behavior and his knowledge." Consequently, those aware of their pneumatic element need to exteriorize it by means of their own ways and forms of behavior. Those who were ruled by the psychic element needed not only to awaken to *pneumatikon* from its lethargy but also to free it from the influence of emotions—and this happens precisely by means of ethics.

65 On its importance in the *Peripatos*, see Ph. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," in A.H. Armstrong, *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 121. See also J. Dillon, *Alcinous. Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 180. See *SVF* 295–305 for the formalization of a theory whose origin might be searched for already in Plato's *Protagoras* 329 ff. A.A. Long & D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 387.

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