

6232
VCLK, K.
2009

Chapter 6

Making Sense of the World

Over the course of the previous chapters, it has become clear that there is something like a larger philosophy—a view of how the world works and of man's place in it—that underlies Manilius' astronomy, astrology, politics, and poetics and informs his shaping of these more specific themes throughout the *Astronomica*. Many details of this world view have already been touched on, but it is now time to connect the dots and present as coherent a picture as possible, as well as to determine where Manilius' ideas come from and how they fit in with the intellectual interests and modes of thought prevalent in the poet's time. Unlike in the case of astrology, where basically all earlier and contemporary sources are lost and Manilius' views can be assessed only through comparison to those of later writers, we have a wealth of information about many of the philosophical and more mystical movements that could have influenced the poet, and the question of his sources thus imposes itself more urgently than in the examination of any other aspect of the *Astronomica*.¹ Without giving up my largely agnostic attitude to *Quellenforschung* (see my remarks in 1.2 above), I shall not refrain from some speculations on this matter in the following discussion, which—owing to the exigencies of the topic—is structured somewhat differently from the preceding chapters. Thus, I first outline Manilius' own world view (6.1), before moving on to a detailed treatment of the poet's intellectual background and the possible philosophical and similar

¹ Note that, in this chapter, I generally refer to Manilius' 'world view', 'cosmology', or 'philosophy' to designate a set of interrelated ideas about the basic structure of the world and man's place in it. Most of Manilius' concerns are what we might call 'philosophical' in the strict sense, that is, of the kind discussed in contemporary philosophical schools and traditions (e.g., Stoicism), while certain others are more at home in intellectual movements that we might call 'mystical' or even 'religious' (e.g., Hermetism). However, given Manilius' eclecticism and the syncretism prevalent in his culture, these terms offer little more than rough means of categorizing (perhaps not all that) different modes of thought, and while I shall in what follows occasionally make such a distinction, I shall not insist on any strict division between these two ways of making sense of the world.

influences on the *Astronomica* (6.2).² Finally, starting from a discussion of Manilius' determinism as found especially in the fourth proem, I draw attention to some of the contradictions and inherent tensions that arise from the *Astronomica's* view of the world (6.3).

6.1. MAN AND THE COSMIC GOD

The basic tenet of what we might call Manilius' natural philosophy is the idea that the universe is divine or, indeed, a god.³ The poet does not simply state this as a fact but endeavours to make a case for it in an extended digression in Book 1 (474–531), where he employs a trope commonly known as the 'argument from design'.⁴ The observation that the movement of the heavenly bodies is perfectly regular and unchanging suggests to the viewer that the world, so clearly a *kosmos*, simply cannot be the product of chance:

ac mihi tam praesens ratio non ulla uidetur,
qua pateat mundum diuino numine uerti
atque ipsum esse deum. (1.483–5)

No other reason seems equally compelling to me as proof that the universe is ruled by a divine being and is itself a god.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Manilius is here specifically attacking the Epicurean philosophy of Lucretius, which held that the atoms that make up the world have indeed come together at random. In arguing against this in his eyes absurd claim, Manilius provides a long description of the regularity of the heavens; he concludes by reiterating that this well-designed whole 'is not the work of chance, but the orderly arrangement of a great divinity' (*non casus opus est, magni sed numinis ordo*, 1.531).⁵

² This procedure entails adopting a deliberately naive attitude in the first section of the chapter, where my purpose is to present Manilius' philosophy as such, without as yet giving any indication as to its possible origin.

³ On Manilius' world view see Lühr 1969, Reeh 1973, and Salemm 2000: 27–45; cf. also MacGregor 2004. Generally on the philosophical and especially religious underpinnings of ancient astrology, cf. Cumont 1912.

⁴ Housman judged this passage Manilius' 'best poetry', maintaining that the poet 'has nothing else so good, and little that is nearly so good' (Letter to Robert Bridges, 25 Sept. 1924; Burnett 2007: 1.572).

⁵ Another instance of the argument from design, this time *ex negativo* ('if there were no divine force in the universe, there would be no cosmic order'), is found in 2.67–78.

From these quotations, it is already clear that there is a certain elasticity to Manilius' concept of the divinity of the universe (compare my remarks in 2.3 above). Is the world simply ruled by a *diuinum numen* (cf. 1.484) or is it a *deus* (cf. 1.485) itself—and what, if any, would be the difference? The ambiguity is brought out perfectly by Manilius' designation of the world as *magni... numinis ordo* (1.531). This phrase could mean 'orderly arrangement of a great divinity' in the sense of 'an object that has been arranged in an orderly fashion by a great divinity' (god *acts as* 'arranger, orderer' of the world); however, it can also be understood as 'a great divinity that finds itself in an orderly arrangement' (god *is* the 'arranged, ordered' world).

If we take into account other passages from the *Astronomica*, we find that god, even when not explicitly identified with the cosmos, is repeatedly described as being physically part of it, positively 'blended' with it. Thus, in the following passage, Manilius, in speaking of a divine breath or soul (*uis animae diuina*, 1.250) that pervades the physical universe and ensures the order and interaction of its parts, also refers to it as 'god' (*deus*, 1.251):

hoc opus immensi constructum corpore mundi
 membraque naturae diuersa condita forma
 aeris atque ignis, terrae pelagique iacentis,
 uis animae diuina regit, sacroque meatu
 conspirat deus et tacita ratione gubernat,
 mutuaeque in cunctas dispensat foedera partes,
 altera ut alterius uires faciatque feratque
 summaque per uarias maneat cognata figuras. (1.247–54)

This construct constituted by the body of the immense universe, and its members formed by the diverse elements of nature—air and fire, earth and stretched-out sea—a force of divine spirit rules it, and god inspires it with sacred motion and directs it with silent reason and dispenses laws of interaction to every part, so that each may affect and be affected by the powers of the other, and the whole may remain interconnected through various appearances.

Similarly, at 2.60–2, god is literally described as 'poured into' the world:

namque canam tacita naturae mente potentem
 infusumque deum caelo terrisque fretoque
 ingentem aequali moderantem foedere molem.

I will sing of god who silently rules nature and is poured into the sky and lands and sea and governs the enormous mass with equal rule.

And again, just a couple of lines later, Manilius refers to one single—no doubt divine—breath or spirit that pervades and governs the entire universe, which is here explicitly pictured as an *animal* ('breathing being, being with a soul/vital principle'):

cum spiritus unus
 per cunctas habitet partes atque irriget orbem
 omnia peruolitans corpusque animale figuret. (2.64–6)

while one spirit lives through all parts and, pervading everything, nourishes the world and shapes its ensouled body.

In addition to being pictured as the world's soul or breath, god is also identified or closely associated with a principle of cosmic intelligence, termed *ratio* ('reason'). In 1.251, quoted above, 'god' not only 'breathes' through the physical world but also rules everything 'by means of silent reason' (*tacita ratione*),⁶ while in 2.64, immediately before the above-quoted reference to the divine *spiritus*, the whole world is said to be 'driven by the movement of reason' (*rationis agi motu*; see also 1.64). When Manilius shortly afterwards speaks of *hic... deus et ratio, quae cuncta gubernat* ('this god and reason that governs all', 2.82), the phrase *deus et ratio* appears to be a hendiadys, with god and reason being two aspects of the same force.⁷ In the *Astronomica*, then, god can be understood as the soul or breath, or otherwise the guiding intelligence, present within the world. Since this divine entity completely pervades the cosmos, it makes equally much sense to call the cosmos itself a god.⁸

As these examples show, one of the jobs of this god, who is either identical with or immanent in the world, is to uphold the cosmic order, which for Manilius rests on the interplay among and interconnectedness of all parts of the universe. The poet expresses this concept in a number of different images. Obviously, the vitalistic notion of the world as a living being equipped with a soul already implies the organic cooperation of

⁶ The force of the reference to silence is unclear (cf. also *tacita... mente*, 2.60, as well as 1.63). Feraboli, Flores, and Scarcia 1996–2001 *ad* 1.250–4 suggest that Manilius is alluding once more to the concept of the music of the spheres (cf. 5.3 and 6.2 on *Astr.* 1.22–3), which is imperceptible to ordinary mortals, to whose ears the revolutions of the heavens proceed without a sound.

⁷ Generally on *ratio* in the *Astronomica*, see Lühr 1969: 73–111, with an appendix that lists all instances of the word at 176–8. Manilius throughout the poem employs *ratio* not only for the divine intelligence that governs the universe, but also for the (related) intelligence of human beings and for the rational system of astrology, thus effecting a close association among the three.

⁸ Another way to refer to the divine universe is *natura* ('nature'); see Wacht 1990 s.v. and below in the text for examples.

all its 'body parts' (in addition to 2.64–6, just quoted, see esp. 1.247–54, 2.752–3, 3.50–1, and 4.888–90). A more mechanistic view is expressed in the image of the *machina mundi* ('machine of the world'), whose interactive elements are designed in such a way as to ensure its orderly movements (see 2.67–8 and cf. 2.807). Most often, however, we find what we might call a muted sociological metaphor, according to which the constituent parts of the cosmos resemble human beings, who are 'related' to one another (*cognatus* is a keyword; see esp. 1.254 and 2.67 and below on 2.123 and 4.910); interact according to *foedera* ('treaties'; see 1.252, 2.62, and 3.55 and cf. 1.493); and are inspired by such political virtues as *consensus* ('concord', 2.63) and *concordia* ('harmony', 3.54).⁹

The divine nature of the universe and the principle of cosmic interconnectedness enable Manilius' 'strong' and 'hard' astrology. If the cosmos is inspired with some kind of higher intelligence; if this intelligence operates in an orderly and purposeful way; and if there is an unflinching mechanism in place to transmit the operations of this intelligence to all parts of the universe, including human beings—then it makes perfect sense to claim that everything, including ourselves, is subject to an unbroken chain of cause and effect. In the proem to Book 4 (1–118), Manilius provides a lengthy exposition of the rule of fate, assuming a position of strict determinism:

fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege
longaque per certos signantur tempora casus.
nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet. (4.14–16)

Fate rules the world, everything is determined by a fixed law, and long periods of time are marked with their certain events. At birth, we die [i.e., our death is predetermined], and our end depends on our beginning.

To believe that, owing to universal interconnectedness, everything is predetermined does not yet in itself necessitate that a crucial role be

⁹ The poet's representation of cosmic interconnectedness in such sociological and even political terms is reminiscent of the simile of the heavenly *res publica* at the end of Book 5 and typical of Manilius' general tendency to humanize the cosmos (cf. 3.4 above and see further Ch. 7 below). Note, furthermore, that all the terms mentioned (*cognatus*, *foedus*, *consensus*, and *concordia*) are also used repeatedly to describe the relationships, especially in terms of astrological aspect, of the individual signs of the zodiac (see Wacht 1990 s.vv.). This ties Manilius' astrology in with his philosophy; it also deepens the impression that both his stars and his cosmos as a whole are ultimately all-too-human. Generally on the history of all three images employed by Manilius—the cosmos as a living being; a political community; or a mechanical artefact—see Lloyd 1966: 210–303.

played by the stars. However, since (thanks to the ambiguity of words like *mundus*; see 2.1, fn. 13) the universe is often identified primarily with its most noble part, the starry sky, and since the stars (thanks to their literally 'elevated' position, the regularity of their motions, and their beauty) enjoy special prestige within ancient cosmology, it is a small step to declaring them the actual dispensers of fate. As we have seen in 3.1, though, Manilius never in fact makes an explicit case for astrology, contenting himself simply with stating that 'god and reason... derives earthly beings from the constellations in the sky' (*deus et ratio... | ducit ab aetheriis terrena animalia signis*, 2.82–3) and that nature 'made the fates and lives of human beings dependent on the stars' (*fata... et uitas hominum suspendit ab astris*, 3.58).

Rather than providing a detailed exposition of how the world works, Manilius is interested in elucidating how it is possible for us to find out about these matters in the first place. Can human beings really understand the heavens? Obviously, this question is at the heart of Manilius' enterprise as a teacher of astrology, and he dedicates a fair amount of space to 'meta-discussions' about the very pursuit of insight into the cosmos (see esp. 4.390–407 and 873–935, the two responses to the frustrated student). It is the poet's strong belief that humans, being able to grasp the workings of the universe, should dedicate all their energy to this endeavour. Within Manilius' cosmic continuum, human beings, too, are obviously bound up in the universe and related to all its parts; indeed, they are, as it were, themselves children of the heavens. The poet thus describes the study of celestial phenomena as follows:¹⁰

nostrumque parentem
pars sua perspicimus genitique accedimus astris. (4.884–5)

We understand our father, of whom we are a part, and approach the stars, from which we were born.

Since the cosmos is divine, human beings, as part and offspring of the cosmos, clearly must partake in its divinity at least to a certain extent. However, Manilius goes even further. Returning to the concept of the universe as a great living being ruled by a divine soul, the poet constructs a parallel to humans, those small living beings likewise in possession of a divine soul (4.888–93): built similarly to the universe, man is a 'little world' of his own, a microcosm, and hence also a little

¹⁰ For similar imagery, cf. 2.123, 4.879, 887, 896–7, and 910; on Manilius' 'anthropology', see also Abry 1998a.

god. It is this similarity to the cosmos that enables him to understand its working:

quid mirum, noscere mundum
si possunt homines, quibus est et mundus in ipsis
exemplumque dei quisque est in imagine parua? (4.893–5)

What wonder if men are able to understand the cosmos since they have a cosmos in themselves and each is a miniature likeness of the god?

In addition to the close relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, which explains man's innate capability for cosmological research and insight, Manilius maintains that the divine universe is particularly eager to reveal itself to human beings and calls on them—sometimes positively forces them—to enter into some kind of interaction with it. This idea, which we have already encountered in 5.3, is a leitmotif of the *Astronomica* and is in part connected with the notion of the poet's own mission as *uates mundi*, the chosen medium of the self-revelation of the cosmos by means of song. However, Manilius also stresses the wish of the universe to make itself known to humans in general, beginning in the first proem, where the *mundus* is said to favour those who investigate it (1.11) and where the poet's short history of astrology in 1.25–65 recounts the different stages in which this 'gift of the gods' (1.26; cf. 4.876) was passed on to mortals. In the proem to Book 2, Manilius fervently argues in favour of the ability of human beings to understand the cosmos, drawing attention to their natural gifts such as language and intelligence (2.105–7) and claiming that 'god descends into (man) alone and makes his dwelling place there and searches for himself' (*quem* [sc. *hominem*] *denique in unum | descendit deus atque habitat seque ipse requirit*, 2.107–8). Shortly afterwards, he poses the following grand rhetorical question:

quis caelum posset nisi caeli munere nosse,
et reperire deum, nisi qui pars ipse deorum est?¹¹
quisque hanc conuexi molem sine fine patentis
signorumque choros ac mundi flammea tecta,
aeternum et stellis aduersus sidera bellum

¹¹ These two lines were famously entered by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe into the guest book on Germany's Brocken mountain on 4 Sept. 1784; see Grumach 1949: 1.391, as well as the brief discussion of the affinities between Manilius' and Goethe's world views in Salemme 2000: 143.

ac terras caeloque fretum subiectaque utrisque
cernere et angusto sub pectore claudere posset,
ni sanctos animis oculos natura dedisset
cognatamque sibi mentem uertisset ad ipsam
et tantum dictasset opus, caeloque ueniret
quod uocat in caelum sacra ad commercia rerum? (2.115–25)

Who would be able to understand the cosmos unless through the gift of the cosmos or to find god unless he had a place among the gods himself? Or who could see and encompass in his narrow chest the mass of the infinitely vaulted sphere, the dances of the stars, the flaming roofs of the universe, and the eternal war of planets against constellations, and the land and sea beneath the sky and what is beneath both, unless nature had given sacred eyes to the soul and turned the kindred mind towards itself and dictated such a great work, and unless there came from heaven something to call us into heaven for a sacred exchange of things?

As this passage shows, human beings are able and indeed called upon to study and understand the cosmos for three closely interrelated reasons: they are themselves related to the divine universe and thus have a special affinity to it (cf. 116, 123); the divine universe has granted to humans the knowledge of itself as a gift (cf. 115, 122); and finally, the divine universe actively 'calls' human beings (123, 125), instigates the 'work' of cosmological research (124), and desires an 'exchange' (125) with the 'kindred (human) mind' (123). The degree of reciprocity envisaged in this passage and the one quoted immediately before is striking: 'god' is not simply issuing an invitation to man but 'descends into him and . . . looks for himself' (2.108), and 'nature' wishes not only to reveal itself, but to enter into some kind of 'exchange' (2.125; cf. 1.50). Of course, these notions are enabled by Manilius' idea of the world as an unbroken continuum, which includes god and man as entities that are both intimately connected and, to some extent, mirror images of each other. Still, there is a certain 'mystical' touch to the poet's enraptured evocations of a communion between human beings and the divine. We shall encounter this tone again shortly.

The finale of Book 4—in which the poet responds to the discouraged objection of his student (4.869–72), who believes that human beings are not in fact able to understand 'nature' (*natura*) and 'fate' (*fatum*)—develops the theme of cosmic self-revelation still further. After pointing out man's intrinsic relationship with god and his status as a microcosm (see the passages quoted above), Manilius concludes that human beings are born 'from', and thus 'for', the heavens: *an cuiquam genitos, nisi*

caelo, credere fas est | esse homines? (4.896–7).¹² He then returns to the argument that man has innate abilities that distinguish him from mere animals (4.897–910): first and foremost among them is his erect walk, which positively predisposes him to ‘lift his starlike eyes to the stars’ (*ad sidera mittit | sidereos oculos*, 4.906–7). In a striking parallel to the conceit at the beginning of Book 2, where god was looking for himself inside human beings, Manilius now describes man as figuratively advancing into the kindred heavens and searching there for none other than himself: *cognatumque sequens corpus se quaerit in astris* (4.910). As the poet makes clear, he is doing so at the behest of the universe itself, which by virtue of the easily visible motions of the stars forces itself on the attention of human beings (4.915–19) and does not allow its call for cosmological study to go unheeded:

ipse uocat nostros animos ad sidera mundus
nec patitur, quia non condit, sua iura latere. (4.920–1)

The universe itself calls our minds to the stars and—since it does not cover them—does not allow its laws to be hidden.

Being human, we are naturally born cosmologists. Not only are we uniquely able to understand the workings of the universe, but we are subject to a positive imperative to dedicate ourselves to this endeavour. Lifting our heads up to the stars is what makes us truly human; in order to fulfil our destiny, to find ourselves, to communicate with that kindred god, we have to contemplate the heavens. As Manilius assures us (4.923–32), we are up to the task: while our intellectual powers may appear small, they are in fact able to encompass the whole, just as the tiny pupil of the eye can take in the entire sky (4.927). In the end—the poet triumphantly asserts—‘reason conquers all’ (*ratio omnia uincit*, 4.932) and ‘nature is no longer hidden anywhere’ (*iam nusquam natura latet*, 4.883). However, the learning process is not easy. In his answer to the student’s earlier objection (4.390–407), which is largely a complaint about the difficulty and obscurity of the subject matter, Manilius admits

¹² I believe that Manilius uses the dative in *cuiquam* and *caelo* with a double meaning: it is a dative of agent, in that humans are born *by* the heavens (cf. 4.887), as well as a dative of purpose, in that humans exist *in order* to study the heavens. Commentators and translators have typically settled for one or the other of the two interpretations (Housman 1903–30, Fels 1990, Goid 1992, and Feraboli, Flores, and Scarcia 1996–2001 prefer ‘from heaven’, while Breiter 1907–8, van Wageningen 1921, and Liuzzi 1991–7 understand ‘for heaven’), but it seems to me that the ambivalence is at the very heart of Manilius’ argument in this passage.

that studying astrology is a lot of work, but he reminds his addressee that people put great effort into far less-deserving (and less-rewarding) enterprises such as mining, seafaring, agriculture, warfare, and luxury living. The student’s endeavours are obviously in a different league, following a unique, and uniquely worthwhile, objective:

quod quaeris, deus est: conaris scandere caelum
fataque fatali genitus cognoscere lege
et transire tuum pectus mundoque potiri. (4.390–2)

What you are looking for is god: you are attempting to scale heaven and, born by the law of fate, to know the fates and to transcend your mind and gain possession of the universe.

The person who studies the cosmos is on a search for god, striving to overcome the terrestrial, human life and to approximate the divine universe itself. This, according to Manilius, is the ultimate goal of our endeavours, and it is worth every effort:

quid caelo dabimus? quantum est, quo ueneat omne?
impendendus homo est, deus esse ut possit in ipso. (4.406–7)

What shall we accord the sky? For how much is the all being offered? Man must give up himself, so that god can dwell in him.

This last line is truly remarkable, envisaging man as transcending his own humanity and achieving a kind of union, or even identity, with the divine as the result of his contemplation of the heavens. It is the most prominent expression of Manilius’ ‘mystical’—we might even say ‘religious’—attitude towards the cosmos, which for him is so clearly divine. Studying the universe (just like singing about it; cf. the poem of Book 2 and 5.3 above) is not one pursuit among many: it is a way of life, indeed the only way of life for those intent on following their true nature and the call of the god of whom they themselves are part.

Before moving on to a discussion of the possible sources for Manilius’ world view, let us briefly summarize the basic elements of his philosophy as determined in this section. For the sake of convenience, I have provided them with simple labels. We have seen (1) that Manilius believes in the *divinity of the universe*, a concept that appears in many variations throughout the *Astronomica*. He (2) maintains that there is *universal interconnectedness* and interplay among all the parts of the cosmos and (3) takes a stance of *strict determinism*, with a crucial role allotted to the stars as the dispensers of fate. In terms of what we might call epistemology, Manilius holds that human beings are able and called

upon to understand the workings of the cosmos because of (4) the intrinsic *relationship and parallelism between man and the cosmos* and (5) the explicit *self-revelation of the cosmos*. Finally, he presents (6) *contemplation of the heavens* as the means to human perfection and a way of approaching the divine.

6.2. POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR MANILIUS' WORLD VIEW

It is obvious that Manilius did not come up with his world view in an intellectual vacuum, but what exactly are the origins of the ideas we encountered in the previous section? Over the years, a number of philosophical and other influences have been suggested, and additional ones can be imagined as well. Of course, it is perfectly possible, indeed likely, that the poet drew on a number of different traditions rather than being an orthodox follower of a particular school of thought. In this section, then, I survey the possible influences on the *Astronomica's* philosophy one by one, offering as I go along an assessment of how I perceive their relative importance.

Stoicism

Within Manilian scholarship, it is the majority opinion that the world view expressed in the *Astronomica* is predominantly Stoic.¹³ At the time of the poem's composition, Stoicism was a system of thought and way of life well known and popular in Rome. Like the other Greek philosophical schools, the Stoa had begun to engage the attention of the Roman elite in the second century BC, when Greek intellectuals came to Rome as a result of the conquest of the East and embassies consisting of philosophers intrigued their Roman audiences with the intellectual challenge of their speeches. By the first century BC, upper-class Romans went to study with philosophers in Greece and often ended up expressing allegiance to a particular school, declaring themselves Stoics, Epicureans, or Academics. This tendency is apparent from Cicero's

¹³ Thus, e.g., the *OCD* entry (= Wilson 1996) simply introduces Manilius as 'Stoic author'. For the poet's Stoicism, see esp. Lühr 1969, Reeh 1973: 159–85, Lapidge 1989: 1393–7, and Salemme 2000: 27–56. Against the *communis opinio*, Lanson 1887: 29–53 and MacGregor 2005 maintain that Manilius cannot be described as a Stoic.

dialogues, where individual speakers are often made to represent the individual philosophical schools; perhaps the most famous case of a Roman's adopting a Greek philosophical stance is that of the younger Cato, whose ostentatious Stoicism earned him both admiration and ridicule. Cicero's philosophical work, explicitly aimed at making his compatriots familiar with Greek thought, must also have contributed to the spread at Rome of philosophical ideas, including the tenets of Stoicism, a school for which the eclectic Academic Cicero had quite a bit of sympathy. It is safe to assume that, by the Augustan period, Stoic ways of thinking were easily recognized and not infrequently shared by educated Romans, and there are numerous imaginable scenarios by which Manilius could have encountered them (on the question of specific sources, see below).¹⁴

If we compare the *Astronomica's* world view with the natural philosophy of the Stoa, the parallels are immediately obvious.¹⁵ Like Manilius, the Stoics maintain the divinity of the universe, employing, among other things, the very argument from design to prove that there is a god active within the world.¹⁶ Just as in Manilius, this god can be viewed in two complementary but somewhat different ways. On the one hand, it is possible to consider the entire universe 'omnipresent divine nature... which is through and through alive, generative, and designing all its products according to a rational plan' (Long and Sedley 1987: 1.267)—that is, to equate god and the cosmos. On the other hand, god is often presumed to be a force active within the cosmos, an 'all-pervasive causal agent *immanent* in matter' (Long and Sedley 1987: 1.272; emphasis in original). This active principle can be described

¹⁴ Lapidge 1989: 1392 points to tantalizing testimony about Stoic literature written in Latin during the reign of Augustus, which attests to general interest in the subject matter and shows that, around this time, 'Stoic philosophy became a respectable subject for Latin literature' (ibid.).

¹⁵ On Stoic physics, see in the first place the fragments and commentary in Long and Sedley 1987: 1.266–343 and 2.264–342. The secondary literature on the topic is endless: for short and useful introductions, see Long 1986: 147–78, Lapidge 1989 (specifically on the influence of Stoic cosmology on Roman writers), and now Algra 2003 and White 2003.

¹⁶ According to Cicero, this argument goes back to Cleanthes (331–232 BC), the second head of the Stoic school (*Nat. D.* 2.15). Since the works of most Stoic philosophers survive only in fragments, we must rely on later authors for a reconstruction of their doctrines. In the case of Stoic cosmology, the second book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*, in which Balbus delivers a passionate defence of Stoic views of the divine, is a particularly important source. For a detailed treatment of the 'Stoic Arguments for the Existence and the Providence of the Gods', see the book of this title by Myrto Dragona-Monachou (1976); on the Stoic use of the argument from design, see Sedley 2007: 205–38.

either intellectually, as 'reason' (λόγος), or vitalistically, as 'breath' (πνεῦμα),¹⁷ and is imagined as being blended with all elements of the universe in a state of perfect 'mixture' (κρᾶσις). We can match up these very same concepts with the Manilian divine *ratio* and *spiritus* and with his description of god as 'poured into' the world.

The idea of universal interconnectedness plays a large role within the cosmology of the Stoics as well. In their wholly corporeal world, which constitutes a physical continuum and where fiery and airy πνεῦμα pervades all things, every part is ultimately connected to every other part and thus able to affect, and be affected by, what happens there. The result is cosmic συμπαθεια, 'feeling-together, sympathy', a concept perhaps first developed by Chrysippus, who imported the term 'sympathy' from medicine and also used other compounds with the prefix συν-/συμ-, 'with', to express the idea that, in the world, nothing happens that does not have an effect on something else, and ultimately on the whole. In imitation of this usage, Cicero in his discussion of the same phenomenon employed words with the Latin equivalent *con-*, as in the artful description of the interconnected universe as *tanta rerum consentiens conspirans continuata cognatio* ('such a great continuum of interrelated matter, feeling and breathing together'; *Nat. D.* 2.19), to choose just one example among many.¹⁸ As comparison with this Ciceronian phrase shows, Manilius' vocabulary of cosmic interconnectedness (which, as we have seen, features such words as *cognatus*, *conspirare*, and *consensus*) has a specific Stoic flavour as well, with especially *consensus* (2.63) acting as a veritable translation of συμπαθεια.¹⁹

One of the most notorious aspects of the Stoic system was the school's belief in all-encompassing fate, a position that again jibes perfectly with what we have seen to be the world view of Manilius.²⁰ According to the Stoics, all events take place in an unbroken chain of cause and effect, a mechanism enabled by the continuous corporeality of the universe. As

¹⁷ The development of the doctrine of πνεῦμα (imagined as a mixture of air and fire) is ascribed to Chrysippus (c. 280–207 BC), the third leader of the school, who used it to replace the older notion of 'designing fire' (πῦρ τεχνικόν) as an active principle.

¹⁸ I owe my observations on Chrysippus' συν- and Cicero's *con-* to Lapidge 1989: 1383–4 and 1388; see also 1395 on Manilius.

¹⁹ Cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.28: *iste quasi consensus, quam συμπαθειαν Graeci uocant* ('that concord which the Greeks call "sympathy"'); see also *Div.* 2.34.

²⁰ On Stoic views of fate and causation, see—in addition to Long and Sedley 1987: 1.333–43 and 386–94, and 2.332–41 and 382–9—esp. Bobzien 1998, as well as the discussions in Long 1971, Frede 2003, Brennan 2005: 233–305, and Salles 2005.

Cicero memorably puts it, the passage of time, according to the Stoics, equals the inexorable 'unwinding of a rope' (*quasi rudentis explicatio sic traductio temporis*, *Div.* 1.127); in the words of Manilius, 'the end hangs from the beginning' (*finisque ab origine pendet*, 4.16).

It is unclear to which extent the Stoics endorsed astrology.²¹ While they certainly believed in divination and used the supposed accuracy of prophecies as an argument for the existence of the gods, and vice versa (see, e.g., Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.7–12 and *Div.* 1.10 and 2.41), there is little discussion in our extant sources of the stars as potential divine signs ('soft' astrology) or as actual causes in the general nexus of fate ('hard' astrology). Cicero reports that Panaetius (c.185–109 BC) was the only Stoic to reject astrology (*Div.* 2.88), and according to Augustine, Posidonius (c.135–c.51 BC) was a strong believer in the practice (*De civ. D.* 5.2 and 5). While it thus used to be the *communis opinio* that Stoicism was generally favourably disposed to astrology (see, e.g., Bouché-Leclercq 1899: 28–34), recent scholars have taken a more sceptical attitude, pointing out that, by and large, there is little firm evidence one way or the other (see esp. Long 1982: 166–72). Perhaps the early Stoics, who were active in the fourth and third centuries BC, when astrology had just begun to spread in the Greek world, simply did not yet give much thought to this practice, and later school figures may perfectly well have differed in their attitudes to it. Whatever the case may be, astrology can certainly be reconciled with and incorporated into Stoic physics. In the case of Manilius, his obvious adherence to the astrological creed does not, therefore, prevent him from (also) being a Stoic, though, as we have seen, the poet fails to make much of an effort to explain the workings of stellar influence in terms of the cosmological tenets (for example, universal interconnectedness) that he develops at not inconsiderable length elsewhere.

To return to our point-by-point comparison between Manilius' world view and Stoic cosmology, the idea that humans are intrinsically related to the cosmos and the connected macrocosm–microcosm argument are likewise part and parcel of Stoic doctrine.²² The very concepts of a soul-like principle (πνεῦμα) and a guiding intelligence (λόγος) within the cosmos already imply that the universe is pictured as a living

²¹ On this question, see Long 1982, Ioppolo 1984, Giannantoni 1994, Bobzien 1998: 145–6 and 166–7, and Jones 2003: 340–1.

²² Generally on ideas of microcosm and macrocosm in antiquity, including in Stoicism, see Conger 1922: 1–28, Allers 1944, and Wright 1995: 56–74.

being comparable to man; in addition, the Stoics explicitly hold that the human soul/mind partakes in its cosmic counterpart (compare Manilius' use of *ratio* for both cosmic and human intellect).

Finally, as for Manilius' more 'mystical' ideas about the self-revelation of the universe and the achievement of union with the divine via contemplation of the heavens, these notions are not alien to Stoicism either (cf. Vogt 2008: 135–48). Not only has the cosmos been teleologically arranged for the benefit of humans, but humans—beings inspired by the divine λόγος and endowed with capacities that set them apart from other animals—are capable of taking in and understanding the workings of the whole. According to the Stoic spokesman Balbus in the second book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*, the heavens 'offer a spectacle to men' (*spectaculum hominibus praebeant*, 2.155), and it is the very purpose of human life to contemplate and imitate the universe, of which we are part:

ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum, nullo modo perfectus, sed est quaedam particula perfecti. (2.37, with reference to Chrysippus)

Man himself is born to contemplate and imitate the cosmos, being by no means perfect, but a certain small part of the perfect whole.

Engaging in this kind of contemplation equals an ascent to heaven and ultimately results in man's becoming similar to the gods:

quid uero? hominum ratio non in caelum usque penetrauit? ... [There follows a list of celestial phenomena understood by human *ratio*.] quae contuens animus accedit ad cognitionem deorum, e qua oritur pietas, cui coniuncta iustitia reliquaeque uirtutes, e quibus uita beata existit et similis deorum, nulla alia re nisi immortalitate, quae nihil ad bene uiuendum perinet, cedens caelestibus. (2.153)

What? Has human reason not penetrated all the way into the sky? ... Contemplating these (celestial phenomena), the mind approaches knowledge of the gods, from which arises piety, and joined to it justice and the remaining virtues, from which comes a life happy and similar to the gods, inferior to the heavenly ones in nothing but (the lack of) immortality, which is of no consequence for living well.

Reason ascends to heaven and, by gaining knowledge of the celestial bodies, gains knowledge of god, which subsequently leads to an assimilation of human and divine life. On the face of it, these ideas appear to be strikingly similar to those found in Manilius; however, if we look more closely, there are crucial differences. As we have seen, the envisaged

goal in the *Astronomica* is a kind of exchange between man and the divine, an overcoming of boundaries, leading to, ideally, a kind of union: god is supposed to 'dwell in' man. There is nothing like this in Cicero, who envisages a human life that is only 'similar' (*similis*) to that of the gods, an expression that needs to mean little more than that this kind of life is perfectly happy.²³ What the Ciceronian cosmologist learns from gazing at the stars are civic virtues that stand him in good stead when he returns to his life in human society; by contrast, the Manilian astrologer forsakes the terrestrial crowds for ever, seeking god himself in the heavens. It is in this religious fervour, this desire for a transcending experience, that Manilius goes beyond what would have been considered orthodox Stoicism. On the whole, though, the *Astronomica's* world view agrees with Stoic thought to such an extent that it would seem appropriate to label the poet a Stoic and conclude that the teachings of the school present a major—probably the largest—influence on his work.

Since, as mentioned above, Stoicism was ubiquitous in the intellectual landscape of early first-century Rome, it appears superfluous or unpromising to search for Manilius' specific Stoic source(s). However, for reasons that will become clear, I shall briefly consider two particular writers, one who was for decades considered the overarching influence on the *Astronomica* and another who—surprisingly—is rarely mentioned in this context. The first is Posidonius, whose presumed importance for Manilius is closely bound up with his reception in German late-nineteenth and early to middle twentieth-century scholarship.²⁴ As is clear from later sources, Posidonius, a Stoic thinker and scientist of the early first century BC, was an extremely important and influential intellectual figure; unfortunately, only meagre scraps of his works survive. This did not deter modern scholars, especially German ones, from reconstructing Posidonius' thought on the basis of later authors, applying fairly generous criteria as to what they considered 'Posidonian'. Conversely, once Posidonius' philosophy had thus been 'established', other works that lacked an obvious intellectual pedigree—such as the poem of Manilius—suddenly looked Posidonian as well,

²³ The comparison of the happy life to that of the gods was a philosophical commonplace in antiquity (see Pease 1955–8 *ad* Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.153 and cf. the discussion below with fn. 38 on *ὁμοίωσις θεῶν* in Plato); to which extent an actual assimilation to the divine is implied differs greatly depending on the context.

²⁴ Salemme 2000: 10–21 provides an excellent *historia quaestionis* and discussion of Posidonius' possible influence on Manilius.

with the result that they in turn could be mined for additional Posidonian material.²⁵ This vicious circle was fuelled both by admiration for a clearly fascinating thinker and by the fashion for reductionist *Quellenforschung*, which rejoiced in being able to point out the one source from which many subsequent works had supposedly sprung.

The 'Posidonius myth' (labelled thus by Dobson 1918) encountered criticism already early on, especially from scholars in the Anglophone world. In the case of Manilius, for example, Housman poured scorn on all those Germans who ascribed to Posidonius ideas that in the English critic's view were instead philosophical or scientific commonplaces. Thus, Housman writes sarcastically, apropos of Manilius' discussion of the influence of the Moon on sea animals, 'omnia a Posidonio sumpta esse Germanorum nemo ignorat, apud quos iam dudum constat Romanos praeter Posidonium nihil legisse' (1903–30 *ad* 2.93; cf. also *ad* 2.66). It was finally the publication of the Posidonian fragments by L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd (1972) that put a serious damper on the enthusiasm for the Stoic thinker: containing only those fragments explicitly attributed to Posidonius, the collection made it clear how very little we know for certain about this influential philosopher's thought. As a result, an agnostic attitude is in order concerning his influence on Manilius as well (see the judicious comments of Salemme 2000: 10–21): while it is perfectly possible that the works of Posidonius exerted an important influence on the poet, there is simply no way to prove it. Note, however, that, as we have seen above, the Stoic nature of Manilius' world view can be determined perfectly well without taking recourse specifically to Posidonius, whose teaching on most points of interest to our poet may not have been radically different from that of other Stoics anyway.

When Housman scoffs that, according to German scholars, Romans like Manilius 'read nothing but Posidonius', one implication of this view is that they did not read other Roman authors. This long-held tacit assumption—that, if two Latin writers agree, they must go back to a common *Greek* source—no doubt contributed to the proliferation of the Posidonius myth and has generally skewed our perception of ancient intellectual history. I would maintain that it has also blinded us to the

²⁵ The idea that the *Astronomica* owes much of its scientific as well as philosophical content to Posidonius was first developed by such scholars as Diels 1879: 490, Malchin 1893, Boll 1894: 218–35, and Müller 1901 (see also Blum 1934) and quickly became common (see, e.g., the Pauly–Wissowa entry by van Wageningen 1928: 1123–4). It has fallen from favour only in the past few decades (cf. the *Neuer Pauly* entry, Hübner 1999, at 819).

possibility of an important Latin source for Manilius' cosmology, namely, the second book of Cicero's *De natura deorum*. Scholars often quote portions of Balbus' speech (which, as mentioned in fn. 16 above, is an important source for our knowledge of Stoic natural philosophy and theology) to point out parallels to Manilius, and Almuth Reeh even provides a detailed comparison between the two texts, listing particularly similar passages (1973: 179–85). Still, she does not in fact claim direct dependence and neither (as far as I can tell) does anybody else.²⁶ In the light of the fact, however, that Cicero's text provides an exposition of the very topics that are crucial to Manilius (namely, that the universe is pervaded by a divine force²⁷ and that man is called upon to contemplate the heavens), using the same rhetorical strategies (for example, the argument from design and the macrocosm–microcosm argument) and employing a similarly rapturous tone and even similar vocabulary (see above on the compounds with *con-*), it seems a fair conclusion that the poet availed himself of this easily accessible source text and mined it for his purposes. After all, Cicero's work, written only about fifty-five years before Manilius' poem, was composed with the very purpose of acquainting his Roman audience with Greek philosophy, and it is reasonable to assume that it did not entirely fail to have some effect, including, perhaps, on Manilius. As we have seen above, the poet is certainly familiar with, and imitates, other works of Cicero, including his translation of Aratus and the *Somnium Scipionis*, and pays the author the compliment of including him among the dead heroes in the Milky Way (1.794–5); when he writes that Cicero received this honour on account of the 'wealth of his eloquence' (*censu . . . oris*, 1.794), he may be referring to his abilities, not only as an orator, but also as a poet and philosophical writer.

One particular point of contact between Manilius and the Balbus speech is the argument from design and its use with a particularly anti-Epicurean slant. We have seen how the argument is employed in *Astronomica* 1.474–531 and again in 2.67–81. In the *De natura deorum*, it is repeated again and again, including, among other places, in 2.19 (where it is treated as an unfailing proof: *quem non coget ea quae dicuntur a me conprobare?*, 'whom will it not force to agree with what I say?'); compare *mihi tam praesens ratio non ulla uidetur*, 'no reason

²⁶ See, however, Feraboli, Flores, and Scarcia 1996–2001 *ad* 1.485–500 on the possible influence of Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.115 (mentioned below).

²⁷ Note though that Cicero describes this force as heat, i.e., the 'designing fire' of older Stoic doctrine, not as the Chrysippean breath (*πνεῦμα*) found in Manilius.

seems equally compelling to me', *Astr.* 1.483) and in 2.115 (where dismissive rhetorical questions of the 'Who could believe?'-type are meant to demonstrate the absurdity of the opposing position; cf. *Astr.* 1.492–3). In 2.93, Balbus illustrates the unlikelihood of a random creation of the cosmos with the observation that a random arrangement of letters will hardly yield Ennius' *Annals*. As we have already seen in 5.2, the same implied analogy between letters and physical elements may lie behind the learning-to-read simile in the methodological digression of *Astronomica* 2.755–71. A connection between the two passages is made additionally likely by the fact that Cicero follows up his argument with an example from architecture (2.94):

quodsi mundum efficere potest concursus atomorum, cur porticum cur templum cur domum cur urbem non potest, quae sunt minus operosa et multo quidem?

If the collision of atoms can create the world, then why can it not create a portico or temple or house or city, things that are less, and indeed far less, difficult to make?

In the *Astronomica*, too, the simile of the letters is followed by one from the building of a city (2.772–87). Of course, unlike Cicero, Manilius is not at this point employing the argument from design, but rather discussing his didactic method. However, as we have already seen, his similes imply the idea that the world is a well-ordered whole and thus, under the surface, carry the same anti-Epicurean polemic that in Cicero is out in the open.

To conclude, it cannot be proved that Manilius really used *De natura deorum*. After all, it is possible that he got the same ideas from different sources, or even from the same source as Cicero himself, which, for all we know, may have been a work by Posidonius. For the reasons just outlined, however, it seems to me more likely than not that the poet indeed made use of the first and most prominent author to have written about Stoic philosophy in Latin. If he did not, I would at least maintain that Manilius is a Stoic very similar to Cicero, or rather to Cicero's Balbus: enraptured by—indeed, positively drunk on—the order and beauty of the divine universe and the ways of expressing this order and beauty in language.

Hermetism

If it thus appears plausible that Stoicism played a considerable role in the formation of Manilius' world view, it is not the only influence that

scholars have detected. The second thought-system often believed to lie behind the *Astronomica* is Hermetism, a tradition at first glance rather different from the intellectual movement of the Stoa and one much harder to pin down.²⁸ We possess a whole number of Greek treatises of popular philosophy of a highly eclectic and mystical nature that are ascribed to 'Hermes Trismegistos' (the 'thrice greatest'), that is, the Egyptian god Thoth as identified with his Greek counterpart. This so-called Hermetic Corpus dates from the first few centuries AD. However, as we can tell from quotations and fragments, there also existed already a few centuries earlier a body of literature on more technical subject matters, including astrology, that was likewise supposed to have been written by Hermes or was otherwise associated with him. In other words, we have a pseudepigraphic tradition, beginning in the Hellenistic period, of 'Hermetic' works, which at least from our perspective fall into two distinct categories: the 'technical' Hermetica (early and largely lost) and the 'philosophical' Hermetica (late and extant).

What does all this have to do with Manilius? When in 1.30 the poet identifies the *primus inuentor* of astrology as the 'Cyllenian'—that is, Mercury—he clearly means the Egyptian Hermes, who was credited with the invention of divers arts, including writing and indeed celestial divination.²⁹ The immediately following description of the oriental origins of astrology (1.43–5) makes this identification additionally likely, especially if we wish to see, in the mention of the kings (1.40–5) and priests (1.46–50), an allusion to the legendary Nechepso and Petosiris: the astrological treatise ascribed to them and perhaps used by Manilius is believed to have had a Hermetic character as well.³⁰ In addition, the poet's sources could have included other technical Hermetica, including the comprehensive astrological compendium whose

²⁸ Generally on Hermetism, see Festugière 1944–54, Nock and Festugière 1945–54 (edn. of the Hermetic Corpus), Fowden 1986, Copenhaver 1992 (English translation of the Hermetic Corpus and the *Asclepius*), and Struck 2004. On supposed Hermetic influences on the *Astronomica*, see esp. Kerényi 1923: 153–8, Vallauri 1954, and Valvo 1956 and 1978.

²⁹ See Housman 1903–30 *ad loc.* Hübner 1984: 127–8 makes the attractive suggestion that Manilius is alluding to Hermes already in 1.20–2, where the two altars of song and subject matter can be understood as those of Apollo (mentioned in 1.19) and Hermes (see also Flores 1982: 121 and Feraboli, Flores, and Scarcia 1996–2001 *ad* 1.11–24). On the role of Hermes in Manilius, particularly on his implied 'theft' of the cosmos, see further below in 6.3.

³⁰ On the presumed Hermetism of Nechepso and Petosiris, see Firm. Mat. *Mathesis* 3. praef.4–1.1, Kerényi 1923: 152, Festugière 1944–54: 1.103, and Fowden 1986: 2.

existence A.-J. Festugière conjectures, using as evidence the Latin *Liber Hermetis*, a Late Antique florilegium that preserves earlier material.³¹

If thus, as appears likely or at any rate perfectly possible, Manilius' astrological sources included writings that we would count among the technical Hermetica or that at least featured Hermes in some capacity, the question remains whether this makes the *Astronomica* a 'Hermetic' work. This issue is bound up with the problem of the consistency of Hermetic thought and the relationship between the philosophical and the technical Hermetica, specifically with the question to what extent we can use the former to tell us about the latter. In the concrete case of Manilius, it turns out that there are many points of philosophical contact between the *Astronomica* and the Hermetic Corpus proper—which, however, postdates Manilius. Are we entitled to conclude that the same ideas were already found in the technical Hermetica or at least that they were already in existence (as an oral tradition?), forming a system of thought that influenced those technical writings and that would ultimately find written expression in the actual Hermetic Corpus?

Giovanna Vallauri in a 1954 article provides a detailed comparison between the *Astronomica* and the Hermetic Corpus, revealing that all the constituent elements we have isolated in Manilius' cosmology are also present in Hermetic thought. These include the divinity of the cosmos (proved by the argument from design), with the particular notion of god as all-pervading reason; the idea of universal interconnectedness; determinism; the idea that man is related to and/or a mirror image of the divine; the self-revelation of the cosmos; and the view that man is born for the contemplation of the universe, an activity that will ultimately make him like god. Given that the Hermetic Corpus is, in Vallauri's words, fundamentally characterized by an interest in the 'relations between the divinity and man' ('relazioni fra la divinità e l'uomo', 143) and by the 'aspiration to understand the divinity' ('aspirazione a comprendere la divinità', 134), it is not surprising that the revelatory and mystical element is particularly strongly developed. As in Manilius, god wishes to be known by human beings, and humans in turn can achieve perfection only through the knowledge (*γνώσις*) of god:

³¹ On the astrological Hermetica, see Festugière 1944–54: 1.89–186 (1.106–23 on the *Liber Hermetis*), Gundel and Gundel 1966: 10–27, and Fowden 1986: 91–4. The *Liber Hermetis* has been edited by Gundel 1936b and Feraboli 1994.

οὐ γὰρ ἀγνοεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὁ θεός, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ γνωρίζει καὶ θέλει γνωρίζεσθαι. τοῦτο μόνον σωτήριον ἀνθρώπῳ ἐστίν, ἡ γνώσις τοῦ θεοῦ. αὕτη εἰς τὸν Ὀλυμπον ἀνάβασις. (CH 10.15)

For god is not ignorant of man; on the contrary, he knows him fully and wishes to be known. This alone is salvation for man: knowledge of god. This alone means rising into heaven.

As in Manilius, the intellectual approach to the divine is presented as an actual ascent to heaven (see also, e.g., CH 10.25) and the gaining of knowledge about god ultimately leads to man becoming divine himself:

ὁ γὰρ γνούς καὶ ἀγαθὸς καὶ εὐσεβὴς καὶ ἤδη θεῖος. (CH 10.9)

He who has acquired knowledge is good and pious and already divine.

Further similarities between Manilius and the Hermetic material include a stance of elitist exclusivity. In the philosophical Hermetica, it is repeatedly stressed that true knowledge is granted only to an elect few (see, e.g., CH 4.3, 9.5; *Ascl.* 7, 9, 22), while, in the *Astronomica*, the poet's usual optimism about mankind's abilities is undercut by the reference to the *minima turba* of his disciples in 2.143–9 (cf. 5.1 and 6.3). Finally, Hermetism explicitly espouses astrology, holding that fate is indeed dispensed by the stars: ὅπλον γὰρ εἰμαρμένης οἱ ἀστέρες ('for the stars are the instrument of fate', Stob. 1.82.8–9 Wachsmuth=*Excerptum* 12.2 Nock and Festugière).³²

The parallels described are striking, but do they really allow us to conclude that Manilius was influenced by Hermetic ideas? Salemmé 2000: 21–6 critically examines the evidence and comes to a negative conclusion, based on a number of observations. First, the fact that the philosophical Hermetica postdate Manilius, while not fatal to the assumption of intellectual influence, at the very least complicates matters since we simply cannot be sure that the ideas found there already existed earlier (even if Hermetic literature of some description certainly did). Second, the similarity between Manilius' cosmology and that found in the Hermetic Corpus can be explained by the fact that Hermetism is an inherently eclectic thought-system that availed itself of many intellectual traditions, including Stoicism. The *Astronomica* and the philosophical Hermetica would thus present parallel, rather than subsequent, developments of intellectual history. Finally, Salemmé points out that, notwithstanding the similarities between the two, there

³² See Festugière 1944–54: 1.87–8, Gundel and Gundel 1966: 309–11, and Mahé 1993 on astrology in the philosophical Hermetica.

are fundamental differences. In many of the Hermetic treatises, the ultimate goal of the human soul is to overcome fate and free itself from matter, rising through and above the physical universe to a purely intellectual sphere. This idea implies a dualist conception of the world that ultimately goes back to Plato and is far removed from the monism of the Stoics and Manilius, in whose single universe everything, including god, is corporeal and fate is inescapable.

Salemme's points are valid, but it may be observed that Hermetism (unlike, say, Stoicism) is not in fact a coherent philosophy but rather the sum of ideas that modern scholars have abstracted from those writings that have come down to us under the name of Hermes and that do seem to point to the existence of some kind of intellectual movement, about which, however, we know very little.³³ There are a number of contradictions within the Hermetic Corpus and between the philosophical and the technical Hermetica. In particular, the dualist, transcendentalist position just described is in obvious contrast, not only with the monist concept of an immanent god found elsewhere in the Corpus (see Fowden 1986: 102–4 on this contradiction), but also with the basic tenets of astrology. As Garth Fowden writes,

The account of the soul's progress through the material and spiritual worlds that we find in the philosophical Hermetica stands in essential contradiction to the doctrines of Hermetic astrology, many of whose devotees would have found it impossible to allow that Man might transgress the planetary spheres and lose himself for ever in contemplation of the divine realm. (1986: 119; see also Festugière 1944–54: 1.122–3)

To return to Manilius, it would thus be perfectly possible for him to adopt certain views that he found in his hypothetical Hermetic sources while eschewing others—or perhaps his particular sources (especially if they were predominantly astrological) contained only the one kind. However, we may be able to detect in the *Astronomica* slight traces of the same self-contradiction that is found in Hermetism. In Manilius' poem, of course, the world is corporeal, there is an unbroken chain of cause and effect, and man is subject to fate. Still, the expressed wish to rise to heaven, encounter god, and become divine pushes the limits of this world view and at times, perhaps, moves beyond it: 'giving up man himself so that god may dwell in him' (cf. 4.407) already has a taste of

³³ See Fowden 1986 for an attempt to determine the social context of the Hermetic works.

dualism and transcendentalism—though, of course, there is no way to know whether Manilius got this taste from the teachings of Hermes Trismegistos.

In the end, the question of the Hermetic sources of the *Astronomica* remains unresolved. By presenting Hermes as the founder of astrology, Manilius certainly shows himself aware of, and probably wishes to align himself with, a tradition. I consider it likely that one or more of the poet's astrological sources were 'Hermetic' in some sense or other and think it is possible, if by no means assured, that they mentioned (presumably in passing) some of the philosophical ideas found in the later Hermetic Corpus. Many of these ideas would have been the same as or very similar to those Manilius encountered in his presumed Stoic readings, and this fundamental agreement, we may conjecture, would have made them even more attractive to the poet. After all, the *uates mundi* was not out to represent a particular school or mystical movement in his poem but, simply and more importantly, to speak the truth.

Platonism

As our examination of Manilius' relationship to Hermetism has shown, it is perfectly conceivable for the poet to have been influenced by more than one intellectual tradition and not necessarily possible to determine where he picked up a particular notion. Individual ideas are not always restricted to specific schools of thought: they may be free-floating commonplaces, part and parcel of the cultural imagination of a particular place and time, or they may at the very least suggest a common ancestry, a point of intellectual departure shared by more than one subsequent world view. In the much-quoted words of A. N. Whitehead, European philosophy 'consists of a series of footnotes to Plato' (1978: 39), and a whole number of Manilius' ideas too are originally Platonic, though it cannot be decided whether he derived them from Plato directly or filtered through their reception in later traditions, including Stoicism and Hermetism, both of which were much influenced by Platonic thought.³⁴

³⁴ See Betegh 2003 for a near discussion of how Platonic ideas, esp. from the *Timaeus*, were taken up and modified by Stoicism (cf. also Sedley 2007: 205–38); for the reception of the *Timaeus* by both Stoics and Platonists, see Reydam-Schils 1999. Sedley 2002 argues specifically for the influence of the Academic Polemo (late 4th–early 3rd c. BC) on Stoic theology, while Frede 2002 examines the influence of *Laws* 10 on Stoic ideas of providence. A more general discussion of the development of Hellenistic views of the

Platonism is often associated with a radical dualism that posits a clear divide between the perceptible world of change and the purely intellectual realm of the Forms. As we have seen above, this kind of thought is (largely) alien to Manilius, who follows Stoic monism in positing a universe in which the divine is physically immanent. However, there is no reason why the poet could not have appropriated certain Platonic views without buying into the system as a whole. Also, and more significantly, Plato's thought developed over time and by no means adds up to a perfectly coherent doctrine, and there are immanentist tendencies in his late cosmology, which proved to be influential on Hellenistic and later views of the universe.³⁵

The work of the greatest interest in this context is the *Timaeus*, in which the eponymous main speaker recounts the creation of the world by a creator god, who is explicitly called a 'craftsman' (δημιουργός). The account is puzzling, with scholarly controversy surrounding a number of details, but while the cosmos described is different from that of Manilius in many ways, there are important points of contact. According to Plato, the universe is a 'living being with a soul and an intelligence' (ζῶον ἔμψυχον ἔννοον, 30b8) that is self-sufficient, orderly, and beautiful, with the result that it can be described as a 'happy god' (cf. εὐδαίμονα θεόν, 34b8). Its soul, to whose description Plato devotes quite a bit of space, extends through, and embraces, the entire cosmos (34b3–7), while also being imagined as two revolving circles, that of the 'same' and that of the 'different', which are clearly meant to represent the diurnal rotation of the sphere of fixed stars, on the one hand, and the movement of the planets along the zodiac, on the other (36b6–d7). As for the stars themselves, they are explicitly said to be gods (40a2–b6).

What we have here is the familiar notion of a divine universe endowed with some guiding principle (the world soul), coupled with the interesting fact that astronomical phenomena are explicitly accorded an important role. As for man's place within the cosmos, human souls are not only created in the same 'mixing bowl' and out of the same (if somewhat less pure) stuff as the world soul, but are assigned, at creation, each its own personal star (41d4–e1). To this it will—provided that it

cosmos under the influence of Plato is provided by Festugière 1944–54, vol. 2; see also Schmid 2005: 119–202.

³⁵ On the two strands of thought (dualist/pessimistic v. immanentist/optimistic) in Platonic thought and their reception, see the second volume of Festugière 1944–54 (pp. ix–xvii provide a general introduction); for a detailed discussion of Plato's later cosmology and its immanentist slant, see Carone 2005.

has conducted itself virtuously during life—return after death to live happily ever after (42b3–5). This is a relatively early testimony to the belief (later so popular) in an afterlife in heaven, and it is here coupled with the more specific idea that human souls are closely related to the stars.³⁶ For Manilius, the astral origin and final destination of the soul is an accepted fact:

an dubium est habitare deum sub pectore nostro
in caelumque redire animas caeloque uenire?
(4.886–7; see also 4.885 and 896–7)

Or is there a doubt that a god lives in our mind and that our souls come from heaven and will return to heaven?

Related, if somewhat different, is the poet's description of the Milky Way as a dwelling place of dead heroes (1.758–804; see further below), while his repeated reference to the heavenly afterlife of the emperor presents a specifically Roman development of the idea of celestial immortality.

What is the kind of life that will make us happy and return us to the stars? According to Plato, it consists in contemplating the heavens, an activity to which we are predestined through our eyesight (47b5–8; cf. *Astr.* 4.906–7) and erect walk (90a2–b1; cf. *Astr.* 4.905–6). By understanding the celestial revolutions, which equal the movements of the world soul, we will be able to control the movements of our own related souls and have them revolve in the same orderly and rational way as the heavens (47b5–c4 and 90c7–d7). The result will be the achievement of the 'best life' (cf. ἀρίστου βίου, 90d6), both now and for all time to come. As later in Manilius, the study of the heavens is thus presented as *the* path to human perfection, with the goal of an assimilation of man and the divine universe, who ideally are meant to move absolutely 'in sync'.³⁷

³⁶ Generally on the notion of astral immortality, see Cumont 1949: 142–88, Boyancé 1952, Rougier 1959: 54–98, and Burkert 1972: 357–68; see also fn. 48 below. Cf. also Scott 1991, who traces the idea of the stars as ensouled (and thus closely related to human souls) from Plato to Origen.

³⁷ On Plato's 'cosmological ethics' in the *Timaeus*, see Betegh 2003 and Carone 2005: 53–78. I wonder whether the Platonic idea of man as actively participating in the circular movements of the heavens does not lie behind *Astr.* 2.143, where the small group of the poet's students is described as 'those whom they [the stars and the universe] have not begrudged their sacred motions' (*quibus illa sacros non inuidere meatus*). Of course, in a way this is a metonymy for 'have not begrudged *knowledge* of their sacred motions', but, as the *Timaeus* shows, understanding the revolutions of the heavens and taking part in them are two closely related things, and Manilius has just been describing his own activity as driving his poetic chariot in an 'orbit' (*in orbe*, 2.138) through the sky (2.138–40); cf. Volk 2002: 234 n. 74 and 2003.

The general idea that 'becoming similar to god' (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) is the purpose of a well-lived human life is found elsewhere in Plato's work (see esp. *Resp.* 10.613b1, *Thet.* 176b1–3, and *Leg.* 4.716c1–d4).³⁸ As for the more specific notion that such a divinization is to be achieved through the study of the heavens, this is developed further in the *Epinomis*, a dialogue written by an early follower of Plato, perhaps Philip of Opus.³⁹ Both concepts were picked up and modified in various ways by many thinkers and writers in the centuries following Plato's death, until they finally reached Manilius, who may or may not have known of their Platonic origins.⁴⁰ What this cursory discussion shows, then, is not that Manilius was some sort of Platonist (which he clearly was not), but rather that many of the details of his world view can ultimately be traced back to the thought of the man who—to borrow Manilius' image from the proem of Book 2—had become the fountainhead of subsequent Western philosophy.⁴¹

Pythagoreanism

If we can trace some of the ideas found in Manilius, as well as in Stoicism and Hermetism, back to Plato, it is also possible to speculate on the sources of Plato's own thought. Clearly, his cosmological and theological views would have been influenced by popular Greek notions about the universe and the gods; it is quite conceivable that he adapted certain Near Eastern ideas; and he was obviously inspired by earlier and contemporary philosophers. An examination of these influences is beyond the scope of this book; however, one school of thought that was believed to have been of particular importance in shaping Plato's philosophy is of significance for the present discussion. Many aspects of Platonic cosmology as

³⁸ On the concept in Plato, see Festugière 1944–54: 2.132–52, Sedley 1997 and 2000, Annas 1999: 52–71, Betegh 2003, and Carone 2005: index s.v. 'god/s as model/example'.

³⁹ On the *Epinomis*, see Festugière 1944–54: 2.196–218 and Tarán 1975. Generally on the topos of *contemplatio caeli* in antiquity, see Pfeiffer 2001: 27–69.

⁴⁰ In the light of my observations on the *De natura deorum*, we might consider the possibility that Manilius was familiar with Cicero's translation of the *Timaeus* as well; this would imply that he had actual knowledge of Platonic doctrine rather than only of those 'Platonic commonplaces' that were part of the general culture.

⁴¹ Manilius lists Plato as one of the Greek inhabitants of the Milky Way (where he is one of only two philosophers, the other being Socrates) and describes him as *aetherius* ('heavenly', 1.774). While the adjective can be taken simply as 'divine', there may also be an allusion to the philosopher's contribution to the study of the heavens.

expressed especially in the *Timaeus* and the *Epinomis* were in antiquity, and are often still today, considered actually 'Pythagorean'—that is, developed either by Pythagoras (6th c. bc) himself or by Pythagorean philosophers of the fifth and fourth centuries. These include in particular the ideas that the cosmic order can be expressed in mathematical terms,⁴² and the notion that human souls—immortal and bound up in a process of transmigration—are related to the stars. Generally, the astral mysticism and 'religious' attitude towards the universe that we have seen already in Plato and that came to pervade cosmological thought in the Hellenistic period—and clearly left its mark on Manilius—was often associated with the influence of Pythagoras.

Owing to the scarcity and unreliability of our sources, it is impossible for scholars today properly to assess the contributions of both Pythagoras himself and his followers.⁴³ It is unclear whether Pythagoras himself developed any of the more philosophical and scientific ideas ascribed to him, or whether he was primarily the leader of a religious cult; it is difficult to reconstruct the details, and impact, of the systems of such later Pythagoreans as Philolaus (c.470–390 bc) and Archytas (fl. c.400–350 bc); and, crucially, it is impossible to tell to which extent Plato and later Platonists, rather than being influenced by Pythagoras, actually 'invented' Pythagoreanism by fathering their own ideas on a revered and semi-mythical figure. In what follows, it is therefore not my intention to reconstruct an actual Pythagorean pedigree (via Plato, or via Hellenistic sources) of Manilius' larger cosmological views; rather, I shall briefly consider a few smaller ideas and expressions found in the *Astronomica* that the poet, or his contemporaries, may have regarded as 'Pythagorean', whether with any justification or not.⁴⁴

There can be no doubt that Manilius had heard of Pythagoras. Owing to the sage's Italian origin, he had always been held in high esteem at Rome, where a legend connected him with King Numa and where already Ennius had demonstrated his knowledge of the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis by claiming that he was housing

⁴² Thus, e.g., in the *Timaeus*, the world soul is described in terms of the mathematical ratios of its constituents (35b4–36b6), while in the *Epinomis*, 'number' (ἀριθμός) is said to be a gift from god that enables us to understand the heavens (977a2–b8).

⁴³ The classic treatment of the 'Pythagorean question' remains Burkert 1972; see also Kahn 2001 and Riedweg 2005.

⁴⁴ On Pythagorean ideas in Manilius, see also MacGregor 2004: 154–5 and 2005: 49–52 and 59–65 and Habinek 2007: 234–5.

Homer's soul (*Ann.* 2–11 Skutsch).⁴⁵ In the first century BC, there was apparently a revival of Pythagoreanism, led by none other than Nigidius Figulus (see Cic. *Tim.* 1) and involving that other great contemporary intellectual M. Terentius Varro (see Kahn 2001: 88–9). Little is known about the activities of this Roman Pythagorean circle (not too surprisingly, given its status as a secret society), but its existence clearly attests to contemporary interest in Pythagorean thought, an interest that is also apparent from the lengthy speech of Pythagoras that Ovid, a few decades later, included in his *Metamorphoses* (15.60–481). Manilius, of course, knew Ovid's work, and he presumably knew Nigidius' *Sphaera*; he may well have read other works of Nigidius as well, including, perhaps, ones that touched on Pythagoreanism.⁴⁶

There are two ideas found in the *Astronomica* that would have been considered specifically Pythagorean: the Milky Way as a realm of dead souls (1.758–804) and the music of the spheres (1.22–3). As for the first, I believe, as mentioned above, that Manilius' main source for this passage was Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. This finale of the *De re publica* is modelled on Plato's eschatological Myth of Er, but shows a number of important differences (see Zetzel 1995: 15 and 223–4). One concerns the dwelling place of those outstanding souls who through their justice and piety have earned immortality. Cicero places them in the Milky Way (*Rep.* 6.16), a move to which he may have been inspired by a work of Heraclides of Pontus (4th c. BC), which recounts the eschatological vision of a certain Empedotimus.⁴⁷ According to Heraclides, the Milky Way functions as a kind of waystation for human souls: it is the place through which they pass both on their way down (from the stars to incarnation) and on their way back up. Heraclides was one of those early followers of Plato who espoused (and creatively shaped) 'Pythagoreanism' (see Kahn 2001: 63–71); he may well have claimed explicitly that the eschatology of the Empedotimus narrative went back to Pythagoras (cf. Burkert 1972: 368). Even if he did not, both the general idea of astral immortality and the more specific notion of the Milky Way as a kind of 'heaven' were so often associated with Pythagorean thought that Manilius too presumably made the connection, and he and his

⁴⁵ On Pythagoreanism in Rome, see Liebeschuetz 1979: 129–31, Rawson 1985: 291–4, Kahn 2001: 86–93, and Riedweg 2005: 123–4.

⁴⁶ Note, though, that, as Rawson 1985: 291 points out, none of Nigidius' extant work titles or fragments appears to be particularly Pythagorean.

⁴⁷ *Frr.* 90–103 Wehrli. On the work, see Burkert 1972: 366–8, Gottschalk 1980: 98–101, and Kahn 2001: 66–7.

contemporaries would, therefore, probably have considered *Astronomica* 1.758–804 a particularly Pythagorean passage.⁴⁸

As for the music of the spheres, to which Manilius alludes obliquely in his first proem, this phenomenon was routinely associated with the Pythagoreans and is invoked by numerous ancient writers, again including Cicero in the *Somnium Scipionis* (*Rep.* 6.18–19) and, with explicit reference to Pythagoras, in *Nat. D.* 3.27 (*ad harmoniam canere mundum ut Pythagoras existimat*, 'the cosmos sings in harmony, as Pythagoras believes').⁴⁹ In Manilius, as we have seen in 5.3, the mention of cosmic sound is part of the poet's description of the ecstasy he experiences during his worship at the twin altars when both he and the *mundus* sing according to the same 'fixed measure' (*certa cum lege*, 1.22). Similar ecstasy is expressed in the immediately preceding reference to the poet's heavenly journey, with its repeated *iuuat* ('it is pleasing', 1.13 and 17). This passage has a Pythagorean tone as well, by virtue of a clear allusion to a portion of the Pythagoras speech in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which also employs a double *iuuat* in the context of celestial ascent. There, the philosopher describes himself as feeling divinely inspired and impelled to speak of matters never investigated by anyone before:⁵⁰

magna nec ingeniis inuestigata priorum
quaeque diu latuere, canam; iuuat ire per alta
astra, iuuat terris et inerti sede relictis
nube uehi ualidique umeris insistere Atlantis. (*Ov. Met.* 15.146–9)

I shall sing of great things not investigated by the minds of earlier men and of things that have lain hidden for a long time; it is pleasing to walk among the stars on high, it is pleasing to leave behind the earth, that sluggish realm, and to ride on a cloud and stand on the shoulders of sturdy Atlas.

Enrico Flores, in his discussion of Manilius' imitation of these lines (1995: 28–9), suggests that the poet is alluding to Ovid in this prominent place at the beginning of his work in order to express solidarity

⁴⁸ On the afterlife in the Milky Way as a 'Pythagorean' idea, see Capelle 1907: 37–48, esp. 39–40; more generally on astral immortality and its Pythagorean associations, see Rougier 1959: 54–98 and Burkert 1972: 357–68 (with a polemic against Rougier in 358–9 n. 41).

⁴⁹ On the music of the spheres and its association with Pythagoras, see Pease 1955–8 *ad Cic. Nat. D.* 3.27, Burkert 1972: 350–7, and Riedweg 2005: 27–30.

⁵⁰ The divine inspiration presumably issues from Apollo (cf. *rite deum Delphosque meos*... *recludam*, 'as is just, I will reveal the god and my Delphi', *Ov. Met.* 15.144). As Riedweg 2005: 72 points out, Pythagoras had a particularly close connection to this god, whose appearance in *Astr.* 1.19 may thus be another way of adding a Pythagorean touch to Manilius' proem.

with his colleague, who had only recently been exiled, and to signal a kind of 'passing of the torch'. This is possible, but it seems more relevant to me that Manilius is here, by means of the borrowing from Ovid, clearly identifying with Pythagoras, an inspired wise man who ascends to the heavens and reveals previously hidden knowledge of great importance.⁵¹ The themes of inspiration, revelation, and ecstasy run through the entire introductory section of the proem of *Astronomica* 1 (1–24), while the specific Pythagorean flavour is reinforced, as we have seen, by the mention of the music of the spheres.

As this discussion shows, 'Pythagoreanism' is less an influence for Manilius than an ideal. Like many of his contemporaries, the poet had some notion that Pythagoras was connected to views about cosmic order and the astral nature of human souls. He would also have associated him with specific ideas, such as the Milky Way as abode of the dead and the music of the spheres. Crucially, though, he considered him a model: a man who had done what Manilius himself was about to do, a 'prophet of the cosmos' (*uates mundi*), and therefore someone with whom the poet aimed to associate himself.

Magic and the Occult

As we have veered slightly from the topic of Manilius' sources to the related question of which approaches to the cosmos the poet—explicitly or implicitly—endorses, we may consider a rather striking passage in the proem to Book 1, which has given rise to divergent interpretations. As part of his progressivist history of civilization (1.66–112), which culminates in the discovery of astrology, Manilius mentions magic as one of the *artes* developed by human beings:

ne uulgata canam, linguas didicere uolucrum,
consultare fibras et rumpere uocibus angues,
solicitare umbras inumque Acheronta mouere,
in noctemque dies, in lucem uertere noctem. (1.91–4)

Lest I sing of well-known matters: they learned the language of birds, to consult the innards (of sacrificial animals) and to split snakes with their voices, to call up the shades and stir deepest Acheron, to turn night into day and day into night.

⁵¹ *Ov. Met.* 15.146 (*magna nec ingeniis inuestigata priorum*) is clearly a model for *Astr.* 1.6 (*hospita sacra ferens nulli memorata priorum*).

Manilius here lumps together a number of different practices, from the prophetic arts of the interpretation of birdsong, extispicy, and necromancy, to such disruptive activities as the killing of snakes through spells and the turning of day into night. With the exception, perhaps, of the first two, which could pass as comparatively benign, all these practices involve breaking the laws of nature for the benefit of the acting human being and can properly be described as (black) magic. It is therefore surprising that Manilius includes them in his catalogue of mankind's positive achievements, among such inventions as language, agriculture, navigation, commerce, and the arts of war and peace (1.85–90). In fact, the description of the magical arts concludes the first part of the poet's cultural history, which Manilius sums up with the assertion that, 'through its endeavours, ingenuity, eager to learn, conquered all' (*omnia conando docilis sollertia uicit*, 1.95). The very next step in the intellectual development of mankind is the investigation and understanding of natural phenomena, including, of course, the heavens (1.96–112).

In her discussion of the passage, Loretta Baldini Moscadi (1980*b*) comes to the conclusion that Manilius' positive attitude towards magic (which is presented as closely connected, positively propaedeutic, to astrology) can be explained through the influence of such intellectual movements as Stoicism, Hermetism, and Pythagoreanism.⁵² If human *ratio* is able to penetrate the secrets of the cosmos, then it is not surprising if human *sollertia*, clearly a related faculty, can master life on earth, from ploughing the fields to conversing with the shades. Behind this view is an unbounded optimism and belief in man's abilities, a belief that is grounded in the conviction that humans are inextricably linked to larger forces and therefore able to transcend their circumscribed terrestrial lives in ways that may appear, indeed, superhuman.

Magic and astrology were historically often linked and may on occasion have been practised by the same person.⁵³ Still, while astrology

⁵² Cf. also Liebeschuetz 1979: 126–39 on the increase of interest in magic in the late Republic and early Empire.

⁵³ Nigidius Figulus, for one, is credited not only with casting horoscopes and reviving Pythagoreanism, but also with being a *magus* ('sorcerer', *Jer. Ab Abr.* 1972, 156.26 Helm). Legislation against astrologers often included practitioners of magic as well, including in the case of Agrippa's ordinance of 33 BC (see Cass. Dio 49.43.5) and the *senatus consulta* of AD 16 (see Tac. *Ann.* 2.32 and Cass. Dio 57.15.8). Generally on restrictive measures against magic at Rome, see Beard, North, and Price 1998: 1.233–6.

drew some censure, it was typically considered an activity based on solid scientific principles and espoused, as we have seen, among others by the Roman upper classes. By contrast, an enormous social stigma attached to magic, and Manilius' endorsement is therefore striking, especially given that some of the practices mentioned by the poet—splitting of snakes, necromancy, and turning night into day—are particularly sinister. In the light of this, M. W. Dickie in a recent article (2002) suggests that lines 1.91–4 are in fact an interpolation. Among other arguments, he points out that the passage could easily be left off without giving the impression that anything is missing; that the lines are a pastiche of tags from Vergil; and, crucially, that Manilius simply would not have displayed a positive attitude towards magic. In my opinion, the last point is unconvincing: I agree with Baldini Moscati 1980b that the poet's endorsement, while on the surface (deliberately?) shocking, actually fits in well with his world view as a whole.⁵⁴ As for the first argument, Dickie's observation is certainly correct, but the fact that the passage could be removed without leaving a trace does not mean that it was never there. Crucially, Dickie provides no explanation or scenario how the four lines (not suspected by any earlier editor) would have made their way into the text. There is always the anonymous interpolator to be invoked, but most interpolations are prompted by something that is already in the text, whereas, in our case, it is hard to see how, in the absence of the passage, any reader could have been reminded of the topic of magic. It is the very strangeness and unexpectedness of the lines that speak for their authenticity, according to a version of the *lectio difficilior* principle: having them in the poem certainly makes for the 'more difficult reading'.

Dickie's second point concerns the borrowings from Vergil: the author identifies four,⁵⁵ pointing out that this constitutes an especially high concentration (2002: 456) and hinting that an interpolator might have mechanically combined Vergilian tags to compose the passage. While he admits that the entire first proem is disproportionately heavy

⁵⁴ Manilius' entire history of civilization is unusual in presenting as positive a number of cultural practices (including agriculture, navigation, commerce, and warfare, 1.86–9) that in other ancient, especially Roman, treatments of the same topic are viewed as ambivalent, if not downright nefarious (cf. the literature quoted above in 3.2, fn. 34). The poet's endorsement of magic, though perhaps the most extreme example of this tendency, fits in perfectly with Manilius' general celebration of human *sollertia* as capable of conquering nature (see also 6.3 below).

⁵⁵ Cf. *Astr.* 1.91 with Verg. *G.* 3.4; *Astr.* 1.91–2 with Verg. *Aen.* 10.176–7; *Astr.* 1.92 with Verg. *Ecl.* 8.71; and *Astr.* 1.93 with Verg. *Aen.* 7.312; see Dickie 2002: 455–6.

in allusions to Vergil, he maintains that, for example, lines 4–6 manifest a much more subtle art of intertextuality, far removed from the hack-work of the presumed author of 91–4 (2002: 456–7). This kind of argument is purely subjective and hardly likely to settle the matter. It seems to me that, rather than providing a contrast, the beginning of the proem (1.1–6) instead presents an interesting parallel to our passage, a parallel that can tell us more about Manilius' ideas about man and the universe. As Dickie avows and as we have seen in 5.2, the first six lines of the *Astronomica* are replete with allusions to Vergil, and most interestingly, in our context, two of these allusions conjure up the idea of magic. By presenting himself as about to draw the stars from the sky by means of song (*carmine . . . sidera . . . deducere mundo*, 1.1–3), the poet takes on the role of a sorcerer. He does so by borrowing from a Vergilian line (*carmina uel caelo possunt deducere lunam*, 'songs can even draw the moon from the sky', Verg. *Ecl.* 8.69) that occurs in close proximity to the verse that lies behind the image of the split snakes in *Astr.* 1.92: *frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis* ('the cold snake in the meadow is split by singing', Verg. *Ecl.* 8.71).⁵⁶ Using one line from *Eclogue* 8 at the very start of the poem and another, from the same context, in his endorsement of magic, Manilius creates a connection between the two passages. He himself appears as a magician—someone who interacts, has *commercium* (cf. 2.125), with the universe—as soon as the poem begins, and then justifies this attitude later, according magic a high rank among the achievements of mankind. The use of Vergilian material in both passages enforces the point.

There is a second 'magical' allusion to Vergil at the beginning of the proem, namely, to the activity of moving forests through song (1.4–5). In the sixth *Eclogue*, this feat is ascribed to Hesiod (70–1), but it is more often associated with Orpheus, who plays an important role in Vergil's work.⁵⁷ I suggest that, through his presentation of himself as someone about to move the woods through his song, Manilius achieves a number of interrelated purposes: he keeps up the Vergilian tone of the proem; he continues the theme of magic and of his own role as magician; he aligns himself with Hesiod as the founder of didactic poetry; and he associates

⁵⁶ This method of bewitching snakes was associated with the Italic tribe of the Marsi (see Clausen 1994 *ad Ecl.* 8.71).

⁵⁷ Orpheus is mentioned in *Ecl.* 3.46 (for the first time in Latin poetry (see Clausen 1994 *ad loc.*, with reference to P. E. Knox), and in the context of moving trees), 4.55–7, 6.30, and 8.55–6, as well as in *Aen.* 6.119–20; he plays a central role in the myth of Aristaeus at the end of the *Georgics*.

himself with Orpheus. The latter was considered not only an outstanding poet but a sage knowledgeable about the universe;⁵⁸ pseudepigraphic works ascribed to him treated cosmology as well as eschatology and informed the practice of mystery cult. Just as he evokes Pythagoras, Manilius alludes to Orpheus as a kindred figure, a poet with magic powers and a deep knowledge of cosmic secrets.⁵⁹

If my reading is correct, Manilius in the short space of his first proem manages to associate himself and his work with a whole number of characters and movements on the more mystical and occult end of the spectrum of cosmological approaches: he explicitly invokes Hermes and the origin of astrology among eastern kings and priests; he alludes to Pythagoras through both the music of the spheres and the borrowings from Ovid's Pythagoras speech; he takes on the role of a sorcerer and presents magic in a positive light; and he even works in a veiled reference to Orpheus. This array attests to the poet's eclecticism and his belief that all these traditions and practices ultimately concern the same thing: the revelation of cosmic secrets to outstanding figures of near-divine abilities, who in turn pass on this sacred knowledge to mankind as a whole.

Our discussion has come a long way, from Stoic physics to magic and mysticism, but the question of the exact sources of Manilius' philosophy remains open. Many of his ideas about the universe and man's place in it are, as we have seen, at home in many different traditions, with the result that it is impossible to disentangle the individual strands and trace them back to their presumed origins.⁶⁰ While Manilius must have had his sources, one can imagine all sorts of different scenarios that would have yielded the same results: perhaps his world view came part and parcel with the astrological treatises he used; perhaps he had studied with a Stoic philosopher or immersed himself in the works of Posidonius or

⁵⁸ Both notions are combined in the cosmogonic song of the character Orpheus in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (1.496–511).

⁵⁹ The poet refers twice more to the power over nature wielded by Orpheus through his music, both times in the context of discussing the constellation Lyra, supposedly the catasterized lyre of the mythic singer (1.324–30 and 5.324–8). In 1.329–30, Manilius even ascribes to Lyra a major cosmic role: *nunc sidera ducit | et rapit immensum mundi reuolubilis orbem* ('now it is leading the stars and carries along the enormous sphere of the turning heavens'). This may be a further allusion to the music of the spheres, which was often associated with the sound of a heptachord lyre (see van Wageningen 1921 *ad Astr.* 1.329 and Zetzel 1995 *ad Cic. Rep.* 6.18).

⁶⁰ Cf. Lühr 1969: 173. The poem itself does not proclaim any intellectual affiliation, apart from the mention of Hermes and the allusions to what we could call the 'mystic tradition' in the first proem, and the polemic against Epicureanism in 1.483–531.

even Chrysippus; perhaps he had sat at the feet of Thrasyllus or another easterner familiar with the teachings of Hermes Trismegistos; or perhaps he had simply perused a few of the works of Cicero. While he himself may have combined ideas that he found in different places, it is clear that he was already heir to an eclectic cosmology that had been developed over the last three centuries BC and that was taking hold in Rome in the late first century. A.-J. Festugière describes this 'vague piety' ('piété vague') that was not associated with any particular school in the following terms:

cette religiosité diffuse . . . où l'on s'adresse à une Ame universelle maîtresse de ce grand corps, le Monde, qu'elle anime, et subsistant le plus excellement dans les astres dont les beaux mouvements réguliers en sont comme la manifestation visible, où aussi, persuadé que notre âme est une parcelle de l'Ame divine, on aspire, dès ici-bas, à se fondre dans ce Principe avant de s'y dissoudre à la mort. (1944–54: 1.12)

Festugière detects this world view (which, in a nutshell, is what I have described in 6.1) in the *Somnium Scipionis*, Vergil, Manilius, and Seneca, among others, but it is really the *Astronomica* that provides the most detailed example of this kind of cosmic religion or religious cosmology.⁶¹ Manilius' poem thus provides an excellent window into contemporary views about the universe: even if not everybody would have agreed with everything the poet said (after all, 'vague piety' is by definition vague and allows for various permutations), many would have concurred with him on many things, which is what makes the *Astronomica* such a useful source for the ways in which educated Romans at the beginning of the first century AD could think of, and speak about, the cosmos.

6.3. COSMIC TENSIONS

Manilius' world view is extremely optimistic. Human beings live in a *kosmos*, a beautiful and well-ordered whole ruled by (or identified with) a divine being. This god is well disposed towards humans, to whom he affords the opportunity to interact with him and to achieve perfection

⁶¹ The second volume of Festugière 1944–54 is a detailed examination of the history of this eclectic 'philosophie religieuse' (xiii), whose development the author traces from Plato through the Hellenistic period to the Roman Empire; see also Schmid 2005: 119–202, who points out that this 'pious view of the cosmos' ('fromme[s] Kosmos-Weltbild', 182) was part and parcel of all philosophical debates of the Hellenistic period.

and happiness through the contemplation of the workings of the heavens. This positive assessment of the state of the world is the dominant philosophy of the *Astronomica*; however, an attentive reading of the poem hints at potential contradictions within the poet's view. These tensions have to do primarily with two matters, Manilius' strict determinism and his occasional description of human cosmological research as an act of impiety. Both tendencies have the potential to destabilize the otherwise so coherent world view of the poem and point at larger problems inherent in Manilius' vision of the cosmos.

The poet's determinism, as we have seen, finds its strongest expression in the proem to Book 4. On the face of it, the attitude espoused there fits in perfectly with the ideas expressed in the rest of the poem and in particular with Manilius' presumed Stoicism and his 'hard' astrology. However, despite its status as one of the *Astronomica's* most famous passages, the proem is strangely disconnected from the rest of the poem (cf. Feraboli, Flores, and Scarcia 1996–2001 *ad* 4.1–118): there is no mention of astrology or of man's exploration of the universe; most remarkably, there are but few hints that the fates that 'rule the world' (4.14) do so with the help of the stars (see 4.105 and 115). What we get instead is a diatribe against the folly of human beings, who waste their efforts to achieve questionable goals without realizing that success or failure are simply not within their own power.⁶² As the poet demonstrates with numerous examples, everything is subject to fate, which works in ways that to incomprehending humans appear entirely random, even though Manilius assures us that from a larger perspective, events follow actual laws.⁶³

Manilius' description of the all-encompassing rule of fate raises a number of problems. Any philosophical system that espouses strict determinism has to grapple with the question of moral responsibility, and the poet explicitly engages this issue (4.108–18). In order to show that the fact that everything is fated by no means excuses the vicious or robs the virtuous of their deserved praise, Manilius points out that

⁶² See Landolfi 1994 on the proem's relation to the diatribe tradition.

⁶³ In order to make this point, Manilius momentarily distinguishes between *fortuna*, the random force that 'is carried, unstable, from one to the next without making a distinction' (*uaga per cunctos nullo discrimine fertur*, 4.97) and 'something greater' (*aliud... maius*, 4.98–9), namely, actual fate that lays down the laws of our lives: everything appears to be governed by fortune, while, in reality, fate is in charge. Elsewhere in the poem, Manilius uses *fortuna* and *fatum* as synonyms; cf. Lühr 1969: 129–33, who lists all uses of *fatum* and *fortuna* in 179–83.

poisonous herbs are blamed and tasty foods find favour even though their qualities result from fate rather than choice. The same principle, he maintains, applies to human actions; indeed, the very fact that they are caused by the heavens makes good deeds more praiseworthy and wicked ones more hateful.⁶⁴

The question that Manilius does not answer, however, is how human beings are supposed to live their lives in the light of the fact that everything is fated. Once they have stopped worrying and quit the endless race for ever more elusive goods, what are they to do? It has been suggested that Manilius is advertising a kind of Stoic *amor fati* ('love of fate'), the idea that people ought to embrace their fate and find fulfilment by living in agreement with the unrolling of events predestined by divine providence.⁶⁵ However, if the poet's message is (to borrow Seneca's famous words) *ducunt uolentem fata, nolentem trahunt* ('fate leads the willing, drags the unwilling', *Ep.* 107.11), he does not make it explicit.⁶⁶ All he tells human beings is that, from birth to death, their entire lives are predetermined; no coping strategies are offered.

Given Manilius' views as expressed elsewhere in the poem, we might expect that he would advise human beings to spend their lives studying the stars, in order to understand those iron laws that govern their lives and to achieve that assimilation to the divine of which, as humans, they are capable. However, within the context of the fourth proem, such a suggestion would make little sense. If everything is predetermined, you cannot persuade someone to become an astrologer (or, for that matter, to stop worrying); if he or she is fated to do so, it will happen; if not, it won't. Manilius' determinism thus calls into question his beliefs about the abilities and calling of man (cf. Neuburg 1993: 276–82): what is the point of encouraging human beings to do their utmost to become like

⁶⁴ This argument has not endeared Manilius to his more philosophically minded readers; see, e.g., A. A. Long, who judges that the poet 'blandly attributes human vice and virtue alike to the sky without seriously facing problems about human responsibility' (1982: 187). It seems, though, that Manilius is interested less in individual responsibility and free will (i.e., the question whether what people do is really 'up to' them) than in society's justification in punishing and rewarding human actions. His point is that the rule of fate does not do away with the traditional mechanisms for apportioning praise and blame, reward and punishment; in fact, these mechanisms are themselves part of fate (*hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsum expendere fatum*, 'this too is fated: to be punished for fate itself', 4.118; on this line, see further fn. 67 below).

⁶⁵ For this view, see Salemm 2000: 46–56.

⁶⁶ The laconic *sors est sua cuique ferenda* ('everybody must bear his own fate', 4.22) is a statement of fact rather than an exhortation to a particular ethical attitude.

god if the intellectual exertion necessary to this end is not in fact something of which we are in control?

It would be possible to salvage the unity of Manilius' thought by describing his position as follows. Everything is fated, including the cosmic god's willingness to reveal himself to human beings; the poet's being called upon to act as a medium for this revelation; the learning process (interactions with the teacher and didactic harangues included) of those chosen to achieve knowledge of the divine; and (presumably) their subsequent 'becoming like god'. As the poet puts it at the end of the second proem, *hoc quoque fatorum est, legem perdiscere fati* ('this itself is part of fate, to learn the law of fate', 2.149).⁶⁷ Such a stance would fit in with the strict determinism of the fourth proem and with Manilius' astrological views, according to which people's *studia*, their pursuits and professions, are dictated by the stars. However, it stands in contrast to the optimism of the poet's pedagogy as expressed especially in the two exhortations to the student in Book 4, as well as to his claim that all human beings are capable of understanding and interacting with the divine. What this contradiction points to, then, is the question of man's own initiative. To which extent is the gaining of knowledge about the universe a human being's own doing? And would it ever be possible to win such knowledge even *without the consent* of that divine cosmos with its inexorable laws? Of course, according to Manilius' official philosophy, it most emphatically would not. However, if we read the *Astronomica* closely, we on occasion get the impression that human reason is able not only to interact with, but even, as it were, to conquer the divine.

The repeated depiction of intellectual achievement, especially that of gaining knowledge about the cosmos, as an act of violence and possible impiety is the second source of tension within the philosophy of the *Astronomica*.⁶⁸ This subtle motif begins in the first proem, where the

⁶⁷ This verse occurs in the context of Manilius' claim that only a *minima turba* has been granted knowledge of the workings of the universe (2.143–8)—the only hint that he considers his student body to be restricted by superior powers. Note that line 4.118, *hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsum expendere fatum*, which sounds similar and has sometimes been taken to refer to the poet's own 'fated' exposition of fate, in its context probably has to do rather with criminals whose crimes as well as whose punishments proceed according to fate (thus: 'this too is fated: to be punished for fate itself'); see my discussion in Volk 2002: 218 n. 41 and fn. 64 above.

⁶⁸ I have treated this topic in Volk 2001; cf. also Delatte 1935 (on the depiction of cosmological study as an act of violence in other ancient texts), Vallauri 1954: 149–51 (on similar issues in the Hermetic Corpus), Lühr 1969: 161–2 (on the tension between *ratio* and *fatum* in Manilius), and Hadot 2006: 91–229 (on the difference between a 'Promethean' and an 'Orphic' approach to nature).

poet's self-representation as a sorcerer about to draw the stars from the sky has, as we have seen, a whole number of connotations. One of the impressions created is surely that of an undue and sinister disruption of the cosmic order: as we learn later in the poem, the very immutability of the stars is the proof and guarantee of both the divinity of the universe and the infallibility of astrology; removing them from the firmament thus constitutes a severe interference with the workings of the cosmos.

Now, obviously, *sidera deducere mundo* is just Manilius' metaphor for treating celestial phenomena in his poetry, and he is not announcing any actual nefarious designs on the heavenly bodies, in the manner (say) of the Thessalian witches. Still, metaphors carry associations and help establish themes, and just as, for example, the recurring image of the heavenly journey helps keep up Manilius' theme of near-mystical elation, the magical metaphor at the beginning of the poem initiates a subtext of violence that continues through the rest of the work, being taken up again, in the form of tantalizing hints, as early as the poet's history of astrology.⁶⁹ As we have seen, Hermes is credited with granting knowledge of this art to human beings; however, Manilius' description of how this 'gift of the gods' (26) came about is anything but straightforward:

quem [sc. mundum] primum interius licuit cognoscere terris
munere caelestum. quis enim condentibus illis
clepsisset furto mundum, quo cuncta reguntur?
quis foret humano conatus pectore tantum,
inuitis ut dis cuperet deus ipse uideri?
tu princeps auctorque sacri, Cyllenie, tanti. (1.25–30)

Earth was first granted more profound knowledge of the universe through the gift of the gods. For who, if they were hiding it, would have stolen heaven, by which everything is governed? Who, born with a human mind, would have attempted so much that he would have wished to appear a god himself, against the will of the gods? You, Cyllenian [i.e., Mercury], are the founder and bestower of such a great and sacred activity.

At first glance, the poet's point seems clear enough: human beings cannot 'steal the heavens' and 'appear like god', if the gods do not allow it; in other words, understanding the workings of the cosmos and thus achieving the desired assimilation to the divine is a gift and cannot be brought about by force. Luckily, the gods are well disposed.

⁶⁹ See the thought-provoking discussion of Valvo 1978, with Flores 1982: 117–20 and Volk 2001: 108–10.

and Hermes, one assumes, acts simply as their representative in distributing the boon that actually issues from the divinity as a collective (compare the plural in *munere caelestum*, 1.26).

Or does he? The conceit of 'stealing heaven' (highlighted through the redundant expression *clepsisset furto*⁷⁰), which is perhaps not so different from the idea of drawing the stars from the sky, calls to mind Hermes' traditional role as a master thief and raises the possibility that the god—a well-known friend and benefactor of mankind both in Greek religion and in his manifestation as the Egyptian Thoth—might have himself 'stolen heaven' from the hiding and unwilling gods, that is, appropriated forbidden astrological knowledge and handed it on to humans. The two questions in lines 1.26–8 would then not be merely rhetorical ('Who would have...? Nobody.'), but perfectly serious and leading up to line 1.30 as the answer ('Who would have...? Hermes did.'). This interpretation is enabled also by the inherent ambivalence of the Latin ablative absolute: it is simply impossible to tell whether *condentibus illis* (1.26) and *inuitis...dis* (1.29) are counterfactual ('if they had hidden it'; 'if the gods had been unwilling') or concessive ('even though they were hiding it'; 'even against the will of the gods').

So is Hermes the representative of divine good will towards man, or is he a revolutionary who in a Promethean act of disobedience steals (knowledge of) the cosmos from the begrudging gods in order to benefit mankind?⁷¹ The first interpretation fits in with Manilius' philosophy as a whole, which stresses both that the divine wishes to be revealed (so the gods are not begrudging) and that, conversely, if it did not wish to be known, attempting to force a revelation would be sacrilegious and, presumably, unsuccessful.⁷² It must also be admitted that taking Hermes to be the thief of the *mundus* makes it difficult to account for the 'human mind' (cf. *humano...pectore*, 28) of the figure who dared defy the gods—unless we assume that Manilius is following a version by

which Hermes/Thoth was born a man and deified only later on.⁷³ If the second interpretation is thus less likely or perhaps even to be rejected entirely, the text as it stands—with its ambiguities and its strange metaphor of cosmic theft—nevertheless evokes it as a possibility, however fleeting. In his story of Hermes, Manilius thus makes at least passing reference to a different paradigm of acquiring knowledge about the universe, one that involves daring, cunning, and the overcoming of divine unwillingness and resistance.

This paradigm is alluded to again and again in the *Astronomica* through Manilius' use of sometimes surprisingly violent language in his description of man's research into and understanding of the cosmos. Thus, the early priests 'bound the god with their dutifulness' (*officio uinxere deum*, 1.48) and 'took hold of the stars that rule by silent laws' (*deprendit* [sc. *experientia*] *tacitis dominantia legibus astra*, 1.63). While the violence in these faded metaphors is comparatively muted, it is more palpable at the end of the first proem, where the 'victory' of human *ratio* is described as a veritable conquest of heaven and a defeat of the gods: 'reason scaled heaven' (*caelum ascendit ratio*, 1.97) and 'snatched from Jupiter his bolt of lightning and power of thunder' (*eripuitque Ioni fulmen uiresque tonandi*, 1.104).⁷⁴ The image evoked is that of the gigantomachy, with the earthborn giants attempting to invade the realm of the heavenly gods and to wrest their power from them.⁷⁵ It recurs in the fourth book of the *Astronomica*, where Manilius assures the student that his task is to 'scale heaven' (*scandere caelum*, 4.390) and to 'take possession of the cosmos' (*mundoque potiri*, 4.392); the latter idea recurs with greater brutality in 4.884, 'we take possession of the captured cosmos' (*capto potimur mundo*; cf. 2.127–8). Generally speaking, in the eyes of Manilius, man, uniquely endowed to impose his will on all aspects of creation, naturally extends his imperialist attitude to the sky as well. Note the tone of aggression in the following passage:

⁷⁰ On *clepsisset* and its connotations, see Flores 1982: 119.

⁷¹ Valvo 1978: 123–8 points out parallels between Manilius' Hermes and the Prometheus of Aeschylus' play.

⁷² Contrast 4.922, *quis putet esse nefas nosci, quod cernere fas est?* ('Who would believe that it is a sacrilege to get to know what it is right to see?') with 2.127–8, *quis neget esse nefas inuitum prendere mundum | et uelut in semet captum deducere in orbem?* ('Who would deny that it is a sacrilege to take hold of heaven against its will and, having captured it, lead it down onto the earth as onto one's own level?'; for the interpretation of these two lines, see Volk 2001: 92–106). Since the *mundus* willingly displays itself to humans, it is *fas* to investigate it; however, if the *mundus* ever were unwilling, 'taking' ('stealing') it would be *nefas*.

⁷³ See Flores 1982: 118 + n. 33, with reference to Gundel and Gundel 1966: 10–11 n. 1, as well as Fowden 1986: 27–8.

⁷⁴ Cf. also the description of the powers of *ratio* in 1.541–3: *ratio, cui nulla resistunt | claustra nec immensae moles caeciae recessus; | omnia succumbunt, ipsum est penetrabile caelum* ('reason, to which no barriers offer resistance nor mighty matter nor dark hiding-places; everything yields (to it), and heaven itself can be penetrated'). A translation of this passage was chosen by the Container Corporation of America in 1961 for an ad in their series 'Great Ideas of Western Man'.

⁷⁵ On the gigantomachy as an established metaphor for impious intellectual endeavours, especially in the field of natural philosophy, see Volk 2001: 102–6, with further references. I have termed this trope 'intellectual gigantomachy'.

secessit in urbes,
 edomuit terram ad fruges, animalia cepit
 imposuitque uiam ponto, stetit unus in arcem
 erectus capitis uictorque ad sidera mittit
 sidercos oculos propiusque aspectat Olympum
 inquitque Iouem. (4.903–8)

He [man] moved into cities, tamed the earth for (bearing) fruit, caught animals, and imposed a pathway on the sea; he alone stood with his head lifted up and, victorious, lifts his starlike eyes to the stars and looks closer at Olympus and asks for Jupiter.

God may invite man into heaven, but as these examples show, it is just about conceivable that man may show up uninvited.

What are we to make of this apparent contradiction in Manilius' world view? It certainly has to be admitted that the instances of 'impious cosmology' are few and far between: that they are mostly fairly subtle; and that they often tend to be neutralized or softened by their immediate surroundings (see Volk 2001: 112–13). Thus, for example, the description of the priests' 'binding' of the god is followed by the remark that 'the presence of the powerful divinity itself inflamed their pure intellects' (*quibus ipsa potentis | numinis accendit castam praesentia mentem*, 1.48–9), which puts agency firmly back into the hands of the divine; at 4.884–5, the martial undertone of *capto potitur mundo* is diffused by the reminder that the cosmos is actually our parent and that we are a part of it. Still, the sense of intellectual violence, or at least of human initiative and independence from the divine, is in my opinion definitely there, an undercurrent that runs through the *Astronomica* and that calls for an explanation. In 2001, I attempted to account for it with the have-one's-cake-and-eat-it-too principle, suggesting that Manilius, as it were, gets carried away by his metaphors and mythological paradigms, wishing to employ at the same time such not necessarily compatible notions as 'cosmic self-revelation', 'Hermes the master thief', 'intellectual gigantomachy', and 'strict determinism' (Volk 2001: 113–14). While I still believe that this hypothesis goes a long way towards explaining the eclecticism and occasional incoherence of Manilius' ideas, it now seems to me that the self-contradictions discussed in this section point to larger tensions that arise from the very way in which Manilius has constructed his cosmos, a universe in which the above and the below are inextricably linked, but where the nature of this link is not always as obvious as it would first appear. This topic will concern us further in the concluding chapter.