

## Thomas M. Johnson the Platonist

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### *Introduction*

The New England Transcendentalists and their disciples read Plato and the Neoplatonists in the translations of the Englishman Thomas Taylor, a theurgic Neoplatonist; which may be characterized as the Greek style of Proclus transliterated into English. Thus American intellectuals read Platonic texts through mystical Procline spectacles. Some of them became religious syncretists ("Orphic" and/or Christian) in the tradition of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Synesius and Proclus. R.W. Emerson in certain moods and A. Bronson Alcott more consistently believed in the human soul's connection with a noetic world identified with the Neoplatonic Hypostases, One, Intellect, Soul — "that Unity, that Over-Soul; ... the Eternal One" (Emerson). H.D. Thoreau translated passages from the "Chaldaean Oracles," sacred scriptures to the "pagan" followers of the fourth century emperor Julian.

Other groups were inspired by this Neoplatonic element in the Transcendentalists religio-philosophical program; among them the St. Louis Hegelians and exceptional individuals such as Thomas M. Johnson of Osceola, Missouri, a Notre Dame graduate trained in Latin and Greek. The Hegelians W.T. Harris and F.H. Sanborn sympathized with Alcott's "Orphic-Pythagorean" Neoplatonism. But, historically progressive 19th Century Idealists, they were critical of his ideas; they considered him an "American original," an archaic survival who preached from a "timeless" Neoplatonic perspective.

As Neoplatonic texts were disseminated and Taylor's work became more widely known, serious Neoplatonists began to write books and articles, publish journals and make their own translations with commentaries. Thomas Davidson translated Porphyry, a New Yorker, Alexander Wilder Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries*, I. Meyer made the first English translation of Synesius *On Dreams*, Thomas M. Johnson the first of Plotinus, *Ennead IV.1 (On the Soul)* the *Hymns of Synesius* and many other works, especially those of Proclus. Johnson and his friends also published articles on Neoplatonic thought; they were basically adherents not objective scholars. This was made possible by the pervasive influence of Absolute Idealism in the 19th Century, which created a favorable atmosphere for Neoplatonic speculations.

The most important journals were the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (Hegelian), *Bibliotheca Platonica* (including the first English translation of Damascius' *de principiis*) *The Platonist* (Neoplatonic and Syncretistic). The movement was serious enough to attract the attention of Paul Shorey, whose interpretation of Plato would be more in line with the early 20th Century's anti-idealistic realism, naturalism and pragmatism. In a critique aimed at Johnson he attacks the "mystical" Plotinists (i.e. not real Platonists) who have spread confusing ideas from Alexandria, Florence, Concord and Osceola, Missouri (!). The ensuing debate is an interesting chapter in this movement of thought.

### I. Thomas M. Johnson and the American Neoplatonists

#### 1. *The Platonist and Bibliotheca Platonica*

In the early 1880's *The Platonist*, a journal dedicated to Platonism and Neoplatonism, appeared in print. It lasted, with some interruption, for the better part of the decade; it was replaced by a sequel *Bibliotheca Platonica* published at the end of the decade. The moving spirit behind these publications was Thomas M. Johnson of Osceola, Missouri. He had become convinced at an early age that ancient Neoplatonism was the highest expression of perennial truth. He managed to become acquainted with like-minded individuals, such as Alcott, and resolved to devote his life to the study, translation commentary and dissemination of the "true philosophy." Many new translations came out in serial form in the journals he edited, some of them for the first time in English. For a time *The Platonist* also published articles on Occult subjects such as the Tarot, Theosophy, and so on; exponents of these systems were fellow syncretists interested in the perennial wisdom of East and West. Furthermore, they were perceived as allies in the struggle against the forces of materialism, atheism and "anti-spiritual" empiricism.

In addition to reprints of Thomas Taylor and their own translations, Johnson and his friends engaged in polemic. They were basically amateur enthusiasts and adherents, rather than objective scholars. Indeed, they are best thought of as Thomas Taylor's American disciples, who attempted to revive the Ancient Theology in a new land. Johnson was a great admirer and supporter of W.T. Harris. In turn, as we have seen, Transcendentalism and Hegelianism created a congenial atmosphere for Neoplatonism. When other currents of thought became more influential than Absolute Idealism, the Neoplatonists found themselves fighting a rearguard action.

The first volume of the *Platonist*, then, appeared in February of 1881,<sup>1</sup> and subsequent issues somewhat sporadically during the 1880's.<sup>2</sup> The *Bibliotheca Platonica*<sup>3</sup> superseded it in 1889-90. But, after that, financial considerations put an end to the Neoplatonic experiment. The motto on the frontespiece reads "Platonism is immortal, because its principles are immortal in the human mind and heart." The *prospectus* promises dissemination of the Platonic philosophy in all its phases. Johnson, who had a flair for condescending Olympian rhetoric, condemns his age as one "degenerated, when the senses are apotheosized, materialism absurdly called philosophy, folly and ignorance popularised."<sup>4</sup> The journal will act as an antidote by affirming the immortality and divinity of the soul, happiness as approximation to and union with the One; release from Matter, the vision of true being, elevation from the sensible to the intellectual. An ambitious goal and mission for a periodical!

The journal would contain 1) original articles with a Platonic angle. 2) Translation of the inestimable works of the tradition. 3) Reprints of valuable out-of-print treatises, especially of Thomas Taylor, "that . . . most genuine Platonist of modern times." 4) Biographical sketches of the heroes of philosophy. An advertisement for volume 2 (1884-85) in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* promised to expand the horizon of Platonic studies to include not only archaic wisdom literature, "but philological investigations, translations and interpretations of the later writers . . . the harmony of the teachings of pure Christianity with the esoteric doctrines of the various ancient faiths will be duly expounded."<sup>5</sup> The successor journal, *Bibliotheca Platonica*, returned, for the most part, to pure Platonism and Neoplatonism: a medium for Platonic students the world over to share the results of philological and philosophical research. Each issue would contain a résumé, to date, of all the relevant literature in America and Western Europe. Johnson called for papers in English or Latin.<sup>6</sup>

1. *The Platonist, An Exponent of the Philosophic Truth and Devoted Chiefly to the Dissemination of the Platonic Philosophy in all its Phases*, ed. Thomas M. JOHNSON, (Osceola, Missouri). Volume First, St. Louis, MO. 1881.

2. *The Platonist*, St. Louis; Orange, NJ; Osceola, MO. v. 1-4 no. 6 1881-1888. Suspended Feb. 1882-Dec. 1883; v. 2 1884 - Jul. 1885; v. 3 and 4 Jan. 1887 - June 1888. (Hereafter *The Platonist*)

3. *Bibliotheca Platonica: an exponent of the Platonic Philosophy*. Osceola, Missouri. v. 1, no. 1-4, July 1889 - Dec. 1890. (Hereafter *Bibl. Plat.*)

4. *The Platonist*, 1, (1881) "Prospectus."

5. *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 6, (1872) "Notes and Discussions," 107.

6. *Bibl. Plat.* inside cover, 1, (no. 4, 1890).

At Notre Dame in 1870, browsing for Classics to read, Johnson happened upon Thomas Taylor's translation of the Chaldaean Oracles<sup>7</sup> and other Neoplatonic writings. Through them he discovered the existence of the mighty thinkers, the genuine disciples of Plato.<sup>8</sup> Later that year he read Thomas Davidson's *Sentences of Porphyry* and procured texts of Plotinus as well as Taylor's *Select Works of Plotinus*.<sup>9</sup> He undertook the "Herculean task" to understand the philosopher's thought.<sup>10</sup> In the same year a first reading of Emerson's essay "Intellect" inspired him with its praise of the *Trismegisti*, including the Neoplatonists.<sup>11</sup> Soon after this Johnson began to translate Plotinus and the other Neoplatonists. He hoped to provide the English speaking world with a much needed version of the entire *Enneads*; a task he never completed.<sup>12</sup>

"Of what nature are pleasures and pains, fears and braveries, desires and aversions, and suffering, the qualities? Do they belong to the pure soul itself or the soul using the body as an instrument, or to a certain third nature — a composite of these two?" This is Johnson's rendering, the first in English, of the beginning of the *Enneads* of Plotinus.<sup>13</sup> Compare the Loeb edition of A.H. Armstrong: "Pleasures and sadnesses, fears and assurances, desires and aversions and pain — whose are they? They either belong to the soul or the soul using a body or a third thing composed of both . . ."<sup>14</sup> Johnson's choice of English words is a bit awkward and his translation of the relative — "of what nature" — is not as good as Armstrong's "whose".<sup>15</sup> But he understands the argument. When he renders important single Greek words by

7. (Old) *Classical Journal* (London 1810-1829) 16, (Sept. and Dec. 1817), 333-344; 17, (Mar. and June 1818), 128-133, 243-264.

8. Reported in his Introduction to Proclus' *Metaphysical Elements*. Osceola, 1909, 13-14.

9. Intro to *Proclus*, 1909, 13-14. This brief outline of intellectual development given at the request of friends.

10. Intro to *Proclus*, Osceola 1909, 14.

11. Intro to *Proclus*, Osceola 1909, 14, n. 16.

12. K.S. GUTHRIE's 1918 edition was rumored to have as its basis JOHNSON's notes; see P. ANDERSON, *Platonism in the Midwest*, N.Y., 1963, p. 196, 169; and for an outline of JOHNSON's activities as a Neoplatonist, 152-158.

13. *The Platonist*, 4, (no. 5, May 1888) 267-72. 267. JOHNSON introduces each section with an explanatory sentence, e.g. I, "Do troubles, sense, opinions, discursive reason, intelligence, belong to soul alone, or to a compound entity," 267.

14. *Plotinus* tr. A.H. ARMSTRONG, six volumes. Vol. I, *Enneads*, I, 1-9, Loeb (Classical Library), Cambridge, 1966, 95. The Creuzer text used by JOHNSON and the modern critical edition used by ARMSTRONG of HENRY and SCHWYZER are identical here.

15. Ἡδοναὶ καὶ λύπαι φόβοι τε καὶ θάρρη ἐπιθυμίαι τε καὶ ἀποστροφαὶ καὶ τὸ ἀλγεῖν τίνος ἂν εἶεν;

philosophical phrases he also gives the Greek: "discursive reason (διάνοια); "intuitive thoughts" (νοήσεις) — certainly accurate in Johnson's Idealist setting. At times he has some difficulty with the text; for example: "But is it delighted at the approach of nothing, not even the good? No: for that which it is, it is always." Compare Armstrong's accurate "and will it be pleased at any increase, when nothing, not even any good, can accrue to it? It is always what it is."<sup>16</sup> Yet Johnson's note again shows some grasp of the philosophical import: "The soul possesses and always possessed the idea of the *good*, and therefore cannot be said to be delighted at its approach."<sup>17</sup> Without Thomas Taylor's usually good judgement as a guide, then, in his early work Johnson was not always a perfect translator.

Among the old and new translations in *The Platonist* and *Bibliotheca Platonica*<sup>18</sup> are *Ennead I.6, On The Beautiful*, by Thomas Davidson;<sup>19</sup> an adaptation of Taylor's version of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*;<sup>20</sup> and Plotinus' *Ennead V.5 "That the Intelligibles are not external to Mind; and Concerning the Good,"*<sup>21</sup> by the editor. A reprint of Porphyry's *Auxiliaries to the Perception of the Intelligible Natures*, the editor notes "basically agrees" with Thomas Davidson's 1869 version in *J o SP*.<sup>22</sup> Alexander Wilder's new translation

16. Plot. *Enn.* I, 1.2, 23-25 (or I, 1.2, 12-13, Creuzer). The texts differ slightly here: ἡδεται δὲ προσγενομένου τίνος; οὐδενός, οὐδ' ἀγαθοῦ προσιόντος. ὃ γὰρ ἔστιν, ἔστιν αἰεί (Creuzer). ἡδεται δὲ προσγενομένου τίνος, οὐδενός οὐδ' ἀγαθοῦ προσιόντος; Ὁ γὰρ ἔστιν, ἔστιν αἰεί. (Loeb, HENRY and SCHWYZER).

17. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) 289. He is often erudite enough to recognize the source of a quotation; e.g. Plotinus' portrayal of Heracles in Olympus and Hades at the same time from *Odyssey*, XI, 602.

18. This is a partial listing; for all of JOHNSON's works see ANDERSON, NY 1963, "Bibliography" 205-207.

19. *Bibl. Plat.*, 4, (1890) 309-321. The editor mentions the need for a new translation of this work.

20. *The Platonist*, 2 (no. 6, June 1884) reprinted in *Bibl. Platonica*, 1, (no. 1, 1889) 42-77. TAYLOR's 1817 *Select Works* contains a partial translation, really a paraphrase. F.H.W. Myers, the noted English founder of the Society for Psychical Research is quoted in a note on p. 43 on the souls of artists, warriors, philosophers and poets, to which he added the saint thereby completing the cycle of Greek civilization. On p. 79 one of the miscellanies in the journal announces the discovery in the past few days of the ancient road from Athens to the Academy.

21. *The Platonist*, 1, (1881) 6-8 (first installment). On page 8 is JOHNSON's "Life of Plato" based on ancient sources.

22. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) (no. 1, Jan. 1888), 25 n. The translation is in two installments. 4, (no. 1), 24-41; and (no. 2., Feb. 1888), 73-95.

of Iamblichus' *On The Mysteries*, later revised and published in book form, was first printed serially in *The Platonist*; it may be viewed, in part, as an attempt to "clarify" Taylor's.<sup>23</sup>

Thomas M. Johnson's versions of two *Hymns* by Synesius show a lively appreciation of his metaphysical poetry and familiarity with the reluctant bishop's Neoplatonic-Chaldaean imagery.<sup>24</sup> For example: *Hymn I* (59-70):

23. *Iamblichus: A Treatise on the Mysteries, A New Translation* by Alexander WILDER was serialized in the volumes of *The Platonist* from 1881-1887. TAYLOR is followed closely; the changes for the most part attempt to make the work more readable.

e.g., TAYLOR, 2nd ed. 1895, 30.

#### CHAP. V.

In the next place, let us direct our attention to the solution of your inquiries. There is, therefore, the good itself which is beyond essence, and there is that good which subsists according to essence; I mean the essence which is more ancient and most honourable, and by itself incorporeal. And this is the illustrious peculiarity of the Gods, which exists in all the genera that subsist about them, preserving . . .

WILDER, *The Platonist*, 1, (1881) 83.

There is, then, the Good; both the good which is beyond Essence and that which is with Essence. I am speaking of the Essence which is most ancient and venerable and not contained by a body. It is a distinguishing peculiarity of divinities, and extends through all the orders that existed among them, preserving . . .

He had already reprinted Thos. TAYLOR's "A Dissertation on the Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries." Third edition. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, Emendations, and Glossary by Alexander WILDER, New York, 1875. A fourth edition with illustrations by A.L. RAWSON appeared in 1891.

24. Synesius' *Hymns I* and II (IX and V in the old MSS) are translated. The best modern editions are: *A Synésios de Cyrène: Hymnes*, tr. Christian LACOMBRADÉ. Paris, 1978. A. GARZYA, *Opere di Sinesio di Cirene* Torino, 1989, 737-799. Although sympathetic to paganism and critical of the Church, JOHNSON remains a pagan-Christian syncretist, similar (in reverse) to Synesius. Thus he is not critical of the bishop. On the other hand, TAYLOR who wrote his own Neoplatonic Hymns says: "In many ways likewise of the Hymn to Jupiter, I acknowledge myself greatly indebted to the elegant Hymns of Synesius, which I should have translated long since, had they not been replete with a certain horrid and gigantic impiety, which not only eradicates from the soul that most natural conception, that there are gods subordinate to the first cause, but introduces the most dire of all opinions in its stead, that a mere mortal is equal to the highest god!" in *Sallust, On the Gods and the World; and the Pythagoric Sentences of Demophilus, Translated from the Greek; and Five Hymns by Proclus in the Original Greek, with a Poetical Version. To Which are Added, Five Hymns by the Translator*. London, 1793, Preface xvi. Emerson, in his *Plato-*

Of Unities the sacred Unity  
 of monads the primeval Monad,  
 Uniting simplicities of the highest  
 And being generated by superessential throes  
 Whence issuing forth through its first born form  
 Unity was diffused in a manner ineffable  
 And received a threefold energy;  
 And as the superessential fount  
 Is crowned with the beauty of offspring;  
 Which emanates from the Centre  
 And around the centre revolves<sup>25</sup>

This is a good translation. Johnson well understands the way in which Synesius gives a poetical description of the source of unity and being, and how the One manifest through its first generated form (noûs) becomes the center of metaphysical descent (proodos) and return (epistrophê). A more prosaic attempt might read:

pure unity of unities and prime monad of monads. Who unifies and gives birth to the simple natures of the highest principles, with super-essential engenderings, whence the monad itself, sprung forth through first generated form, ineffably poured out, holds the force of three summits. And the super-essential source is Crowned by the beauty of children springing forth from the center and flowing back about the center.<sup>26</sup>

Again, from Johnson's *Hymn V* (22-26) (II in old MSS):<sup>27</sup>

Beyond the blessed Silence conceals  
 The Division yet ever indivisible  
 Of intellectual and intelligible natures  
 There is one Fount, and one Root  
 Shining forth in a triple form of light;<sup>28</sup>

*niana* (notes for his essay on Plato) writes: "In his translation of Cratylus Thomas Taylor says Christianity is a certain most irrational and gigantic impiety ἀλόγιστος καὶ γιγαντική ἀνοσιουργία.

25. *Hymn I*, 1. 59-70. *The Platonist*, 3, 39-40.

26. The text: ἐνοτήτων ἑνὰς ἀγνά, / μονάδων μονὰς τε πρώτα, / ἀπλότητας ἀκροτήτων / ἐνίσασα καὶ τεκοῦσα / ὑπερουσίους λοχεΐαις / ὅθεν αὐτὴ προθοροῦσα / διὰ πρωτόσπορον εἶδος / μονὰς ἄρρητα χυθεῖσα / τρικόρυμβον ἔσχεν ἀλκάν, / ὑπερούσιος δὲ παγὰ / στέφεται κάλλει παιδῶν / ἀπὸ κέντρου τε θερόντων, / περὶ κέντρου τε ῥυέντων. LACOMBRADÉ, Paris, 1978, 102. For an analysis of these Neoplatonic verses see J. BREGMAN, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher-Bishop*, Berkeley, 1982, 30-31.

27. For a detailed discussion of the order of the *Hymns* see *Synésios de Cyrène: hellène et chrétien*. C. LACOMBRADÉ, Paris, 1951; also LACOMBRADÉ, 1978, 8-17.

28. *The Platonist*, 3, (1887) 123. The text: Τὰ πρόσω μάκαιρα σιγὰ / νοερῶν τε καὶ νοητῶν / ἄτομον τομάν καλύπτει. / Μία παγὰ, μία ῥίζα / τριφασῆς ἔλαμψε μορφά. LACOMBRADÉ, 1978, 81. For a discussion of Chaldaean

Accurate. The italicized *Silence* (*sigê*) is the transcendent silence of the paternal depth in the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The distinction intellectual (noeric) and intelligible (noetic) refers to the Ideas as respectively active thoughts and eternal objects of thought. This distinction became especially important and was reified in later Neoplatonism. The final lines depict the One and its immediate manifestation in the First Intelligible Triad of the *Chaldaean Oracles*; The One, its Power and its Intellect. The translation of the rest of the poem does justice to its author's ideas, spirit and intentions.<sup>29</sup>

A most noteworthy contribution of *The Platonist* to Neoplatonic literature is the first English translation of Synesius' work *On Dreams* by Isaac Meyer.<sup>30</sup> In his notes the translator not only draws from his knowledge of ancient philosophy and Greco-Roman syncretism, but also the Hebrew Kabbalah and even ideas about form and matter of the medieval Jewish Neoplatonist Solomon Ibn Gabirol. He compares Synesius' notions of the rational and vegetative soul, with the Kabbalistic higher soul, spirit and vital soul.<sup>31</sup> Meyer's translation is respectable and useful, although there are occasional problems with text and translation, and confu-

and Christian trinitarian imagery here see BREGMAN, Berkeley 1982, 82-83.

29. E.g.: *The Platonist*, 3, (1887) 130-31.

Where abides the Profundity Paternal  
 There likewise is found the glorious Son  
 Offspring of his inmost essence,  
 And the world-creative Wisdom;  
 And of the Holy Spirit shineth forth  
 The light which bindeth all in one.  
 From one Fountain and one Root  
 Comes the abundance of all goods  
 Thou art the Root of things present, past and future  
 Thou art Father, thou art Mother;  
 Thou art masculine, thou art feminine;  
 Thou art voice, and thou art silence  
 Thou art Nature's parental nature  
 Thou art O Lord the aeon of aeons.

1. 27-34: ἵνα γὰρ βυθὸς πατρῶος, τόθι καὶ κύδιμος υἱός, κρᾶδιαῖόν τι λόχευμα, σοφία κοσμοτεχνῆτις, ἐνοτήσιόν τε φέγγος ἁγίας ἔλαμψε πνοιᾶς. Μία παγὰ, μία ρίζα ἀγαθῶν ἀνέσχεν ὄλβον.

1. 60-67: σὺ δ' ἐσσι ρίζα παρεόντων πρό τ' ἐόντων, μετεόντων, ἐνεόντων· σὺ πατήρ, σὺ δ' ἐσσι μάτηρ. σὺ μὲν ἄρρην, σὺ δὲ θῆλυς, σὺ δὲ φωνά, σὺ δὲ σιγά, φύσεως φύσις γονοῦσσα, σὺ δ' ἀναξ, αἰῶνος αἰών.

30. The work was published serially in three issues of *The Platonist*, 4, (no. 4, Apr. 1888), 212-224; (no. 5, May), 225-231; (no. 6, June), 291-298. MEYER is familiar with significant facts of Synesius' biography, 212 n.

31. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888), 216 n.

sion of the *Sybilline* for the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Thus Meyer renders an important passage:

Do not throw the Flower of Matter into the terrestrial abysses;  
the phantom has its place upon the brilliant summits<sup>32</sup>

Which I translate:

It shall not leave behind the *residue* of matter on the precipice  
(=material world); but the image also has a portion in the  
realm surrounded by light<sup>33</sup> (*Chaldaean Oracles*, Fr. 158)

Synesius seems to be working out the implications of a theory in which, connected with the spirit or pneuma, is a 'vehicle of the soul' - eidolikē psychē, which becomes the "imagination" (phantasia) when the soul is embodied. It functions as a connecting link between the sensible and intelligible realms. Somehow as image (eidolon) it returns to the spiritual world (or at least the Cosmic Summit) "aetherialized" with purified material elements (air and fire) apparently acquired during incarnation. Hence matter is transformed into spirit.<sup>34</sup> This doctrine could be used by a Christianizing Platonist as a "compromise" on the idea of the resurrection, a notion concerning which Synesius had reservations.<sup>35</sup>

Although he is unaware of the Chaldaean sources and notions involved here, Meyer appears to be aware of what Synesius is about: "The flower of matter" our author deems to be particles of air and fire. The divine body with him is imagination; this he also calls "the first body of the soul." — (i.e. the vehicle referred to above) "He considers the imagination as something very subtle yet material, corresponding perhaps to Qabbalistic Ruach" [=Spirit =Pneuma] "The flower of matter being the Nepesh [=vital soul embodied with material elements of incarnation], "and the soul the Neshamah [=higher soul] of the Qabbalah."<sup>36</sup> The rest of the translation makes accessible and readable an important work of ancient psychology and pneumatology. Thus Emerson's celebration of Synesius, one of the *Trismegisti*, led to the inclusion of his prose and poetry in *The Platonist*.

Proclus' *Elements of Theology* first made its appearance serially in *The Platonist*, translated by the editor as a "handbook of elemen-

32. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) 227-28.

33. Jay BREGMAN, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher - Bishop*, Berkeley 1982, 149; for an analysis of the passage, 149-151. «οὐδὲ τὸ τῆς ὕλης κρημνῷ σκύβαλον καταλείψει, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰδώλῳ μερὶς εἰς τόπον ἀμφιφάοντα» (Fr. 158, des Places). A Garzya (ed.), *Opere di Sinesio di Cirene*, Torino 1989, 574.

34. See esp. BREGMAN, Berkeley 1982, 150.

35. See *Ep.* 105, 1. 78-80, GARZYA, Torino 1989, 276. BREGMAN, Berkeley 1982, 149-151; 160-61; WALLIS, NY 1972, 103-4.

36. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) 228 n.

tary principles of Platonic Theology";<sup>37</sup> Johnson printed a revised edition in book form as Proclus' *Metaphysical Elements* in 1909. He criticizes Creuzer's edition and emends where he thinks necessary.<sup>38</sup> The translation is somewhat literal and stilted, compared (e.g.) to E.R. Dodds' famous edition, but it is essentially accurate with useful notes and an appendix which has a brief summary and two clear geometrical schematic diagrams of the system.<sup>39</sup> The book is dedicated to Wm. T. Harris "who has battled for God, Freedom and Immortality . . . against sottish atheists and materialists."<sup>40</sup> The introduction consists largely of a paraphrase

37. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) 210. The translation appeared in vols. 1 and 2; a few passages of a revised translation appeared in v. 4 as *Theological Institutes*; finally a revision came out in book form: *Proclus' Metaphysical Elements*, tr. Thos. M. JOHNSON. Osceola, MO, 1909.

38. E.g. *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) 210 n. 2: καὶ εἰ οὐχ ἔν "These words I have added from Cod. A. Creuzer omits them, but it seems plain that they should be inserted." These words are also included in DODDS, 1933 edition. See n. 39.

39. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, Appendix, 198-99. It can be said with some justification that the modern scholarly study of Neoplatonism was firmly established with the publication of *Proclus: The Elements of Theology, A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* by E.R. DODDS, Oxford, 1933, 2nd Ed. 1965.

E.g., for Proposition 2, texts are almost identical. I will give the text of the proposition, its translation and some of the explanation (translation only) by both authors. DODDS, p. 1. πᾶν τὸ μετέχον τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ καὶ οὐχ ἓν JOHNSON, 4, 240. πᾶν μετέχον τοῦ ἑνός, καὶ ἐστὶ καὶ οὐχ ἓν DODDS, p. 2: "All that participates unity is both one and not-one."

For inasmuch as it cannot be pure unity (since participation in unity implies a distinct participant) its 'participation' means that it has unity as an effect, and has undergone a process of becoming one. Now if it be nothing else but its own unity, it is a bare 'one' and so cannot participate unity but must be pure unity. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, 1-2 (an improvement over *The Platonist*, 4, (1888) 240): *Every thing which partakes of The One is alike one and not one.*

For though it is not The One itself — since it participates of The One and is therefore other than it is — it experiences The One though participation, and is thus able to become one. If therefore it is nothing besides The One, it is one alone, and will not participate of The One but will be The One itself.

JOHNSON's later work indicates that he had graduated from enthusiastic amateur to respectable (enthusiastic) scholar.

40. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, Title page.

of Marinus' *Life of Proclus*.<sup>41</sup> In modern times, says Johnson, Proclus had influenced Bruno, Spinoza and Hegel; the latter corresponded with Creuzer on the text.<sup>42</sup>

Johnson explains the system as follows. Everything other than the One is multitude (plēthos) and participates in some degree the One. Hence they are one and not one. One through participation, but not essentially.<sup>43</sup> An overview of the system can be represented by four interlacing triangles, each containing three circles; the circle at the apex represents the primary cause, at the base-right, a secondary, and left the order of nature in a series. For example, at the top is Being, the Cause of Life (base-right). To the left the circle of beings which proceed from Being, their primary cause, and so on: Life of lives: Intellect of intellects: Soul of Souls: Body of bodies. A circle above the triangle represents the One (cause of All) and two circles below Bodies and Matter respectively.<sup>44</sup> The One is the direct cause of matter. There is also 'horizontal' as well as 'vertical' progression: thus Being-Life-Intellect manifest appropriately at each level: intellectually at Intellect, psychically at Soul,<sup>45</sup> and so on. Thus Johnson worked out a reasonable outline of Proclus' system. The revised translation is an improvement over the sections that were brought out in *The Platonist*. If he did not grasp all of the doctrines and subtleties of the *Elements of Theology*, his work is a start in the right direction.

Other important translations by the lawyer from Osceola include: *The Commentary of Proklos on the First Alkibiades of Platon, the basic introduction to Platonism and a key to mystic wisdom*<sup>46</sup> — in

41. In addition JOHNSON chides contemporary attitudes in his notes. E.g. JOHNSON, 1909, Intro. V, n. 6

Doubtless the fashionable philosophasters of this materialistic age will shake their empty heads over the intellectual training of Proclus and brand it as "mystical," but since the opinion of these sapient gentlemen arises from ignorance and incapacity it will not disturb those whose thought ranges beyond the barriers of sense and matter.

42. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, Intro. X.

43. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, 2 n. 1.

44. This explanation is presented along with a schematic diagram. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, Appendix, 198.

45. Cf. Proclus, *Elements*, prop. 103. All things are in all things, but each according to its proper nature . . . DODDS, Oxon. 1965, 92-93. JOHNSON, Osceola 1909, 199 also schematizes the system as concentric circles with The One in the center. (He does not seem to realize that in Proclus system there are levels of unparticiple Being, participle Being and participle beings, etc., etc. He only presents unparticiple Being and participle beings, etc., etc.)

46. *The Platonist*, 3, (1887) 57. The translation appeared in *The Platonist*,

this he follows the old Neoplatonic interpretation. In his *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists* of Eunapius, the 4th century militant pagan hagiographer, Johnson's notes display a lively interest in how theurgy and the mystery cults fared under "bigoted" Christian emperors. The Neoplatonists are the "mahatmas" and "adepts" of their age. Julian is praised, ignorant and barbaric Christians condemned for their destruction of the Alexandrian Serapeum and other temples.<sup>47</sup> Another significant first in English in the *Bibliotheca Platonica* is the great later Neoplatonist *Damaskios: On First Principles*.<sup>48</sup>

Thomas M. Johnson was an enthusiast and a dogmatic advocate, rather than a creative thinker. His outlook, as we have seen, was derivative of Thomas Taylor. As a syncretist his purpose was to harmonize all systems that corresponded with the Neoplatonic<sup>49</sup> truth and to refute the others, which are "false".

The writings of Alexander Wilder, a New York physician and psychiatrist, usually also reflect the basic Neoplatonic viewpoint. His article in *Bibliotheca Platonica*, "The Later Platonists"<sup>50</sup> emphasizes their universal syncretism which maintains a central principle of truth behind all religions and philosophies.<sup>51</sup> In "The Spectator of the Mysteries" (*Epopetes*) he presents an account of the Eleusinian rites and the revelation that the initiate sees all things with the eye of the Infinite because he realizes the Delphic Injunction *Gnōthi seauton* — know thyself — in union with the Higher Good. Self-knowledge becomes mystical knowledge. Knowledge of myself, at bottom, is knowledge of the Absolute.<sup>52</sup>

1, (1881) 38-39, 74-75; and revised with revised introduction in 3, (1887) 1-15, 57-66, 113-16, 169-72.

47. *The Platonist*, 3, (1887) 589 n. The translation is in 3, (1887) 371-81, 416-23, 545-60, 577-94, 643-55.

48. *Bibl. Plat.*, 1 (no. 2. Nov-Dec. 1889) 82-98. In 1, no. 1 (July-Aug. 1889) JOHNSON printed in Latin, *Praeaeatio in Damascium* by Ch. Emile RUELE, the editor of the text.

49. For example, in his "Notes on The Kabbalah" *The Platonist*, 3, (1887) 91-100, he equates the "Incomprehensible One", the En Soph of the Kabbalists with the Neoplatonic One in detail, citing texts from both traditions, and concluding that the triadic emanations of both are identical. (This is in the spirit of Renaissance syncretism.)

50. *Bibl. Plat.*, 1, (no. 3 May-June '90) 162-86. This essentially is a worked up version of his Concord Summer School lecture. (He had been in the group from the beginning; e.g. his interpretation of the *Phaedo*, "The Last Words of Socrates," appeared in *The Platonist*, 1, (no. 1, 1889) 39-43.

51. *Bibl. Plat.*, 1, (no. 2, 1889) 162. He mentions solar worship; the Dec. 25 birthday of Mithras, "divine men" — he seems to accept the hagiographical accounts of the sages; theurgy; Proclus' teaching that *symbola* or tokens made possible ascent through each level of reality up to the One, 184.

52. *The Platonist*, 1, (no. 1, Feb. 1881) 3-6; in 1 (no. 4, May 1881) 80-83

The physician accepted a "spiritual" theory of evolution suited to an Idealist's outlook. The mind possesses qualities such as memory, understanding and imagination which animals do not. There is no evolutionary connection between the human and animal brain, and the "missing link" is merely a dream of certain naturalists. The mental faculties have the brain for their principle organ: the *sensuous* the medulla oblongata, the *reasoning* the parts immediately above, parallel with and including the forehead; and the *supersensuous* or intellectual (i.e. noetic) connected with the coronal region of the brain. Furthermore, evolution cannot explain the "ensoulment of body" (and of the "hylozoistic cosmos") as described by Plato in his *Timaeus*.<sup>53</sup> (!)

Wilder's installments of "Platonic Technology", a glossary of philosophical Greek terms also deserves mention. The definitions give philosophical and common usages of words.<sup>54</sup> Let two examples stand for many: *Dêmiurgos*, ὁ δημιουργός. An architect; an artist; the Framer of the Universe; the Demiurge; the Evil Potency, *as set forth by the Gnostics, who formed the material Universe*; also a chief magistrate in the Archaian (sic) cities. *Einai*,

τὸ εἶναι. *An infinitive verb used as a noun.* Being, being in itself, absolute being; the ground and reason of all being, the noumenal as contrasted with γίνεσθαι and γένεσις, the phenomenal. See *Eidos*, *Ousia*.<sup>55</sup>

Much miscellaneous information also found its way into the journals: Papers and poems read at midwestern celebrations of Plato's birthday were duly mentioned or printed.<sup>56</sup> Reports of lost Neoplatonic MSS turning up; discoveries of busts of Plato; letters

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WILDER defines *Entheism* as participation in the divine nature, which modern physicians consider pathological because of their limited point of view. Among the great Entheists are Sokrates, Ammonius Sakkas, Spinosa, Plato, Buddha, Apollonius and Iamblichus.

53. "Life and Mind," *The Platonist*, 3, (no. 7, July 1887) 358-68. In 3, (no. 10, Oct. 1887). WILDER also publishes an article on "Creation and Evolution," 528-544 in which he dissents from the materialists of his day.

54. *The Platonist*, 1, (no. 2, Mar. 1881) 30-32, (nos. 8, 9, 10, Sept., Oct., Nov., 1881) 159-160, (nos. 11, 12, Dec. 1881; Jan. 1882) 188-194. 3, (no. 3, Mar. 1887) 131-32 as "Philological Notes."

55. Note here the influence of post-Kantian Idealist terminology, noumenal and phenomenal used for the Platonic intelligible and sensible or being and becoming.

56. The celebration of Plato's birthday on Nov. 7, continued the traditions of Florentine Platonism. A "Symposium" was held. Papers and poems were read and later published: e.g.: "Platonic Psychical Reflections" by A. WILDER, *Bibl. Plat.*, 1, (no. 1, 1889) 29-37; "Poem for Plato's Birthday," Lewis J. BLOCK, *Bibl. Plat.*, 1, (no. 4, 1890) 302-305; "On Holiness" Julia P. STEVENS, *Bibl. Plat.*, 1, (no. 2, 1889) 105-109; for description of festivities see "Platonic Celebration," *Bibl. Plat.*, 1, (no. 2, 1889) 118-126 and 1, (no. 4, 1890) 306-309.

from European scholars; a piece on Dialectic by the noted Toronto educator Angus Dallas; Platonic trivia, arcane lore, book reviews, and so on.<sup>57</sup>

## 2. Other Publications and the Conflict with Paul Shorey

After the last issue of *Bibliotheca Platonica*, Thomas M. Johnson remained in obscurity for seventeen years.<sup>58</sup> Then in 1907 he published a translation of Iamblichus' *Exhortation to Philosophy*,<sup>59</sup> followed by the *Opuscula Platonica*<sup>60</sup> and Proclus' *Metaphysical Elements*<sup>61</sup> (already discussed above). Appropriately inscribed to A. Bronson Alcott "one of the brightest of Heaven's exiles straying from the orb of light (Enn. 4.1)" was an earlier work (1880) in which he had attempted *Enneads* IV.8 "On the Descent of the Soul", a treatise basis to Alcott's "Lapsarian" theories.<sup>62</sup> This, along with other selections from the same *Ennead*, was to be a "specimen" of Johnson's intended complete works of Plotinus in English.<sup>63</sup> "Three Fundamental Ideas of the Human Mind" is an account our innate knowledge of God, Freedom and Immortality. Rather than original arguments, Johnson, as usual, employs the

57. In *The Platonist*, 2, (1885) 140-42. For example the following: "Discovery of Two Fragments of a Cyclic Poem Attributed to Proklos": "In the fifth volume of *Hermathena*, a valuable philological publication, there is an interesting paper entitled "On Two Fragments of a Greek Papyrus" by the Bishop of Limerick, in which he attempts to show, and not unsuccessfully we think, that he has discovered fragments of a cyclic poem hitherto unknown, written by Proklos the noted Platonic philosopher." The article goes on to tell of the acquisition of the papyrus from a "mysterious" antique dealer in Egypt to analyze the language to determine if the author is Proclus.

58. This fact is mentioned by Joscelyn GODWIN in his forward to "Iamblichus: *The Exhortation to Philosophy*. tr. Thos. M. JOHNSON, ed. Stephen NEUVILLE, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988 (reprint of 1907 edition), 7.

59. See n. 58. The 1988 reprint also includes *Fragments of Iamblichus* and the valuable Proclus' Excerpts from *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles* both from 1907.

60. *Opuscula Platonica*: "The Three Fundamental Ideas of the Human Mind," Hermeias' "Platonic Demonstration of the Immortality of the Soul," Thomas Taylor's "Dissertation on the Platonic Doctrine of Ideas," and Boethius' "Epitome of the Platonic Theory of Reminiscence" (a poem from the *de Cons. Phil.*) (Osceola, MO, 1908). This work is especially important for understanding the debate with Paul Shorey.

61. See above n. 37.

62. *Three Treatises; Enneads* IV.1, IV.8, and IV.2 (Osceola, MO, 1880). The last was a reprint of Thos. TAYLOR's version.

63. JOHNSON never completed this work, though he made extensive notes. See above n. 12.

dogmatic method of citing authorities to make his case.<sup>64</sup> Two points, however, are worthy of attention. Following Hermeias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus*, the essential *self-activity* of the soul is a basis for its immortality. The term self-active is the exact equivalent of the Greek *αὐτοκίνητος*; the chief modern exponent of self-activity is W.T. Harris. A *self-active* soul would also be *self-determined*. The very concept Harris though Alcott's Neoplatonism lacked. It is highly probable, then, that Johnson convinced Harris that Neoplatonism and Hegel were potentially closer than the latter had originally thought.<sup>65</sup> Secondly, he bases his argument that the idea of deity is fundamental to the human mind on Iamblichus. In a famous passage from *On the Mysteries*, the theurgist claims that a priori knowledge of the gods' existence is "co-essential" to us and prior to judgement and demonstration. Thus it is wrong to say with Porphyry "it must be granted there are gods" as if it *might not* be granted.<sup>66</sup> If Johnson, despite his assurance, had attempted a form of the Ontological argument here, or even an appeal to direct "religious experience", he would have still been in the camp of the philosophers. As things stand, he must be considered a "gnostic theurgist" or a Theosophist. It is not surprising that he included at the end of his edition of Iamblichus' *Exhortation*, Proclus' *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles*, a work intended to fill the soul with divine fire and bring it into contact with the One "anagogically" through ineffable symbols and invisible hymns.<sup>67</sup>

Probably the most important reason for the reappearance of the reclusive Thomas Moore Johnson was "the preposterous and fallacious allegations" of one Professor Paul Shorey concerning Plato and Platonism. The University of Chicago classicist, clearly a philologist not a philosopher, had the audacity to call John Stuart Mill "the Chief Platonist of the 19th Century."<sup>68</sup> Worse than that he denies the Neoplatonists are the legitimate heirs and interpreters of Plato; he ranks the mystic Emerson with Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill. Yet Emerson, insofar as he was a Platonist, was an esoteric Platonist, who studied the originals in

64. "Over two thousand years ago Plato proved the essential imbecility and radical absurdity of atheism and materialism, and from that day to this the war against these twin enemies of the Good . . . has been waged with rational weapons wrought by the mighty intellect of the immortal Master of the Academy, and his genuine disciples." JOHNSON, *Opuscula*, Osceola 1908. Prefatory note 1.

65. JOHNSON, *Opuscula*, Osceola 1908, Prefatory note 2.

66. JOHNSON, *Opuscula*, Osceola 1908, 2.

67. See *Proclus' Commentary* in JOHNSON, NEUVILLE, Grand Rapids 1988, 123.

68. "Plato and His Philosophy," reprinted from the Springfield Republican, Sept. 2, 1906, 1 and note.

Taylor's translations: *The "Over-Soul" was drawn largely from Plotinus.*<sup>69</sup>

What had aroused so much anger was perhaps the fact that Shorey's attack was part of a more general critique of the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato:<sup>70</sup>

The most conspicuous Platonists have always been those whom Coleridge calls the Plotinists. From Alexandria to Florence, from Concord to Jacksonville and Osceola, they have made Platonism synonymous with mysticism. On minds of this type, the beautiful poetry in which Plato conveys his hopes or conjectures of the transcendental, operates as rank poison. The healthy aversion felt by Macaulay for this esoteric Platonism is a chief cause of the widespread prejudice that regards Plato as the apostle of a priori sentimentalism, and the antithesis of inductive and utilitarian science. Macaulay's specious comparison of the Platonic and Baconian philosophies has sunk deep into the popular mind. And since the sober, scientific mind will distrust the hyperbolic encomiums of Emerson, let us confine ourselves to Mill, whom we may pronounce the chief Platonist of the 19th century.<sup>71</sup>

The charge of a priori sentimentalism is not without foundation, at least with respect to the disciples of Thomas Taylor. F.B. Sanborn, W.T. Harris's co-biographer of Alcott, accused Shorey of philistinism, absurdities, and self-evident stupidities.<sup>72</sup> Shorey's reply is well balanced: if he exaggerated about Mill — a point that could be argued in a civilized manner — his knowledge of Plato was wide and accurate. The context of "my paper", he says, ". . . shows plainly that I had no intention of disparaging Emerson, whose essay on Plato is marked by the insight of genius."<sup>73</sup> Finally, the future author of *What Plato Said*, calls for a level of debate above that of yellow journalism. But Sanborn's "crushing rejoinder" was even more hostile. It is a polemic which consists of little

69. "Plato and His Philosophy," 1906, 5.

70. On this interesting topic see *The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato*, E.N. TIGERSTEDT, Helsinki, 1974.

71. "Plato and His Philosophy," 1906, Appendix 12-13. SHOREY's statement is from "Plato and His Lesson's for Today." *N.Y. Independent*, Feb. 1, 1906.

72. "Plato and His Philosophy," 1906, Appendix 12.

"This Philistinism about Plato reappeared in America lately, in the absurdities of one Paul Shorey, an apostle to the Gentiles of Chicago University, on the study of Greek; who, in a paper in the Independent last February, indulges in these self-evident stupidities. . .

73. "Plato and His Philosophy," 1906, Appendix 13. The letter on 13-14 is signed Paul SHOREY, University of Chicago, July 28, 1906.

more than epithets and simply fails to engage in well reasoned arguments with Shorey.

Every age has its own version of Plato, and the new "tough-minded" reading was more in line with the new anti-Idealistic realism and naturalism of the early 20th Century. The position of Shorey and others like him won widespread acceptance in academic circles for several decades. In 1964, John Rist, a scholar of Neoplatonism, directly challenged some of Shorey's arguments. He questions the claim of some modern scholars to "demonstrate exactly Plato's views . . . and to show that these views were (often) . . . misconstrued by the Neoplatonists": He then quotes Shorey (*Platonism*, 40)

The Neoplatonic mind combines with its dialectical impulse certain needs and aptitudes vaguely designated by such words as scholasticism, mysticism, enthusiasm, asceticism, pantheism, symbolism and the imaginative personification of abstraction. The dialectic yields pleasure from the mere exercise of ingenuity in the process, and from the cumulative intensity of the emotion of conviction which this semblance of reasoning generates. This subjective feeling is so strong that it requires little confirmation from without. Hence the imperturbable self-assurance of the Neoplatonic state of mind — the almost comic innocent serenity with which these "babe-like Jupiters", in Emerson's phrase, Plotinus, Proclus, Olympiodorus, Synesius and the rest, sit on their clouds and from age to age prattle to each other and to no contemporary . . . Plato, as if in divinatory anticipation of the Neoplatonists and the Hegelians, calls the pseudo-dialectics of the One and the Many an eternal disease of language in the human mind.

Rist answers Shorey as follows:

. . . untested generalities as those suggested by Shorey have often been allowed to pass almost unchallenged.

Shorey, for example, is suggesting that "scholasticism, mysticism, enthusiasm, pantheism," and the rest are in some way Neoplatonic aberrations of which Plato was innocent. This is plainly incorrect. The laws of Athens are "imaginatively personified" in the *Crito*, symbolism is involved in the illustration of the Good by comparison with the Sun in the *Republic*, asceticism is continually in the background of the *Phaedo*, enthusiasm and mysticism abound in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, while scholasticism might well be suspected in the second half of the *Parmenides*. As for pantheism, it is true that it cannot be found in Plato; neither can it in Plotinus.<sup>74</sup>

74. *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus and Origen*. Toronto, 1964,

Shorey's reaction was one-sided, but understandable at the time. Contemporary scholars, however, have had some success in showing that if Neoplatonism is not the one true interpretation of Plato, neither is it inconsistent with many of Plato's concerns. The American advocates of Neoplatonism were insufficiently critical. When Absolute Idealism declined they found themselves in an historical cul-de-sac.

## II. The 20th Century

In the 1880's the Neoplatonists had made common cause with Theosophists and Occultists. In his later works Thomas M. Johnson praised the English Theosophist G.R.S. Mead for his reprints of Thomas Taylor<sup>75</sup> and his work on the *Hermetica*. It has been said that the man who attempted to continue the Neoplatonic tradition, *in his own way*, Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (1871-1940) belongs in a Theosophical context.<sup>76</sup> He translated works of Numenius, Porphyry, Proclus and the Pythagoreans.<sup>77</sup> His complete edition of

Part I, ch. 1, 14. Rist prefaces his quotation and remarks:

This objection is simply the belief that modern scholarship is able to demonstrate exactly Plato's views on every philosophic topic, and hence to show that in very many cases these views were misconstrued by the Neoplatonists. Such arguments are often expressed in grandiose language and adopt a patronizing tone towards the supposedly misguided Neoplatonists. An example which displays these qualities and this mode of criticism is the following passage from Shorey which deserves to be quoted at length . . .

75. In *Select Works of Plotinus*, (1895 reprint of T. TAYLOR's translation) MEAD compares the age of Plotinus to his own: "It requires no great effort of the imagination . . . to see a marked similarity between the general unrest and searching after a new ideal that marked that period of brilliant intellectual development, and the uncertainty and eager curiosity of the public mind in the closing years of the nineteenth century," Preface, xi.

76. See *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, compiled and tr. Kenneth Sylvan GUTHRIE, ed. David R. FIDELER with a forward by Joscelyn GODWIN, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987, Foreword, 13.

77. K.S. GUTHRIE's writings include: *Numenius of Apamea: The Father of Neoplatonism*, NJ, 1917; (Guthrie worked without the benefit of a good critical edition); *Plotinus: Complete Work*, 4 vols., NJ, 1918; *Proclus' Life Hymns and Works*, New York, 1925. *Porphyry's Launching Points to the Realm of Mind*, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, which originally appeared as "Porphyry's Commentary: Principles of the Theory of the Intelligibles, Porphyry" in *Plotinus*, NJ 1918, v.4, 1215-1265; for Pythagorean writings see above n. 2 (The Life of Proclus and the Numenius have been reprinted recently in 1968 and 1987 by Phanes Press, Grand Rapids, MI).

Plotinus is the first in English.<sup>78</sup> Guthrie's phrases were perhaps not quite as "stiff" as many of Johnson's, but his "free and colloquial style" at times misses the Greek idiom; e.g. Porphyry's *Life* begins: "Plotinus, the philosopher who lived recently . . ." rather than "Plotinus, the philosopher of our times."<sup>79</sup> Guthrie considers Numenius the father of Neoplatonism to whom Plotinus owes a great deal.<sup>80</sup> His view of history is dated and factually confused: Boethius comes after Aquinas, Maimonides and Ibn Gabirol are Arabian philosophers.<sup>81</sup> His translations and commentaries, however, display familiarity with Neoplatonic thought, and his attitude was far from arrogant.<sup>82</sup> His avowed purpose was to bring to the attention of the world "the great significance of these writings in the history of philosophy . . ." and ". . . the benefit of humanity that had for so long been deprived of this its precious heritage . . ."<sup>83</sup>

The 1910 monograph on Plotinus<sup>84</sup> contains some errors, but it presents a fairly coherent account of the thought of the *Enneads*, in the late antique context, along with translations of important passages. Plotinus, he thinks, is a "rigid monotheist", who uses the names of the pagan deities unsystematically to illustrate a point. He proved it possible to conceive of a just, loving God, who was also absolute Beauty, *outside* of Christianity. Augustinian Christianity could not do as much. Augustine, who owes him much, still speaks of eternal fire, whereas Plotinus anticipates universal salvation.<sup>85</sup>

Porphyry's *Sententiae* first appeared at the end of the 1918 edition of Plotinus. They follow an old MS order arranged with reference to the *Enneads*: to be read sequentially as a commentary on selected passages of Plotinus.<sup>86</sup> The translation, however, lacks

78. For a discussion of GUTHRIE's translation's in alleged dependence on Thos. M. JOHNSON and comparison and contract of their ideas see ANDERSON, NY 1963, 168-69.

79. ARMSTRONG, Camb. 1966, v.1, 3.

80. GUTHRIE is not unaware of the differences between the two philosophers, but he thinks that they are relatively trivial; see *Plotinus*, 1918, 4, 1314-15. A major problem is Guthrie's insistence on his own order of *Enneads* rather than Porphyry's.

81. *Plotinus*, 1918, 4, 1327. Guthrie's "expository" order is meant to guide the reader through the *Enneads*. The results are, at times, confusing. Porphyry's order with a commentary or summary is preferable.

82. See *Plotinus*, 1918, Foreword, 2, where the author welcomes all corrections and suggestions, etc.

83. *Pythagorean Sourcebook*, Grand Rapids 1988, 15 (Preface to the original edition of 1920).

84. *Plotinus, His Life Times and Philosophy*, London, 1910.

85. *Plotinus*, London 1910, 56-57.

86. But see WALLIS, NY 1972, 98, who gives A.C. LLOYD's opinion:

the lucidity of Davidson's.<sup>87</sup> The modern order also gives a more or less systematic account of Neoplatonism.<sup>88</sup>

The Platonist Press published Marinus' *Life of Proclus* along with the *Hymns* and some works in 1925. Guthrie had decided to publish those writings of Proclus which were accessible but unavailable: It is reported that a seaman, who had been a miner in California, named Emil Verch, appeared in the translator's study "out of the blue." "He asked for an explanation of a vision he had recently had of a sage by the name of Proclus giving lectures in an unknown tongue."<sup>89</sup> Guthrie told him about Proclus and Verch asked him to make a translation and spread the word: Hence the hagiographical title *Marinus' The Life of Proclus or, Concerning Happiness: being the biographical account of an ancient Greek philosopher who was innately loved by the gods*.

Guthrie tried to get the word out, even selling mimeographed editions by mail-order. But in the 1920's America was listening to the "different drummer" of modernity. Those still interested in Neoplatonism were critical historians; e.g. the Plato scholar, Ronald B. Levinson, wrote his Ph.D. thesis under Shorey on Thomas Taylor.<sup>90</sup> In intellectual Christian Platonist circles Neoplatonism also had its critics. Paul Elmer More thought Christian and Neoplatonic mysticism withdrawal from a full human life. It is also

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"any idea that they provide an easy introduction to Plotinus is unlikely to survive the experiment." GUTHRIE says: "The order of Bouilet . . . (is kept) . . . because this the one that Porphyry introduced into the works of Plotinus. It must, therefore, have been of most significance to him. Plotinus, 1918, 4, 1214.

87. Compare: GUTHRIE, Plotinus, 1918, 4, 1226, 15(1), "Every body is in a place; the incorporeal in itself is not in a place, any more than the things which have the same nature as it;" DAVIDSON, *JoSP*, 3, (1869) 48(1), "All body is in space: no one of the things which in themselves are incorporeal, or anything of such nature, is in space." 1. Πᾶν μὲν σῶμα ἐν τόπῳ, οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν καθ' αὐτὰ ἀσωμάτων ἢ τοιοῦτον ἐν τόπῳ. *Porphyrii Sententia Ad Intelligibilia Ducentes*, ed. Erich LAMBERZ, Teubner, Leipzig, 1975.

88. In addition says DAVIDSON, *JoSP*, 3, (1869) 47, the MS is problematic and "Creuzer was singularly unfortunate in his attempts to improve the readings." Still the *Sentences* will best clarify any "system" that may exist in the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

89. John MICHELL, *Marinus: The Life of Proclus*, tr. K.S. GUTHRIE, Grand Rapids, MI, 1986 (reprint from 1925 ed.). Introduction, 10.

90. "Thomas Taylor the Platonist." Unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1924. On Levinson's evaluation of American Neoplatonism see HARGER, NJ 1969, 91. Thos. M. JOHNSON's son, a professor of Art, published a work on TAYLOR, "Neo-Platonic Hymns by Thomas Taylor," *Philological Quarterly*, 9 (1929), 145-156. The middle initial P. stands for "Plotinus". JOHNSON had another son whose middle name was "Proclus".

philosophically un-Platonic.<sup>91</sup> In certain literary circles, however, there was continuing interest. C. Terrell believes that Neoplatonic elements in the poetry of Ezra Pound were connected to Thomas Taylor — perhaps through G.R.S. Mead's reprints. Pound accepted a Neoplatonic interpretation of the Eleusinian mysteries, whose "gnostic" light continued underground in medieval Europe, to be re-kindled in the Renaissance. It is again re-emerging in modern times.<sup>92</sup> Paul G. Kuntz has argued vigorously for an element of Christian Neoplatonism in the thought of Santayana.<sup>93</sup> But these are isolated examples. The Neoplatonists had simply, under the banner of Idealism, imported a Romantic version of an ancient philosophy to an energetic new nation without making any appropriate changes.<sup>94</sup> Thus, in the long run, their efforts did not succeed.

The recent revival of interest in mystical modes of thought includes Neoplatonism: several translations of Taylor, Johnson and Guthrie have been reprinted.<sup>95</sup> Some of the editors express a theo-

91. *Paul Elmer More* by Francis X. DUGGAN, New York, 1951, 95, 105.

92. C. TERRELL "Mang-Tsze, Thomas Taylor and Madame YAH" *Paideuma*, 7, 1978, 141-154; see also *A Light From Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, by Leon SURETTE, Oxford, 1979. On Pound's Neoplatonism see Okiko MIYAKE "The Greek Egyptian Mysteries in Pound's 'The Little Review Calendar'" and in Cantos 1-7, *Paideuma*, 7, 1978, 73-112, 74 n. 6 is especially useful for bibliography on Pound and Neoplatonism. MIYAKE also deals with Pound's conception of "material vortices" in his poem "Plotinus" in her forthcoming: *Ezra Pound and the Mysteries of Love: The Unity of His Cosmos*, MS, 20; Convinced the influence of T. Taylor on Pound highly probable, perhaps through the reprints of Pound's acquaintance G.R.S. Mead, C. TERRELL also reprinted "Thomas Taylor: The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries" in *Paideuma*, 7, 1978, 155-78. (It should also be noted that W.B. Yeats was seriously involved with Neoplatonism.)

93. "Categories and Orders of Santayana's Christian Neo-Platonism" Paul G. KUNTZ. *Bulletin of the Santayana Society*, no. 3, Fall 1985, 9-21. (There has also been some recent scholarly discussion of Neoplatonic elements in the philosophy and logic of the seminal American thinker C.S. Peirce.)

94. Alexander WILDER remarked "We are in new times, and we are not of them," ANDERSON, NY 1963, 194. The essentially important was saved by Wm. James, who discusses the mysticism of Plotinus in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Cambridge, 1985 ed, 338.

95. E.g. see above n. 2, 3.

sophical or theurgic outlook.<sup>96</sup> Highly sophisticated and modernized forms of Neoplatonism have been suggested in North America, especially since the 1960's, by e.g. the late Hegelian "logician of mysticism" J.N. Findlay and the unorthodox and apophatic Christian Neoplatonist and scholar A.H. Armstrong.<sup>97</sup> Modern Neoplatonic scholarship has been first rate, and some of the better scholars still perceive living philosophical options in Neoplatonism.

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96. G. SCHOLEM remarks of post-enlightenment mysticism: "This secular mysticism takes on particularly interesting form in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where, after Blake, we encounter such figures as Walt Whitman, Richard Bucke, and Edward Carpenter, who in their interpretation of their experience recognized no authority whatsoever." Blake still uses traditional imagery; but later purely immanent and naturalistic interpretations became common. Scientific and philosophical theories accepted by these authors, however, e.g. Evolution, often played a determining role in their interpretations: *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 3rd ed., New York, 1973, 16-17.

97. Two accessible shorter works are "The Logic of Mysticism" J.N. FINDLAY, *Religious Studies*, 2, (1967), 145-62; "Platonic Mirrors" A.H. ARMSTRONG, *Eranos Yearbook*, 55, (1986), 147-81.