

Neoplatonism And The Origin Of The Cartesian Subject

James A Doull
fdoull@gmail.com

Introduction

Hegel, beginning his lectures on the history of the older modern philosophy, observed that that philosophy began where the ancient had ended: the new philosophy had its origin in a completion of the old. This completion he found in Neoplatonism: the divine self-consciousness which was for Aristotle the first among substances became in the full development of Neoplatonism the one comprehensive substance which, going into the division of an ideal and a sensible world, was at once the origin of that division and the end to which it returned. The appropriation of being by thought which began with Parmenides was complete. The present paper would clarify the development of Neoplatonism to that completion and the transition at that point to another philosophy.

The difference of the old philosophy from the new was that the one was about the Idea the divine actuality on which all things depended the other about Spirit the revelation of the absolute unity itself.

The absolute freedom of the Idea is not merely that it passes over into life nor as finite knowledge lets that difference appear in itself, but in the absolute truth of itself [that is, as returned to itself out of this division] freely releases the moment of its otherness as nature.¹

The rational individual in this relation to the divine freedom and to a nature opposed to itself is the subject which comprises its difference in its self-relation.

The primary structure of Neoplatonism is transformed in this transition. Being and thinking (*noeton* and *noesis*) are not mediated by this procession and sensible appearance of the orders of nature, but thinking mediates the relation of a creative divine freedom with a created world to which was imparted in the medium of time and extension an apparent independence. With this altered relation of the primary moments it is no longer true, as for Proclus, that "every manifold is posterior to the One." The knowledge beyond

¹ Hegel, *Enzyklopadie der philosophischen wissenschaften* (1830), 44. Hegel speaks of the transition from the return of all finitude to the freedom of the One to where the finite is for a free Cartesian (or Augustinian) subject from the standpoint of a logic which has taken into itself also this older modern relation. Descartes (or Augustine) rather finds himself in this new philosophical beginning than has hold of the logic of the transition.

knowledge of the One and the discursive knowledge of a plurality this side of the One have no longer a gulf between them but are elements of a knowledge at once immediate and mediated.

Man in this new philosophy is a self-consciousness which knows the division of the finite as its own.² Radically opposed to an extended world, its inner freedom externalized, it is also drawn to that apparently alien world and finds a realization of its freedom in discovering its hidden ideality. Hence an insatiable scientific and technical interest, which while it may distract from the knowledge of God and freedom, is also a way to that knowledge.

The difference of the Neoplatonic from the older modern world is evident where individual freedom and a unified objective end meet in a political community. The highest political realization of a Neoplatonic thought is the unified state of the ending Middle Age. Individual freedom is ordered under a sovereign will. In relation to the sovereignty individuals have an intuition of their primary freedom. The ordered relation of their finite interests to this primary end is sustained by the opposition of an aristocratic or universal class to the class of those in commerce and the trades, however much the interests of the two may interpenetrate. The ruinous consequences when the sovereign fails to maintain his priority or when private persons would usurp the monarchy, where the relation of commoner to aristocrat degenerates into unbounded hatred can nowhere be studied better than in well known Shakespearean tragedies. The most complete breakdown of the ordered elements is perhaps where Hamlet has the obligation to restore a corrupted monarchy, is destroyed with many in the contradiction of being at once sovereign and subordinate.³

² The Neoplatonic noetic thought knows the finite as belonging to self-consciousness, but to a self-consciousness itself composite of the divided and the undivided, and having its freedom beyond this relation. For the Cartesian subject a true knowledge of the finite is consequent on its relation to the divine freedom. Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophiae*, V: "Etsi enim ejus sim naturae ut, quamdiu aliquid valde clare et distincte percipio, non possim non credere verum esse, quia tamen ejus etiam sum naturae ut non possim obtutum mentis in eandem rem semper defigere ad illam clare percipiendam, recurratque saepe memoria judicii ante facti, cum non amplius attendo ad rationes propter quas tale quid judicavi, rationes aliae afferri possunt quae me, si Deum ignorarem, facile ab opinione dejicerent, atque ita de nulla unquam re veram & certam scientiam, se vagas tantum & mutabiles opiniones, haberem." (AT, vii, 69). Augustine's criticism of a Porphyrian Neoplatonism, from which he has received great enlightenment, is that it does not in this way stabilize his relation to the sensible world: "...invisibilia tua per ea quae sunt intellecta conspexi, sed aciem figere non evalui et repercussa infirmitate redditus solitis non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam [i.e. not 'scientiam'] ..." *Conf.*, VII, xvii.

³ Aquinas proposed to define the relation of individuals to the state through the virtues of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The virtues, as belonging to the free individual or person, could however only hold their ground against evil passions within a Roman structure of hell and purgatory and subjected thus to an ideal unity of interests in a sovereign will a structure elaborated in the *Divina Commedia* and other works of the poet. In the Renaissance state the virtuous and the self-seeking will are harmonized in relation to the sovereign: the virtuous knight has become the 'conquistador' or the like. When this harmony is destroyed, as by the murder of a king, the attempted restoration by particular wills exposes their nullity and that the state is in truth the one sovereign will. That the state is the sovereign is at the historical level the completed demonstration of the Neoplatonic principle: the unity is not only before the division, but contains within it the division and the negation of the division in the recognized supremacy of the monarchy.

The free subject of the older modern age, as having the division within his freedom, is himself sovereign and with other constitutes a civil society a state within the state. The external state of Locke or Rousseau has not for its end to replace the state but to make the unified end of the state also the end of all its members.⁴

It can be useful to the argument to notice the difference of both the Neoplatonic and the older modern freedom from the contemporary freedom where individuals in their particularity would found all authority and institutional order on their prior rights. Communities acceptable to this freedom are either rooted in language and other natural particularities linguistic and cultural communities or must satisfy the boundless passions of individuals through a global economy. In this contemporary freedom the eternal appears to be more deeply historicized than ever in previous ages. Being is declared to be time, and time whose moments are concretized, fortified thus against a resurgent eternity. This temporalized freedom was however menaced for Heidegger by the abstract logic of the global economy which broke through a natural basis of thought in language. Its stability depends in truth, as analogously in the Hellenistic age, on a division into opposed dogmas.⁵

So much at this point for the moderns. The immediate antecedent of Neoplatonism was of course the Hellenistic world, where individuals thought to find freedom within the bounds of time and change. Plato and Aristotle, bringing to light the intelligible world on which the *polis* rested, had discovered in thought a coincidence of the objective good and individual freedom. Then, as for us in recent times, this result appeared to be the immediate possession of individuals and the objective pole a Heraclitean or Democritean world of change. In a clarified relation of self-consciousness to the totality of 'becoming' or 'becoming atomized' individuals thought to have an untroubled freedom (*ataraxia*). On the basis of that primary relation they thought also to have as truly their own the finite content of their world.

The free individual or person appropriated his world either in the immediacy of pleasure or universally in a comprehended imagination. Against these dogmatic *haireseis*, which have analogies in concreter form in our world, the Sceptic sought freedom in an undivided relation to the world of becoming. In that total view the opposed dogmas of the Stoic and Epicurean collapsed and the individual was virtually freed from his temporal cave. That being is time is the view of a divided self-consciousness, and the division once shown to be without truth, the individual goes into himself and would find a true consciousness of his freedom in an intelligible world.

The individual in this way returns to the origin of his freedom as set forth in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. His relation to those philosophies is not that of those who

⁴ An end which of course was clear neither to Locke nor Rousseau who remained with a subjective liberation. The relation of such an individual freedom to a unified political end is only partially disclosed in the 'enlightened' institutions of the United States.

⁵ Without a criticism of the divided philosophical culture of the present time Neoplatonism can appear deceptively close to the contemporary spirit: P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, I, 492-3; J. Combès, *Études Néoplatoniciennes*, 35-60. For want of a sufficient criticism J. N. Findlay, having escaped the contemporary 'Cave' to Neoplatonism, fell into the more difficult 'Cave' of Hinduism.

sought to bring the sensible world within the grasp of thought and then discerned beyond it a realm of separate spirits. Already in his superseded dogmas the free individual thought to have the categorized sensible world within his primary self-relation. Returned to the intelligible realm he found the ideas within thought. Plato was read as having this knowledge and as desiring beyond it relation to an absolute One. The One as self-consciousness beyond the division of *noeton* and *noesis* and as absolute good beyond finite relations was Aristotelian and not Platonic, the Aristotelian God as the point of unity before division, where the individual had contact with the ground of his freedom. The unified temporal world which had gone over to an eternal world had now the status of a derivative image.⁶

The three *hypostases* or totalities which made up the Neoplatonic world were at first only loosely articulated. If one suppose the complete articulation to be that found in Eriugena, where the ideal and sensible worlds have the simple structure of a division and return of the One, Plotinus by this measure is only at the beginning of a development. It was contained in the conversion from a unified sensible world to the intelligible, that the relation of the two worlds should not be abstract, as where the individual remains in the ideal world and only some part of himself descends reluctantly to a sensible embodiment. For the descent to be concrete the intelligible world must first be unified, the moment of division and difference in it made adequate to the '*noetic*' and '*noeric*' poles and they to each other. The One, as the origin of what comes after it, while remaining free of finite division must have that status for thought as comprehensive of the intelligible and sensible totalities.

The history of Neoplatonism is not of the different interests of one philosopher from another, that one is more purely philosophical, another more pious and devoted to the gods, but is the logical development of the one systematic structure. The development can only come to rest where the integrated individual knows his freedom as resting on a unified relation of the two worlds to the One.⁷

The Neoplatonists had themselves an objective measure of the progressive movement of their thought in the *Parmenides* of Plato, as in their commentaries they succeeded one farther than another in explaining the order and connection of its 'hypotheses'. It is no great matter that the dialogue was diverted from its original intention of showing how the relation of sensibles and separate ideas depended on a synthesis of the one and the indefinite dyad regarded affirmatively and then negatively. The dialogue taken to be about the One and the noetic world and their sensible image could not be fully explicated until the relation of these totalities had been given the form of a unified divine self-thinking. The history is near to completion when Damascius, extending his commentary

⁶ Unless through composition with the Dyad the Platonic 'One' is an abstraction and not properly the 'good': *Philebus* 65a-67b. The '*demiourgos*' who fashions an image of the ideal world is mythical and not conceptually defined in *Timaeus*. If after Aristotle's destruction of the assumption that the concrete and actual can be from a composition of contraries (*Met.*, N,2), Neoplatonists speak of what is after the One as 'composite' this Platonic language serves, if inappropriately, to speak of principles concrete and actual drawn from Aristotle.

⁷ On the deepening understanding of Neoplatonism after Plotinus, Dodds, *Proclus, Elements of Theology* (1932), XVIII-XXVI, compared with Trouillard on Proclus in Combès, *Ét. Néopl.* (1989), 308ff.

to the negative hypotheses, discovers a unified relation of the sensible world to the intelligible, as already when the second hypothesis in his comment is found hardly other than the incomprehensible division of the One itself.⁸

One further point in this preliminary statement: something of the Aristotelian *noesis noeseos* eludes this return to it from the temporal freedom of the Hellenistic sects. Aristotle speaks of a divine thinking where what is divine is not so much divine because it is absolutely one as because it is the active *nous* which having all the intelligible in its possession is the actuality of that unity itself. There is in this concept, to speak theologically, an equality of persons and not a primacy of the paternal or substantial. Thus if Neoplatonism is for Hegel a realization of the Aristotelian idea it prepares also for the disclosure in another philosophy of what more that idea contains.⁹

It remains to follow the course of this argument more precisely. Its natural division is the following:

- (a) The origin of the free individual and the temporalized Hellenistic world.
- (b) The logic of the conversion of this temporal freedom to the eternal.
- (c) The logical development of Neoplatonism.
- (d) The origin in it of the older modern philosophy.

A) The Hellenic Origin Of The Hellenistic Philosophy

Hegel's history of Neoplatonism as the process by which all finitude is known to have its truth in the Aristotelian *noesis noeseos* is difficult from the comprehensiveness of its view. It looks back not only to the Hellenistic schools as the immediate antecedent of Neoplatonism but to the origin of that subjective culture in the older Greek world. The free individual or person, emerging from the substantial life of the *polis* and its gods, found first a temporal realization of its freedom in relation to a temporalized and materialized *logos* and then from an apparent and contradictory freedom sought and discovered its ground in an eternal *logos*.¹⁰

⁸ See 'Damascius', *infra*.

⁹ The One of the Neoplatonists as also the Good is pure act. This concept is presupposed without insight into its structure. What Aristotle says at *Met* XII, 7, of the divine activity is taken to be true at the noetic level. How Aristotle could speak more definitely but not mythically also of the first god can be explained historically and is more evident to the standpoint of the older modern philosophy which knows the undivided and the divided as complementary.

¹⁰ This circuitous route corrects a tendency to find too direct a kinship between contemporary subjective freedom and Neoplatonism. The freedom which finds its substantial end in Neoplatonism is that of the 'person' or rational individual of Hellenistic-Roman culture, who is free from his world but does not expect, as in all contemporary doctrine of rights, that it serve and satisfy him in his particularity. The intelligible

In this return the Neoplatonists read Plato and Aristotle as though containing already the subjective freedom of the following age. The problems of the previous age and its philosophies fell outside their interest. This longer perspective has the advantage that it permits not only a comprehensive view of Neoplatonism and its intrinsic movement but also its limit, if there is that in Plato and Aristotle which Neoplatonism does not contain but became the interest of later philosophy.¹¹

The subjective spirit of the Sophists and of the Socratic schools for Plato and Aristotle could either be contained within the qualified freedom of the political community or directed to its true development in a 'theoretic life'. The 'virtuous' relation of the individual to the state was a practical freedom which harmonized the passions to the common good. It belonged to the 'theoretic life' to discover a radical unity of life and thought. The free individual of the Hellenistic schools had supposedly brought all division and particularity to rest in an untroubled self-relation (*ataraxia*).¹²

The reader of Eumenides knows that the stability of the *polis* rested on a harmony between the gods of the state and those of the family or natural community. The individual stood in a divided relation to the underworld and to the Olympians. The unconscious potentiality of the one was his end as mortal. In relation to the Olympians he participated in the immortal life of the gods, in whom for a poetical vision life and self-conscious freedom were united. An ordered human life was made possible by a reason which could hold in check the latent conflict of these opposed ends.

The virtuous balance is easily destroyed by war "which mostly assimilates the disposition of men to their immediate circumstances."¹³ The resolution of this division at its extreme point also became the interest of tragedy. Oedipus is shown as learning the blindness of political reason in relation to natural particularity. He is then shown also as liberated from the vengeful passions of the natural will, and in relation to his sons and daughter from the opposed ends of family and state. The unity of these ends which is brought into view in these and other Sophoclean tragedies is not that of the Aristophanic comedy where the individual is raised to a self-conscious freedom in relation to the opposed ends of family and state and their gods. The tragic unification is rather that of the Aristotelian god for whom life is the actuality of self-conscious freedom, not in the

basis of this freedom is to be sought not only in Neoplatonism but also in the older modern philosophy. Both philosophies are necessary to a correction of contemporary dogmas.

¹¹ In particular there occurred in the discovery of the categories of a finite reflection in Plato and Aristotle a dialectical relation of affirmative and negative moments for which there was hardly place in a Neoplatonic separation of divided and undivided, a relation which could again become of interest when in the older modern philosophy divided and undivided were regarded as complementary.

¹² The principles of the Hellenistic philosophies were anticipated by the Socratics, but within the *polis* could not attain their later universality. The following paragraphs indicate how this universal self-consciousness could emerge from the objective authority of the political community and its gods.

¹³ Thucydides III, 82.

medium of poetical language but for that inmost unity of the soul which is the actuality of the potential *nous*.¹⁴

Aristophanes when in *Symposium* he defines the primary movement and end in humans describes it mythically as the liberation from a divided relation to the gods. The comedies present variously through divided and ridiculous characters the divided relation of individuals to their institutions and their gods, and then dissolves these divisions. The spectator is awakened to a knowledge of this content as his own. There is in that awakening the beginning of a new relation of individuals to their institutions. The poet himself in *Plutus* writes not for citizens of the *polis* but for a society of free individuals.

At this point of transition the individual through the comic art has a free relation to that same world, human and divine, as the Neoplatonist will regain for himself when the new society into which the *polis* has fallen has come to an understanding of itself. In this return Proclus has still not quite attained that freedom from a plurality of finite gods which is there in *Birds* and others of the later comedies of Aristophanes. Only perhaps in the last flowering of Neoplatonism in the Renaissance does a like completeness recur in aesthetic form.

The logic of this transition from the old substantial world to the world of free individuals is more transparent in the history of Greek philosophy. The movement there is to discover an *arche* in which thinking and being are one, the contrarities of the many being united in that relation. In this development emerge the categories through which the finite is more adequately grasped, until in Aristotle's 'substance' and 'causes' the world of things is concretely related to thought. But the most comprehensive of divisions remained, that of the *nous* itself in the structure of the *polis* and its gods. In that division, if one speak teleologically of the history with Aristotle, lay the original provocation to philosophical thought, and the inquiry only came to rest with its resolution in the *noesis noeseos* which has life and nature as its own.

This *arche* is for Aristotle the object of a *theoria* in which the divided and laborious life of men finds freedom in relation to a divine thinking comprehensive of this division.¹⁵

¹⁴ The difference of tragic and comic poetry as ways of self-understanding within the *polis* illustrates the difference of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies from the Hellenistic philosophies which have as their principle the rational individual or person and the origin of that concept. The logic of the transition is to be seen most clearly in the Aristotelian philosophy. Tragedy in its fullest development (*Trachiniaiæ*, *Oedipus Coloneus*) raises human mortality to a participation in the immortal self-consciousness of the gods. Comedy, attending to the mixture of human and divine in the gods (which Plato would eliminate), awakens a subjective freedom on the human side more complete than that of the gods.

The Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies give conceptual form to the noetic. The principal difference between the philosophies in this regard is whether what is first is the One or Good or this principle as having the dyad within its self-knowledge. In neither case does the human individual take this elevation and inner unification to be his own independently of the divine or as a person. In this free individual the elevation of the human is the divine life, which for Aristotle as a temporary state is stabilized, but this stabilization is abstract: the finite is an otherness for the individual who maintains his freedom by negating this otherness, by subordinating it to a prior unity. This relation did not and could not occur within the older philosophy. The Socratics who anticipated in a manner the Hellenistic schools could not maintain their subjective principles against the objectivity of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies.

There is not yet here the free individual of the Hellenistic schools nor the Neoplatonic *nous* in which this individual comes to a true concept of itself. Nor is there the relation of the *nous* to a primary One, the unknowable end and interest of all knowledge.

The new standpoint of post-Aristotelian philosophy is the result of all the previous development. The world as brought within categorial form belongs to the comprehensive category of self-conscious thought; the ideas and their sensible derivatives are within the *nous*. But this unified thought is also divided: the immediate unity of the *nous* in the One is also a divided relation to all that is other than the One. The primary interest of this post-Aristotelian thought is therefore to overcome this division, that the *nous* should so unify its knowledge of the many that in the end its difference from the One will be known as without truth. Philosophical thought would in this way have found its way back to the original Aristotelian concept of the *nous* for which division and plurality was not through a transition to another standpoint but intrinsic to the One.

The Aristotelian philosophy in its original and proper sense responded to the primary desire and need of the older Hellenic world. The undeveloped concept in it of a movement not to the One but from it had however a continuing interest in the ancient world not philosophical, but as the receptivity and expectation of the Christian revelation. That revelation is unintelligible from a Neoplatonic standpoint as contradicting the primacy of the One over all plurality. But if that presupposition is undone in the completed development of Neoplatonism there may be thought room for a philosophical thought to which that division is intrinsic.¹⁶

B) The Hellenistic Schools And Origin Of Neoplatonism

The world of the Hellenistic schools, if one consider it from the side of Neoplatonism, is a temporal image of the intelligible world. That image emerges at the point of coincidence between the undivided and divided in the intelligible. The image is an immediate existence of the ideal. The noetic self-consciousness of the ideal world is dispersed in that immediacy into a multitude of souls having knowledge of sensible individuals and abstract universals. The individuals who have taken the division of life and thought of the *polis* and its religion into their self-relation find themselves in the immediacy of this result in that sensible world. This temporalized freedom is the antecedent and condition of the conversion from it to the noetic world of Neoplatonism. The individuals of this Hellenistic world bring with them from their earlier formation the assumption that they are free, that the sensible multiplicity and their own contingent relations are not alien but stand in a true relation to their self-consciousness. The Stoic

¹⁵ *Metaphy.* A, 983a29ff.

¹⁶ The Aristotelian god, knowing only itself, has also life in it. It knows life therefore as its own *logos* or is self-revelatory. The One of the Neoplatonists is assumed to be productive of all things, but not through its own *logos*, unless as this appears dividedly, e.g. as the *praedestinationes* of Eriugena. This implication of the Aristotelian divine idea has its further philosophical development in Augustine and then in the older modern philosophy, where one does not have fully the Aristotelian relation but a knowledge at least that the divided and the undivided are complementary.

would show this assumption to be true for the individual as universal or thinking, the Epicurean for him in his sensuous immediacy. The Sceptic regards this fixed assertion of opposed dogmas as reason to question whether there is any truth for self-consciousness. He goes on to show that if one assume a unity of these opposed dogmas reason itself destroys this supposed truth and reduces it to a knowledge of appearances, which can suffice for daily life but is without truth. All three have in common a self-conscious freedom which rests untroubled in itself. The Sceptic has disclosed a world which contradicts this assumed freedom.¹⁷

Scepticism is thus a disintegration of philosophy and of that world of which it is the comprehensive thought. The 'deconstruction' which nibbles at opposed contemporary dogmas is in comparison frivolous, in that behind a radical subjective freedom and its temporalized world an older Christian order remains. For this ancient scepticism there is nothing but the contradiction of an assumed subjective freedom and an unfree world. The logic of this disintegration is of the greatest importance to a knowledge of Neoplatonism. Through it one knows Neoplatonism not as an extravagant aberration but as a necessary turning of thought. This turning also contains implicitly the subsequent course of Neoplatonism not simply to go over to an intelligible world but also to know the contradiction of the sensible as resolved in that relation.

The *ataraxia* of the Stoic appeared to be absolutely stabilized against the world: "*Justum et tenacem propositi virum, si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae.*"¹⁸ The unstable content of sense and imagination was appropriated to the self-identity of thought in the *kataleptike phantasia*, the Stoic criterion of truth. The Stoics thought also that they could advance from that abstract universality, which is indeed the beginning of science, to a demonstrated unity of sensible particularity with it. They would thus have established an unshakeable relation of thinking self-consciousness to its objects. The defect in this relation was that it contained the syllogistic mediation only as negated in the relation of individual to universal. The mediation belonged to a subjective reflection and not to the structure of its objects.¹⁹

Although the Stoics appeared to have gone beyond Aristotle in detaching the categories from sensible substance and making logic fully the possession of self-conscious thought, in the immediacy of this result they had only an abbreviated and formal relation of thinking to the forms of reasoning. So also at the same time as the *logoi* of nature were taken to be comprehensive of finite categories, the Stoics had hold of sensible objects only through abstract categories of Presocratic thought somethings, their qualities and relations through which an objective unity of 'somethings' with their determinations is not discovered.

¹⁷ The following succinct statement of the essential structure of the three principal Hellenistic philosophies attempts to extract the intrinsic *logos* of each from the texts of the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Usener's *Epicurea* and Sextus Empiricus (R.G.Bury). That is the harder to do in that analogies of that culture to the subjective culture of the present time invite us to read the texts in the light of imported *Logoi*. The best defense against anachronistic interpretations is ever Hegel's *Vorlesungen uber die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 'Dogmatismus und Skepticismus' (Michelet, 1840, 377-517).

¹⁸ Horace, *Carm.*, lib.III, III,1 ff.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, Michelet, Vol. 13, 399ff.

The Epicurean sought to bind together infallibly the inner security of his self-conscious freedom with the passing good of pleasure. The mediation between the two fell to a discriminating judgment which should relate momentary pleasures to the whole content of a cultivated life. But, as with the Stoic, this mediation was lost in the untroubled self-relation of the individual. In that abstract freedom he is indifferent to the world: "*Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum.*"²⁰ Similarly the categories in which he thought his sensible world were shifting qualities and atoms having only the most formal differences and properly, as pure objects of thought, only their difference from the void.

The opposition of the Stoic to the Epicurean philosophy cancels itself out no doubt, in that beginning with opposed assumptions each maintains itself so far as it can appropriate the assumption of the other. For themselves the opposition remains, but the Sceptic rightly calls them 'dogmatists' and takes their one-sided assumptions into one view. This comprehensive view leads to the inevitable conclusion that the free individual who is certain the world is not alien to him finds himself in an alien world which has for him no essential and moving interest.²¹ The student of Neoplatonism at least is unlikely to confuse this with the so-called scepticism of Hume or Schultze. That scepticism would be called by the ancient Sceptic an empirical dogmatism.

Ancient scepticism is beyond the opposition of rational and empirical positions but can get hold of itself only negatively by demolishing both. The 'tropes' or 'turnings' by which it effects this complete 'deconstruction' are finally reduced to five.²² (1) If there are only dogmatic positions, then there is no philosophy, that is, unified discourse. (2) If there is philosophical discourse, every mean between universal and individual demands another to ground it, and this another *ad infinitum*. (3) For a perception which relates this regress to itself, everything is an endless relativity. (4) "The 'trope' from hypothesis is when the Dogmatists being compelled to recede *ad infinitum* take as their beginning something which ... they demand to assume as granted without demonstration."²³ But why one hypothesis rather than its opposite? The ground for preferring one to the other lies in the matter of inquiry, which has thus an equal claim to be assumed without proof. (5) The relativity of universal to sensible which emerges from the fourth 'trope' cannot be circumvented by demonstration. The demonstrations the Dogmatists would give of their positions conceal a regressive negativity in their premises and in their conclusions, so that demonstrative reasoning is endlessly circular.

These 'tropes' effect an '*epoche*' or suspension of judgment in all inquiries. Regarding the 'tropes' themselves in this suspense the Sceptic both speaks of them empirically as an indefinite plurality, and knows the five as complete.²⁴ In truth they are complete unless for a thinking which knows endless division as a moment in itself and in its objects. That

²⁰ Lucretius, III, 830

²¹ On the sceptical life, St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VI, vi ff. The oppressive demands of the contemporary scholarly life are different as having, however obscurely, an underlying concept of scientific truth.

²² Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr.Hyp.* I, 164-177.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 135 and 169ff.

knowledge Plato sought in his concept of an 'otherness' which was not infinite only but a moment in the definite structure of genera and species and their relation to individuals.²⁵ Aristotle regarded Zeno's problems of the infinite, which still perplex logicians, as belonging to an abstract and undeveloped thought.²⁶ In his concept of substance they were resolved. That knowledge was however for a thinking which could contemplate universally the formation of increasingly concrete unities of being and thinking. The Sceptic and the Dogmatists, whose positions he would unite, have possession of this development in their self-conscious freedom. But this is a divided self-consciousness, at once universal and as individuals in changing relation to ever changing things. For the Sceptic this division has the form on the one side of a freedom from finite relations resting in itself, on the other of an endless empirical involvement with his world. He is impotent to bring these relations into that unity which is presupposed in the sense of his freedom.

The Sceptical criticism not only destroys the opposed 'dogmas' of the Stoics and the Epicureans but virtually also its own standpoint. There is a progression in the five later tropes in which the endless division from falling in a subjective reflection on the relation of universals to sensible individuals passes into the objective relation of the terms. The fifth 'trope' on the circularity of the relation has all but brought the object into the form of a *logos* comprehending division. Such was the original relation for the Stoics, of their self-conscious freedom to the universal *logos* and its genera as *spermatikoi logoi*. In that relation the divided moments of self-consciousness, as universal and immediate, are united. This unity itself as immediate is the instant (*to exaiphnes*) in which the divided moments of 'becoming' are one. In this unified relation to the sensible world the free individual is released from the bonds of his temporal cave and reverts to his original concept as a thinking which in its self-relation knows as its own the division of life and the ideal world. Such is the origin of Neoplatonism.²⁷

C). Neoplatonism

Introduction

For one who looks back to the origin of the self-conscious freedom which foundered in Scepticism, the configuration of the world this self-consciousness finds when it has collected itself out of its division and temporal dispersion is evident. Its freedom rests in the unity of the ideal and the sensible world; life and the attendant division of immediate and universal self-consciousness is a manifestation of that unchanging unity.

For the self-consciousness itself which has collected itself out of the division and contradiction of Scepticism, its world is not at first so clearly articulated. The *ataraxia* or

²⁵ *Sophist*, 254b ff.

²⁶ *Physics* VI, 9.

²⁷ "Die nächste Stufe, welche das Selbstbewusstsein erreicht, ist, dass es ein Bewusstsein über das erhält, was es so geworden, oder ihm sein Wesen zum Gegenstande wird." Hegel, *Gesch. der Phil.*, 516.

rest which the free individual had against the division and fluctuation of his world is now the One, his end as unified. The individual finitude of the Sceptic has sunk for a unified thought into that unity. All the sensible has been absorbed into the externalized identity of matter.

In this relation the division the Sceptic could not make his own has been transcended. Self-consciousness is constituted in relation to the One by a division from it and the negation of this division. The division occurs and is negated; the resultant self-consciousness has hold of the moments of its formation as a transition, not at first as a stable knowledge of their relation.

For the self-consciousness thus constituted all finitude falls within its self-relation. It comes to a knowledge of this finitude as its own by dividing what is immediately identical with itself and then by appropriating what has been completely divided. For to know its objects as its own is to impart to them its own logical structure of division and return to the undivided. The knowledge of its objects and of itself in this universal thought has thus the form of a procession and return. But this grasp of its objects and of its own freedom is not at first complete. Just as in its constitution and resulting self-relation it did not have hold of its moments, so their relation is not fully articulated in the knowledge of its objects.

Again, when this unified thought itself and its world pass over into temporal manifestation, the sensible world is not fully articulated. The divided self-consciousness of the Dogmatic schools recurs and their unification through Scepticism is lost from sight.

The movement and history of Neoplatonism is from this first incomplete knowledge of itself to an adequate knowledge of its underlying concept, that is, of the sensible world as manifestation of a unified Idea. The development of this systematic thought can only be intrinsic and of the system as a whole, that is, of its elements and primary logical structure. The principal Neoplatonists differ no doubt in their interests. Iamblichus, for example, has a religious interest, which, by the measure of a Plotinian or Porphyrian Neoplatonism might appear unphilosophical. But in this interest lies the need to discover better the relation of the individual to the ideal world than is found in those philosophers. In him, as in Proclus and Damascius, there is a continuing articulation of the system. In that lies their importance and their interest to a philosophical mind.²⁸

It is alien to the systematic form of this philosophy that the source of its movement and development should be sought in extraneous and contingent causes. The historical development here is also not that of Greek philosophy before Aristotle, where one

²⁸ Dodds (E.T., xix) can write of Plotinus that "he stands not at the point of origin but at the culminating crest of the wave...within two generations the dialectical tension of opposites which is the nerve of the Plotinian system was threatening to sink into a meaningless affirmation of incompatibles." And at xxv, "Proclus ... is not a creative thinker even in the degree of Iamblichus, but a systematizer who carried to its utmost limits the ideal of one comprehensive philosophy that should embrace all the garnered wisdom of the ancient world." As if there were less a system in Plotinus than in Proclus! The question, as was clear to the Neoplatonists after Plotinus, was of the logic of the same system.

philosophy followed another it might seem randomly. The inner logical connection which revealed itself to Aristotle was concealed from his predecessors. There was there an inarticulate movement to systematic form. The development here is within the system.²⁹

The knowledge the noetic self-consciousness has of itself and of its world as its own is abstract so far as the moment of division or mediation is transitional only and lost in the return. Its identity with itself is the prevalent moment in its knowledge. The development is towards an adequation of the moments, where each has in it the others: and Being, Life and Thought are complementary forms of the same totality, differing only as centred successively on each.³⁰ The One remains transcendent over a more and more unified noetic world until the separation becomes problematical.³¹

The philosophers in the course of this development are attracted by cosmogonic systems which appear to integrate the One and the noetic world. Porphyry would admit such an integration, but at the price of importing finite relations into the infinite One. Others accordingly incorporate these cosmogonies, which serve a religious interest, only at a second level. The intrinsic development of Neoplatonism itself finally passes into a Trinitarian form, as with Maximus Confessor and that great Irishman John Scotus Eriugena.

A further development is still necessary. The subject which contemplates the '*divisio naturae*' stands outside the movement itself and can well take from its result a merely formal concept of the divine actuality. That he in his particularity should be comprehended in the movement it was necessary first that a human order should be established, and then this order taken into the infinite Neoplatonic form. This human order was defined by Aquinas through a finite Aristotelian logic. This logic was expanded particularly by Duns Scotus and dissolved in the nominalism of Ockham. That development permitted a return to the standpoint of Eriugena with the difference that the ascent to the universal and the return to worldly interests were harmonized in one divine Idea.³² That completion of Neoplatonism was then the turning point to another philosophy.

1. Plotinus

Of all forms of Neoplatonism there is in the Plotinian the greatest distance between the underlying concept and the form of its disclosure in the intelligible and sensible worlds. In all that comes after the One there is no concretion of the undivided and the divided, but only a difference which passes into an abstract self-relation. The *nous*, as it originates in turning to the One out of division, is an undistinguished unity of being and thinking.³³ The primary forms through which a determinate thought is constituted are the

²⁹ Aristotle, *Met.* I, 984b17ff; 993a11ff.

³⁰ Proclus, *infra*.

³¹ Damascius, *infra*.

³² Cusanus, *infra*.

³³ *Enneads* VI, 2, 6, 18-20. That the *megista gene* of *Sophist*, and they alone, are the primary distinctions of thought, *En.* VI, 2, 6-9.

megista gene of Plato's Sophist: being, motion and rest, same and different. In these forms Plato found a response to the Parmenides of his dialogue, who appeared to have shown that there was no true finitude. But of the 'otherness' which thought had through these irreducible distinctions within itself Aristotle had long before observed that it was an 'otherness' of true and false of the relation of thought to being but not a complete determination of either.³⁴

In the first treatise of the sixth Ennead Plotinus carries through a detailed criticism of the Aristotelian and the Stoic categories. The criticism is that of an infinite thinking which has in itself its own finitude and that of its objects. It is thus beyond the Aristotelian *gene tou ontos* which only in relation to 'first substance' have that unity of their moments in a manner. The Stoic categories, as modes of an infinite *logos*, are closer to Plotinus. But in relation to both, Plotinus' criticism is extraneous and superficial.³⁵

It is not that Plotinus might on further reflection have entered the doctrines examined and criticised them on their own ground. The impediment lay in his concept of the *nous* as immediately unifying endless division in its self-relation. Its actual thinking contains first this indeterminate difference and its need is to limit this indeterminacy. Through the Platonic *gene* the *nous* brings its difference into the stability of its self-relation. In this relation it falls into another duality between the result and the way to it: it stands in an abstract relation to its difference.³⁶

The Aristotelian categories originated in a profound criticism of the Platonic doctrine that all things were a composition of the One and the indeterminate Dyad. In the Aristotelian categories the Dyad has passed into the moment of 'privation' in a concrete object. For Plotinus only the One is beyond composition out of elements. Aristotle was in error, so the criticism repeats with all the categories, in supposing his categories to have a unity unthinkable from the standpoint of the critic.³⁷

The Stoic categories appear to Plotinus as a nest of contradictions, which no doubt they are, in that through them the positivity of the 'some thing' and all difference are objectively united.³⁸ It reveals a complete shift in the Neoplatonism of Porphyry that he can receive into his thought both the Aristotelian and the Stoic logic.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Met.* 1089a15-31.

³⁵ Plotinus is often praised as nearer to experience than later Neoplatonism. But the relevant experience here is that of the Hellenistic age. In that regard if Porphyry is Stoicism thought, Plotinism might be spoken of as a thinking of Epicureanism.

³⁶ The logical *gene* are to the unity of thought as parts to the whole: *En.* VI 2, 3, 20ff. Proclus *E.T.* 73 on the finitude of this relation.

³⁷ *En.* VI 1. The examination of Aristotle's concept of sensible substance in Chap. 2 and 3 illustrates the method applied in the rest to the other categories

³⁸ Plotinus comes to his categories through a certain interpretation of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides*. The Stoics look for the primary distinctions in an externalized thought in which the absolute negativity of the first hypothesis and the relative of the second are conflated. Of this it can be said at least that the relation of the two hypotheses is not in a subjective reflection only, as for Plotinus, but more objective.

After examining the Aristotelian categories, which, as he regards them, have neither unity severally nor do they together constitute one genus, and the Stoics who cannot without contradiction distinguish four categories within a generic unity, Plotinus asks for his part how there can be a limited multiplicity in thought. The *nous* is different from the One as distinguishing being and unity. For Plotinus the second hypothesis of *Parmenides* teaches the primary stations in a corresponding formation of being and the negative unity of thinking. The thinking which all but coincides with being is an image of the absolute One. The perfect coincidence of being and activity is the One itself. There appears in their relation as distinguished an indefinite plurality. This plurality is encircled in that as from the One both terms are the whole. The activity of thinking is on the side of the object a timeless motion. The stability of being is the self-identity or rest of thinking. A reflection on the difference of these three terms adds sameness and difference to their number. Plotinus is satisfied that there can be no further primary distinctions or categories. The successive contraries treated in the second hypothesis give rise to derivative distinctions quality, quantity and the other so-called categories.³⁹

The primary genera are distinct only as the movement of thought to itself is distinguished from its original and restored identity. The beginning does not have the division in it nor does the division remain in the end, nor again does the difference have that from which it is different. The noetic world as founded on these distinctions cannot have the triadic form Porphyry sought to give it.

The structure of Plotinus' noetic world is of a universal thought in which differences are implicit; then a multiplication of beings and intelligences in the genera or ideas of a natural order and intelligences particularized in relation to them; then this activity returned to rest in the original identity. The unified and the pluralized thought are exclusive of each other.⁴⁰

The same abstract relation of unified and divided moments recurs in the psychic '*hypostasis*'. Intelligences in going over to soul both retain their universality and fall into the multiplicity of nature even to embodiment and to the pure dividedness which is matter. Nature is ambiguously good and evil, according as souls have descended into it or in their intellectual part remain undescended.⁴¹ Souls may order and unify their relations to an external world through the Platonic virtues. But this order assumes and cannot comprehend the primary division of the undescended and the descended soul. In the sensible world the soul does not have that unity which, if abstractly, the Stoic and Epicurean knew.

The ecstatic unity of the individual and the One, in which Neoplatonism has its beginning, is not mediated and confirmed in the explication of the system. The desired freedom appears to be lost unless through a deeper integration of the divided and the undivided.

³⁹ *En.* VI, 2, 6-9; on the relation of the 'Platonic categories' to Aristotle's *gene*, chap.13-19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* chap.20-22.

⁴¹ *En.* VI 4, 13-16, among many places.

2. Porphyry

If Plotinism be taken as the measure of Neoplatonism, Aemilius and Porphyry will be seen as falling back to Numenius and a middle Platonism which did not yet know fully the primacy of the One and the ecstatic relation of the individual to it beyond all division.⁴² But the division which occurred first at the noetic level became at the psychic level an unbridged duality in the individual. A return to the One must be to the One as the source of this division. This step, which occurs immediately to a reflection on the whole Plotinian system, was taken by both his principal disciples.

With Aemilius and Porphyry there begins the series of Neoplatonic commentaries on *Parmenides* which reveal a progressive integration of the system. In Plotinism the One was too abstractly related to permit more than a rudimentary exegesis, which found the three '*hypostases*' in the first three hypotheses. Porphyry's exposition differs principally from that of Aemilius in that it denies a difference of principle between rational and irrational souls, and before that has apparently unified more strongly the intelligible and intellectual moments of the *nous*. In this he has carried through more fully the same revision of Plotinism. Porphyry's whole exposition is the surest confirmation of that interpretation of his whole philosophy as Stoicism completely Platonized which Pierre Hadot put together from many sources. There is an abstract unity of soul with itself from which negativity has been excluded. Sensible beings appear first as ordered then as unordered, so also matter. The contemplation of the material world relates all finitude first to the identity of the substrate then considers it as a pure detached otherness.⁴³

The formation of the noetic world through division of an absolutely unified thought has here a like structure to the mythical generation in Numenius and the Chaldaean Oracles of a triadic intelligence. The moments of an undistinguished 'paternal' identity are first distinguished and opposed, then the difference is taken into a thinking turned to its origin. This trinity in which the movement and spiritual connection falls between the 'father' and the 'son' Hadot finds in the writings of Marius Victorinus, as also a conceptual exposition of the same doctrine which can only be thought Porphyrian.

As constituted by this relation to the One which contains the division in it, the self-conscious intelligence likewise unites its '*noetic*' and '*noeric*' aspects not through an immediate unification of positive and negative moments ('sameness' and 'difference') but as these have been categorially articulated. There is room for the Aristotelian logic through which, as in Stoicism, thought maintains its self-identity. The primary distinctions for this noetic self-consciousness are, however, the categories of the Stoic physics through which thought found relation to the infinite *logos*: the 'something', the 'not-something', the positive as 'quality', the negativity of 'state' and 'relative state'. These

⁴² Porphyry and Numenius: summary of their relation in des Places, *Numenius, Fragments*, 26-28; "Pardessus Plotin, après la mort du maître, son évolution religieuse a de plus en plus rapproché Porphyre de Numenius"; Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 114-17, lists points on which the fragments of the commentary on *Parmenides* "mark a return from Plotinus towards Middle Platonism."

⁴³ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, Cousin, 1052, 31 - 1053, 9 on Aemilius; 1053, 38- 1054, 10 on Porphyry. Analysis in Proclus, *Theologie Platonicienne*, Saffrey et Westerink, I, lxxx - lxxxii [henceforth TP]; and on the attribution of the text to Aemilius and Porphyry, lxxx, n.2 and lxxxii, n.1.

distinctions can just as well define the relation of thought to the transcendent One as it brings its content into the contradictory relation of being and not-being. Thinking and thought are united in the exclusion of the contradictory in the constitution of 'beings' and 'non-beings' and the transcendent unity of this opposition in a principle beyond both. This principle is pure act as uniting immediately being and the negative self-relation of thinking. In the self-identical activity of this relation the difference of the noetic level from the One vanishes.⁴⁴

The limit of the standpoint becomes evident when this intellectualized Stoicism has passed over into soul and the sensible world. It is the limit of the Stoic 'dogmatism' which unites individual and universal abstractly on the side of the universal. It is an advance no doubt over Plotinus that souls in their multiplicity and embodiment are inwardly united. But what the opposed Epicurean 'dogma' would save has no place in this relation. Still less is there any understanding of that concreteness which the Sceptic sought and could not find.⁴⁵

Because the opposition of universal soul to particular individual souls has been sharpened, as against Plotinus Porphyry is interested more than his teacher in the 'theurgic' arts. They are useful, however, only to souls in their particularity. The soul as thinking needs no extraneous means to its salvation. Porphyry's Neoplatonism leads to a divided relation of humans to the One and is thus an inadequate explication of its concept.

Plotinus had spoken of the One and what came after it according to a Presocratic logic which unites contraries only in the moment. According to the Stoic logic of Porphyry the divided was one with the undivided at the point where its positive and negative moments had the form of contradiction. The unity was abstract and exclusive of the negative, and this abstractness appears in a divided relation of the soul to the One.⁴⁶

The inescapable demand for the Neoplatonist was not to revert to Plotinism but to find a comprehensive relation of the One to the divided. Towards this the first step was to set the One beyond all finite relations to what was other than itself.

3. Later Neoplatonism

⁴⁴ On 'beings', 'not-beings', 'not-being' beyond beings, Hadot I, chap.iii. On the relation of the One to the Triad of Being, Life and Thought, on the identification of Being and the One, chap iv, esp. 264-72, 310-330.

⁴⁵ The different structure of the soul in Porphyry and Plotinus is well stated in Hadot I, 336ff. "Chez Plotin, il n'y a d'opposition qu'entre l'acte de l'essence et l'acte qui dérive d'elle: le premier Un est act immobile en lui-même; le second Un est un acte derive de cet act immobile... [In Porphyry] il faut distinguer l'acte tourné vers soi, qui pose l'être, l'acte tourné vers l'extérieur, qui détermine cet être et le définit, et enfin l'acte dérivé." The soul as reflecting the intelligible Triad is triadic. The moment of difference in this triadic structure is transitional to the identity of the moments, not an equal moment, as for Proclus.

⁴⁶ Both in the Triad and in Soul the 'divided' is implicit in the moment of identity and actually in the return, but in both moments abstractly, as in Stoicism.

Although it is true that one would look in vain in Neoplatonism for the logic of a movement from the undivided to the divided and multiple⁴⁷, Iamblichus and after him Proclus and Damascius brought the argument finally to the form where only the limits of human discourse obstructed a knowledge of their equality in a trinitarian relation. In all these philosophers the soul that finds rest in the One is itself unified, its particularity contained without abstract reduction in the relation of individual to universal. The One which is the interest of this unified soul has a like relation to division and to the completed division which is the individual. This concrete relation on the one side and on the other is clarified by degrees in the thought of these three philosophers.

(i) Iamblichus

Iamblichus distinguished before the noetic realm a One without division and a One uniting 'limit' and 'unlimited'. The plurality belonging to this second One is itself unified, that is, it is not subject to the opposition of its constituent moments. It is the plurality of gods through whom the individual in his particular relations to the world is unified and awakened to a sense of the primary One. Thus Proclus reports of Iamblichus' exegesis of *Parmenides* that the first hypothesis was found to be about the One and the gods.⁴⁸

There is in this relation a unification of the second with the first One, as also of the individual with the universal soul. But in the one case as in the other the unification is on the side of the universal moment. The *henads* of Proclus effect, or are intended to effect, a more concrete relation of the many gods to the One, and Damascius' criticism of Proclus moves farther in the same direction.

The difficulties of Iamblichus' formulation come to light more distinctly in the further course of his comment on *Parmenides*. The self-conscious intelligence, while it knows the triad of being, life and thought as its own, has this knowledge variously in its moments: the noetic intelligence contains the three monads in their undivided totality; in its division and negative return it knows the particular ideas and not their comprehension in the monads.⁴⁹ A consequence of this incompleteness of the noetic realm is that the transition to soul and the sensible world is divided: before soul the many gods in the guise in which they appear in the lower world as 'angels', 'demons' and 'heroes' constitute an intermediate hypothesis. From the same defect stems also the interpretation of the last two hypotheses as about the celestial and sublunary worlds. Proclus objected rightly that these as not for thought total objects are not properly 'hypotheses'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ " Die Selbstentwicklung dieser Einheit aber wird bei Proklus nicht eben mehr zur Notwendigkeit des Begriffs gemacht, als bei Plotin; diese Müssen wir ein für allemal aufgeben, den Begriff der Entzweiung hier zu suchen." Hegel, *Gesch. Phil.*, vol. xv, 64. In the development from Plotinus to Damascius the structure of the moments of rest, procession and return becomes ever more concrete, as each contains more explicitly and completely the others. This development is to the concreteness of subjectivity but this expressed through the categories of unity and multiplicity, between which the transition is for a reflection extraneous to both and is not known as the development of the object itself.

⁴⁸ Proclus, *In Parm.*, 1054, 37 - 1055, 25. Saff.-West. *TP*, I, lxxxii-lxxxiii.

⁴⁹ Dillon, *Iamblichi Fragmenta*, *In Philebum*, Fr.4, and commentary thereto.

⁵⁰ Proclus' criticism of Iamblichus' exposition of *Parmenides*, *o.c.*, 1055, 17-25; Saff.- West. *TP*, I, lxxxiii.

The soul for Iamblichus is at an extreme remove from the Plotinian soul untouched by the sufferings of its mortal part. The individual soul, though an inner freedom belongs to it, can attain to that freedom not of itself but only as the gods are moved through the theurgic arts.⁵¹

(ii) Proclus

The principal division for Proclus of all that is after the One is of gods or *henads* and beings composite of the undivided and the divided. There is the One, and after the One the whole noetic realm. The relation of the two is that the same total content is in the One without division and contrariety, in the noetic as divided and opposed.⁵²

The division in the noetic between the 'ontic' and the 'henadic' is that with the one the moment of self-relation or being is first, then procession, then reversion to being; while the 'henadic', though divided according to the division of being, remains primarily in an undivided relation to the One. The three monads being, life and thought through which the ideal procession and return takes place are the same totality, each having the others in it, and distinguished only by the moments of 'rest', 'procession' and 'reversion'. That these moments are divided and timelessly successive results from the original constitution of the noetic: before the concretion of 'being' as the first 'monad' are its abstract elements, 'measure' and the 'unmeasured', which are unified through their relation to the One. For the thought which considers this unification the first product is 'being'; 'life' and 'thought' then follow as the division and reunification through which the noetic self-consciousness actually knows all things as its own. The realization of self-consciousness in the three 'monadic' totalities, should it be complete, would cancel the assumed priority of the abstract moments and know the derivation from the One as not a composition but through a primary unity of the abstract elements and their product.

Hegel rightly observed that the noetic self-consciousness as realized through the relation of the three monads, each having in its manner the other moments in it, was virtually one idea. Proclus himself, though he speaks similarly of the unity of the monads, is not yet at the point where it can be fully evident.⁵³ Where the unity of the monads comes most nearly into view is in the reversion of the '*noeric*' to the 'noetic' intelligence. That completion of self-conscious thought is also the point of transition to the psychic '*hypostasis*' in the language of Timaeus to the demiurgic construction of the soul.

⁵¹ Texts on Iamblichus' concept of the individual soul in its difference from earlier Platonism collected in Dillon, 41-47.

⁵² In summary form, *E.T.*, props 1-6; *P.T.*, II, chap.1, III, chap.1-9.

⁵³ Hegel's brief exposition concentrates on *Platonic Theology* III. chap. 6-14, where Proclus elicits his doctrine of *henads* from *Philebus*. Of the three *monads* he says, "Und diess alles ist Ein Denken, Eine Idee: das Beharren, das Vorschreiten, und das Umkehren", translating (Saff.-West. *TP*, III, 50, 10). "Et tous ces trois moments repos, procession, conversion ont le caractère de l'Un et sont intelligible" (Saff. West.) "Diese drei Dreieinigkeiten verkündigen nun auf eine mystische weise die völlig unerkannten Ursache des ersten unmitgeteilten Gottes", translating *Platonic Theology*, 16-18. On the meaning of 'mystical' Hegel makes the precise comment "Das mystische daran ist, dass diese Unterscheide, die als Totalitäten, als Gottes bestimmt sind, als Eins gefasst werden."

The unification of self-consciousness is spoken of through successive contraries 'in itself - in another', 'rest - motion', 'same - different'; and through syllogistic relations of the undivided and the divided mediated by these categories. It is enough for the present argument to observe that this reflection leads neither to a complete unification of the 'noetic' nor to a concept of soul in which the relation of individual to universal is fully articulated. The latter result demands particular attention if one would see the criticism of Proclan Neoplatonism by Damascius and his revision of its principles as a necessary development.⁵⁴

Proclus, as Iamblichus before him, has need to find a unified relation of the human soul to the One and the whole 'noetic' realm. It reflects the priority of 'being' over 'life' and the activity of thinking that the soul has an eternal being and is embodied in the sensible world through its activity.⁵⁵ Although Proclus has moved far from Plotinus and early Neoplatonism towards a concrete concept of man, there is still a distance to go if the sensible individual is to be known as the immediate existence of the whole man. The original concept and desire of Neoplatonism is not yet fully realized.

(iii) Damascius

If with Proclus it is not far from sight that the three monads of the noetic realm make up one idea, Damascius brings fully to light that this unity is the truth of the matter. That the monads which together constitute the infinite procession and conversion of what remains with itself appear as a successive plurality is for a thought which has not hold fully of its own finitude. The primary division for Proclus of all things after the One into composite beings and *henads* belongs already to a finite standpoint.⁵⁶

The logical method of all the Neoplatonists is an infinite self-conscious thought which can make the finite and divided its own. But in this appropriation the present argument has shown in what ways it might remain held by finite abstractions. Proclus in considering the constitution of self-conscious thought gave an independent 'henadic' status to 'limit' and 'unlimited' the abstract moments of the division which rested undivided in the One. This initial concession to the finite pervaded his whole system even to his concept of the human soul. Damascius throughout his *Principles* uses a method of 'problems' and 'solutions' which shows a complete clarity about the relativity of finite moments. Problems are formed by fixed finite assumptions. The solution is to situate

⁵⁴ These remarks condense a long and involved exposition of the 'third intellectual triad' in Damascius' commentary on *Parmenides* (Ruelle II, 169-245). An analysis of the criticism of Proclus contained in this argument in Saff.-West.TP, V, ix - xcvi

⁵⁵ For Proclus on the relation of the substance of the soul to its activity, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 191. Damascius' criticism in his exposition of the third hypothesis of *Parmenides*, Ruelle, II, 246-273, esp. 252-7, 262,4. See the lucid exposition of the difference of Proclus and Damascius on the structure of the soul in Joseph Combès, *Études Néoplatoniciennes*, Grenoble, 1989, 260-7.

⁵⁶ E.T., prop.6 "...le limitant et l'illimité ont l'inconvénient d'apparaître contredistingués comme des termes de même rang, ce que reporte là-haut nos propres oppositions", J. Combès, *Études Néoplatoniciennes*, 255.

them as relative in an infinite whole. The application of this method to Proclus' system breaks down its rigid structures and allows its moving spirit to appear far more clearly.⁵⁷

The *Principles* begins with a problem about the relation of the One, considered as principle, to a plurality of which it is assumed to be principle. In this problem lies the difficulty which has beset all his Neoplatonic predecessors of relating the One to the divided: each term has to be at once independent of the other and related to it. There is no solution to these contradictions unless in perceiving that the separation of principle from principled is the product of a finite thought, and that the One is not simply beyond division but has division as its own moment.⁵⁸

Damascius' method is perplexing to human thought in that it places the truth, which is its primary interest, beyond its grasp. So with all forms of Neoplatonism, but here, as afterwards with Cusanus, the limit of human discourse is directly exposed.⁵⁹

It would be long here to follow through Damascius' revision of the noetic world already strongly unified by Proclus. The primary opposition of 'ontic' and 'henadic' is all but dissolved in a concept of what is not one as first of all unified not 'limit' as opposed to 'unlimited', but transcending this division in relation to the undivided. The intelligible is thus not the product of prior 'henadic' elements but itself equally 'henadic' or divine. It comes into view with this knowledge of a unified division that the ideal world is in truth not a second level below the One but rather, as taught by the Oracles and other revelations, the One itself as triune. An intelligible world more within the grasp of a human thought subject to exclusive contraries can be thought no more than that: a world of human discourse.⁶⁰

This deeper unification of the ideal world permitted Damascius to see a concrete unity of the human soul in which the embodied individual in a sensible world is the whole soul, as also the soul as universal is not abstract but the whole soul. That the soul descends from its universality not in its activity only, as for Proclus, but substantially as well supposes an equality and concretion of its moments at one level and the other. This knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of the intelligible as triune and concrete are reciprocal.⁶¹

Proclus was confident that he had learned from Syrianus, his teacher, the true and adequate exegesis of *Parmenides*. The four 'hypotheses' after the first give the complete procession of all things from the One even to the externalized and absolutely divided unity of matter. If the One is, all things both eternal and temporal are. The remaining four

⁵⁷ Damascius' method is equivalent to Cusanus' method of 'learned ignorance', a comprehensive scepticism which knows itself.

⁵⁸ A conclusion from which nothing separates Damascius, but which he cannot draw, for with it would fall the whole Hellenic world and its gods.

⁵⁹ *Principles*, 8.

⁶⁰ Damascius' criticism of Proclus on the relation of the One to the Intelligible and to finite knowledge, Ruelle I, 111-113 (Combès III, 113-122).

⁶¹ For Proclus, E.T., props. 106 and 191. Damascius' concept of the soul, Ruelle II, 251, 19ff; 252, 7-11, 27-8; 262, 7-26. Also Combès, *Études Néoplatoniciennes*, 189-198, "L'un humain selon Damascius".

'hypotheses' show that, if the One is not, all things in consequence are not. This exegesis Damascius finds defective, in that it omits from all reality what the world is for souls in a sensible world. Sensible reality it regards as a Stoic would from the side of its identity, not in its otherness and negativity. Damascius, knowing the concrete unity of the soul, regards the sensible world as for such a unified soul. In this, though inwardly, he resumes the standpoint of the Sceptic.⁶²

Thus the not-being of the One, as treated in the sixth 'hypothesis', is an indifference underlying affirmative and negative, such as is the universal side of the sceptical consciousness. The flux of images which have neither substrate nor definite relation to a knowing subject, presented in the eighth 'hypothesis', is again sensible immediacy as for the Sceptic. The seventh and ninth 'hypotheses' Damascius concedes to Syrianus and Proclus are about the nullity of all things, if the One is not. These hypotheses he declares to be 'impossible', that is, contradictory. But he hesitates to reject them as meaningless since all the 'hypotheses' as unified totalities contain like contradictions. It is as though, happy to have found meaning in two of the negative hypotheses, he turns from the anomaly that they should have a different status than the others.⁶³

These "meaningless" hypotheses also have in fact meaning for him. Through them a Sceptical relation of the soul to itself and its sensible objects is converted into that unified soul he knows already, for which also the flux of images is individualized. At that point the development of Neoplatonism appears to be complete; the argument has returned to the divided self-consciousness of Scepticism and made clear what that division of the individual from its universality is.⁶⁴

(D) The Origin Of The Older Modern Philosophy

1. Neoplatonism from Eriugena to Cusanus

With Damascius the development of Neoplatonism appears to be complete: the ideal and sensible worlds at the point of their complete explication and concreteness disclose through their nullity, as other than the One, that the One is the sole comprehensive truth. There remains with him however an ambiguity and hesitancy in the face of this result: the hypotheses which set forth the procession and return of all things are only for a finite thought, but that thought also finds it absurd to recognize the contradiction and nullity of its hypotheses to recognize its own finitude and permit the world of its finite discourse to be drawn into the infinite actuality of the One. This further step is taken by Eriugena, guided to it by Dionysius and Maximus Confessor. There is one finite totality or nature,

⁶² Exposition of the negative hypotheses, Ruelle II, 432-60; and the excellent study of Damascius on the negative hypotheses in Combès, *Études Néoplatoniciennes*, 131-188.

⁶³ Ruelle II, 433.

⁶⁴ For Damascius, as for all Neoplatonists, the One is the first moving interest of humans, the good through which they are unified; of all else outside this unified relation there is only a human or hypothetical knowledge.

which thought can divide into a creative beginning, a creative *logos* containing a plurality of ideas or created ends, the complete explication of this *logos* as soul and the sensible world, this world as through man united with its exemplar, the exemplary and the sensible thus unified as resting eternally in their creative origin.

A difficulty remains however in the system of Eriugena not far different from that of Damascius. The quadripartite division takes the place of the 'hypotheses'. The movement of the argument no longer depends on a Platonic text but is purely logical, the undivided good as it is for a thought which knows its moments as successive. For this extraneous thought the 'uncreated creative' is divided from 'that which neither creates nor is created' the principle as returned to itself. And between the two is room for the ideal world and its sensible image. What is the status of this thought and of the structure the ideal and sensible have for it?

The ideal totality 'creates and is created'. As one *logos* it 'creates'; as a plurality of ideas or 'primordial causes' it is 'created'. The structure is very much that of Damascius, the 'unified' in which contraries coincide, and within it the ideas as composed of 'limit and unlimited'. This totality is posterior to the One, from which for the contemplative subject it comes forth and recedes into it. The particular ideas are at once the objects of an immutable knowledge, and prior to this knowledge is endless 'dyadic' division. The sensible totality has the same ambiguity, that the soul knows a multitude of changing but recurrent images of the ideal content and when predicated of its material substrate those images dissolve into vanishing appearances.

Souls as returning to the ideal from their dispersion as the sensible totality again return first to their 'primordial cause' or their original state as created, and then through Christ or the *logos* into the unity of the ideal world. The subject which follows the outgoing and return of 'nature' through this twofold movement does away both with its objective divisions and with the gradations in its knowledge of them.⁶⁵

There occurs then the question how beyond the divisions and constructions of a subjective reflection the infinite good is present to what is other than itself, how it is the end to which the rational creature in its finitude is principally drawn. The sense of this question, and how a further philosophical development beyond this point is possible, is readily intelligible if Eriugena's thought be situated in its historical context. The *Periphyseon* was written at a time when politically a unity of ends embodied in the 'emperor' had been established and drew individuals to it for a time, until it succumbed to the counter attraction of divisive passions and interests. The weakness of this restored Roman Empire was that the political good did not inform and give direction to those interests as different and opposed to its realization. For this formation it was not enough that the good should have come into view as that in which for thought all that came after it was enveloped. The good had to have root in the finite: it was necessary that the 'dyad' and the power of contraries be arrested in finite substances. The movement to the good might then have a sensible beginning and be through an ordered human life. Aristotle provided the means for this embodiment of the good.

⁶⁵ As summarily stated at *De Divisione Naturae* V, 1019 - 21 (Migne).

Cusanus, six centuries after Eriugena, can appear to propose very much the same system. Dionysius and Proclus are also his masters. But between the two systems there is a profound difference: the good for Cusanus is realized in individuals as they have passed through the oppositions of an ordered human world to an infinite unity. His Neoplatonism has behind it a succession of Aristotelian positions in which the mediation of individuals with the good is variously understood. This history makes possible a transformation of Eriugena's system in which the externality of thought to the principle is overcome and the principle known not only by the negation of the finite but positively as the beginning of what comes after it.

The relation of the great Scholastic systems to the resurgent Neoplatonism of Cusanus can be indicated briefly in its general logical structure. It is sufficient in this interest to speak of Thomism, Scotism and the nominalism of Ockham. Presupposing the one good, these systems proceed to a knowledge of it by another route than that of Neoplatonism from a sensible beginning variously taken. From this beginning one moves to a demonstrated knowledge that God is or, it may be, finds the mediation questionable. The understanding is capable of a true knowledge of sensible substances, and from their finitude can argue to an infinite cause which sustains them. Neither the knowledge of sensible substances nor the ascent from them to God is frustrated by an 'unlimited' as an element of all things.

But the realistic beginning of such an argument tends to be undermined: the subject which carries it through and connects beginning and conclusion can always ask in that infinite relation whether the logical structure defining the sensible does not belong rather to itself. The subject in its relation to the good reacts against the limit a particular relation to the sensible sets to its freedom. It reacts first to a nominalist stand against the reality of the limit, then is receptive of another mediation between the world and the good which accommodates better its freedom.

In this way the assumed beginning with the world and its logical form is by degrees drawn into the relation of the subject to the good, and an underlying Neoplatonism draws other positions into itself. In this restoration there is the difference from all earlier Neoplatonisms that all finite structures through which the good appears and does not appear have lost every semblance of independence.

Aquinas assumes a world of Aristotelian finite substances, and by negating the infinite regress that appears in the mutual relations through which their actuality is sustained, arrives in his five ways at the concept of an infinitely actual being. The subject which carries through this proof knows itself as a substance as an intellectual form relating to itself all other forms through the necessity of the understanding. Within this unity there is a dispersion of powers, such that sense perception knows the individual directly, the understanding only mediately. The logical movement of the proofs draws

together into one the self-relation of substances and their externality, and this unification is reflected into the subject.⁶⁶

Practically, an inner unity of the will with particular natural relations through the virtues is converted into a Stoic individual, whose particularity is inward and has the form of universal rights. Scotism expresses the result of this unification. The individual is not an externalization of the substantial form having its principle in '*materia signata*' but belongs to the perfection of the substance. The difference of individual from universal is contained in their relation, as 'formalities' within their community. The thinking individual is likewise more strongly integrated: discursive and intuitive moments of knowledge are more nearly one activity, as are thought and sense perception. The way to a knowledge of God is through individuals in which universals are present, not purely but in a particular content. Universals in their purity are only in the intellect. The question is whether there is a first in the orders of causality, finality and eminence. The reasoning here is to an infinite being in which the finitude and consequent dependence of substances so conceived has passed into an absolute unity of self-relation and division. This idea is not possible only but actual, since its perfection would be diminished if, as with all else, its universality and its division were not absolutely unified.⁶⁷

Scotism passes easily into the nominalism of Ockham, as the individual substances presupposed in the movement from the world to God are seen to rest on a simpler relation of individual and universal for the thinking subject. The difference of the sensible individual from the universal is the difference in the subject between a sensuous and a thinking intuition. In the one the multiple sensuous content is immediately united; through the other the subject is able to bring the content into logical form of judgment and syllogism.

The nominalist has made for himself a science of contingency in which the movement from the world to God is no more than a possibility without logical cogency. There is no proof that an endless regression is impossible. Practically he lives in a world of free individuals, a democracy where hierarchic order has lost its hold. There is the intuition of a common good, but with it an empirical diversity of ends.

The movement to God at this point is through an inner unification of division and discourse with intuitive unity, not simply their cooperation in relation to a given content, as in nominalism. The necessity which moved in the demonstrations of Aquinas and Scotus has to be discovered as the contrariety underlying contingent relations and their coincidence in the unity of thought. The objects of a thought which has thus taken its external presuppositions into itself are, as Neoplatonists had long known, constituted from logical elements and not alien to self-consciousness.

⁶⁶ An annotation which would tie this and the following paragraphs to the texts would be too extensive to attempt here. there is also the difficulty that, as commonly in a history of philosophy, the connection of one position with another only comes out fully at the end of the development, when one looks back from Cusanus to Eriugena.

⁶⁷ Scotus' proof is explicated fully in Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot*, Chap. II; on the twist Scotus gives to Anselm's argument, 168 ff.

Cusanus thought to have in the coincidence of opposites a truer knowledge of God and the world than could be obtained by reasoning from finite presuppositions. Only in God and in the intellect as turned to itself out of finite operations was the *coincidentia oppositorum* actual. All that otherwise was taken for truth was only an endless approximation. The right relation of the mind to this approximate truth was a *docta ignorantia*, a scepticism fully cognizant of itself. This scepticism is neither the attitude of Damascius nor that of Eriugena to the finite, allowing less of stability to it than either. For Cusanus himself it could not long stand without further foundation.

The system set for in the *Docta Ignorantia* and the *De Conjecturis* is very different from that of Eriugena. The beginning is with God as unity, equality of division and the nexus of the two the universal coincidence of opposites, as man, collected into a self-relation which sustains its explication into divided relations, is this coincidence individualized. this concept is not of the God who creates only, but of that which 'creates and is created' or of the 'unified' of Damascius. But the 'creative' and 'created' moments of that idea are more strongly dissociated. The stabilized finitude of the ideal and the sensible worlds is more explicitly subject to the power of contraries. The mutual limitation and concretion of contraries into 'primordial causes' fall outside the consideration of God and is treated rather in the second book of the *Docta Ignorantia*, which is about the world, as ".⁶⁸ *correlaria praeambularia ad inferendum unum infinitum universum*

That the world is the idea under the form of endless division is common doctrine since Proclus. With Cusanus the scepticism latent in that account becomes explicit, in that his attention is on the dyadic form as prior to every content. And inference to God from the world would be mediated by the disclosure through 'learned ignorance' that it has no truth.

The return of the world to God, as treated in the third book of the *Docta Ignorantia* has likewise another structure than for Eriugena in that the point of interest is the relation of individuals as 'microcosms' uniting uniquely the two worlds to Christ or the universal *Logos*. Where in Eriugena's narration of the return individuals are restored first to their original state as united with their primordial cause and than raised to the creative *logos*, here these stages are for the subject the experience of the finitude of his unique independence. The method of 'learned ignorance' breaks through that barrier also, and the individual knows himself as within a unified end.⁶⁹

Cusanus could not rest with this first system. It was the standpoint of a restless subjective spirit which sought unity beyond division but found it only at the term of a reflection which dissolved the division into an infinite self-relation. The way to this resolution was lost in the result. The *docta ignorantia* uncovered a unity beyond its reflection but could not overcome itself. This method, coming out of nominalism, found again a reasoned relation of the world to God. In however attenuated a form it assumed a world and a subject which knew it. Here the reasoning which discovered God as the

⁶⁸ *Docta Ignorantia*, II, 1-6.

⁶⁹ *Docta Ignorantia*, III, 1-3.

principle destroyed its own assumption finite relations of thought to corresponding things.

The creative principle, at once beginning and end, in which all divisions subsisted became the interest of Cusanus. The 'coincidence of opposites' no longer appeared a sufficient concept of God, nor was he content with a knowledge of God by the *via negativa*. That way assumed a finitude which was to be negated, an assumption which the *docta ignorantia* dissolved. Nothing remained to conceal the true principle underlying the divisions.

The system which emerges from this revision is only different from that of Eriugena in that it is for the individual who has experienced the limit of relations to the good through an ordered 'otherness', ideal and sensible. The simple intuition of the One, which was ever for Neoplatonists the only unqualified truth, has no longer below it another thought which moves to it through oppositions. The *docta ignorantia* reduced all discourse to scepticism. The conclusion was then drawn that division and difference reside in and belong to the actuality of the creative good.

Cusanus works through this revision in successive attempts to speak of it adequately. He proposes to think of God as the *non aliud*, to be known not simply as beyond the 'otherness' which to the *docta ignorantia* discloses the untruth of the finite, but as that in which the finite rests. He is then dissatisfied with this name as not indicating clearly that God is not only the indifferent foundation of difference but the primary division and actuality. That infinite potentiality which also is he thinks might better be named *possest*. But that name has the inconvenience that it suggests a difference and not the absolute unity of these moments. The most appropriate name he therefore finds to be '*posse*', so far as this indicates the infinite actuality of infinite potentiality.⁷⁰

Through the succession of these names Cusanus divests his thought ever more distinctly of the externality belonging to the method of *docta ignorantia*. The transcendence of otherness is transferred thus from a sceptical reflection to the One itself/ thereby also the negative theology of the earlier systems passes into an affirmative presence of God in and through division and finitude.⁷¹

2. Modern Philosophy

⁷⁰ "...quidditas quae semper quaesita est, et quaeritur et quaeretur, si esset penitus ignota, quomodo quaereretur quando etiam reperta maneret incognita? ... Cum igitur annis multis viderim ipsam ultra omnem potentiam cognitivam, ante omnem varietatem et oppositionem quaeri oportere, non attendi quidditatem in se subsistentem esse omnium substantiarum invariabilem subsistentiam ... non aliam et aliam aliorum entium quidditatem ... deinde vidi necessario fatendum ipsam rerum hypostasim seu subsistentiam posse esse, et quia potest esse, utique sine posse ipso non potest esse ... Ideo posse ipsum...est quo nihil subsistentius esse potest." *De Apice Theoriae, Opera*, Paris, 1515, ccxix.

⁷¹ "Quando ... mens in posse suo videt posse ipsum ob suam excellentiam capi non posse, tunc visum supra suam capacitatem videt ... *Ibid.*, ccxx. The comprehensive Proclan *monads* are appearances of this ground, and [so the opusculum continues] the thinking whose object it is knows itself as having its division and difference intrinsic to it, as with Augustine's trinity of rational powers, which is not intelligible in a Neoplatonic logic. The principle of a new philosophical development has come into view.

The new philosophy began where the old ended, namely where the One beyond all else passed into the self-consciousness which knew the finite as its own. With this transition doubt took the place of the scepticism which had its understanding in Neoplatonism. Doubt has in it a point of certainty and the interest is to know the rest as in a necessary relation to the first certainty thinking has of its own being.

The first systematic analysis of what is in this self-consciousness certain of its being is the *Meditations of Descartes*. The indubitable certainty of self-consciousness is discovered by doubting all that can be doubted.⁷² The movement to this certainty is a separation of thought from all the content of sense perception, imagination, even of mathematics, which of supposed sciences appeared the most trustworthy. The world from which thinking abstracted itself was opposed to it as wholly other, extension infinitely divisible to the indivisibility of self-consciousness.⁷³ But the seeming independence of the subject in this relation was disturbed by a finitude not conformed to its certainty. This instability rested on the idea of an infinite being in whom all perfections were absolutely united the Neoplatonic One as having in its self-relation all the intelligible and sensible. By a proof of the existence of this idea from the dependence, not of a sensible world, but of the self-certain subject, the relation of the two is discovered to be that of creator to creature.⁷⁴ In that relation the rational creature can discriminate true and false as certainly as it knows itself, through the pure logical form which unites self-consciousness with what is other than itself.⁷⁵ That this inner truth should become a science also of material objects requires that the extended world which is wholly other than thought be known as depending on the existence of the divine idea. The thinking subject has thus confronting it the divine idea externalized, not a multitude of contingencies without necessary connection, ever dubitable to thought, but in which there is systematic unity and mutual exclusion of identical and different.⁷⁶ Sense perception and imagination as related to that object are not principally doubtful and deceptive but that through which the mind moves to the clear and distinct ideas of the understanding.⁷⁷ Finally on this foundation self-conscious thought can discover a necessary connection with that one body which it takes to be peculiarly its own.⁷⁸

The new philosophy has thus for its principal interest the same infinite One or Good as the old, only as not beyond the ideal and sensible totalities but in them as their creator. The way to a knowledge of this principle is not by turning from the illusory knowledge and nullity of the sensible world to an intelligible world which thought makes for itself in

⁷² Med. I.

⁷³ Med. II.

⁷⁴ Med. III.

⁷⁵ Med. IV.

⁷⁶ Med. V. The truth the mind has through the pure logical form of demonstration is immutably actual in the necessary existence of God: "Atque ita plane video omnis scientiae certitudinem et veritatem ab una veri Dei cognitione pendere, adeo ut, priusquam illum nossem, nihil de ulla alia re perfecte scire potuerim." *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, Adam-Tannery ed., VII, 71.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, 79. Nature as a mechanical system in which all things are both connected and mutually exclusive is knowable to the understanding which by its logic distinguishes true from false.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

the light of a primal unity. The idea is sought through a sensible world itself belonging to self-consciousness and the agreement of what is there discovered with the understanding.

The essential problems of this philosophy are also other than those of the old. The logic by which a free self-consciousness would know the natural and the human world contradicts its freedom. The subject finds an abstract freedom in the substance of Spinoza beyond the necessity of its infinite thinking and extended attributes. The monadic individuals of Leibniz do not define a self-conscious freedom. Free self-consciousness turns therefore to itself and would know God, the world and its own freedom, should this be possible, through itself and its ideas.⁷⁹ This subjective reflection may be likened to ancient scepticism, but is rather an idealism which would know those relations to what is other, in which the subject is unfree, as contained in its freedom, in the concrete freedom present in the transition from the old to the new philosophy.

The infinite ideas of the earlier stage of this philosophy God, nature and self-conscious freedom recur in the subjective reflection, first as regulative ideas or as presupposed in the moral will⁸⁰, then as the true substance in which the subject is not first but the moment of return to the good itself through the externality of nature.⁸¹

The new philosophy in its subjective phase was destructive of the state, that is, of an objective unity of ends.⁸² As in relation to the unified good of the state, as realizing variously that unified end, the subject is the bearer of rights established through the revolutions of the eighteenth century. These rights are other than those which attach to the free individual or person of the older world through its various relations to the good.

The new philosophy, so far as centred in the subject, was destructive of the concrete freedom of the Christian revelation. In its full explication where objective and subjective poles meet this philosophy gives the stability of thought to the Christian '*Vorstellung*' of creation, fall, the inner division of the free subject. It provides thus a theological method extending the *intellectus fidei* of Augustine.⁸³ This is another method than those which rest on Neoplatonism and the primacy of the negative over positive theology.

What is meant by saying that the new philosophy began where the old ended has perhaps been clarified by a long and difficult argument.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Hume has before him the same infinite ideas as the Cartesian and subsequent philosophies and finds God, nature and freedom inaccessible to the subject empirically.

⁸⁰ Kant, Fichte.

⁸¹ Schelling, with loss in the 'Identitätsphilosophie' of the difference between the old and the new philosophy; the difference is held together and restored in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*

⁸² So far as an objective order is not also assumed (Locke) or in some manner derived (Rousseau, Kant).

⁸³ Augustine, converted to Christianity out of the radical conflict of the will, as turned to God or to itself, through a Cartesian self-certainty uncovered conditions of his conversion in a meditation on Scripture. The new philosophy, through its derivation from the old, gives to the *intellectus fidei* an independence from the text and a greater capacity to distinguish the spirit from the letter.

⁸⁴ One usually takes a shorter route from contemporary subjectivity to Neoplatonism. But what there is more in this subjectivity than in ancient scepticism can easily colour one's perception of Neoplatonism and

obscure the development from it of another philosophy. That difficulty has been circumvented in this piece, but on its method more needs to be said than is possible here.