

Longinus on Plotinus

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I

Plotinus' judgment on Longinus is well known: "φιλόλογος μὲν, φιλόσοφος δὲ οὐδαμῶς" (Porphyry, *VP* [= *Vita Plotini*] 14, 19–20). Without denying Longinus' talent, Plotinus is able by reclassifying him to deflect the philosophical challenge posed by Longinus' rival version of Platonism; and the put-down has stuck to Longinus ever since. It has not been noticed that Longinus had an equally effective way of deflecting Plotinus' challenge, once again by reclassifying him as something other than a Platonic philosopher. Plotinus' way of describing the difference won out historically, but Longinus' case deserves to be heard.

The relevant passages are preserved, along with Plotinus' remark and much else about the state of Platonism in the third century AD, in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*. But the texts have suffered from mistranslations, and sometimes from needless emendations; some sensitivity to the context in Porphyry's *Life* is needed to bring out what Longinus was saying.

One of Porphyry's goals in the *Life* is to defend Plotinus against certain accusations that had been made against him in his lifetime. Porphyry cites texts of Longinus (in c. 19 a passage from a letter to Porphyry, in c. 20 the preface to a book *Πρὸς Πλωτῖνον καὶ Ἰντιλιανὸν Ἀμέλιον περὶ τέλους*) in order to show that, although Longinus had apparently once believed the charges against Plotinus, this "κριτικώτατος" of our time" (*VP* 20, 1–2) had eventually come to a more favorable opinion, while continuing to disagree with Plotinus' philosophical views. The most important of the charges against Plotinus was that he *ὑποβάλλεται τὰ Νομμηνίου*: the usual translation, "plagiarizes Numenius," gives a first approximation, though I will query the concept of "plagiarism" below. Porphyry argues that Longinus, toward the end of his life, did not believe this charge, since Longinus says (in the preface that Porphyry cites in c. 20) that Plotinus and his disciple Amelius surpassed the other philosophers of their time in the number of problems they examined in their writings and in their "distinctive manner of consideration," and that Plotinus was

πρὸς Πυθαγορείους ἀρχὰς καὶ Πλατωνικάς, ὡς ἐδόκει, πρὸς σαφεστέραν τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ καταστησάμενος ἐξηγήσιν: for the treatises of Numenius and Cronius and Moderatus and Thrasyllus are nowhere near Plotinus' treatises on the same subjects in precision [ἀκριβεία]. (Longinus apud VP 20, 71–76)

I cite the first part of this passage in Greek, because the translation and even the text are controversial. A.H. Armstrong, in his Loeb Plotinus, translates "Plotinus, it would seem, has expounded the principles of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy more clearly than anyone before him," and something like this is the most common interpretation. But I think it is not really what Longinus is saying.

To begin with, this would be surprisingly strong praise for Longinus to give to his chief philosophical opponent. Longinus was a professed Platonist, and if he says that Plotinus has given the clearest and most precise exposition of Plato's principles, he would in effect be recognizing Plotinus as a philosophical authority: but this is Longinus' preface to a book of philosophical criticism of Plotinus and Amelius, where he will try to depict Plotinus as a worthy opponent, but hardly as an authority to be followed. Beyond this, the Greek text as I have cited it (which is the text of Henry and Schwyzer and of all the manuscripts they report, and which Armstrong accepts) does not support Armstrong's meaning: Armstrong's translation of ὡς ἐδόκει is intolerably vacuous, and does not account for the tense of ἐδόκει. Indeed, to avoid this problem, Richard Harder proposed to emend ἐδόκει into δοκεῖ.¹ But we should accept the text and change the translation: ὡς ἐδόκει means *as it appeared*, not to Longinus himself but to Plotinus, when he composed the texts in question. This is the interpretation adopted by the Paris group (Luc Brisson, Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Richard Goulet, and others) in their recent edition and translation (with notes and critical essays) of the *Life of Plotinus*.² They write: "[Plotin] a fourni des principes

¹ Harder's text and translation are in *Plotins Schriften, übersetzt von Richard Harder, Neuarbeitung mit griechischem Lesetext und Anmerkungen, Band Vc: Anhang, Porphyrios Über Plotins Leben und über die Ordnung seiner Schriften*, ed. Walter Marg (Hamburg, 1958). Armstrong seems to be treating ἐδόκει as a past potential or the apodosis of a counterfactual conditional with a suppressed protasis ("if one were to consider"); but then it would have αἶν. Paul Kalligas (*Πορφύριου Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου βίου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῶν βιβλίων αὐτοῦ*, text with introduction, notes, and modern Greek translation [Athens, 1991]) translates ὡς ἐδόκει as κατὰ τὴ γνῶμην μου (i.e., Longinus'), apparently ignoring the tense, and makes the phrase modify σαφεστέραν.

² *Porphyre: La Vie de Plotin* (Paris, v.1, 1982, v.2, 1992). The authors are listed in v.1 as Luc Brisson, Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Richard Goulet and Denis O'Brien, in v.2 as Luc Brisson, Jean-Louis Cherlonneix, Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Richard Goulet, Mirko D. Grmek, Jean-Marie Flamand, Sylvain Matron, Jean Pépin, Henri Dominique Saffrey, Alain-Ph. Segonds, Michel Tardieu and Pierre Thillet. I will refer to the authors collectively as "the Paris group," sometimes also noting the individual responsible for a particular remark.

pythagoriciens et platoniciens, *ainsi qu'il les entendait*, une explication plus claire que ses prédécesseurs" (2: 169, my emphasis); and Goulet-Cazé in her essay, "L'arrière-plan scolaire de la *Vie de Plotin*," translates the same passage as "il a donné un exposé plus clair que celui de ces prédécesseurs de *ce qu'étaient à ses yeux* les principes pythagoriciens et platoniciens" (1:264, cp. 1:275 and 1:57, my emphasis).³

I think the Paris group's interpretation is closer to being right than Armstrong's, and certainly it makes Longinus' praise for his rival more plausibly restrained. But it still does not give a clear enough meaning, and it involves some further difficulties. Recall that the next clause of Longinus' text goes on to praise the ἀκρίβεια of Plotinus' treatises over those of a series of his predecessors (Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, Thrasyllus). Goulet-Cazé says that "si Longin dans ces lignes loue l'ἀκρίβεια de l'exégèse plotinienne des ἀρχαί, il ne va pas jusqu'à en reconnaître le bien-fondé, comme le souligne le ὡς ἐδόκει" (1:275); but if Plotinus' interpretation of these ἀρχαί was not well-founded, what could its ἀκρίβεια have consisted in? I propose to solve the problem by translating the sentence instead: "he has given a clearer interpretation of the Pythagorean, *and, as he thought, Platonic*, principles, than his predecessors did." Longinus would be saying, then, not that Plotinus was a great Platonist, but that, whatever the merits of his claim to be a Platonist, he was the best of the Pythagoreans: since Plotinus has given the clearest and most precise statement of the notoriously obscure Pythagorean principles, Longinus in his defense of true Platonism will take Plotinus (rather than Numenius or whoever) as the spokesman for the opposing position. This is Longinus' point in saying that Plotinus had expounded the principles in question better than "Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus," all of them known more as Pythagoreans than as Platonists: both Moderatus and Numenius spoke of their principles as the One and the Two, and Moderatus (if he is Porphyry's source at *Vita Pythagorae* c. 53, as from c. 48 on) actually attacked Plato in the name of a pure Pythagoreanism. Earlier in the *Life* Porphyry had listed "Severus, Cronius, Numenius, Gaius, and Atticus" as authors discussed in Plotinus' school, and if Longinus had wanted to show Plotinus' superiority to all earlier Platonists, it is odd that he would have mentioned only the Pythagorizers and not Severus or Gaius or Atticus, none of whom has anything Pythagorizing attributed to him.⁴

³ Goulet-Cazé rightly notes, 1:275–6, that Longinus' intention in his preface is not to endorse the philosophy of Plotinus and Amelius, but to explain why they are the most important philosophers for him to be arguing against.

⁴ The Paris group themselves (Brisson at 1:58) list Moderatus, Thrasyllus, Cronius and Numenius as Pythagoreans (though noting that these philosophers would also have claimed to be Platonists), while listing Atticus, Gaius, and Severus as Platonists instead. For what is known

This interpretation of what Longinus is saying about Plotinus is strongly confirmed by the interpretation that Porphyry himself gives in the following chapter (*VP* 21, 1–9), when he restates what Longinus' preface implies about his attitude toward Plotinus. From the text he had cited in the previous chapter, Porphyry now concludes only that Longinus believed (i) that Plotinus and Amelius excelled in the number of problems they wrote on and in their "distinctive manner of consideration" (lines 1–4); (ii) that they did not τὰ Νομηνίου υποβάλλεσθαι καὶ τὰ Κείνου πρεσβεῖν δόγματα, but rather τὰ τῶν Πυθαγορείων αὐτοῦ τε ἐλομένου μετιέναι δόγματα (lines 4–6);⁵ and finally (iii) that Plotinus' treatises surpassed in ἀκρίβεια those of Numenius, Cronius, Moderatus, and Thrasyllus (lines 6–9). Porphyry is here being scrupulously exact in reporting what he can and cannot infer from Longinus' preface. Strikingly, he does not say that Plotinus was a great

of these figures see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London, 1977); as Dillon rightly stresses, Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic "Pythagoreanism" was historically just a modality of Platonism (even the would-be anti-Platonist Moderatus is totally dependent on Plato for his "Pythagoreanism"). On Thrasyllus, see Harold Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism* (Ithaca, 1993); Thrasyllus' Pythagoreanism emerges most strikingly in his interpretation of Democritus (Tarrant, 85–7; Tarrant discusses the present texts of Longinus and Porphyry at 87). It is surprising that Porphyry elsewhere mentions Longinus amidst Numenius and Cronius and Moderatus: in *Against the Christians* Fr. 39 (cited by Eusebius *Church History* VI, 19), complaining about the Christian Origen's use of pagan learning in interpreting the Jewish scriptures, Porphyry says that Origen "συνῆν τε γὰρ αἰεὶ τῷ Πλάτῳ, τοῖς τε Νομηνίου καὶ Κρονίου Ἀπολλοφάνους τε καὶ Ἀωγίνου καὶ Μυδεράτου Νικομάχου τε καὶ τῶν ἐν Πυθαγορείοις ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν ὡμίλει συγγραμμισιν, ἐχρήτο δὲ καὶ Χαιρημῶνος τοῦ Στωικοῦ Κορνοῦτον τε ταῖς βίβλοις" (Porphyry is apparently concentrating on writers useful for Origen's project as models either of theology or of exegesis). Porphyry does not actually call Longinus a Pythagorean here, and, since he has not mentioned any Platonist names after Plato and before the group beginning with Numenius, Porphyry probably intends here to be listing Platonists and Pythagoreans, rather than simply Pythagoreans; it is still strange company for Longinus, reflecting Porphyry's views on the relation between Platonism and Pythagoreanism rather than Longinus' own. There is no erasing Longinus' contempt for all writers on Pythagorean principles before Plotinus, including Numenius and Cronius and Moderatus. It is noteworthy that, in Longinus' long survey of recent philosophers (*VP* 20), he cites nine Platonists, eight Stoics, three Peripatetics, and no Pythagoreans, apart from the incidental mention of earlier Pythagoreans in attesting to Plotinus' superiority. The Pythagoreans seem to be, like the Epicureans, not quite respectable philosophers.

⁵ Plotinus is the antecedent of the genitive absolute αὐτοῦ ἐλομένου, which would be bad grammar if he were the subject of the infinitive μετιέναι, but the subject is rather "Plotinus and Amelius" (thus τούτους χρῆσασθαι in the parallel construction in line 4). What Porphyry is saying (and what Longinus was saying in the passage Porphyry is summarizing) is that *they*, Plotinus and Amelius, followed the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, *he*, Plotinus, having made his own choice of them, and Amelius (*VP* 20, 76–80 and 21, 9–12) following in Plotinus' footsteps.

Platonist, or indeed that he was a Platonist at all: this is because he recognizes that Longinus had not said that the principles Plotinus had so clearly expounded were genuinely Platonic, but only that they were Pythagorean.

Once again, scholars have found the implied reservation about Plotinus' Platonism so troubling that they have proposed to emend the text. Thus Richard Goulet says that it is "très surprenant qu'un platonicien comme Porphyre ait laissé tomber la mention des principes platoniciens dans un rappel de la phrase de Longin. C'est bien dans le cadre d'un réinterprétation non seulement du pythagorisme, mais aussi du platonisme que Plotin inscrivaient sa démarche philosophique et c'est certainement ainsi que Porphyre, tout comme Longin, la comprenait" (2:292, cp. 2:129 and 1:264 n1). For this reason, the Paris group adopt Tollius' seventeenth-century proposal to emend τὰ τῶν Πυθαγορείων αὐτοῦ τε ἐλομένου μετιέναι δόγματα into τὰ τῶν Πυθαγορείων αὐτοῦ τε Πλάτωνος μετιέναι δόγματα.⁶ But we should keep the text of the manuscripts. If Longinus had said that Plotinus "followed the doctrines of Plato himself," then this admission would be very important for Porphyry's apologetic purpose, and it would be surprising indeed if he failed to mention it; but Longinus had made no such admission. Longinus had, however, admitted that Plotinus treated more problems than other people did, that he had his distinctive manner of consideration, and that he had given a more precise exposition of the Pythagorean (and allegedly Platonic) principles than any of the earlier Pythagoreans including Numenius: this is more than enough to show that Longinus, when he wrote this preface, did not believe that Plotinus ὑπεβάλετο τὰ Νομηνίου, and this is what Porphyry is trying to show. Of course Porphyry himself believes that Plotinus is following genuine Platonic doctrine, but he knows that Longinus was not equally convinced.⁷

If we retain the text of the manuscripts, we can also appreciate a positive point that, on Porphyry's interpretation, Longinus is making about Plotinus. Porphyry says that Longinus grants that Plotinus followed the doctrines of the Pythagoreans αὐτοῦ ἐλομένου, "having chosen or selected them for himself." Armstrong translates this as saying that Plotinus "deliberately propounded Pythagorean views," but surely no one had suggested that Plotinus Pythagorized unintentionally, and saying that he Pythagorized deliberately would not refute the charge that he plagiarized Numenius. The point is

⁶ Tollius, *Dionysii Longini de sublimitate commentarius* (Utrecht, 1694); also followed in MacKenna's translation and by Kalligas.

⁷ As Kalligas recognizes even while accepting Tollius' emendation: "● Πορφύριος ὅμως φαίνεται νὰ ενδιαφέρεται νὰ ὑπογραμμίσῃ τὴν αὐθεντικότητα τοῦ πλατωνισμοῦ τοῦ Πλωτίνου, πρῶγμα ποὺ ὁ Λογγίνος μᾶλλον δὲν ἦταν ἔτοιμος νὰ κάνει" (164, ad VP 21, 6).

rather that Plotinus made his own selection and interpretation from among the notoriously obscure and inconsistent reports of Pythagorean teaching, and that he did not take over a pre-packaged interpretation of Pythagoreanism from Numenius or anyone else, but in fact gave a more precise interpretation than his predecessors had done. If we emend *αὐτοῦ τε ἐλομένου* to *αὐτοῦ τε Πλάτωνος*, then we lose this point: for without *αὐτοῦ ἐλομένου*, then whoever's doctrines Plotinus may have followed, he might still have been plagiarizing Numenius.⁸

II

But what exactly does it mean to say that Plotinus *υποβάλλεται τὰ Νομηνίου* (first cited *VP* 17, 1–2), and how does it connect with the other accusations that Porphyry reports in the same breath, not only that Plotinus talks nonsense [*ὅτι πλατὺς φληναφός*], but also that he is *υποβολιμαῖος*, and *ὅτι καὶ τὰ φαυλότατα τῶν ὄντων υποβαλλόμενος*?" We usually translate *υποβάλλεσθαι τὰ Νομηνίου* as "plagiarizing Numenius," but what concept of plagiarism is involved? *Τὰ Νομηνίου* are not books but doctrines: this is clear from Amelius' complaint about people *τὰ τοῦ ἐταίρου ἡμῶν* (i.e., Plotinus') *δόγματα εἰς τὸν Ἀπαμεία Νομηνιον ἀναγόντων* (cited *VP* 17, 18–19), and from Porphyry's equation of *υποβάλλεσθαι τὰ Νομηνίου* with *τὰ κεῖνου πρεσβεύειν δόγματα* (in the summary of Longinus' preface, *VP* 21, 4–5): *τά τινος* and *τά τινος δόγματα* are interchangeable. So the charge was not that Plotinus tried to pass off Numenius' books as his own, but that he took over Numenius' doctrines. But what would be wrong with this? Longinus and his contemporaries did not require philosophers to be doctrinal innovators; if Longinus had really said that Plotinus followed Plato's own doctrines, this would have been praise and not criticism. So *υποβάλλεσθαι τὰ τινος* must be not simply taking over someone's doctrines, but doing so in some particular way that makes this a wrong. If we translate "*υποβάλλεσθαι τὰ Νομηνίου*" by "plagiarizing Numenius," we are suggesting that the wrong would lie in Plotinus' claiming to have

⁸ The Paris group (esp. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé at 2:106) raise the problem of interpreting the *τε* in *αὐτοῦ τε ἐλομένου* if the manuscript reading is retained; Goulet-Cazé suggests that it might be taken as equivalent to *καὶ ταῦτα* with participle, so "followed the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, and that by his own choice." But by far the easiest solution (following a suggestion of Eyjólfur Emilsson) is to take *τε* with *καὶ* at the beginning of the next clause: "not only did they follow the doctrines of the Pythagoreans by Plotinus' making his own choice of them [rather than by his following Numenius], but indeed the treatises of Numenius and Cronius and Moderatus and Thrasyllus are nowhere near Plotinus' treatises on the same subjects in precision."

⁹ This is Porphyry quoting Amelius. *VP* 17, 21–24; Porphyry's summary at *VP* 18, 1–8 collapses these accusations into *υποβάλλεσθαι τὰ Νομηνίου* and being *πλατὺς φληναφός*.

invented some doctrine that had in fact been invented by Numenius a century or so earlier; but since Plotinus did not claim to have invented any doctrines at all, this could not be a plausible charge, and the alleged wrong must lie elsewhere.

The problem must be that Plotinus is taking his doctrines from the wrong source, from Numenius instead of Plato, and that consequently his doctrines are not the right ones. One charge against Plotinus was that he *υποβάλλεται καὶ τὰ φαυλότατα τῶν ὄντων* (VP 17, 23–24); this must mean, not “auch das kleinste Wort ein Plagiat” (Harder) or the like, but rather “that his fundamental principles are the meanest of realities” (Armstrong), “ὅτι θέτει ὡς βάση τὰ κατώτερα ὄντα” (Kalligas), where the meanest of realities is the One, following the familiar accusation that Aristotle had made against Speusippus and the Pythagoreans.¹⁰ So part of the problem is that Plotinus simply *υποβάλλεται* the wrong principles; and Kalligas is right (*ad loc.*) that there is a play on words with *υποβάλλεσθαι* in the sense of laying down a foundation (LSJ *υποβάλλω* I 2). But, as the charge of being *υποβολιμαῖος* shows, the accusations turn on a sense of *υποβάλλεσθαι* as an essentially wrong action: the word has the basic meanings “bring in another’s child as one’s own” and “palm off one’s own child as another’s” (LSJ *υποβάλλω* II 1), the first of which is metaphorically extended to mean “plagiarize,” since a writer’s books (or doctrines or principles) are metaphorically his children. Even in the accusation that Plotinus *υποβάλλεται τὰ φαυλότατα τῶν ὄντων*, the principles in question are assumed to be, not the genuine Platonic principles—like the demiurgic νοῦς, which Longinus, with the non-Pythagorean mainstream of Middle Platonism, took to be the highest principle—but rather Pythagorean principles, the One and perhaps the Two and the Numbers that proceed from them. When Plotinus *υποβάλλεται τὰ φαυλότατα τῶν ὄντων*, he is bringing in these offspring of the Pythagoreans, and trying to pass them off, not precisely as his own children (for he does not claim to have invented them), but rather as genuine offspring of Plato, the founder of the αἵρεσις to which Plotinus claims to belong. This is also the meaning of the charge that Plotinus *υποβάλλεται πρὸς Νουμηνίου*: he is introducing Numenius’ Pythagorizing doctrines into

¹⁰ See the notes of Armstrong and Kalligas *ad loc.* For Aristotle against Speusippus and the Pythagoreans, who make the least perfect things the principles, see *Metaphysics* A7 and N4–5; at N5 1092a14–15 Aristotle attributes to Speusippus (or, perhaps, says it follows from Speusippus’ views) that the One is μηδὲ ὄν τι, a passage which would be recalled by Plotinus’ opponents. Other translators have tried taking *υποβάλλεται καὶ τὰ φαυλότατα τῶν ὄντων* as “copies badly” or “copies what is worst in his model,” but these, like Harder’s translation, do not really make sense of τῶν ὄντων. The Paris group translate, inscrutably, “il pille jusqu’aux plus vils des êtres,” and give no commentary.

the Platonic school, and trying to make them pass as the offspring of Plato. Perhaps there is a specific reference here to Plotinus V.1.8, where Plotinus (arguing against someone who thinks these doctrines are *καινοί*, line 11), argues that the Moderatus-Numenius scheme of three gods, the first of whom is a One superior to the demiurge, can be found “in Plato’s own writings” (line 14)—an argument that relies precisely on fathering the neo-Pythagorean *Second Letter* on Plato.¹¹ Plotinus claims here that his *λόγοι* are merely *ἐξηγηταί* (line 12) of these ancient doctrines, and this is a good example of what Longinus means when he says that Plotinus has given a clearer-than-heretofore *ἐξηγήσις* (VP 20, 73) of the Pythagorean and, as he thought, Platonic principles.

There is a further point to the charge that Plotinus is *ὑποβολιμαῖος* (VP 17, 22), an accusation closely connected with *ὑποβάλλεσθαι τὰ Νουμηνίου* and *ὑποβάλλεσθαι καὶ τὰ φανυλότατα τῶν ὄντων*. It seems natural to assume that if *ὑποβάλλεσθαι* is to plagiarize, or to steal a child and pass it off as one’s own, then a *ὑποβολιμαῖος* is a child-stealer or a plagiarist; and everyone translates “*ὑποβολιμαῖος*” as “plagiarist” at VP 17, 22. But this meaning seems to be nowhere else attested (LSJ do not list it as a possible meaning at all); nor does “*ὑποβολιμαῖος*” mean “child-stealer,” so that it could be extended metaphorically to a plagiarist. Rather, the *ὑποβολιμαῖος* is always the supposititious child himself, the changeling (thus in Plato, *Republic* VII 537e9). And this is the real point of the charges against Plotinus: he is a changeling, a Pythagorean child who may have been raised as a Platonist but whose works now show that he is no true son of Plato.¹²

III

By the time that Longinus wrote *Πρὸς Πλωτῖνον καὶ Γεντιλιανὸν Ἀμέλιον περὶ τέλους*, he did not believe that Plotinus *ὑπεβάλετο τὰ Νουμηνίου*. But he still seems to have believed the main point of the grumbling against Plotinus, namely that Plotinus was a Pythagorean trying to pass—falsely but (as Longinus admits) sincerely—for a Platonist. Who was responsible for this grumbling, and for its exaggeration into the charge of

¹¹ For Numenius’ three gods, and Moderatus’ three Ones, see Dillon (op. cit.). Tarrant (op. cit.) ascribes the *Second Letter*, plausibly enough, to Thrasyllus.

¹² For the opposite of *ὑποβολιμαῖος* in this sense, note the common praise of someone as someone else’s *γνησιώτατος* student or follower or commentator: Dionysius of Halicarnassus says this of Cephisodorus in relation to Isocrates (*De Isocrate* c. 18) and of Aristotle in relation to Plato (*Ep. ad Pompeium* c.1), and Simplicius says it of Aristotle in relation to Plato (*In de Caelo* 378) but also of Xenocrates in relation to Plato (ibid. 12, *In Phys.* 1165), of Eudemius as Aristotle’s *γνησιώτατος ἐταῖρος* (ibid. 411) and of Alexander of Aphrodisias as Aristotle’s *γνησιώτατος ἐξηγητής* (ibid. 80, 258).

ὑποβάλλεσθαι τὰ Νομηνίου? Porphyry calls them οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος (VP 17, 1–2), that is, people connected with the philosophical schools at Athens: this would include Longinus as well as others. It is naturally the Athenian Platonists who would be Plotinus' most immediate rivals (Longinus had lost his student Porphyry to Plotinus, and Porphyry had gone from holding Longinus' thesis on the status of the Forms to writing a defense of Plotinus' thesis against Longinus, VP 18, 10–19, and 20, 86–97); and the Athenian Platonists could explain the phenomenon of Plotinus and the threat he posed to them, while at the same time discrediting him, by reclassifying him, as not a true Platonist but an offshoot of a less respectable philosophy which did not have a chair at Athens. We do not know how much of the grumblers' case against Plotinus Longinus had subscribed to; but Porphyry says that Longinus "at first, as a result of the stupidity of others, persisted in despising [Plotinus]" (VP 20, 5–6, tr. Armstrong), until Porphyry was able to bring him to a more favorable attitude. The grumbling is unlikely to have been very well informed, since the Athenians would not have had much access to Plotinus' teaching: according to VP 19, Longinus was dependent on Porphyry and Amelius for his knowledge of Plotinus, and he complains about the faults of the Plotinus manuscripts they had sent him (if, as Porphyry says (VP 20, 5–9), the manuscripts were accurate and Longinus was simply baffled by Plotinus' συνήθης ἐρμηνεία, this only underscores Longinus' difficulties in acquiring a sound knowledge of Plotinus' teaching).

While there were many distinct philosophical issues between Longinus and Plotinus, and while our evidence is too fragmentary to reconstruct much of the discussion, some general reflections on the philosophical background may help put the issues in perspective. The Platonism of the first and second centuries AD had arisen out of earlier Stoicizing interpretations of Plato, as a movement of correction. Against the Stoics, and against such interpreters as Antiochus, the Platonists maintain the incorporeality of the ἀρχαί, both as the right interpretation of Plato and as the truth. But the Platonists share many assumptions with the Stoics, and there is a continuum of positions between them. The Platonists, like the Stoics, are mainly concerned with the concrete active and passive principles, God and matter, that combine to produce the world, and with the concrete individual souls that act in bodies; the Platonists' main burden is to prove that these concrete agents and patients are non-bodily. From this perspective—and it is one side of Middle Platonism, while neo-Pythagoreanism is another—such entities as the One and the Numbers would be mere abstractions, incapable of acting or being acted upon, posterior to and parasitic on the real concrete principles of the world. A strange pseudepigraphon, Theano *Περὶ εὐσεβείας*, goes so far as

to reclaim Pythagoras for this position: Pythagoras could not have said that all things arise out of number, his wife or daughter writes, since "how could things which do not even *exist* [οὐ μὴδὲ ἔστιν; cp. Aristotle on Speusippus] be conceived to *generate*?" Pythagoras said merely that things arise *according to* number, because they are generated in an orderly way.¹³ Longinus would have sympathized; we know that he interpreted the Platonic Ideas as analogous to Stoic *lektav*, mere thought-objects subsisting parasitically on the demiurge's activity of thinking, themselves neither agents nor patients but merely the standards by which the demiurge chooses to act (Syrianus *In Met.* 105). What could Longinus have made of Plotinus' One, a principle lacking all determinate content and best described in negations, a God superior to the God who made the world, refusing from sheer superiority to act directly on bodies—a principle which, just by being the highest and ultimately unattainable object of thought, produces the thought-activity of the demiurgic *νοῦς*, and so produces the very substance of the demiurge? Longinus could only have seen this as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the folly of treating abstractions as if they were concrete agents; and this is just what it means to call Plotinus *πλατὺς φλήναφος*.

When "the people from Greece" began to say that Plotinus *ὑπεβάλετο τῷ Νομηνίῳ*, the man who told Amelius about this, and thus provoked Amelius' and Porphyry's defenses of Plotinus, was *Τρύφων ὁ Στωικός τε καὶ Πλατωνικός* (VP 17, 1–3). This is a remarkable title. With one exception (to be discussed shortly) no other figure is described in our sources both as a Stoic and as a Platonist, and certainly never are the adjectives conjoined in this way. To be a Stoic and a Platonist, one must regard Stoicism and Platonism not as schools with differing views, but as complementary intellectual disciplines. Being a Stoic and a Platonist is like being a professor of philosophy and theology: Trypho would have performed his Stoic duties by lecturing on Chrysippus, and his Platonist duties by lecturing on the *Timaeus* or other Platonic texts, and presumably he would have tried as much as possible to keep them from conflicting, just as Porphyry did in commenting on Plato and on Aristotle's logic. Posidonius is once cited *τὸν Πλάτωνος Τιμαίον ἐξηγούμενος* (Sextus AM VII, 93), apparently endorsing Plato's views as he interpreted them, whether in a commentary on the whole *Timaeus* or only in discussing a single passage; and no doubt Posidonius, and perhaps also Antiochus, was a precedent for Trypho. But only once apart from Trypho is someone we know to be a Stoic also described as *Πλατωνικός*, Panaetius

¹³ Theano ἐκ τοῦ *Περὶ εὐσεβείας*, at Stobaeus 1:125–6 Wachsmuth; also printed, with one minor change, in Holger Thesleff, ed., *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period* (Abo. 1965) 195.

in Proclus (*In Tim.* 1:162 Diehl): it is striking that Proclus is here citing Longinus, and Proclus himself may not have recognized Panaetius as the Stoic. Longinus, though rejecting the Stoic thesis of the corporeality of the *ἀρχαί*, belonged to a philosophical culture where it was possible to be *Στωικός τε καὶ Πλατωνικός*, and where being recognized as a Pythagorean called one's Platonism into question. The future of Platonism lay with Plotinus, not with Longinus. Syrianus, in his commentary on *Metaphysics* B, says that he will show how a *Πυθαγόρειός τε καὶ Πλατωνικός* would answer Aristotle's *ἀπορίαι* (*In Met.* 2), and to us as post-neo-Platonic readers this self-description seems natural, while Trypho's seems absurd. Listening to Longinus on Plotinus, however fragmentary our evidence, helps to show us a philosophical culture where the plausibilities were reversed. When Longinus said, in effect, "*Πυθαγόρειος μὲν, Πλατωνικός δὲ οὐδαμῶς*," he was no more fair than Plotinus when he said "*φιλόλογος μὲν, φιλόσοφος δὲ οὐδαμῶς*"; but our understanding of Platonism can be deepened by hearing both judgments together.