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REINCARNATION IN ANCIENT AND EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

A Julius Weinberg Memorial Lecture

I need not assure you that I appreciate the honor of being chosen to deliver this year's Julius Weinberg Memorial Lecture. Any thought of Julius inevitably renews the grief that he left us so early but it also gives a new impulse to our feelings of gratitude and admiration for all that he did and all that he was. His outstanding publications on mediaeval and early modern philosophy convey impressions of his scholarship to many who were not fortunate enough to be associated with him for years and to be fascinated by his enthusiastic love of literature and by his altogether exceptional breadth of interests. No less exceptional was his gift for communicating his insights. Conversation with him was invariably inspiring; although the wide range of his knowledge might have proved discouraging to young scholars, the warm personal interest that he took in them prevented any such effect; they came away eager to explore for themselves at least a fraction of what had just been made visible to them.

Contrary to what is widely believed, the soul concept is not a part of the Hebrew-Christian heritage but has its origin in Greek thought. Moreover the Greeks, though the word

psyche occurs in their earliest poetry, needed generations, nay centuries to give it the content that soul has continued to have ever since. It is only in Socrates and Plato that the manifold components of psyche both on the religious and on the secular side are integrated, with results that determine the conception of immortality not only for Greek philosophy but also for Christian theology.

We are headed for Socrates and Plato, but to see their achievement in its true light we must consider briefly some ideas which had earlier been associated with psyche. In the earliest literary documents, the Iliad and the Odyssey, psyche has very restricted meanings. It means life or the breath of life; hence when a person dies or, as happens more often in the Iliad, is killed, his psyche leaves him. And this, I may add at once, is all we know about it for the individual's life time. If psyche sustains him and keeps him active during his life it does so in the most unobtrusive, inconspicuous way. After death psyche presents itself differently. It continues but in a very poor and so to speak minimal existence. In the dark world below souls flit about as shadows, fortunately not very conscious of their gloomy surroundings; for when Odysseus visits the world below he has to offer a drink of blood to these shades to awaken them to consciousness and make them speak. Just occasionally the Homeric psyche is permitted some very limited further manifestation. It may for instance at the moment of changing from life to death bemoan its sad fate, but whether it does so by a mere sigh or in a more articulate way we are not told.

Homeric poetry is known to be selective in the beliefs it presents. About men's fate after death there existed at the time many other and quite different beliefs. But there would be no point in discussing them once more. If for instance the dead ancestor in his grave receives offerings, he is doubtless held to exert some power, but for all we can tell it is simply the dead man himself, not his psyche, which has to be honored or appeased. Similarly it is not the psyche of a particularly distinguished or fortunate hero that goes to the Islands of the Blessed but he himself. And even when beliefs in the Underworld moved beyond the Homeric stage and included a judgment which assigned punishment to the wicked and a joyful existence to the just, those so treated must be something more substantial than the unconscious Homeric shades. To be sure, we are dealing with very fluctuating beliefs that recognized no authority besides tradition which varied greatly and the poets who did not speak with one voice.

Fortunately when we come to the great Pythagoras we are on firmer ground. Critical scholarship has stripped him of his claims to mathematical glory; even the famous Pythagorean theorem has been sent back to Babylon but the new impulse that he gave to religious thought remains unquestioned. For Pythagoras is doubtless the man ridiculed by a contemporary satirist as rushing up to someone whom he saw beat a dog and exclaiming: "Stop; do not beat him; for it is the psyche of a dead friend which I recognized as I heard his whining." Here is the word psyche and here is clearly, if parodied, the idea of transmigration

into animals. We should be happy to have some more authentic testimonies and one I can use with a good conscience is a reference to him a good half century later in the physical philosopher Empedocles: "There was a man of surpassing knowledge who possessed the richest mind, a master of manifold cleverness who when he stretched his mind (i.e., made an effort with his entire mind) easily saw all the beings that are in ten or twenty lives of men."

We need not hesitate to understand that Pythagoras claimed recollection of what he himself--and possibly others too--had been in ten or more incarnations. Trustworthy too is the tradition that Pythagoras on seeing the armour of Euphorbus, a Trojan warrior, recalled that he himself had been Euphorbus. It has been acutely suggested that this story points beyond Euphorbus to Euphorbus' god, Apollo. Very probably Pythagoras felt a special closeness or even kinship with Apollo. He may have considered himself in Apollo's service and may have hoped to join him some day. This view is particularly attractive because that period abounds in astonishing religious phenomena, almost invariably related to Apollo. There is ecstasy and ecstatic prophecy, say of the Sibyls and of the Pythian prophetess in Delphi, who does not utter her oracles by her own powers but has Apollo speaking through her after he has taken possession of her mind and feelings. There are also curious instances of trance and other subjects of great interest to religious psychology, shaman-like individuals whose bodies remain as if dead while their true selves--perhaps their psyche--

travel to distant regions and return with amazing tales; you might not accept all of them as true, but it is important that their contemporaries did, and so did they themselves. In Pythagoras' case we are still in the dark as to what psyche is or does as long as it resides in a particular body. Is it really "we,"--we as we live our daily lives and do our daily work, or is it a strange mysterious ghost-like being in us? That it was considered divine is intrinsically probable; its immortality seems implied and was not much later definitely asserted. And reincarnation may well with Pythagoras have been the privilege of some exceptional individuals half-way between god and man, an experience rather than a creed. But others accepted it as truth, and roughly a generation later we find in the poet Pindar reincarnation combined with the motif of a judgment in the world below and with a final arrival on the Islands of the Blessed to be in the company of gods, heroes and other elect.

We are more truly within the orbit of Pythagoras when we hear the message of Empedocles, the outstanding fifth century physicist-philosopher whom I quoted a short while ago, but it would be rash to use the beliefs and convictions which we fortunately read in his own words for a reconstruction of Pythagoras' outlook. Empedocles knows himself to be a divine being--a daemon he says--who once shared the life and company of the gods but has fallen from that exalted status. It is here that the motifs of fall and sin enter the picture, but as we shall presently see, the Greek notions of fall and sin

differ sufficiently from the biblical to create a conflict for early Christianity.

Empedocles' memory does not like Pythagoras' span ten or twenty incarnations but it still assures him of previous existence as a young man, as a girl, as a bird, a fish and a plant. I am unable to explain this curious phenomenon of memory but would observe that it bears witness to Empedocles' very vivid feeling for the kinship of all living beings (here even extended to plants)--the same awareness which made him the discoverer or precursor of comparative morphology: "Hair and leaves, the feathers of birds and the scales (of fish) are the same thing." This kinship accounts also for his sin and fall. For the eating of meat is the cardinal sin. How he came to commit it when he was among the gods we do not know, but now that he atones for it here on Earth by entering successively the bodies of various living beings he is horrified to see how generally the slaughter of animals is practiced by men. How easily the animal now killed for consumption by the entire family could be the dead father or son or some other near relative.

The only way back from the horrible conditions on Earth and the only return to the gods is complete abstention from animal food. For himself Empedocles is confident that he has covered most of this way back, and since his friends and followers pay him god-like honors, they probably share his confidence. The last stages before return to divine status are incarnations as a ruler of men, a physician, a soothsayer

or a poet. Empedocles himself combines at least three of these capacities: physician, soothsayer and poet. The uncanny daemon who for the time being has made his home in him has probably endowed him with such supernormal and supernatural powers, but for the ordinary functions of the senses and of the intelligence, for normal joy and grief, the daemon can hardly be responsible.

Not the psyche but the daemon defines Empedocles' religious experience. Yet normally it is the psyche which wanders from person to person or from human being to animal and back again. In the meantime the secular psyche (if I may use the term) had greatly expanded its range and was no longer merely the organ of life in the physical sense but of much else that is vital. If it seems artificial to trace the secular development by itself and separated from the religious aspects, my excuse must be that our sources, Greek lyrics and tragedy of the classical age, allow no alternative. Nor am I the first to realize this. In fact I may here quote the findings of others that "the psyche is spoken of as the seat of courage, of passion, of pity, of anxiety, of animal appetite, but before Plato seldom if ever as the seat of reason." The psyche may be deeply stirred, may be in misery or agony, and it may if it finds itself in such condition either be mastered by firm resolution or left to its sufferings. When Antigone assures her sister that her own psyche has died and dwells with the dead, she means that in the world of the living nothing matters to her any longer, since her emotional attachment is

entirely to her dead parents and her dead brothers. Another character in tragedy, horrified at what strikes her as a shameless betrayal by gods and men, pours out her feelings in a song addressed to her psyche as the organ directly affected by misery and injustice.

At the end of the fifth century B.C. all that moves a person and all that has value for him concentrates in his psyche, and thus psyche itself becomes a thing of special value for man. Also, understandably enough, when others appraise someone they describe him or her as a gentle, friendly psyche or as a noble psyche, a strong, firm psyche or again, if such be the case, as "a wicked, base psyche always peering round corners."

Many more passages could show how psyche almost monopolizes the approach to what we would call personality and character. However, it is one thing to regard it as the core of a person, as indicative of someone's worth, as a sensitive organ, and another to insist that nothing is more important in life than to take care of one's psyche and to see to it that it suffers no harm but remains in the right condition. Yet this, from all we can tell, was Socrates' conviction which provided the impulse for his curious and often infuriating habit of questioning and examining the citizens of Athens. Enough remains mysterious about this man but this persistent, most intense concern about his own and other people's souls is one of the few points about which consensus has been reached between scholars as different in their

approach as Burnet, Jaeger, Dodds, Guthrie, and Vlastos, to name but these. And though Plato's Apology ("Defense" of Socrates) is not a historical document, we readily accept Socrates' affirmation in it that what he does is to persuade people young and old not to worry about their bodies and not to be concerned with their possessions before they have taken care that their soul (psyche) be in the best possible condition.

If the psyche is so precious it must be somehow sacred. Thus we come back to the thesis from which we started, that the secular psyche and the religious, the two concepts we have traced separately, are brought together by Socrates. But it is in his person, his ethos and conduct that they meet. To integrate them in the medium of philosophical thought with the help of arguments and philosophical visions remained for Plato. For if the view which we have taken of Socrates and his intense concern about the psyche is correct, it must also be correct to say that throughout the work of Plato, from his earliest dialogue to the last, we can trace the unfolding of this Socratic motif, the necessity to look after the soul. In an early dialogue like the Protagoras a would-be disciple of the sophist is urged to consider the danger involved in entrusting as valuable a possession as his psyche to the uncertain fate that awaits it in the sophist's education; and the last of Plato's works, the Laws, includes solemn admonitions to the citizens to "honor" their souls in the right ways and to avoid the wrong ways.

When we discussed Pythagoras and Empedocles, the psyche looked rather like a stranger who had taken up temporary and uneasy residence in the body. In the normal activities of daily life it seemed to take little part. For Plato this could no longer be true. For the psyche which he holds to be immortal and for whose fate after life reincarnation offered some meaningful answer, is now the central organ whose vibrations respond to the individual's sufferings and emotional experiences and whose decisions initiate his activities. And if the activities of the mind had so far not been included among its manifestations, Plato takes this final step. Not only reason and knowledge but all intellectual functions, all varieties of thought and belief are now placed in the psyche. Since emotions and desires which had been attached to it previously remain so, Plato has to define the relation of the mind to the emotions, a relation which, whether as conflict or cooperation, materializes in the psyche. It was again Plato who assigned the standard Greek virtues or (to use a better word) human excellences--courage, justice, wisdom and moderation--to the psyche; and while in earlier thought psyche could be influenced, coaxed, or coerced, it now thanks to Socrates and Plato comes to be known as something that may be moulded, guided, in a word educated. Socrates achieved this by personal influence, through advice and conversation, whereas Plato in the Republic comes forward with two carefully planned schemes of education, one for a larger class of citizens, the other for the philosopher kings.

I thought I should present these advances not merely because they substantiate the thesis that only with Socrates and Plato did the soul concept attain its classical form, but because we shall find these aspects of psyche (and some more) in Plato's version of its fate hereafter through successive incarnations.

If psychosomatic explanations were available in the fourth century, Plato himself has excluded the possibility of applying them. Inevitably a soul that has the capacities just described must be quite distinct from the body, something non-physical, spiritual, invisible and, if spiritual, not subject to any bodily changes, in a word, immortal. This means that it survives the body but also that it existed before the body. We have seen how important a place memory has in Pythagoras' and Empedocles' conception of survival and transmigration. In Plato the soul remembers not its previous lives but something no eye can behold, namely the Platonic Forms, the norms and models of say, justice, courage, and piety, eternal like the soul, unchanging and free from all the imperfections that corrupt their manifestations on Earth. To contemplate these prototypes of excellence (arete) it is necessary for the soul to depart pure and undefiled. However purity does not for Plato, as for the Pythagoreans, mean abstention from animal food but freedom from the desires and pleasure of the body. If the soul avoids all contamination by the body, it will be spared further incarnations and return clean and holy to the company of the gods--a thought we have

met earlier. For souls which depart impure their next incarnation depends on the vice or weakness to which they have been prone. A greedy, rapacious and power-hungry soul will enter a wolf or a hawk. One guilty of gluttony or similar excesses will reappear in a donkey. If moderately virtuous and social-minded but not in the truly philosophical sense, the soul will be reborn in a bee or an ant, the two animals which share man's capacity for community life. This is by no means the worst fate; but after a good record in these animal bodies the soul may return to human beings. But there is in the Phaedo, the first dialogue where Plato acquaints us with these fates of soul, no ascent by stages in the hoped-for return to the gods.

The Phaedo does not consist entirely of rational argument and discussion. As often, Plato reinforces rational proofs by the persuasive narrative of a myth (or mythos) about what happens to souls after death. Such myths are not meant to be accepted literally; they have the advantage of making vividly concrete what would otherwise have remained pale theory. Rather astonishingly, the myth which concludes the Phaedo ignores reincarnation. Instead, taking us to the Underworld, it describes the punishments and the places awaiting different kinds of sinners, and it refers briefly to the "beautiful habitations" of those who have lived a pure and holy life. It is only in the Phaedrus, a dialogue much later than the Phaedo, that Plato presents a mythical account of souls that fall and suffer incarnation, first in a human body and later on in

others. Here specific episodes often bring Empedocles to mind, while the myth as a whole shows Plato in the Pythagorean tradition.

Still all traditional motifs, such as the original life with the gods, the sharing of their bliss, the fall and the ensuing protracted migration from body to body, finally also the return to the gods, have been reshaped in a manner that reflects the maturer conception of soul and all that it now encompasses.

To begin with, the souls live not only in the company of the gods but also of the Platonic Forms. In a description aglow with poetic colors Plato sets forth how divine and human souls under the lead of Zeus visit the realm of the Forms and draw sustenance from them. True spiritual being, justice itself, courage itself, true and unchanging knowledge are beheld by Mind, noblest part and pilot of the soul, and are (in a metaphorical sense of course) the nourishment of the divine souls as well as of the others. But these other souls are liable to fall from this perfect condition, because they harbor in themselves desires and emotions that are hostile to the mind's communion with truth. Once a soul has fallen, only that of the genuine philosopher has a prospect of returning soon, after three blameless lives, to the home of the gods. For the others it will take ten thousand years--a round figure in Greek, but familiar in such contexts--and will involve numerous incorporations. Here too as in the Phaedo reincarnation

includes entering an animal's body and the possibility of a return from animal to man.

But the first incarnation, while the vision of the true realities is still vivid, cannot be in an animal's body. Altogether it depends on the intensity with which a soul has absorbed the truth whether it is assigned a body of higher or of lower standing. The soul most thoroughly familiar with the Forms enters the body of a philosopher, artist or other lover of beauty, the one next in order that of a ruler just in peace and war, and so it continues, with the sophist and the tyrant lowest in the scale.

But how is the soul ever to find its way back to the divine abode and to the Forms? Does anything here below activate the memory of those glorious visions? Plato--by all odds the first to ask this question--answers that in our environment here the likenesses of justice, moderation and the other excellences are dim and without lustre. "Beauty alone as it shone bright above is also clear and resplendent here to our sense of vision." The effect of beauty is to kindle love in the soul. We know that souls may be influenced, in fact moulded and educated. Yet the only love and the only education which for Plato and his contemporaries could have a truly ennobling influence is homosexual love. It may have been principally in aristocratic circles that homosexual relations included besides their physical component guidance by the lover toward all that is beautiful--beautiful in the widest sense of the word (kalos): noble, fine, excellent,

distinguished. Plato dismisses the physical component but describes graphically the struggle of sensual desire against the higher aspirations of soul. The purpose of this love is the winning of a soul properly disposed and the joint achievement by lover and beloved of a conduct that earns them the way back to the exemplars of human excellence.

I cannot convey an impression of the enthusiastic rapture or of the profusion of glowing colors throughout this mythical section of the Phaedrus. But since I have suggested that after periods of separate development the two facets of psyche, the secular and the religious, have finally been combined, a few examples may illustrate this integration. In the company of the gods there are no feasts with sacrifices to Aphrodite, as in Empedocles, no wild beasts which live gently and happily with humans in a paradisaical condition. Instead the mind, the noblest faculty of soul, becomes imbued with the archetypes of man's perfection. The struggle between the baser desires and the mind's attachment to sublime reality--conceivable only after Plato's integration of mental and emotional activities in the soul-concept--takes place, as I mentioned, before incarnation when it causes the fall; a similar struggle between the same opposing parts of the soul also determines the success of eros: will it lead the soul upward to the realm of Platonic Forms or will it end in physical consummation? In this struggle there is anxiety, yearning, pain, pleasure, impudence, shame, memory, eagerness, self-control, forethought and much else that the soul has now acquired and

can activate. Love too may be mentioned once more--we have certainly traveled far from the Pythagorean schemes in which avoidance of animal food secured a release from the body.

Not only has the soul which suffers or escapes reincarnation become something very different from what it was in the earlier versions, but reincarnation itself has a new significance. For the kind of body assigned at each stage, and similarly the final release from the necessity of rebirth, depends now on the closeness or remoteness from the norms of human excellence. Of these the soul after its fall may still retain a vivid and compelling memory or it may have become oblivious. Remembering implies conforming so that we may be tempted to consider the individual's conduct and the justice meted out in accordance with it as the idea which structures the myth. But this cannot be quite correct. Each new reading leaves us again with the impression of how powerfully Platonic love and the blessing it imparts dominate the description.

Still justice is an important motif, and reincarnation has been transformed in this direction even if in the Phaedrus other concerns obscure the change. For we meet reincarnation once more in Plato's last great work, the Laws, where a special Book (X) is devoted to the citizen's attitude to the gods of the city. A belief not only in the existence of the gods but in their providential care is necessary for a healthy community life, and if numerous impressions and experiences are apt to disturb a man's confidence and prompt doubts about divine justice, Plato has persuasive words, much in the style of a

myth, to bring home to him the limitations of his vision. At this final stage Plato carries his conviction about the supreme worth of soul to new lengths. Thus whatever god takes care of things down here achieves his end through doing right by the souls, a task far easier than reorganization of bodies or physical elements. He deals in effect with a universe of souls. Here are some key sentences: "Every physician and every skilled artisan does all things for the sake of the whole, and not the whole for the sake of a part Now as a soul combining first with one body, then with another, undergoes all sorts of changes, either of herself or through the influence of another soul, all that remains for the master of the game is to transpose the pieces, sending the better to the better place and the worse to the worse, seeing to it that each of the parts might in the easiest and best way procure the victory of the good and the defeat of evil in the whole." Shortly afterward we are given the important assurance that individuals by their own choices and decisions determine the moral quality of their lives; on the basis of this quality the deity, ordering everything for the best, assigns the next life as well as the next place (among the places there is one called "altogether holy" which can be none other than the realm of the gods to which souls of highest merit return).

This section of the Laws has received little attention in modern times; yet in combination with the Phaedrus myth it must have had a paramount influence on the first full scale system of Christian theology, Origen's treatise On First

Principles. This was composed around 220 A.D. in Alexandria, at a time and in a place where the initial opposition between Christianity and Greek culture had given way to a more conciliatory attitude. Highly educated Christians who wished to secure the best of Hellenic thought turned to Platonism, which was just on the way to a new flowering. In speculative power Origen's system, though soon disowned by the Church, is of the same order as St. Augustine's City of God and, I imagine, the syntheses of the great schoolmen.

I must limit myself to tenets relevant to our subject. These are the divine nature of souls, their original being with God (or close to him), the fall, reincarnation according to conduct in the previous life and the eventual return to God. What is astonishing is that conceptions Plato had treated in the medium of myth and as matters of personal belief, keeping them distinct from philosophical argument, have become in Origen the core of his most sternly rational treatise and are almost unrelated to his expressions of personal piety and his inclinations toward mysticism.

God, as Origen declares, has created all spiritual beings free and equal. The freedom relates to their choices, as in the passage just quoted from Plato's Laws and elsewhere in Plato. Equality has its problems. For while the creator in his omnipotence and goodness had no reason why he should not endow all of them with the same potential for the best, being free some use this freedom better than others.

What is their original condition? To be in the presence of the Trinity and to contemplate face to face, as St. Paul had said. But ever since the Fourth Gospel Christ was the Divine Logos, the Word which was with God, Wisdom and Reason. All spiritual beings have reason in common with Him, though they do not have it in the same manner, since it is not their essence. Therefore they will not forever remain with him but are liable to fall. Still, to dwell with God and contemplate divine perfection heightens the desire to hold on to the Trinity. Inevitably, contemplation has Platonic connotations, and there is at least one passage where Christ as the divine Reason (the Logos) contains in himself "the preformed species and causes of all creation," which means the archetypes or Platonic Forms.

Still, for created minds to persist forever in this sublime contemplation is strenuous. They tire, and tiredness or tedium, negligence or indolence, is Origen's way of accounting for the fall from bliss.

How far do the souls fall? This depends on the degree of negligence or indolence. At first they have a chance of finding a home in the aether or else in the lower strata of air; here they would for the Greeks be daemons--and in daemons Platonists had just developed a lively new interest--whereas in the Hebrew-Christian tradition they are angels, archangels, thrones, dominations, powers. However if the fall continues down to the lowest rung of Jacob's ladder, as Origen puts it--and this would be a proof of gross indolence--they reach the

Earth, and only when souls have fallen so low do they receive a body. In Origen's scheme not only bodies but the entire physical world exists to offer a home to fallen souls. Had there been no fall, there would be no physical Cosmos but only a world of spirits. Here on Earth the entire rich variety of environments, of sceneries and of living conditions has been provided by God to meet the needs of the diverse conditions of fallen souls. These conditions include incorporations in animals (Origen can invoke some passages in the Bible where animals are spoken of as possessing souls). As regards human beings, Origen is keenly aware that some are born to a life of misery and desperate struggle, others to affluence; some are born free, others as slaves; some with a crippling illness, others with perfectly healthy bodies. It also makes a difference whether you are born a Greek, an inheritor of a rich civilization, or a savage. These differences may induce the belief that there is no divine justice and providence. They may also, and in fact they did in gnostic sects, give rise to a conviction that God's control is limited and that here on Earth power is wielded by a wicked, devilish principle. For Origen as a true Platonist all these differences are due to the individual's conduct in previous incarnations. God did not from the beginning assign different conditions of life but freedom, and whatever souls experience in successive incarnations is due to the choices they made in their earlier life or lives. In discussing these choices and decisions between good courses of action and bad ones Origen resorts to a biblical explanation: "The spirit

is willing but the flesh is weak." These are now the two forces at war in man. They take the place of reason and the desires, the better and the inferior parts of soul in Plato's scheme.

But the fall as such is clearly not the Biblical version but the Pythagorean-Platonic. In the question of a return to God Origen also leaves the orthodox road and proceeds on his own. In the end--but it is a far-off end--all created spirits will be united with God so that he will be indeed "all in all." Yet to achieve this end one cosmic cycle does not suffice. After this Heaven and this Earth have passed away there will be another Heaven and another Earth, as the prophet Isaiah said and as the tradition of Greek thought likewise suggested; for several schools of philosophy believed in a large or infinite number of successive worlds. Origen thinks that when the present physical world disintegrates there will still be many souls, notably the followers of Lucifer and Lucifer himself, which had fallen so low that punishments could not yet restore them. Unlike some philosophers, especially the Stoics, Origen does not assume an exact 'recapitulation' down to every detail of each cosmic cycle by the succeeding ones. There will not be another Adam and another Eve, another Moses leading his people out of Egypt or another Judas betraying the Lord. But souls will continue to enter different bodies, and always in accordance with their merit or lack of it in preceding lives. Many aeons, many cosmic cycles will be needed to bring about the restitutio in integrum but only this end of things, the final return of all, not the irrevocable separation of the saved from those

consigned to eternal punishment seemed compatible with God's goodness and with his power.

The perspective into the future, which involves the question about the end of things, shows Origen in the debt of Hebrew-Christian thought. Utterly Platonic and I would say more Platonic than Plato himself, indeed the last word on the primacy of soul, is his thesis that the very existence as well as the configuration of the physical world is due to the requirements of souls. It would seem that when all souls have found their way back to God and no abodes for physical bodies are any longer needed, the material Universe will pass away without either a bang or a whimper, barely noticed in its disappearance.

The system built by Origen and in particular the phases on which I have dwelt were repudiated by the authorities as too Greek, too Platonic, perhaps also just too highbrow and certainly not close enough to the Biblical basis. That his doctrine of the fall differs from the fall of Adam and Eve we have seen, and like original sin so also the redemption worked by Christ seemed to find no adequate place in his scheme. No more did the Last Judgment if in the end salvation was to be universal. The treatise embodying these heretical doctrines was banned. We have to reconstruct it from reports, extracts, unreliable (because expurgated) Latin translations and other sources but even the very circumspect use of all such material in the recent edition by Görgemanns and Karpp leaves occasions for wondering how pervasive Platonism was. Paradoxically evidence of great value is contained in an edict of the emperor

Justinian issued in 543 at the request of Origen's enemies, since it quotes the most outrageous doctrines from which the emperor wished posterity to be protected. The emperor's instruction was obeyed by the synod of Constantinople, but as the edict itself is extant among the Acta of the synod, his laudable intention was defeated--at least for the small fraction of posterity interested in the history of the dogmas.

It is customary to contrast Origen's theology and eschatological tenets with St. Augustine's and to regard the latter as victorious. For Western Christendom this is probably correct. What is less familiar is that St. Augustine in The City of God polemizes twice against Origen. In one passage he insists that the physical world is, like everything God has created, beautiful and good, too valuable by far to serve as the receptacle or as the prisonhouse of fallen souls. In the other he refers sarcastically to Origen's tenderheartedness (miser cordia) which does not leave sinners to eternal damnation.

And indeed if we look back at the form in which reincarnation made its first appearance we realize how thoroughly it must have been transformed. In its first versions it set the elect apart, promising release to men especially close to the gods. Next the character of the elite changed; true philosophers succeeded to prophets and other servants of Apollo. Plato gave the idea a new turn when he used it to vindicate divine justice which, if not visible in one lifetime, corrects the balance in the course of successive generations. This was a momentous departure; for universal justice thus defined was

the basis of Origen's universal salvation, the optimistic scheme in which everyone, high and low, good and bad, would in the end be with God and where even Satan would have a chance of turning into an angel of light.

Reincarnation - Notes

The Julius Weinberg Memorial Lecture was delivered in the University of Wisconsin at Madison on April 18, 1979. For several reasons it has seemed desirable to keep its form as a lecture. A full presentation of the material and a more adequate discussion would have required far more space. Anyone close to the subject will be aware of my large debt to Rohde, Dodds, and to several books of Burkert. He will also know how often I find myself on controversial ground. A special motive for publishing the lecture was my impression that one of the principal channels of Plato's influence on early Christianity, Origen's doctrine of soul, is rarely appreciated in its importance. Even here, however, my references and comments could not go beyond the minimum necessary. Fortunately the recent edition of Origen's de principiis (mentioned in the Notes on p. 18) makes much that substantiates my points readily accessible. Further help may be found in my paper "Providence and the Souls. A Platonic chapter in Clement of Alexandria" (above pp. 352 ff.)

p.468: For Euphorbus see W. Burkert, Weisheit und Wissenschaft. Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Plato (Nürnberg, 1962) 116 f. On the Hyperborean Apollo cf. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational 140 ff.; Nilsson, GGR I 517 ff., 528 f., 582 ff. In Pindar see Ol. 2.56 ff., esp. 68 ff.

P.471: For the sentence quoted see Dodds, op. cit. 139; ibid. significant passages of Greek tragedy. My own quotations: S., Ant. 555 f.; Eur., Ion 859 ff., S., Phil. 1014. Rohde,

Psyche II 140 ff. shows how the word psyche comes to replace a number of others previously employed for vital, emotional and intellectual experiences. After the great advances made by Snell and others this important topic calls for a new treatment. I am conscious of the limitations inevitably connected with my concentration on the word psyche.

p. 473: John Burnet, Proc. Brit. Acad. 1915-6, 233 ff.; Jaeger, Paideia. The Ideals of Greek Culture II 41; Dodds, op. cit. 209, 226 n.19; Guthrie, HGPh. III 467 ff.; Vlastos in Gregory Vlastos (ed.), The Philosophy of Socrates (Garden City, N. Y., 1971) 7 and pass. See Pl., Apol. 30a. In the Platonic Apology Socrates' concern about the souls of his fellow citizens is presented as a "service of the god" (Apollo, 23a, 30a). Making every allowance for Plato's elaboration of the link to the Delphic oracle--and some allowance also for the difference between the Delphic and the Hyperborean Apollo--we may yet think of Socrates as continuing the tradition of the earlier servants of Apollo. Erwin Wolff in Plato's Apology (Berlin, 1929, 67 ff.), a book unduly neglected, deals with the 'service' motif but thinks primarily of the famous seers, including Amphiaraus, as Socrates' spiritual forebears.

p. 473: The thesis of separate developments was formulated by Burnet, loc. cit. 257 who distinguished the "Orphic doctrine of purification" from the "scientific view of psyche." That "scientific" is too narrow a term will probably be generally

admitted. As for the Orphics, I may have failed to give them their due, but feeling most uncertain about their specific contribution I venture to think that my account of Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato is not damaged by my hesitation to allow for Orphic influence. A fuller presentation would have to include the continuing recognition of psyche as the principle of life, an idea which Plato develops in several new directions. It would also have to define the place of Heraclitus who discovered both the "depth" and the limitless extension of psyche (B 45 D-K).

p. 473: Prot. 312b ff.; Legg. 5. 726 ff.

p. 475: Psycho-somatic explanations: In the Phaedo (64 ff.) pleasures and desires are still treated as experiences of the body that have a harmful effect on the soul. In later dialogues, beginning with the Republic, such "sufferings" are associated with the "desiring" part of soul. Note however the psychosomatic point of view at Tim. 42a, 86 ff.

p. 476: "beautiful habitations," Phaedo 114b. In the myth of the Republic (10, 614b ff.) the choice of the next incarnation is made by the souls themselves. Their freedom on this occasion makes it the more important that they have firm convictions about what is good and what is bad for themselves.

p. 478: See Phaedrus 248c for first incarnation and hierarchical scale; 249b f.: return to human body. The passage paraphrased

and in part quoted, 250b, has its sequel at c8 ff. For the struggle between reason and desires see 248a, 253c-e, 255e-256d. The educational tradition in homosexual relations is brought out better by H. I. Marrou, Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité (3d ed., Paris, 1951) ch. 3 and by K. J. Dover, Greek Homosexuality (Cambridge, 1978) pass., e.g., 12, 202, than by Platonic scholars who tend to look at Plato as the first or the only one to find in homosexuality more than physical satisfaction. --For aristocratic concerns see the elegies transmitted under the name of Theognis.

p. 480: See Legg. 10. 903c f.; 904b ff.

pp. 482 f.: See now Origenes Vier Bücher Von den Prinzipien herausgeg., übersetzt . . . von Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp (Darmstadt, 1976), a landmark for studies in this field. For the influence of Pl., Legg. X on Clement of Alexandria and Origen see Mus. Helv. 26 (1969), 229 ff. The possibility that Origen knew the Platonic scheme only through the works of recent Platonists who had used Legg. X (see John Dillon, The Middle Platonists, London, 1977, 374 ff. on Numenius, 380 on Cronius) cannot be entirely excluded but in view of his profound learning it is most unlikely (see Eus., hist. eccl. VI 19.8). For 'reincarnation' in Plotinus I must content myself with a reference to IV 4.45, the most significant of relevant sections (but "change of place" in the sense of Legg. X fits better).

p. 482: For freedom and equality see esp. de princ. III 1 and pass., also I 3.6 and 5.3 in Görgemanns' reconstruction, 6.2 with his note p. 221 n.9; II 6 init. Note for instance II 9.6; 169.27 Koe(tschau): aequales creavit omnes et similes.

p. 482: For Father, Son and Holy Spirit see I 1-3. Christ as Wisdom containing species et rationes totius . . . creaturae I 2.3 init. (the negative reaction to the Forms II 3.6; 122.1 ff. Koe need not disturb; see Görgemanns ad loc. and H. A. Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Church Fathers I, Cambr., Mass., 1956, 271 ff.). --Causes of the fall: I 3.8-4.1; also I 5 pass. Origen relates psyche to psychesthai and explains souls as spirits or minds whose fall is a result of "cooling." See esp. II 8. Rene Cadiou, Introduction au système d'Origène (Paris, 1932) 48 ff. compares the causes of fall with those in Plotinus and the Phaedo. --For the hierarchy of angels see I 5.

p. 484: For the existence of body and physical Cosmos see I 8 "Anhang" 1.7 ff. GÖ. On the diversity of conditions in the world see II 1 ff.; on the diversity of human lives II 9.5.

pp. 484 f.: For "spirit and flesh" see III 4.2 ff. Görgemanns ibid. nn.2,4 and pass. refers to the Platonic parts of soul. Successive Cosmoi: III 5 (ibid. 3; 273.6 f. Koe; Isaiah 65.17). No identical repetition II 3.4. For "all in all" (ad Cor. 1.15.28) see III 6.1; 281.5 Koe (also 2 init., 3 init.); note that in III 5.6 ff. the argument works up toward this final statement.

p. 485: For the all-inclusive restitutio see esp. 111 6.5 with Görgemann's note 16. Note also I 6.3 and I 8; 101.1 ff. Koe as well as canon 9 of Justinian's edict (to be mentioned presently).

pp.486 f.: For the edition see above (note on p. 482). In the "Einführung" (ch. 6) Görgemanns deals with the transmission and with the sources available for reconstructing the treatise. For Justinian's edict see ibid. 44 f. and for the anathemata 322 ff. Eduard Schwartz's edition in Acta Conciliorum Oecum. 111 (Berlin, 1940) 210 ff. remains basic. --The contrast with St. Augustin has been eloquently stated by E. R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety (New York, 1965) 127 ff., esp. 131 f. St. Augustine's polemics: de civ. Dei 11.23; 21.17. Origen, even though he may not share St. Augustine's admiration for the beauty of our Earth but is content to think of it as well and suitably organized, never doubts that God is its creator; he is radically opposed to Gnostic doctrines of a vicious "adversary" responsible for matter, bodies and the entire world here below.

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