The Cambridge Platonists in Henry Fielding's Christian Platonic *History of Tom Jones*

James Bryson
Faculty of Divinity, Sidney Sussex College
Cambridge University

In 1956, a young scholar by the name of Ralph W. Rader, who would go on to become Professor of English Emeritus at the University of California Berkeley, noticed an affinity between a passage in Henry Fielding's *Amelia* and Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, where Fielding describes the deism of one of his characters, Mr. Booth, whose rejection of the doctrine of divine providence, it would seem, verges on outright atheism.[1] Fielding does not mention Cudworth by name, but cites Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), perhaps a better known figure to his contemporary readership, as his theological authority. Rader points out that Fielding's mention of Clarke here is no reason to assume that he is the only or most important influence in this crucial passage in the novel, before revealing his important discovery. Rader convincingly argues that it is highly likely that Fielding must have had Cudworth particularly in mind at this moment of the novel, because he quotes from the late antique poet Claudian to illustrate the unstable spiritual state of the man who denies God's providence, as Cudworth himself does in service of the same point in his *True Intellectual System*.[2] This is made all the more likely by the fact that Fielding owned a copy of Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* (1678).[3]

1 Ralph W. Rader, "Ralph Cudworth and Fielding's *Amelia*", *Modern Language Notes*. Vol. 71, No. 5 (May, 1956), pp. 336-338.

2 Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London: 1678), p. 80.

3 Frederick G. Ribble; Anne G. Ribble, *Fielding's Library: an annotated catalogue* (Charlottesville: University of Virgina, 1996). It is also worth noting that Fielding was a friend of Thomas Birch, editor of an abridged version of Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* (1743).

Dionysius, Vol. XXXVII, December 2019, 182-195.

Fielding scholarship acknowledges the importance of the Cambridge Platonists for the theological background of the novelist's literary works, mediated particularly by latitudinarian divines like John Tillotson and Issac Barrow, but judgements vary about how Fielding would have felt about their theological attitudes broadly understood.[4] Fielding scholars rightly emphasise deism as a regular target in his novels. Deism takes on two principal forms for Fielding: it is either of an intellectual or sentimental stripe.[5] Shaftesbury, who Fielding references in his writings and correspondence, is considered an example of the latter, and the Cambridge Platonists – as the intellectual ancestors of Samuel Clarke, Matthew Tindal, and Thomas Chubb – of the former. This caricature is at odds with Rader's discovery, which shows that Fielding put Cudworth in service of orthodoxy, and with the work of the eminent 20th century Fielding scholar, Martin C. Battestin, who accepts the influence of Cambridge Platonism on Fielding's mature Christian theistic worldview.[6] More recently, in a brilliant and wide-ranging essay, the Platonist scholar Wayne Hankey accepts Battestin's judgement about Cudworth's influence on Fielding, and he develops the implications of his critical insights by showing how Fielding's Christian Platonism bears itself out in the spiritual education of his heroes and heroines, most notably in his magnum opus, *The History of Tom Jones* (1749).[7] Hankey shows how Fielding romantically represents the

4 The leading scholar of Fielding's intellectual sources is the late Martin C. Battestin. See, for example, Battestin's pioneering work, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959).

5 The seminal article for Fielding's critics on this point is A. R. Humphreys, "'The Eternal Fitness of Things': An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Thought", *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Apr., 1947), pp. 188-198. Humphreys mentions Fielding's polemic against rigid and theoretical moralism, and he includes the Cambridge Platonist attempt to found morality on axiomatic principles as a precursor of Square's logic-chopping approach to the moral life in *Tom Jones*.

6 Martin C. Battestin, *A Henry Fielding Companion* (Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. 229-230.

7 Wayne J. Hankey, http://numerocinqmagazine.com/2014/07/15/conversion-ontological-secular-from-plato-to-tom-jones-essay-wayne-j-hankey/.

ancient neo-platonic doctrine of providence. Fielding's theology is latitudinarian and his psychology the product of a Christian Platonic vision of human nature, one which is sinful but capable of reformation through the exercise of faith and preparation for the reception of grace through the acts of confession and repentance.

The dialectical 'history' of divine providence in *Jones* led another Platonic critic to take notice. Samuel Taylor Coleridge numbered *Tom Jones* as one of the 'three most perfect plots ever planned'.[8] Fielding may have had Coleridge's beloved Plotinus to thank for his narrative vision. Battestin suggests the mediation of Cudworth here, who elaborates on the Plotinian comparison of human beings to actors on the stage in God's epic poem, a spiritual exercise designed to help us make sense of evil in the world, while offering a way of seeing our place in his cosmic drama. Battestin cites the following passage from Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*:

> The Evolution of the World, as Plotinus calls it, is ἀληθέστερον ποίημα, a Truer Poem, and we men Histrionical Acters upon the Stage, who notwithstanding insert something of our Own into the Poem too; but God Almighty, is that Skilful Dramatist, who always connecteth that of ours which went before, with what of his follows after, into good Coherent Sense; and will at last make it appear, that a Thred of exact Justice did run through all, and that Rewards and Punishments are measured out in Geometrical Proportion.[9]

Here we have another characteristic element of the Platonic tradition on which the Cambridge Platonists insisted, that, as Henry More put it, the 'purgative course is previous to the illuminative'. In his popular handbook on moral philosophy, *Enchiridion Ethicum* (1668), originally composed in Latin, but posthumously translated into English as *An Account of Virtue* (1690), More charts a course for the soul to the life of virtue, exhorting us to examine the meaning of our naturally hedonistic tendencies, which must be reformed by reason in cooperation with what Shaftesbury will call the 'moral sense', and what More calls the

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8 H.N. Coleridge (ed.), *Specimens of the table talk of the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In Two Volumes* (London: John Murray, 1835), vol. 2, p. 171.

9 Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System* (London: 1678), pp. 879-880.

'divine spark' hidden but animating the life of every human soul. More of the role of the 'spark' in Fielding's history in a moment.

Fielding intends his history as a literary version of the Platonic spiritual itinerarium of the soul, called by beauty to the acquisition of virtue. In the Dedication to *Tom Jones*, he writes:

> I declare that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history. This honest purpose you have been pleased to think I have attained; and to say the truth, it is likeliest to be attained in books of this kind; for an example is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes as it were an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked charms...Besides displaying that beauty of virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger motive to human action in her favour, by convincing men, that their true interests directs them to a pursuit of her.[10]

Tom Jones ought to be read as a self-consciously Platonic history of love. Love is perhaps the most important theme in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists and their circle, in large part because it is a topic that goes to the heart of philosophy, theology, and religion, blurring the boundaries between and within these disciplines and practices. Love, for example, is a central theme in their moral philosophy, Trinitarian theology, and interpretation of scripture. It should go without saying that love is the central theme of the Renaissance and ancient literature in which the Cambridge Platonists, like Fielding, were steeped.

Fielding is explicit about the role 'true philosophy' plays in the formation of his protagonists. Tom's love interest is his neighbour, Sophia Western. Tom comes to love Sophia – recognised to be the most beautiful woman in the country round – for the goodness and beauty of her character, not her physical beauty. This is much to the astonishment of the otherwise all-knowing narrator himself, familiar with Tom's frequent capitulations to the temptations of the flesh.

Fielding draws on Neoplatonic theories of beauty to explain the education Jones receives by falling in love with Sophia, both the heroine herself and the very idea and life of wisdom. Fielding argues in a thoroughly Platonising way. His hope, he claims, is to make the

10 Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*. Editing with notes and introduction by R.P.C. Mutter (London: Penguin, 1966), Dedication, p.37.

'good man wise'.[11] Although occasioned by a person, reminiscent of Diotima's ladder in Plato's *Symposium*, Jones is in love with the idea of Sophia. He is in love with the idea of Sophia herself and he is driven by an intuitive sense of his need for a spiritual education. In Sophia, as in Squire Allworthy, his adopted father, whose chief virtue is his 'goodness', there is a meeting of the person and the idea. By the end of the romance, through dialogue with goodness and union with beauty and virtue through the attainment of wisdom – represented concretely in his friendship with his benevolent father Allworthy, and in his marriage to Sophia Western – Jones achieves the perfection of his spiritual education in the world:

> Whatever in the nature of Jones had a tendency to vice, has been corrected by continual conversation with this good man, and by his union with the lovely and virtuous Sophia. He hath also, by reflexion on his past follies, acquired a discretion and prudence very uncommon in one of his lively parts.[12]

As many critics recognise, the plot of Fielding's history is driven by the mystery of Tom's parentage. Again, this is another trope surrounding love in the Platonic tradition that goes back to the *Symposium*, picked up by Plotinus and his Renaissance commentators. Is love divine or human, a god or a daimon? Is Aphrodite, the goddess of love, to be contemplated at a distance, or is she the earthly rather than heavenly goddess who concerns herself principally with romance? Or perhaps love is a term better applied to friendships, or religious or filial devotion than to romance? Plato suggests an alternative parentage to the heavenly and earthly Aphrodite, drawing our attention to another genealogy that holds love is a spirit (*daimon*) born of the marriage between *Poros* and *Penia* – plenty and poverty. As Thomas Leinkauf points out, love is a mixing and mixed virtue in the Platonic philosophy of the Renaissance.[13] Tom Jones embodies all of these mysterious contradictions, resolved only by

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., Book XVIII, Chapter The Last, p. 874.

13 Thomas Leinkauf, *Grundriss Philosophie des Humanismus und der Renaissance (1300-1600)* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2017), Band 2, pp. 1288-1301.

the divine goodness which watches over him and those whom he loves, deserving or not. All of his characters are lovers or else they pursue loves of various kinds. These pursuits demonstrate a lack, but they also inspire an astonishing level of resourcefulness.

Fielding deploys another Platonic theme by making the contemplation of death an important way of educating his characters. Facing death is crucial for Fielding because it lays character bare. The impending death of Squire Allworthy and the public reading of his will, for example, reveal devotion in Jones and avarice in his villainous counterparts. Death also demonstrates the priority of the Christian religion over and above philosophy. In language that echoes the title of Anne Conway's great treatise, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* – the central message of which is God's overflowing love for his creation – Fielding puts the following words into the mouth of Square, the deist philosopher, who, apparently terminally ill, converts to Christianity:

> I have somewhere read, that the great Use of Philosophy is to learn to die. I will not therefore so far disgrace mine, as to shew any Surprize at receiving a Lesson which I must be thought to have so long studied. Yet, to say the Truth, one Page of the Gospel teaches this Lesson better than all the Volumes of antient or modern Philosophers... I would not here throw the horrid censure of atheism, or even the absolute denial of immortality, on all who are called philosophers. Many of that sect, as well antient as modern, have, from the light of reason, discovered some hopes of a future state; but, in reality, that light was so faint and glimmering, and the hopes were so uncertain and precarious, that it may be justly doubted on which side their belief turned. Plato himself concludes his Phaedon declaring, that his best arguments amount only to raise a probability...As to myself, to be very sincere with you, I never was much earnest in this faith, till I was in earnest a Christian.[14]

In a much more extensive way than Conway, Cudworth famously classifies philosophers as theists or atheists and traces themes and lines of argument in ancient and modern philosophical theism and atheism. It is hard not to hear echoes of Cudworth's *magnum opus* in passages of this kind.

There is another Platonising strand at work in Fielding's literary imagination that we find most thoroughly developed in Henry More, although it is of great importance for the Cambridge

14 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, Book XVIII, Chapter 4, p. 823.

Platonists and their circle. Fielding refers to Jones as one of the 'sparks' in his history, language that evokes the high medieval and patristic tradition of deification. In the work of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), to which More dedicated a lengthy work, the divine spark that lies in every human soul is drawn out by the heavenly Sophia, the feminine personification of Christ.[15] The most proximate source of this tradition for Fielding may have been Isaac Barrow (1630-1677), a contemporary of More and Cudworth, who many scholars argue was influenced by More's speculative theology.[16] Fielding also owned the works of Clement of Alexandria, another source of the doctrine of deification for the Cambridge Platonists.[17] Fielding was attracted to the idea that we are good by participation in the heavenly realm of true goodness. Platonism comes to him by many channels and must be regarded as essential to his world-building moral vision.

Fielding takes aim at the same philosophical and theological targets as his Cambridge Platonist forebearers, and highlights the most important feature of their Platonising world view: the primacy of divine goodness requires that divine omnipotence is drawn out and channeled by the divine wisdom. Jones' tutors are a deist philosopher, Thomas Square, a champion of the 'rule of right' and the 'eternal fitness of things', and a Calvinist theologian, Roger Thwackum, a voluntarist and scriptural literalist. For all the learning of the one and severe piety of the other, neither man lives by the principles he espouses. (The conversion of Square at the end of the history, noted above, is followed by a confession to his villainous behaviour towards Jones). These characters mirror

15 Henry More, "Philosophiae Teutonicae censura", in *Omnia Opera* (London: 1679), pp. 529-561.

16 For recent attempt to link Barrow and More on the question of absolute time, see Emily Thomas, "Henry More and the development of absolute time", *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Science* 54 (2015) pp. 11-19.

17 D.W. Dockrill, "The Heritage of Patristic Platonism in Seventeenth Century English Philosophical Theology". In: *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics, and Religion*, edited by G.A. J. Rogers, J.M. Vienne, and Y.C. Zarka (London: Kluwer, 1997), pp. 55-77.

their benevolent counterparts, Squire Allworthy, best known for his 'goodness', and Jones himself, whose reckless behaviour is continuously overlooked because of his personal charm, but above all owing to his charitable spirit. Allworthy, however, although the local magistrate, never had a formal education, so for all his good will towards his fellow man, he lacks the sophistication required to impose moral order in his own jurisdiction. Worse than this, he puts those in his charge in material and spiritual danger, including Jones, who, like his adopted father, must be educated by the world because his teachers are morally corrupt.

The work of providence, therefore, is Fielding's overarching concern, given the frailty of good men and the vicious and the largely unreformable nature of the bad. In his Christian epic, a self-conscious response to Milton's *Paradise Lost* – another great work of Christian and Cambridge Platonic theology – all are redeemed who would be redeemed, and those who would otherwise are consigned to the abyss of the oblivion they choose.[18] As the great Renaissance Platonist Marsilio Ficino points out in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, forgetfulness and lust are the principal psychological effects of elevating the material above the spiritual. Fielding owned a copy of Ficino's edition of Plato's *Omnia Opera*, which included his influential commentary on the *Symposium*, a neo-platonic reading of the cooperation of love and beauty of the soul in search of divine goodness.[19]

Because Fielding is so deeply committed to a Christian Platonic account of love as the principle of human happiness and flourishing, I am reluctant to endorse Professor Hankey's interpretation of the picture that Jones and his great successor Jane Austen paint i.e., that in the Protestant Platonism of the 18th and early 19thcenturies the felicitous marriage of the gentry replaces

18 James Bryson, "Christian Cabbalistic Platonism in Milton's *Paradise Lost*". In: *The Metaphysics of Conversion* (University of Edinburgh Press, forthcoming).

19 On the relation between love and beauty in Ficino's commentary, see Werner Beierwaltes, "Marsilio Ficinos Theorie des Schönen im Kontext des Platonismus", (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag, 1980).

the transcendent *telos* of the spiritual journey, characteristic of its ancient and medieval forerunners. Hankey judges that:

> The secularization and humanization of the human and cosmic *telos* and the means to it goes much further when we move from the culmination of conversion as contemplative or ecstatic union with the Divine Good, True, and Beautiful to felicity as marriage of the Protestant gentry. It is evident that such an incredible representation of matrimony must depend on its filling in for the transcendent divine goal of the ancient and medieval quest.[20]

In response to this interesting and provocative judgement, let us consider the concluding passage of Fielding's history:

> To conclude, as there are not to be found a worthier man and woman, than this fond couple, so neither can any be imagined more happy. They preserve the purest and tenderest affection for each other, an affection daily increased and confirmed by mutual endearments, and mutual esteem. Nor is their conduct towards their relations and friends less amiable, than towards one another. And such is their condescension, their indulgence, and their beneficence to those below them, that there is not a neighbour, a tenant or a servant, who doth not most gratefully bless the day when Mr Jones was married to his Sophia.[21]

Marriage is the end of Fielding's history, not its beginning or middle. Like Dante's *Commedia* – which Hankey juxtaposes with Fielding's *Jones* – the pilgrims are moved by and towards love as their end from a growing awareness of its overflowing power, an end with which they must cooperate and ultimately will, but do not and cannot determine by their own strength. The felicity in love that Tom and Sophia enjoy, Fielding insists, cannot be accomplished without the oversight of a transcendent providence. Here the Christian religion and its two great commandments remain fully intact, shaping the sense and sensibility of the age. Hankey conflates secularity with Protestantism, and limits the possibility of cultural sensitivity to the role of transcendence in human destiny to a pre-Reformation and ahistorical golden age of contemplation. Interestingly, this hermeneutic of suspicion is characteristic of some recent Cambridge Platonist scholarship, and typifies the Christian post-modern theology that motivates it, a theology which longs for a return to the pre-modern and laments the Protestant modernity they regard as responsible for so many modern ills, traceable to a conflation of the religious and the moral that culminates in the 'secular' ethics

20 Hankey, see Note 7 above.

21 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, Book XVIII, 'Chapter the Last', p. 874.

of Kant and the correlative destruction of metaphysical religion.[22]

Fielding should not be read as a stage along the way towards such developments. At an important moment in Tom's travels, shortly after he is cast out of his home, having renounced his claim on the woman he loves in an attempt to preserve her honour, and robbed of what little money he had to start a new life for himself – by a man whom he believed a dear friend no less – Tom declares his willingness to fight for the 'Protestant Religion'. Lest he be taken for a non-conformist of a radical kind, Tom qualifies this by explaining that religious zeal does not exclude love for King and country, even if it represents a higher vocation:

> I think no man can engage in a nobler cause than that of his religion; and I have observed in the little I have read of history, that no soldiers have fought so bravely, as those who have been inspired with a religious zeal: for my own part, tho' I love my King and Country, I hope, as well as any man in it, yet the Protestant interest is no small motive to my becoming a volunteer in the cause.[23]

Religion and God in this Protestant context still transcend a purely 'secular' world view. Moreover, love itself is necessarily communal in the Christian Platonic vision Fielding and the Cambridge Platonists propound. Felicity is by no means limited to married aristocrats, just as for the medieval Christian Platonist, the experience of the beatific vision does not require mastery of Aquinas' *Summa* or Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. On the contrary, the health and good will of the community requires marriage and the family as its beating heart. As is made clear in the quotation above, Fielding is careful to point out that Jones and Sophia are no less loving towards their friends and community than they are devoted to their matrimonial union. Here there is a mutual indwelling

22 David Leech, *The Hammer of the Cartesians: Henry More's Philosophy of Spirit and the Origins of Modern Atheism* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014). Leech draws on the 'univocity' thesis of radical orthodoxy as a way of showing how More moves away from the Neoplatonic emphasis on purification — characteristic of his early writings — later in his career in reaction to Cartesian 'nullibism', a move that brings More dangerously close to what John Henry calls the 'crypto-materialism' of More's later metaphysics. See also, John Henry, "A Cambridge Platonist's Materialism: Henry More And The Concept of the Soul", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* Vol. 49 (1986), pp. 172-195.

23 *Tom Jones*, Book VII, Chapter 12, p. 341.

of individuals and community made possible by an institution grounded in love, rightly called 'the state of holy matrimony'.

The concluding words of Fielding's epic insist on the overflowing and sacred nature of the love between Sophia and Jones, which confers benefits on their friends and on the wider community acquainted with them. The stability of their marriage reflects the character of the divine providence which made it possible, an indefatigable and irresistible divine persistence which human folly repeatedly attempts to frustrate. This is not a replacement of the transcendent aim of the ancient and medieval spiritual quest, but a product of the same conviction in the operation of the transcendent in the human community. The argument of *Jones* reflects the theology of divine love and goodness championed by Cudworth. Given his deep investment in the work of loving providence, Fielding must have been struck by the following passage from Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*, one deeply sensitive to love in her many, universal, and divine aspects:

> For it is nothing but φιλοκαλία, or the Love of Pulchritude, as such, which though rightly used, may perhaps Wing and Inspire the Mind, to Noble and Generous Attempts, and beget a scornful disdeign in it, of Mean, Dirty, and Sordid things; yet it is capable of being abused also, and then it will strike downward into Brutishness and Sensuality. But at best it is an Affection, belonging only to Imperfect and Parturient Beings; and therefore could not be the First Principle of all things. Wherefore we see no very great reason, but that in a Rectified and Qualified sence, this may pass for true Theology; That Love is the Supreme Deity and Original of all things; namely, if by it be meant, Eternal, Self-originated, Intellectual Love, or Essential and Substantial Goodness, that having an Infinite overflowing Fulness and Fecundity, dispenses it self Uninvidiously, according to the best Wisdom, Sweetly Governs all, without any Force or Violence (all things being Naturally subject to its Autority, and readily obeying its Laws) and reconciles the whole World into Harmony. For the Scripture telling us, that God is Love, seems to warrant thus much to us, that Love in some rightly Qualified sence, is God.[24]

A question lingers. If Fielding's Christian Platonism is traceable to the unifying vision of love, beauty and goodness, exemplified in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists, why do Fielding scholars classify them as proto-deists? One possible reason for this is Fielding's distaste for the idea that it is possible to argue

24 Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System*, p.117.

one's way towards moral insight by employing axiomatic proofs analogous to those of Euclidean geometry. Indeed, both Cudworth and More appear to write treatises that proceed in this way. To the casual reader, More's *Enchiridion Ethicum* and Cudworth's *Eternal and Immutable Morality* could seem like works which argue that moral certainties can be rationally deduced. Indeed, More and Cudworth have acquired a reputation in contemporary histories of moral philosophy as early-enlightenment figures who believed morality to be a strictly rational affair, prioritising the role of 'head' above 'heart' in the formation of moral judgements.[25]

This is not the place to show how this caricature is virtually the complete opposite of the truth.[26] Instead, I would like to suggest an alternative target in Fielding's mind, a contemporary of the Cambridge Platonists: one Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). Interestingly, Fielding was in possession of a copy of the works of Spinoza, whose *Ethics* purport to proceed according to 'geometric demonstration' based on the Euclidean model. Spinoza anticipates a Nietzschean attitude to the moral life, since he places God beyond good and evil, a necessary consequence of a system that prioritises the intellectual but static nature of reality, rather than its intelligibility and transcendent origins, as the Cambridge Platonists do. For both Cudworth and More, their ethical vision requires a 'super-intellectual' perspective, reflected in the moral life itself and available to the human soul through its transcendent essence as an image of God. The Cambridge Platonists place mind (*Nous*) over and above discursive reason (*dianoia*), which means that all human beings have access to moral and spiritual insight as transcendent creatures, regardless of their logic-chopping capacities. Scripture can also reveal divine truths because the fundamental principle of the created world is its intelligibility. In this Platonising world view, God can make himself understood.

25 Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralist on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

26 I treat this question here: "A Philosophy of Love: Henry More's Moral Philosophy", *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 61 (1): 84-106 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1515/nzsth-2019-0005

If deism is the belief in the possibility of a purely rational theology, one can only surmise that the Cambridge Platonists are placed in this category because they are known by their reputation not their writings. This is a general problem with the history of philosophy in the seventeenth century. Both 'materialists' like Hobbes and 'empiricists' like Locke emphasise the importance of revelation and comment extensively on scripture in their writings. The Cambridge Platonist interest in Cartesian dualism was born of their conviction that the Frenchman had opened up a space for a metaphysics of the spirit in the wake of the materialist challenge of Hobbes and later the pantheistic system of Spinoza himself. What distinguishes the Christian from the Platonist is the emphasis he places on the uniqueness of the body rather than of the soul. The Cambridge Platonist defence of the immortality of the soul, a doctrine of an indisputably Platonic provenance, grows out of their Christian belief in the resurrection of the body, even if it must be a spiritual body that rises, not one of the flesh. *Tom Jones* is Platonic in this specifically Christian sense. Jones is a young man immersed in his body, a principled hedonist, whose mind needs to be brought into alignment with the 'spark' of divinity in his heart. Importantly, his relation to Sophia – both as person and idea – is always and necessarily pure. For Fielding the divine spark remains pure, but sentimentalism is not enough. Mind and heart must operate in tandem for God to make himself present to the human soul.

Deism would have been impossible for the Cambridge Platonists. To their eyes, philosophical reflection and scriptural revelation, metaphysics and ethics, philosophy and poetry are complementary pursuits, necessary as pairs if they are to contribute to the spiritual health of the soul. Moreover, religion, they insist, opens up the space for the philosophical reflection they hold dear: it precedes, accompanies, and is the capstone of the speculative philosophical life. It is no accident that the first work of the Cambridge Platonist school is a cycle of 'Christian Platonical' poems, nor should it surprise us that the Platonising poetry of Edmund Spenser, read to Henry More by his father as a boy, laid the groundwork for Henry More's spiritual conversion to Christian Platonism. His *Psychozoia*, the first of his poems, is a *figura* of his mystical *metanoia*.

Returning to Rader's observation noted at the outset, for a literary man like Fielding, Cudworth's approach to philosophy and theology would have been highly attractive. The illustration and support of theological argument by lines of verse is typical of the Cambridge Platonist conviction that *logos* and *mythos* are complementary for philosophical and theological speculation and the spiritual itinerarium of the soul they serve. In Fielding, speculative contemplation has not disappeared, but has gone underground. Platonic philosophical speculation has taken refuge from the dry logic-chopping of 18th century scholasticism and the spiritually empty bromides of Enlightenment deism, and found safe harbour in the Christian allegory, epic, and novel, where it will refresh itself until its rebirth in the theologically inspired philosophy of German Idealism. Those romantic philosophers also read the Cambridge Platonists, but that is another story.