

French Neoplatonism In The 20th Century

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Pierre Hadot refers to "l'importance du rôle qu'a joué Plotin dans la formation de la philosophie de Bergson" when considering "l'importance que le mouvement néoplatonicien revêt dans la formation de la pensée moderne." In looking at the retrieval of Neoplatonism in French philosophy and theology in this century, we may well begin with Bergson.¹ That retrieval is generally opposed to the Western metaphysical tradition as this is understood to determine modernity, and is also anti-Idealist. Bergson is connected positively and negatively both to the metaphysical tradition and to the German Idealist appropriation of Platonism. In his philosophy, some of the characteristics of the anti-intellectualist and anti-Hegelian Neoplatonism which follows are established.

Henri Bergson: the End is in the Beginning

Bergson was particularly and almost uniquely attached to Plotinus among previous philosophers. Émile Bréhier discerned that it was "comme s'il reconnaissait en Plotin un autre lui-même."² Nonetheless, he found in Plotinus not only a "schéma dynamique"³ which corresponded to his own understanding of reality but also what for him comprised the most fundamental error of the metaphysical tradition, the misrepresentation of life and movement in intellectual stability. Nonetheless, he found in Plotinus not only a 'schema dynamique' which corresponds to his own understanding of reality but also what for him comprised the most fundamental error of the metaphysical tradition, the misrepresentation of life and movement in intellectual stability.

It was the judgment of Bergson that the metaphysics of most ancients and moderns:

was led to look for the reality of things beyond time, beyond what moves and changes ... >From then metaphysics could only be a more or less artificial arrangement of concepts, an hypothetical construction. It pretended overcoming experience, but in truth, it only substituted to the moving and full experience ... a system of general and abstract ideas,

¹ Pierre Hadot, "Introduction," *Le Néoplatonisme (Royaumont 9-13 juin 1969)*, Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche scientifique, Sciences humaines (Paris: CNRS, 1971), 2.

² Émile Bréhier as quoted in Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 2.

³ Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, 8.

drawn from this same experience or rather from its most superficial layers.⁴

Ultimately, by opposition both to the Plotinian turning of the soul toward the universal as well as to the conclusion of the Plotinian mystical quest in what Bergson misrepresents as a static contemplative rest (static, precisely because still too much Greek and thus intellectualist), he reverses Plotinus, placing him on his feet!⁵

Bergson's Neoplatonism we can situate initially within the French attenuated following of Schelling mediated to him via Victor Cousin and especially via Felix Ravaisson whom he admired so much.⁶ In this his connection with Idealism appears even if it is Schellingian in his difference from Hegel.

Hegel is known among Bergson's French mediators, but he is both misrepresented and rejected. Cousin had many exchanges with Hegel, nonetheless, his is an

hégélianisme affadi ... qui n'ose pas enseigner l'identité des contraires, qui pare d'oripeaux vétustes de profondes nouveautés, avec un talent plus oratoire que philosophique.⁷

Ravaisson had no personal relations with Hegel (his were instead with Schelling). For him the genius of Hegel is to have understood "... l'enchaînement rationnel des conditions logiques qui forment en quelque sorte le mécanisme du monde intellectuel."⁸ Hegel takes the form to be the reality and reduces all to logic. "[L]a philosophie hégélienne est, selon Ravaisson, un formalisme logiciste et un mécanisme intellectualiste."⁹ In opposition to this misrepresentation of Hegel, Ravaisson presents his own philosophy and that of France in his time as "un réalisme et un positivisme spiritualiste."¹⁰ He sides with Schelling, saluting the:

⁴ Jacob Schmutz, "Escaping the Aristotelian Bond: the Critique of Metaphysics in Twentieth-Century French Philosophy," *Dionysius* 17 (1999), 175, quoting H. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, transl. M.L. Anderson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), [French *La Pensée et le mouvant, Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6 (Genève: Albert Skira, 1946)], 1259.

⁵ Henri Bergson, *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, (Genève: Albert Skira, 1945), 210-212; see Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, 3-9; Leszek Kolakowski, *Bergson, Past Masters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 82.

⁶ Henri Bergson, "La vie et l'oeuvre de Ravaisson," in *La Pensée et le mouvant, Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6 (Genève: Albert Skira, 1946), 237-271 at 245-46; see Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, 3.

⁷ Dominique Janicaud, "Victor Cousin et Ravaisson, Lecteurs de Hegel et Schelling," *Les Études philosophiques*, 1984, 456. For an enthusiastic presentation of Hegel as the true heir of the Neoplatonic tradition and Schleiermacher as the founder of a new Kantian Platonism in opposition to that, and thus of the anti-intellectualist French Neoplatonism of this century, see Douglas Hedley, "Was Schleiermacher an Idealist," *Dionysius* 17 (1999), 149-168.

⁸ Janicaud, "Victor Cousin," 458 quoting Ravaisson.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹⁰ See Ravaisson's *La Philosophie en France au XIX^e siècle*, 2^e éd. (Paris: Hachette, 1885), 275 as quoted in H. Gouhier, "Liminaire," *Les Études philosophiques*, 1984, 433 and Janicaud, "Victor Cousin," 463.

système par l'achèvement duquel Schelling a terminé sa glorieuse carrière, et dont la liberté absolue du vouloir, par rapport au mécanisme logique de Hegel, forme à la fois la base et le couronnement ...¹¹

Bergson sees Ravaisson as an Aristotelian, who would not divorce the sensible and the intellectual, but rather move within the sensible to the intellectual: "sans quitter le domaine de l'intuition, c'est-à-dire des choses réelles, individuelles, concrètes, de chercher sous l'intuition sensible une intuition intellectuelle."¹² This involves intuiting the dynamic connection of all the forms of being. Bergson is one with Ravaisson here but judges him as having too much seen Aristotle through the Alexandrine commentators and thus having too radically opposed Plato and Aristotle.¹³ Bergson himself will tend rather to Platonise Aristotle, so far as he is not exempted from the false intellectual fixing of the moving and vital. As a result he finds in one side of Plotinus what Ravaisson found in the Stagirite. The same comes out in Ravaisson in a preference for Plotinus over Proclus. Jean Trouillard writes that in his reflections on Proclus, Ravaisson:

ne comprend pas que l'Un soit au delà de l'activité et de l'intelligibilité elle-même. La dimension mystique, pourtant fondamentale, du néoplatonisme lui échappe ... On sent qu'il continue à identifier l'absolu à la Pensée de la pensée. D'ailleurs il préfère Plotin à Proclus, jugeant le premier plus idéaliste et, dans son optique, plus proche d'Aristote.¹⁴

Bergson will move beyond Ravaisson toward the mystical side of Neoplatonism and, indeed, want to push beyond a misrepresented Plotinus in this regard.

With Schelling as against Hegel, as they are represented in the nineteenth-century French reception of them, Bergson criticises previous philosophy for its reduction of reality to the noetic understood as a false objectifying and fixing of both world and subject. In order to circumvent that reduction, Bergson turns to experience, to action and will, and to a mysticism, which is represented as beyond the Greek and Plotinian because in mystic union contemplation and productive action are one. Looking at Plotinus within this problematic, the result is deeply ambiguous, as I have noted above.

Certainly, on the one hand, Plotinus is to be criticised as the culmination of the fundamental misunderstanding within metaphysics:

Toute cette philosophie qui commence à Platon pour aboutir à Plotin, c'est le développement d'un principe que nous formulérions ainsi: "Il y a plus

¹¹ Ravaisson's *La Philosophie en France*, 264, quoted by Janicaud, 463.

¹² Bergson, "La vie," 241.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁴ Jean Trouillard, "Les notes de Ravaisson sur Proclus," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 152 (Janvier-Mars 1962), 73-75 at 75.

dans l'immuable que dans le mouvant, et l'on passe du stable à l'instable par une simple diminution." Or, c'est le contraire qui est vrai.¹⁵

However, on the other hand, in the Plotinian conceptions of soul, of World Soul, of *logos* and of procession, Bergson finds fundamentals of his own understandings. Bergson accepts: "l'idée platonicienne d'une Âme du monde, expliquant par se descente dans l'univers sensible, l'harmonie de l'ensemble."¹⁶ Such a notion of soul is close to that of a self-explicating *logos*. "La création intellectuelle y est en effet présentée comme la réalisation progressive d'un dessein d'ensemble, appelé 'schéma dynamique'.¹⁷ In consequence there is an exact parallel between intellectual and vital creativity. "Vie et pensée sont donc toujours, et conformément au schéma plotinien de la 'procession', un passage de l'unité à la multiplicité."¹⁸ This is what in Plotinus, Bergson places against the objectification and the reduction of the moving to the static characteristic of intellectualist metaphysics.

In common with those who succeed him in a turn to Neoplatonism, Bergson wishes to rescue both the world and the self from these objectifications and reductions. Like those leaders of the French Phenomenological tradition who, at the very end of this century, stand within this turn to Neoplatonism, Bergson attacks traditional metaphysics and attributes the problem pervading its history to the self-closure of a subjectivity caught in its own intellectualist objectifications. Equally in common with them, the escape involves the anti-intellectualist elevation of the One and Good and a voluntarism. Freeing the subject from the absoluteness of the subject-object dialectic of *Nous* will enable recovering the philosophical conditions of an "expérience intégrale," experience which is genuinely open to what is other. At this point, he anticipates developments which will judge Plotinus as too intellectualist.

Émile Bréhier: an Hegelian Plotinus

But Bergson was not the last to turn to Plotinus from within the remains of "le mouvement romantique allemand s'accompagnera d'une renaissance parallèle du néoplatonisme."¹⁹ Émile Bréhier was among the few who attended Bergson's *conférences* on Plotinus at the Collège de France, which began with Bergson's first *cours* there.²⁰ Bréhier recalled those commentaries on the *Enneads* "avec gratitude et admiration" and doubtless they partly inspired his own very important work on Plotinus.²¹ With Bréhier,

¹⁵ Bergson, *La Pensée et le mouvant*, 245 as quoted in Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, 3.

¹⁶ Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹ Hadot, "Introduction," *Le Néoplatonisme*, 2.

²⁰ Émile Bréhier, "Images plotiniennes, images bergsoniennes," *Études de philosophie antique*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 292; Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, 2.

²¹ Most notably, Plotin, *Ennéades*, texte établi et traduit par Émile Bréhier 7 vols., (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924-38) and Émile Bréhier, *La philosophie de Plotin*, Bibliothèque de la Revue des Cours et Conférences (Paris: Boivin, 1928).

the Idealist, indeed specifically the Hegelian, context and interpretation are clear. But he does stand almost alone as a French thinker who is positively attached both to Hegel and to Plotinus. As we shall see, the turn to Neoplatonism among Catholic thinkers is generally both anti-Augustinian and anti-Hegelian. Where, with Claude Bruaire (1932-1986), we find almost uniquely a French philosopher who would both call himself Catholic and identify his thought with Absolute Idealism, it is justly said: "Rien n'est plus étranger à la philosophie bruairienne que la théologie apophasique qu'il répudie comme athée, et qu'il situe à juste titre dans la mouvance de la métaphysique néo-platonicienne."²²

Bréhier's following of Hegel is, however, strictly limited. He refuses to consider "la pensée plotinienne comme une réalité en soi," and judges that:

l'histoire de la philosophie ne nous fait pas connaître d'idées existant en elles-mêmes, mais seulement des hommes qui pensent; sa méthode ... historique, est nominaliste; les idées, pour elle, n'existent pas à proprement parler."²³

For him "collective philological work pursued without intermission" must now correct the systematic visions which make modern history of philosophy possible. Nonetheless, it is Hegel and Comte who are being corrected:

It is in the philosophy of mind of Hegel and in the positivism of Comte that we must seek the explanation of the riddle of history, or rather, the authority for treating history as a riddle to be solved.²⁴

On the crucial question of the relation of *Nous* and the One, Bréhier does follow Hegel, who is praised as "un des hommes qui était le mieux préparé, par sa nature d'esprit, à comprendre Plotin."²⁵ When by *Nous* is considered "état de recueillement parfait où l'objet est pleinement absorbé dans le sujet, il n'y a plus alors aucune distinction précise entre l'Intelligence et l'Un." In mystical elevation there is not in fact a passage beyond thought, instead, Hegel:

Répondant aux reproches de ceux qui font de Plotin un mystique enthousiaste, il dit que, pour lui, l'extase était "pure pensée qui est en soi .. et se prend pour objet". Plotin avait l'idée que l'essence de Dieu est la pensée elle-même et qu'elle est présente dans la pensée. [L]'Un n'est pas ...

²² Denise Leduc-Fagette, "Claude Bruaire, 1932-1986," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 177:1 (Janvier-Mars, 1987), 5-19 at 13. See Claude Bruaire, *L'être et l'esprit*, Épiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 6-7, 96ff. and Xavier Tilliette, "La théologie philosophique de Claude Bruaire," *Gregorianum* 74:4 (1993), 689.

²³ Bréhier, *La philosophie de Plotin*, 171.

²⁴ Émile Bréhier, "The Formation of our History of Philosophy," *Philosophy and History, essays presented to Ernst Cassirer*, edited Raymond Klibansky and H.L. Paton, 1st edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936) reprint Harper Torch Books (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 159-172 at 168 and 171.

²⁵ Bréhier, *La philosophie de Plotin*, 180.

la région où la pensée philosophique cesse pour transformer dans le bégayement inarticulé du mystique. ... C'est pourquoi Hegel a eu raison de dire que "l'idée de la philosophie plotinienne est un intellectualisme ou un idéalisme élevé."²⁶

So far as there is a mysticism in Plotinus seeking union beyond thinking this is credited to "L'Orientalisme de Plotin."

The mixture of Hegelian and positivist shaping of the history of philosophy comes out strongly in Bréhier's treatment of *La Philosophie du Moyen Âge*.²⁷ Henri Berr, the editor of the series in which Bréhier's volume appeared, significantly titled, *Bibliothèque de synthèse historique, L'évolution de l'humanité*, sums up the author's argument in terms of a recovery of the authentic Occidental heritage of the Greeks by the elimination of this Oriental element.²⁸ For Bréhier this will involve getting beyond "l'enseignement philosophique donné par le clergé" in order to arrive at "une spéculation autonome, d'une recherche de la vérité pour elle-même."²⁹ Consistently with this Bréhier initiated the great discussion of whether philosophy could qualify itself as "Christian." For him there could no more be a Christian philosophy than a Christian mathematics.³⁰ One of those who first and most prominently engaged Bréhier on this question was Maurice Blondel.

Maurice Blondel: the Lay Philosophical Mystic and Father of Priestly Neoplatonism

It tells us much about the purposes which Neoplatonism serves in twentieth-century France that, after Bréhier, the future of Neoplatonism in France is primarily not with laïcs but with Catholic scholars, theologians and philosophers most of whom were priests, or who, like Pierre Hadot and Michel Tardieu³¹, started their scholarly careers as priests. It will also tell us a great deal about philosophy in our time that, in these last days of the century when the great priestly scholars, philosophers and theologians who created the Neoplatonic revival in France and gave it its character have passed to their rewards

²⁶ Ibid., 180-81.

²⁷ Émile Bréhier, *La Philosophie du Moyen Âge*, Bibliothèque de synthèse historique, L'évolution de l'humanité (Paris: Albin Michel, 1937).

²⁸ Ibid., ii.

²⁹ Ibid., 433 & 145. For similar views see George Davy, "Préface" to Émile Bréhier, *Études de philosophie antique*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), xiv-xv.

³⁰ Étienne Fouilloux, *Une Église en quête de liberté, La pensée française entre modernité et Vatican II, 1914-1962*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1998), 151. See Xavier Tilliette, "Le Père de Lubac et le débat de la philosophie chrétienne," *Les Études Philosophiques*, Avril-Juin 1995 ["Henri de Lubac et la philosophie"], 193-204.

³¹ Among the auditeurs of Jean Pépin in the IV^e section of EPHE in 1973-74 was "le P. M. Tardieu (attaché au C.N.R.S.)" he was also a student of Hadot. In 1976 he assumed a chair in "Gnose et manichéisme" in the IV^e section and passed to the Collège de France to "Histoire des syncrétismes de la fin de l'Antiquité" where he begun to teach in 1991.

without new sons among the clergy to succeed them, their work is now carried on by lay philosophers, theologians and scholars.

Not surprisingly, one of the main accomplishments of the clerical scholars so far as Neoplatonic studies are concerned has been to show the intimate connection in the schools of Late Antiquity between philosophy and religious life. Thus, even if they accept E.R. Dodds' demonstration that no recourse to the Orient is required to explain the Plotinian doctrine of the One or mysticism,³² they are happy to find in the character of the philosophy an opening to the Oriental. While this religious turn begins among the clergy, it will also enable Neoplatonism to become a substitute for Catholicism among laicized priests and the disenchanting.³³ For example, Pierre Hadot has spent the greatest part of his scholarly career teaching, one might almost say preaching, that philosophy is a way of life, *une spiritualité*.³⁴

Having brought the question of the future of Neoplatonism in France after Bréhier into connection with French Catholicism, the problems of "Christian" philosophy and of relations of clergy and laity, we cannot leave the first part of our century without noting the sole Catholic Modernist in the circle of Bergson whose work escaped ecclesiastical condemnation.³⁵ It belongs to the perfect shape of the history we are exploring that an important part of the reason Blondel was spared was that he was lay. Nonetheless, he inspired more of what overcame the anti-Modernist crusade in the French Catholic Church than anyone and the revival of Neoplatonism was crucial to that overcoming.³⁶ Nor were those who suspected him of Modernist sympathies entirely wrong. He agreed with Loisy that the crisis which modernity posed for Catholicism could not be unloosed "par la vertu de la scolastique, par un retour au fixisme médiéval."³⁷ When one recollects that the anti-Modernist crusade takes place within the Leonine revival of Thomism, and that the attempt to return to Scholasticism as the mode of Catholic philosophy and theology was the positive side of the crusade, this agreement is very dangerous.

Maurice Blondel belongs to the same reaction against traditional metaphysics which we found already in Bergson. So far as Blondel conceived metaphysics as trapped within a logic of self-objectification by a pretense to speculative completeness apart from action, he followed Bergson's indications as to the way out. Blondel sought to move simultaneously toward transcendence and a deeper experience which would bring union.

³² See E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly*, 22 (1928), 129-142.

³³ The most evident example of the latter is A.H. Armstrong and is put forthrightly in his "Some Advantages of Polytheism," *Dionysius*, 5 (1981), 181-88 (here he is clearly moved by reflections of Festugière but the strongest contemporary influence on him comes from Trouillard.)

³⁴ See Pierre Hadot, *Chaire d' Histoire de la pensée hellénistique et romaine, Leçon Inaugural*, faite le Vendredi 18 Février 1983 (Paris: Collège de France, 1983), idem, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, translated by Michael Chase, with an préface by Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

³⁵ See R.C. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France 1900-1914*, (Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1988), 152-54.

³⁶ See Fouilloux, *Une Église en quête de liberté*, 149-91

³⁷ Émile Poulat, "Maurice Blondel et la crise moderniste," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, Janvier-Mars, 1987, 50 quoting Blondel to Loisy.

With him, "We are not in the presence of a metaphysics of understanding or speculation, but in a metaphysics of union with the very first principle. We are closer to Neoplatonism than to Aristotelianism."³⁸ The connections to Blondel's thought of those priests who most radically turned to Neoplatonism as a way out of the traps in which it seemed that Western modernity must necessarily destroy Christianity as religion are significant.

Blondel has been studied at length by Père Henry Duméry, a follower who as late as 1958 had four works consigned to the Index for philosophical deviations "d'ordre métaphysique," involving a "méconnaissance de l'analogie de l'être."³⁹ Joseph Combès of the Oratoire de France tells us that with Blondel we find fundamentals of the thought of the Sulpician Jean Trouillard.⁴⁰ These three priests, Duméry, Combès and Trouillard, Stanislas Breton, has described as "la triade néo-platonicienne de France" developing un "radicalisme néoplatonicien."⁴¹ Breton, a Passionist priest, might well have made French Neoplatonism a quaternity by placing himself in it. Both Duméry and Trouillard saw in Blondel's thought something of Neoplatonism.⁴²

The Blondelian Jesuits: Platonism and the Greek Fathers

Blondel's desire for a mystical way in philosophy and theology, one oriented to inner knowledge, union and transcendence, as well as his discovery in his correspondence with Loisy of the "lacunes philosophiques de l'exégèse critique"⁴³ had also a strong effect among the Jesuits. It helped inspire the great series of Patristic texts "Sources chrétiennes," which they founded and directed.

This return to sources was by no means theologically or philosophically neutral. It was not only a reaching back beyond the Middle Ages, Scholasticism and Thomism to the Fathers, but it was specifically a move toward the Greek as against the Latin Fathers, and especially against the unilateral privileging of Augustine.⁴⁴ The Jesuits Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou were with Blondel in opposing a Scholasticism which was logical and metaphysical to the detriment of an itinerary simultaneously philosophical, theological and mystical. In the Greek Fathers they thought to find a Christian way which was not tightly departmentalised in the Western fashion, where its rigidities, rationalistic

³⁸ Schmutz, "Escaping the Aristotelian Bond", 185.

³⁹ Fouilloux, *Une Église en quête de liberté*, 35 quoting *L'Osservatore Romano* July 6, 1958 columns 841 and 842.

⁴⁰ See Joseph Combès, "Néoplatonisme aujourd'hui: La vie et le pensée de Jean Trouillard (1907-1984)," *Études néoplatoniciennes*, 2nd. éd., Collection Krisis (Grenoble: Millon, 1996), 353-65, originally published in *Gonimos*, Mélanges offerts à L.G. Westerink, (Buffalo: Arethusa, 1988), 85-102, at 354-55.

⁴¹ Stanislas Breton, *De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992), 31 & 152-3.

⁴² See Henry Duméry, *La Philosophie de l'action*, Préface de Maurice Blondel, (Paris: Mouton, 1948), 113-14 quoted by Illyd Trethowan, in Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, (London: Harvil, 1964), 113.

⁴³ Poulat, "Maurice Blondel," 52 quoting Blondel to Loisy.

⁴⁴ Fouilloux, *Une Église en quête de liberté*, 184.

confidence and narrowness had not supplanted integrated spiritual movement, where a deductive theology had not been separated from Scriptural meditation.⁴⁵ Those who were seeking an alternative to Thomism, whose scientific divisions of this kind they associated with its Aristotelianism, generally saw Platonism as involving the desired integration for the sake of theology understood as mystical itinerarium.

As the other side of such a return to sources, both de Lubac and Daniélou endeavoured to understand and explain the phenomena of atheism and secularization.⁴⁶ Given the interplay with the Augustinian tradition and German Idealism which we have noted in the French turn to Neoplatonism, we must mention at least, even if here we can do no more, de Lubac's study of both in this connection. His writings on "surnaturel"⁴⁷ had as their aim to trace the history of its naturalization in Western theology and philosophy and also to find how "la foi peut être légitimement employée à l'intelligence universelle, sans que l'ordre surnaturel en soit naturalisé, ni l'ordre naturel, volatilisé." This he associated with Greek Patristic Platonism, on the one side, and with Blondel on the other.⁴⁸ Because the problem of the relation of the natural and the supernatural is in Western theology a question of natural desire, Blondel's "coaptation entre la volonté humaine, le désir naturel, et le surnaturel chrétien" is de Lubac's point of departure and return.⁴⁹ In contrast, de Lubac finds that the anthropologised theology of Feuerbach, which involves everything to which he is opposed (anti-Christology, the inversion of the *kenosis*, etc.), is the result of the Hegelian Christology, itself realizing certain tendencies implicit in Western theology but become dominant in both the baroque Scholasticism and modern philosophy.⁵⁰

Of those involved with "Sources chrétiennes" Daniélou made special studies of the relations between pagan myths and Christian mysteries and between Platonism and mystical theology. His works find paganism and Christianity complementary, but paganism only desires what Christianity attains. Such a contrast will not satisfy Trouillard. In distinction from Daniélou's decidedly Christian Platonism,⁵¹ there is a deeper turn to Neoplatonism itself in Jean Trouillard's following of Blondel.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 182-87.

⁴⁶ See Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, (Cleveland / New York: World Publishing, 1963).

⁴⁷ For example, Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

⁴⁸ See Tilliette, "Le Père de Lubac," 195 who is quoting de Lubac, *Théologies d'occasion* (Paris: de Brouwer, 1984), 104-105. Tilliette's article gives a good summary of de Lubac's relation to Blondel.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ For considerations of de Lubac's understanding of Hegel see Olivier Boulnois, "Les deux fins de l'homme. L'impossible anthropologie et le repli de la théologie," Jean-Yves Lacoste, "Le désir et l'inexigible. Préambules à une lecture," and Bruno Pinchard, "Sujet théologique, sujet initiatique. L'interprétation du joachimisme par Henri de Lubac et la figure de Dante," all in *Les Études Philosophiques*, Avril-Juin 1995 ["Henri de Lubac et la philosophie"], at 208, 232-38 and 248-49.

⁵¹ See Jean Daniélou, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien, je sais - je crois* (Paris: Fayard, 1966); idem, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, [1st ed., 1944] *Théologie 2* (Paris: Aubier, 1954); idem, *Le message chrétien et la pensée grecque au II^e siècle*, ms (Paris: Institut Catholique de Paris, Faculté de théologie: no date), this as also *Platonisme et théologie mystique* refers to the work of Festiugere.

**From Blondel to Trouillard:
from Augustinian ontology to Proclean *Hénologie***

With Trouillard we arrive at Neoplatonism developed within an anti-metaphysical and essentially postmodern position. Trouillard's Procline *hénologie* stands sharply against Idealist interpretations of Neoplatonic texts and is developed as an alternative to what he regards as the Hegelian conclusion of the Augustinian following of Plotinus. It is equally an alternative to Thomism and is clearly shaped by Martin Heidegger's critique of *onto-théologie*. The movement out of Thomism comes easily to the followers of Blondel's integrated itinerarium but getting beyond Augustine is more difficult.

Trouillard encountered the work of Blondel in 1929 when at the age of twenty-two he was studying theology. It offered "une méthode de pensée qui s'autorise de la conspiration immanente de l'esprit avec tous les orders de réalité et avec leur principe transordinaire ..."⁵² Trouillard's turn to Plotinus when teaching at the seminary in Bourges (1939-1956) was only "un approfondissement pour lui de la notion et de la réalité de l'immanence spirituelle."⁵³

Blondel searching for the grounds of action had found it in the "condition inconditionnée" which is both its term and source. This principle is

une motion intérieure qui transcende tout développement temporel, car celui-ci en est issu; et Blondel montrait que la raison, dans son effort même pour se fermer au surnaturel, le postule nécessairement.⁵⁴

The first fruit of Trouillard's consideration of Plotinus within a Blondelian framework was to find "à la racine de l'esprit une union implicite à une source ineffable."⁵⁵ It was the Plotinian language of the "unspeakable contact", the grounding in what is unthinkable because prior to both *noesis* and *esse*, which attracted Trouillard.

A ground prior to thought and being seemed to provide the right solution to the problem occupying all the followers of Blondel we have mentioned. On the one hand, they perceived a destructive modern secularization of Christianity. On the other hand, that secularization appeared as the necessary development of Western Christianity. Neoscholastic metaphysics would loosen no knots. Thomism, with its separation of philosophy and theology, and its account of the relations of natural and supernatural coordinate with this separation, did not belong to the solution of the problem but to its intensification.⁵⁶ De Lubac had shown that the Western tradition had come to regard the supernatural as another nature superadded to the first. It was inevitable that in such a scheme, nature would retrieve what had been alienated and so make itself total. The Plotinian location of the transcendent ground of nature in what was beyond

⁵² Combès, "Néoplatonisme aujourd'hui," 355.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Boulnois, "Les deux fins de l'homme," 209-22.

representation, grasp, manipulation and retrieval seemed to provide a way out.⁵⁷ However, to follow such a path something more deeply and decisively determinative of the character of Western Christendom and its dilemmas than Thomism would have to be questioned, namely, the Augustinian tradition,

It is not surprising, then, that, in an important article by Trouillard on Blondel, written in 1960, one finds sharply expressed the problematic governing the turn by French Neoplatonic theology both from Augustine and from Idealism. Blondel's refusal of theology and philosophy as separated sciences belonged to his profoundly Augustinian spirituality and way of thinking: "... la dialectique blondélienne est saturée d'apports anselmiens et augustiniens (bonaventuriens)."⁵⁸ Nor was he Augustinian only in his spiritual and dialectical style, Augustinian onto-theology was at the center of his reasoning.⁵⁹ Trouillard quotes a profoundly Augustinian passage from *L'Action* speaking of the absolute adequation of *l'être, connaître* and *l'agir* in God and this as belonging to the structure of all subjectivity, so that "La trinité, c'est l'argument ontologique transporté dans l'absolu, là où cette preuve n'est plus une preuve, mais la vérité même et la vie de l'être."⁶⁰

Trouillard's first response to this is a warning about the dangers of Augustine's trinitarian speculations. In his view, this line of Western thought did not adequately protect the divine transcendence because it remained within the Plotinian - Porphyrian tradition of the exegesis of the *Parmenides* as opposed to the more radical division of the One from *Nous* in the tradition which moves within paganism from Iamblichus to Damascius. In seeking to found self-reflexive subjectivity in the divine, the Augustinian tradition projects the finite unto the infinite. One of the problems of Augustine's trinitarian speculations is:

... redoubler sous prétexte de les fonder dans l'Absolu, les distinctions inhérentes à l'esprit créé. Une des faiblesses de la tradition augustiniennne est d'être demeurée en deçà de l'exégèse plotinienne du *Parménide* et de n'avoir pas compris qu'en celle-ci les exigences de la critique et celles de la vie religieuse convergent pour libérer la Transcendance de tout ce qui revient à l'intelligible. Hors de là on risquera perpétuellement le quiproquo, comme il arrive à la dialectique hégélienne dont nul peut dire si elle est celle de Dieu ou celle de l'homme et qui joue de cette ambiguïté.⁶¹

However, in the passage he had quoted from *L'Action*, Trouillard found something Plotinian he could affirm, something which Bergson also found in Plotinus, namely, the

⁵⁷ Combès, "Néoplatonisme aujourd'hui," 356.

⁵⁸ Tilliette, "Le Père de Lubac," 194.

⁵⁹ See appropriately, Claude Bruaire, "Dialectique de *L'Action* et preuve ontologique," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 177:1 (Janvier-Mars, 1987), 424-433.

⁶⁰ Blondel, "la page 349 de *L'Action* de 1893" as quoted by Jean Trouillard in "Pluralité spirituelle et Blondel," *Archives de philosophie*, Janvier-Mars, 1961, 21-28 at 23. unité normative selon

⁶¹ Trouillard, "Pluralité spirituelle," 24.

living interconnection of intelligences: "l'intersubjectivité ... tient à la structure même de pensées qui se posent les unes par les autres dans une sorte de circumincession."⁶² From there he moves to Proclus and from Proclus we are brought to reflect on other features of Blondel's thought: the power of negation, the indeterminate and absence. Trouillard concludes:

Le point commun entre Blondel et la tradition platonicienne, c'est cette infinité d'absence qu'implique toute présence. Plus exactement, c'est la positivité et l'efficacité de cette absence. Une intention mentale se définit par ce qu'elle exclut autant que par ce qu'elle pose.⁶³

At this point Trouillard's *hénologie* comes into view. It becomes explicit in his conclusion:

... si la norme domine la présence et l'absence, si elle commande possession et privation, le nom d'Être semble mal choisi pour la désigner. La normative est une hyperontologie. ... Elle est *être* dans la mesure où elle réalise ses dérivés, mais elle leur impose aussi "la distance". Elle est *unité* au sens où elle règle le divers, mais elle est également source de la multiplicité et de la bigarrure des êtres."⁶⁴

Thus we are drawn to a concluding quotation from Proclus on the foundational transcendence of the One and to a summary remark on Blondel. Trouillard thinks he has shown to have the principles of "une ontologie originale, qui n'est pas une variété de celle d'Aristote ni une simple reprise des méditations augustinienes."⁶⁵

Along the same lines, Jean-Luc Marion finds in Blondel "la conversion de la volonté," or *charité*, by which he would turn to God without returning to *onto-théologie*. This theology without ontology Marion first discovered in a retrieval of the Christian and Procline Neoplatonism of the Pseudo-Denys and outlined in his first book *L'idole et la distance*.⁶⁶ His article on Blondel touches on its central theme so far as Blondel is also concerned to find how will transcends "tous ses objets comme autant d'idoles."⁶⁷ However, Denys is not the subject of Marion's reflections in considering *L'Action*. Rather it is Blondel's consideration of the will not only as he directs a polemic against Schopenhauer and Nietzsche but also as its infinity is converted to charity in the Christian

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 27

⁶⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, "La conversion de la volonté selon 'L'Action'," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 177:1 (Janvier-Mars, 1987), 33-46 and idem, *L'idole et la distance, Cinq études*, (Paris; Grasset et Fasquelle, 1977). On his move to Denys see W.J. Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, edited by Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, Studies in Christian Origins (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 150ff. and idem, "Stephen Menn's Cartesian Augustine: Metaphysical and Ahistorically Modern," *Animus*, 3 (1998), 19-29 for his understanding of Augustine.

⁶⁷ Marion, "La conversion," 38.

tradition which leads from Augustine to Bernard of Clairvaux. Marion's attempt "to shoot for God according to his most theological name - charity"⁶⁸ and thus to move "hors-texte," transcending the historical conditions of philosophy, is also Augustinian. Augustine's voluntarism attracts him and, like Trouillard, he detaches himself from the Augustinian ontology to which Blondel had been drawn, even if he will not follow Trouillard into a Neoplatonic henology.⁶⁹ Trouillard and Marion meet because in charity a Neoplatonic move to the One - Good beyond being and to the will beyond the *noetic* can be united.

However, in what unites Blondel, Trouillard and Marion we have moved too quickly. Between Bergson, Bréhier and Blondel, on the one hand, and Trouillard, Combès, Duméry, Breton and Marion, on the other, there is a considerable history and to some of that we must now attend.

From Bréhier to Festugière: Plato becomes a Mystic

This intervening history is primarily a history of scholarship, it involves a shift from a concentration on Plotinus to his successors, a connection with English scholarship and a move from laïcs to clergy. The Neoplatonic aspect of French postmodernity stands on the shoulders of the clergy. An essential reason for this is that a crucial determining factor in the revival of Neoplatonism is its connection with Thomism.

The development of French Neoplatonic scholarship occurs first within and then in reaction against the Neothomism of the Leonine revival. This Neothomism is a species of anti-modern thought which by a dialectical twist leads to a postmodern retrieval of Neoplatonism. From the perspective of the Neothomists, Neoplatonism appeared as an ally of modernity, the predecessor and support of its idealisms -- a judgement which the work of Bréhier and Bergson seemed to support. On the contrary, the positive present interest in Neoplatonism depends on a reversal of this judgment. In the last third of the twentieth century, the dead Neothomism and Neoscholasticism of the nineteenth century revival, appears, instead of Neoplatonism, as having been thoroughly infected with modern objectifying rationalism. At its heart is discerned the onto-theologism criticized by Heidegger.⁷⁰ Thomas' identification of God with *ipsum esse subsistens* came to be regarded as profoundly problematic. For, about 1960, the French discovered, against the judgment of Étienne Gilson, that Heidegger had not made, and indeed, would not and

⁶⁸ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without being: Hors-texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, (Chicago; Chicago University Press, 1991), xxi; see idem, "The Idea of God," *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayres, 2 vol. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), i, 270-72.

⁶⁹ See Hankey, "Stephen Menn's Cartesian Augustine," 26, especially note 52.

⁷⁰ This summarizes the argument of my "Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21-24 septembre 1994*, édité Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 405-438 and "Denys and Aquinas."

could not make, an exception for Thomas in his history of onto-theology.⁷¹ Neoplatonism, in contrast, especially the Procline and Dionysian variety, and medieval thought so far as it is thus Neoplatonic, is conceived as a better means of responding to the questions to which modernity has come.

On the way into these reversals, the work of A. M. J. Festugière (1898-1982) is indicative and essential.⁷² A Dominican, Père Festugière was originally moved by the hope of finding in Neoplatonism the medium by which Aristotle could be adapted to Christian purposes. The intended result was to have been that the Philosopher, identified by the Fathers as a veritable font of heresy, could become instead one foundation of Aquinas' thought.⁷³ But, after a Thomistic beginning, Festugière ended up teaching and publishing primarily about Plato, pagan religion and Neoplatonism, concentrating on their mystical aspects. In 1944, he started publishing an edition of *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*⁷⁴ -- which came out in the series *Études bibliques!* after having been rejected by *la collection Guillaume Budé*⁷⁵ -- and which is essential to the Iamblichan - Procline tradition in Neoplatonism. In 1945 he began another four volume collection of texts and translations, the *Corpus Hermeticum*.⁷⁶ The *Corpus* involved a collaboration with a close friend, Arthur Darby Nock, an Englishman who, after many humiliations at Cambridge, had fled to Harvard.⁷⁷ Festugière was also a close friend of the Irish Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, E.R. Dodds, "with a lifelong interest in occult or supernormal phenomena, to which his attitude was by no means crudely rationalist or altogether unsympathetic"⁷⁸ and who survived with difficulty Oxford's incomprehension of his ground-breaking work on Proclus.⁷⁹ This began an important interchange between French and English Neoplatonic scholars where the pursuit of a personal religious quest was common.

There was nothing here of Bréhier's positivistic detachment. Père Festugière's life was a constant engagement in a deeply troubled religious quest. He studied the forms of

⁷¹ See Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas," 146-47 and idem, "From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: the fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-speaking North America," *Dionysius*, 16 (1998), 184-186.

⁷² See *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: antiquité païenne et chrétienne*, éd. E. Lucchesi et H.-D. Saffrey, Cahiers d'Orientalisme 10 (Geneva: P. Cramer, 1984) which contains a bibliography. His "Portrait" in this volume is by H.-D. Saffrey and is reprinted in H.-D. Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Histoire des doctrines de l'antiquité classique 14 (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 297-305.

⁷³ David T. Runia, "Festugière Revisited: Aristotle in the Greek Patres," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 43 (1989), 1-2 and 26.

⁷⁴ 4 vols., Paris: Lecoffee, 1944-54.

⁷⁵ Saffrey, "Portrait," x.

⁷⁶ 4 vols. Paris: *Les Belles Lettres*, 1945-54.

⁷⁷ Nock established the text and Festugière commented and translated.

⁷⁸ A.H. Armstrong, "Iamblichus and Egypt," in idem, *Hellenic and Christian Studies*, II, (London: Variorum, 1990), 186 and see E.R. Dodds, *Missing Persons. An Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

⁷⁹ See Robert B. Todd, "A Note on Wayne J. Hankey's review of Blank, Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians*. (BMCR 99.10.33)," *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 99.11.19, at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr>.

the Hellenic search for personal salvation and sought there answers to his own questions. H.-D. Saffrey described the quest thus:

toute sa vie le Père Festugière a été habité par le problème du mal. Non pas qu'il mît en doute l'existence de Dieu, mais sa question était: "Dieu aime-t-il les hommes? ... *Personal Religion Among the Greeks*⁸⁰ était celui qui lui tenait le plus à coeur.⁸¹

In reflections near the end of his life, Festugière wrote that in the first century there was an extraordinary phenomenon:

l'homme a cru que Dieu l'aimait. C'est la révolution la plus considérable de l'humanité. C'est ce qui a fait passer de l'homme antique à l'homme moderne. C'est ce qui ne cesse de plonger l'historien dans le plus totale stupéfaction.⁸²

In contrast to this stupifying optimism, the Greeks were unsurpassable guides in a realistic philosophical and religious treatment of the human condition:

Man is unhappy. From the time of Homer and his reference to "men of a day" no people has devoted so much thought to this matter as the Greeks. The Greek looked at life without illusion.⁸³

But this realism was not destructive of piety. On the contrary, Festugière found among the Greeks both a popular and a reflective piety in which he saw everything which marked true religion. In Homer's heroes he finds:

personal religion. It is a religion of deep friendship. The devotee does not place his confidence in the respect he has shown to the god; he places it in the god's friendliness.⁸⁴

When Festugière comes to what he calls reflective piety, the first of whom he speaks is Plato. Of his doctrine of the Good beyond thought and being in the *Republic* and that of the *VIIIth Letter*, he writes:

... this is the expression of a personal experience. In sum, the suprême object of knowledge, the final degree of our metaphysical investigations,

⁸⁰ André-Jean Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks*, Sather Classical Lectures 26 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954).

⁸¹ Saffrey, "Portrait," vii and xii

⁸² A.J.M. Festugière, *Du Christianisme*, in *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière*; 275-281 at 275.

⁸³ A.J. Festugière, *Epicurus and his Gods*, trans. C.W. Chilton (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1955), vii.

⁸⁴ Festugière, *Personal Religion*, vii.

the term on which all the rest depends, is an object which defies definition, and hence cannot be named. It is the Unknown God.⁸⁵

Despite this, Festugičre was not attracted by all the religious phenomena of late Antiquity. *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* does not go far beyond Plotinus. Pierre Hadot criticizes him:

(comme d'ailleurs celle de son ami, le grand E.R. Dodds) a été beaucoup trop dominée par des clichés ... sur la décadence sociale et politique de la vie politique du monde antique, sur le trouble ... de la conscience collective antique.⁸⁶

It is only with Hadot and Trouillard that an appreciation of what was positive in the religion of Iamblichus and those who followed him into a revealed religion with a restoration of cult and theurgy which could match Christianity appeared.

That Festugičre's treatment of Platonism marked a transition was evident to Bréhier himself. After presiding over the *soutenance* of Festugičre's doctorate, Bréhier published a criticism of his interpretation of Plato "en faisant voir chez Platon un mystique" and for treating the Plotinian reading of Plato as correct both in method and content. The criticism had little effect. In his teaching at the École pratique des hautes études, where from 1943 to 1968 Festugičre was Directeur d'études in a chair called alternatively "Religions hellénistiques et fin du paganisme" and "Religions de la Grèce ancienne," he moved freely back and forth between Plato and late Hellenistic philosophy, theology and religious life.⁸⁷

Especially problematic for Bréhier is, significantly, Festugičre's sympathy for the Plotinian interpretation of the *Parmenides* and "la distinction radicale qu'il met entre l'Un de la première hypothèse ... et l'Un de la seconde hypothèse" in the interest of "la mystique platonicienne."⁸⁸ Trouillard and those who will be occupied with the problems posed by Heidegger's criticism of *onto-théologie* will affirm and develop this radical distinction so that being is not first. It is significant, however, that the interpretation

⁸⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁶ Pierre Hadot's memorial for Festugičre in the *Annuaire EPHE V^e*, t. XCII, (1983-84), 31-35 at 34. It was only through reading Trouillard that A.H. Armstrong got beyond Dodds' prejudices in respect to later Neoplatonism. Another criticism of Festugičre's approach to late antique religion comes from Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Les Sciences religieuses entre la sociologie, le comparatisme et l'anthropologie," in Jean Baubérot, Jacques Béguin, François Laplanche, Émile Poulat, Claude Tradits, Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cent ans de sciences religieuses en France q l'École pratique des hautes études*, Sciences humaines et religions (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 85-6

⁸⁷ Émile Bréhier, "Platonisme et néoplatonisme: A propos d'un livre du P. Festugičre," *Revue des Études grecques*, LI (octobre, 1938), 489-98, republished in Bréhier, *Études de philosophie antique*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 56-64 Festugičre's *thèse de doctorat čs lettres*, was published as *Contemplation et vie contemplative chez Platon*, Collection Le Saulchoir, Bibliothèque de philosophie, 2 (Paris: Vrin, 1936). See Hadot's memorial, 32.

⁸⁸ Bréhier, "Platonisme et néoplatonisme," 61-2. For Bréhier the great error of Festugičre is separating the contemplative and the scientific in Plato.

emerges first in a renewed religious interest in the Platonic tradition. This return to the religious side of Neoplatonism remains and largely determines what of the Christian religion is held to in opposition to the theoretical or philosophical side of Neoplatonism. Postmodern Neoplatonism magnifies the "dualité du Platon mystique et du Platon savant"⁸⁹ because this involves the possibility of separating theology and ontology as Heidegger demands.⁹⁰

The Scholar Priests

Festugière's movement from Thomas Aquinas to Neoplatonic scholarship was repeated with his student and biographer, Henry-Dominic Saffrey. Also a Dominican, in 1954, Saffrey edited Aquinas' *Commentary on the Liber de causis*, the first text of Thomas to have a proper scientific edition.⁹¹ This work was to have been a beginning of a map of the extent of the Procline influence in Western theology and an indication of the consequences for theology of that discovery, but, mostly, Saffrey stayed with Later Greek Neoplatonism.⁹² When his work on the *Commentary* was complete, he went to Oxford where he began his edition, translation and commentary on the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus as a D.Phil. thesis for E.R. Dodds. The last of the six volumes appeared in 1997, truly a life's work. In it he testifies to his formation by Dodds and Festugière. Dodds:

par son édition exemplaire des *Éléments de théologie*, doit être considéré comme le pionnier des études procliennes en ce XX^e siècle; A.J. Festugière, par ses admirables traductions des commentaires de Proclus sur le *Timée* et la *République* de Platon, a ouvert la voie à une meilleure intelligence des doctrines de Proclus et du Néoplatonisme en général.⁹³

However, the original Dominican project which he shared with Festugière was not entirely neglected. By studies of the objective connections between Proclus and the Pseudo-Denys, Saffrey assisted those who undertook to show how Neoplatonism was

⁸⁹ Ibid., 64.

⁹⁰ See W.J. Hankey, "Theoria versus Poesis: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas," *Modern Theology*, 15:4 (October 1999), 387-97; Jacques Derrida, "Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations," in *Psyché: Invention de l'autre*, (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987), 584-595; Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 44, 55-6, 114-43; Jean-Luc Marion, *Dieu sans l'être*, [1st ed. 1982 Librairie Arthème Fayard], (Paris: Quadrige & PUF, 1991), 81-154; idem, *L'Idole et la distance*, 177-243; Louis Bouyer, *Mysterion, Du mystère à la mystique*, (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1986), 230 ff.

⁹¹ *Super Librum de Causis Expositio*, éd. H.-D. Saffrey, o.p., *Textus Philosophici Friburgenses* 4/5 (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, Louvain: Éditions E. Nauwelaerts, 1954).

⁹² Three articles showing his initial interest in the sources of Thomas are gathered at the beginning of the first of two collections of his articles: H.-D. Saffrey, *Recherches sur la tradition platonicienne au Moyen Âge et à la renaissance*, (Paris: Vrin-reprise, 1987), the last of them was originally published in 1975.

⁹³ Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, 6 vol., texte établi et traduit par H.-D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997), vi, vii-viii.

present within Latin mediaeval thought.⁹⁴ Moreover, it was not only a doctrinal continuity which Saffrey concerned himself to show. He carried forward the sympathetic study by Festugière and Nock of the religion of the Hellenic and Hellenistic worlds. He showed how in developing "theology as science," and philosophy as *religio mentis* and way of life:

Proclus organised the studious life as a kind of monastic life ... the program of study as part of a true life of contemplation and prayer; it was he who viewed the philosophy of Plato as a "mystagogy," as an "initiation into the holy mysteries themselves ... installed, for eternity, in the home of the gods on High." ... That is why ... the spirituality of Proclus heralds the spirit of medieval philosophy.⁹⁵

In his Inaugural Lecture of the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies in 1995, Saffrey maintained that the Neoplatonic "theology as science" had its "full flowering in the 13th century West."⁹⁶ The result of this and other scholarship was not only that Neoplatonism was developed as an alternative to Thomism but that a Neoplatonic Thomas was also made possible. The Neoplatonising of medieval scholasticism which will be carried out by Hadot and the disciples of Festugière will not only transform the understanding of medieval philosophy, theology and spirituality but will also be important in the response to Heidegger and be crucial in how they are placed in post-modern philosophy and theology.

In 1966, the Jesuit Édouard des Places published an edition and translation of Iamblichus, *Les mystères d'Égypte*.⁹⁷ In 1971 and 1989, the same Société d'édition brought out his Greek text and French translation of the *Oracles Chaldaïques* and of the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus (Jean Trouillard revised and corrected the edition of the *Oracles*). So, between the Jesuit and the Dominicans, the picture of the oracular and theurgic aspects of Neoplatonic spirituality in Late Antiquity was filled out.

⁹⁴ The last of a series of articles is "Le lien le plus objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," *Roma, magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis, Mélanges offerts au Père L.E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire*, (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales: Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 1998), his conclusions about Denys are summarized in H.-D. Saffrey, "Theology as science (3rd-6th centuries)," *Studia Patristica*, vol. XXIX, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 321-39, translated by W.J. Hankey, French version "Les débuts de la théologie comme science (IIIe-VIe)," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 80:2 (Avril, 1996), 201-220, at 337-338.

⁹⁵ H.-D. Saffrey, "From Iamblichus to Proclus and Damascius," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, World Spirituality 15 (New York: Crossroads, 1989), 250-264 at 264, French version "Quelques aspects de la spiritualité des philosophes néoplatoniciens de Jamblique à Proclus et Damascius," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 68:2 (Avril, 1984), 169-182. See his "The Piety and Prayers of Ordinary Men and Women in Late Antiquity," 195-213 in the same volume.

⁹⁶ Saffrey, "Theology as science," 339.

⁹⁷ Paris, *Les Belles Lettres*, for an incomplete bibliography of des Places, see his festschrift *Études platoniciennes, 1929-1979*, (Leiden: Brill, 1981); for additional bibliography, see *Platonism in Late Antiquity*, edited Stephen Gersh and Charles Kannengiesser, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 8 (Notre Dame: Notre Dame U.P., 1992), ix-xii.

The English: Plotinian Mysticism or Procline Theurgy

There is, of course, an English Neoplatonic scholarship which was important for the French developments, as Saffrey's testimony to E.R. Dodds makes evident.⁹⁸ Besides being the pioneer of Procline studies in the 20th century, he was the encouraging friend of Festugière and a teacher of Saffrey. This English Neoplatonic scholarship can involve philosophical judgments moving in the same direction as French developments, as A.H. Armstrong's insistence on negative theology and his growing appreciation for post-Plotinian Neoplatonism as he came under the influence of Jean Trouillard show.

Armstrong's final position differed from that of Dodds, though they were originally closer than they came to be. Dodds opposed explaining the Plotinian development of Platonism by means of an Oriental influence, instead finding all that was necessary within the Hellenic philosophical tradition.⁹⁹ In the same line, the earliest of Armstrong's articles, which is reprinted in *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, "Plotinus and India," (1936) is a criticism of Bréhier's *La philosophie de Plotin*. As I indicated above, Bréhier uses the influence of the *Upanishads* to explain the mysticism of Plotinus in which "the distinction between subject and object becomes meaningless" and "The self and the One and Infinite Reality are one and the same."¹⁰⁰ Armstrong rejects both Bréhier's characterization of Plotinian mysticism and his hypothesis as to its origin.

Dodds valued what remained of Greek philosophical reason in Plotinus before the decline to anxiety and irrationality which seemed to him to characterise the later Neoplatonists. Dodds "disliked" Proclus.¹⁰¹ As with Festugière, for him the dominant anxiety and irrationality among the post-Plotinian philosophers manifested themselves in endless quests for mediation by means of a ceaseless multiplication of conceptual entities and religious rites.¹⁰² For Armstrong, as with Festugière and Trouillard, Plotinus was above all a mystic, but, in contrast to his successors, in the judgment of Armstrong this involved real inward intellectual experience. The systems of the successors seemed to Armstrong to be abstract conceptual reflections parasitic on what Plotinus had actually known. His first strong presentation of the apophatic Plotinus, "The Escape of the One: An Investigation of Some Possibilities of Apophatic Theology Imperfectly Realised in the West," was not delivered until 1971.¹⁰³ The published article is set under a quotation of Jean Trouillard and quotes him at length. He records his debt to Trouillard most extensively, in "The Hidden and Open in Hellenic Thought" (1985)¹⁰⁴ and again in

⁹⁸ Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds, 1st. edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933).

⁹⁹ See Dodds, "The Parmenides of Plato."

¹⁰⁰ A.H. Armstrong, "Plotinus and India," in idem, *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, I (London: Variorum, 1979), 22.

¹⁰¹ Armstrong, "Iamblichus and Egypt," 180.

¹⁰² See E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959) and *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1965).

¹⁰³ See *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, XXIII, (London: Variorum, 1979).

¹⁰⁴ Armstrong, *Hellenic and Christian Studies*, V, 101-6.

"Iamblichus and Egypt," (1987) where he appears as a leader in the revaluation of theurgy.

The late emphasis on the apophatic by Armstrong came so far as Trouillard had shown him how "the last Hellenic Platonists" could explain and provide a way through our present religious crisis. According to Armstrong, Trouillard

has tried to show that they can speak to our condition, and do something to illuminate the religious and philosophical perplexities of our own time ... What seems to me to have been happening for a very long time, but to have become particularly apparent recently, is the progressive breakdown of any and every sort of "absolutism". By "absolutism" I mean the making of absolute claims for forms of words and ways of thinking about God as timelessly and universally true ... ¹⁰⁵

The revaluation of theurgy was, however, more difficult for Armstrong and the English. Since Dean Inge (a contemporary of Bergson), English Neoplatonism has not been clerical, and Inge's Platonism was fundamentally intellectual. The English have until very recently, preferred Plotinus to his successors.¹⁰⁶ Armstrong was strongly anti-clerical. He was willing "to grant more importance to material symbols, rites and sacraments on the way to God than the pure intellectualism of Plotinus, or Porphyry ... would allow."¹⁰⁷ But theurgy implied something more. "The gods in Iamblichus are external to and far above the natural universe and the human *psyche*. ... They intervene from above, and select the material means by which they deign to lead us to them in ways beyond our understanding." In consequence theurgy is not only exempt from philosophy but also involves uncritical submission to the "*magisterium* of the theurgist" to a "privileged group of human beings."¹⁰⁸ This he found profoundly objectionable and was only able to accommodate himself to it so far as in the intellectual mysticism of Plotinus and in the return to cult of Iamblichus:

we can find here a mutual recognition of those two ways to God, without domination or exclusion of either, which conforms well to Indian teaching about and practice of the Yogas.¹⁰⁹

Armstrong was not going to let apophatic theology and theurgy lead him back to a Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchical Church either in an Eastern Orthodox or in a Western form. He had grown increasingly to think that the Christian traditions generally and the

¹⁰⁵ A.H. Armstrong, "Negative Theology, Myth and Incarnation," his contribution to *Néoplatonisme, mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard*, Les Cahiers de Fontenay, 19-22 (Fontenay-aux-Roses, 1981), 47-62 in A.H. Armstrong, *Hellenic and Christian Studies*, VII, (London: Variorum, 1990), 47.

¹⁰⁶ For the shift see H.J. Blumental & E.G. Clark, "Introduction: Iamblichus in 1990," *The Divine Iamblichus. Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. H.J. Blumental & E.G. Clark, (London: Duckworth, 1993), 1-4.

¹⁰⁷ Armstrong, "Iamblichus and Egypt," 186.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 188. See A.H. Armstrong, "The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties: the Hellenic and Platonic Tradition" [1986] in *idem, Hellenic and Christian Studies*, IV, 50.

Latin particularly had eliminated the skeptical, apophatic and hence tolerant aspect of Neoplatonism and so came more and more to see it through Oriental religions. Given his starting point this is not without irony.

As he testified, it was to Trouillard, Saffrey and Hadot, that Armstrong owed much in his more positive attitude to theurgy. In fact Hadot breaks through the whole problematic in which these questions are set by connecting the so-called anxiety and irrationality of late antiquity and its solutions to the growth of individuality. He admits "une certaine tonalité affective commune" characterising Christians and pagans. However,

Il n'est peut-être pas exact de considérer cette vaste transformation comme un phénomène morbide. Il est vrai qu'il y a une crise psychologique, mais elle est provoquée par un phénomène éminemment positif: la prise de conscience du "moi", la découverte de la valeur de la destinée individuelle. Les écoles philosophiques, d'abord épicuriennes et stoïciennes, puis néoplatoniciennes, donnent une importance croissante à la responsabilité de la conscience morale et à l'effort de perfection spirituelle. Tous les grands problèmes métaphysiques : l'énigme du monde, l'origine et le fin de l'homme, l'existence du mal et le fait de la liberté, sont posés en fonction du destin de l'individu.¹¹⁰

Such a revaluation was more than the result of what Armstrong called "a more careful reading of more easily accessible texts" and of "a detached scholarly interest inspired by the fascinating philosophical oddity of the doctrines being studied."¹¹¹ Armstrong never faced the philosophical problems involved either in his division between the mystical and the reflective in Neoplatonism or in his turn to the apophatic. Moreover, despite his concern with contemporary religion, Armstrong had no interest in or patience for Heidegger and the deeper questions of contemporary philosophy. It is not until very recently, still under the influence of French philosophers and theologians, that the English have combined Neoplatonism and postmodern thought. In this context, both the apophatic and the theurgic are elevated.¹¹² Catherine Pickstock, a member of the group led by John Milbank, celebrates Plato as leading "dialogue ... into doxology, which

¹¹⁰ Pierre Hadot, "La fin du paganisme," [1972] in idem, *Études de philosophie ancienne*, L'ane d'or (Paris: Les Belles Lettres: 1998), 339-74 at 346-47. See also his memorial for Festugière, 34

¹¹¹ Armstrong, "Iamblichus and Egypt," 181 and 184.

¹¹² On this relation to French thought see John Milbank, "Postmodernité," in *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, dirigé par Jean-Yves Lacoste, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 916-17. For a collective work of the school see J. Milbank, C. Pickstock and G. Ward (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy, A New Theology* (London - New York 1999). On their mixing of Neoplatonism and postmodernity, see Hankey, "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style: Readings by Jacques Derrida, Robert Dodaro, Jean-Luc Marion, Rowan Williams, Lewis Ayes and John Milbank," *Animus*, 2 (1997), 45ff.; idem, "Denys and Aquinas," 154-61; idem, "Theoria versus Poesis," 387-97; idem, "The Postmodern Retrieval of Neoplatonism in Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and the Origins of Western Subjectivity in Augustine and Eriugena," *Hermathena*, 165 (1998), 9-33.

for Plato is our principle human function and language's only possibility of restoration."¹¹³ She interprets the old Latin Mass theurgically in order to set it against a modern division of subject and object which belongs to the self-closure of the subject. To open this objectified subject, it is essential that material things are numinous and be addressed as if personal.¹¹⁴ Thus, Pickstock hopes to effect the "restoration of the subject," a "living subject," with "a substantive, though not completed identity," having "a definite but open identity."¹¹⁵ This has been the aim of the movement we are tracing from its beginning with this century and it will be no less explicit at its end. It is worth noting that, in playing their role in this restoration, John Milbank is satisfied that I am correct in linking him and Pickstock with "the Dionysian legacy of theurgic neoplatonism."¹¹⁶

French Neoplatonism moved this way and led the English to it. This coheres with the movement in French Neoplatonic studies from Plotinus to Iamblichus and his successors. However, the creation of a "Postmodern Critical Augustinianism" within English "Radical Orthodoxy"¹¹⁷ reminds us that the movement we are studying both may work to establish an alternative to a Porphyrian - Augustinian kataphatic onto-theology and also may reinterpret Augustine so as draw him toward an apophatic Neoplatonism realised in charity and *poesis*. John Milbank takes the second course and refuses the:

contrast of a Porphyrian Augustine and theurgic Dionysius ... Augustine also places the soul within the cosmos and in the *Confessions* finally realises his own self hood through losing it in cosmic liturgy.¹¹⁸

The French Problematic

The discussion of Augustine and Dionysius in these terms is itself a result of the scholarship and philosophical reflection which belongs to French Neoplatonism. Plotinian and Porphyrian study continued. The Belgium Jesuit Paul Henry not only co-edited what is now the standard edition of Plotinus but, by pointing to what in Marius Victorinus stood between Plotinus and Augustine,¹¹⁹ established the context in which his

¹¹³ Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 43.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 195ff.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 95, 199, 114, 118, 192, 211-12, 214.

¹¹⁶ John Milbank, "Intensities," *Modern Theology*, 15:4 (October 1999), 485 ("Intensities" is in part a response to my "*Theoria versus Poiësis*" in the same issue.)

¹¹⁷ See John Milbank, "'Postmodern Critical Augustinianism': A Short *Summa* in Forty Two Responses to Unasked Questions," *Modern Theology*, 7:3 (1991), 225-37 and *idem* "Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul," *Modern Theology*, 13 (1997), 451-74 together with my "Stephen Menn's Cartesian Augustine," and "ReChristianizing Augustine Postmodern Style."

¹¹⁸ Milbank, "Intensities," note 142, p. 497.

¹¹⁹ See Paul Henry, "The *Adversus Arium* of Marius Victorinus, the First Systematic Exposition of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *JTS*, n.s. 1 (1950), 42-55. For Henry's work and bibliography see Jean Pépin's memorial in *Revue des études augustinienes*, 30 (1984), 205-9.

student, Pierre Hadot, identified Porphyry as the missing link.¹²⁰ Hadot showed that an aspect of Plotinus's teaching about the activity of the One and its relation to *Nous* had been exploited by Porphyry and transmitted to Augustine either directly or through Marius Victorinus. In consequence, Augustine's Trinity could be seen as an extension of an alternative within the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides* of Plato. Porphyry's telescoping of the hypostases, against which Iamblichus and his successors reacted, might then be understood as the founding of the onto-theological tradition in which the First is understood in terms of being so that ontology will be absolute. Alternatively, the same doctrine might be taken as the foundation of an apophatic ontology. Milbank and Jean-Luc Marion can embrace Augustine so far as he is understood as thus engaged in *théo-onto-logie*, an ontology which is pointed to its transcendent source, not to be conceptualized in a philosophical science nor secularized through a Cartesian self-certain and self-grounding rational subjectivity.

To return to the advance of the French into later Neoplatonism, it was precisely the irrationality in Iamblichus and his followers which attracted. The post-Plotinian Neoplatonists not only drew philosophy within theology, but they also drew theology within a spiritual life dependent upon theurgy for union with the principle of thought which was itself above intellectual comprehension. A philosophy in which reason is dependent upon theology, and theology is grounded in *spiritualité* dependent upon the elevation of the theurgist, has an obvious appeal to the clergy.¹²¹ But, in the intellectual circumstances of the French Church in the second half of the 20th century the appeal was connected with a necessity. By 1960, theologians were writing of *La Crise de la raison dans la pensée contemporaine*.¹²² Whether or not that crisis existed outside philosophical and theological circles, it certainly was actual within them. Among philosophical theologians there was a reaction against what Stanislas Breton called the *philosophie aristotélico-thomiste*. Ultimately, this reaction can be summed up in their adoption of the Heideggerian critique of *onto-théologie* and the consequent demand either for an Neoplatonic alternative to Thomism or a recasting of Thomas in Neoplatonic terms.¹²³

Jean Trouillard had significantly developed Plotinian studies with his *La procession plotinienne*, published in Paris in 1955. For him, as for Festugière and Hadot, "Plotin est surtout un *mystique*."¹²⁴ While this mysticism belonged to the critical self-negation of

¹²⁰ See Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 2 vols. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968). For a collection of the articles by which Hadot traced the history from Porphyry and Augustine to Western mediaeval ontologies see his *Plotin, Porphyre. Études Néoplatoniciennes*, L'ân d'or (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999). For his further work on Plotinus see his new series begun in 1988: *Les Écrits de Plotin publiés dans l'ordre chronologique* sous le direction de Pierre Hadot (Cerf). A survey of his work at the EPHE V^e section which began when he assumed the chair in Latin Patristics in 1964-65 and continued in Festugière's chair in "Théologies et mystiques de la Grèce hellénistique et de la fin de l'Antiquité" from 1970-71 and at the Collège de France (Chaire d'histoire de la Pensée hellénistique et romaine) from 1982 will show that mysticism was his continuing concern.

¹²¹ See Breton, *De Rome q Paris*, 31, 152-54, 164.

¹²² *La Crise de la raison dans la pensée contemporaine*, Recherches de philosophie v (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960); Trouillard contributed to this collection (see below).

¹²³ For the latter see Ghislain Lafont, o.s.b., "Écouter Heidegger en théologien," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 67 (1983), 371-98 and ultimately Jean-Luc Marion.

¹²⁴ Jean Trouillard, "Raison et négation," *La Crise de la raison dans la pensée contemporaine*, 34.

reason which the contemporary crisis required, it was not until after 1956 when Trouillard moved on to Proclus, (e.g. *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus* in 1972 and *La mystagogie de Proclus* in 1982), that a new theological structure really emerged.¹²⁵ Trouillard was the first to undertake a philosophical and theological revolution by means of an apophatic *hénologie* together with an appreciation of the importance of the self-constituted in Proclus as a substitute for Aristotelian and Thomistic ontology. For Trouillard the most attractive Christian system is that of Eriugena rather than of Thomas and he has inspired a new translation and commentary on the *Periphyseon*.¹²⁶ For Eriugena: "Dieu ne se connaît pas lui-même. Et la raison de cette nescience, c'est que Dieu n'est rien".¹²⁷ In consequence the good is the name least unjustified but, as opposed to Aquinas, all names are improper and human perception is necessary to the creation of the cosmos.¹²⁸ The significance of the new "radicalisme néoplatonicien" is summed up by Stanislas Breton:

Ce qu'ils ont inauguré, sous les apparences d'un retour au passé, c'est bel et bien une manière neuve de voir le monde et d'y intervenir, de pratiquer la philosophie, de comprendre le fait religieux, en sa forme chrétienne comme en son excès mystique; puis, et j'ai hâte de l'ajouter, de relier le vieil occident à son au-delà extrême-oriental.¹²⁹

We will note the significance of the access to the Orient. No one was interested in celebrating Occidental rationalism.

Breton's move -- and that of French Catholicism -- from Rome to Paris, (his informal intellectual and religious autobiography, from which I am quoting, is entitled *De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique*), was not just a move from a Roman *philosophie aristotélico-thomiste* to a Neoplatonic thinking and spirituality, but it was also a relocation to a Parisian Athens where he could be open to the thought of his lay compatriots. In France, Breton and Combès continued the work of Trouillard, (see Breton's *Philosophie et mathématique chez Proclus*¹³⁰ and *Matière et dispersion*¹³¹ and Combès, Damascius, *Traité des premiers principes*,¹³² Damascius, *Commentaire du Parménide de Platon*,¹³³ and *Études néoplatoniciennes*). Breton and Duméry worked on the philosophical and theological implications of this shift, one bound up with the

¹²⁵ For an incomplete bibliography, see *Néoplatonisme, mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard*, 313-16; Combès, "Néoplatonisme aujourd'hui," supplies a list of subsequent work.

¹²⁶ Érigène, *De la Division de la Nature*, Introduction, traduction et notes par Francis Bertin, tome 1: Livres I&II, tome 2: Livre III (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995).

¹²⁷ See Jean Trouillard, "Érigène et la naissance du sens," *Platonismus und Christentum. Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie*, herausgegeben von Horst-Dieter Blume und Friedhelm Mann, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband 10 (Munster: Aschendorffsche, 1983), 267-76 at 268.

¹²⁸ For a profound reflection on the alternative models see Jean Trouillard, "Procession néoplatonicienne et création judeo-chrétienne," *Néoplatonisme, mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard*, 1-26

¹²⁹ Breton, *De Rome à Paris*, 154, see also, particularly, 164.

¹³⁰ Bibliothèque des archives de philosophie (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969).

¹³¹ Grenoble: Millon, 1993.

¹³² trans., intro. et notes, J. Combès, 3 vol., (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986-1991).

¹³³ trans., intro. et notes, J. Combès, 2 vol., (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1997).

consequences of the Second Vatican Council.¹³⁴ Inherent in the logic of Breton's move, and one of the consequences of the Council, was an end to the domination of the clergy in philosophy and theology. Indeed, among a priesthood which understands itself theurgically, but through a new communal liturgy, neither scholarship nor intellect seem important. As a result the last figures we shall look at in this history are laïcs.

Back to the Laity

We begin with a Protestant philosopher, Pierre Aubenque, who set the questions for Neoplatonism in the Heideggerian terms which have dominated French philosophy in the last third of the century. Aubenque's "Plotin et le dépassement de l'ontologie grecque classique," was delivered in 1969 to a colloque on Neoplatonism and published in 1971. He considers first how, in virtue of the priority of the One, "une hénologie négative, l'indication toujours répétée de la nécessité d'un *dépassement* de l'ontologie," Plotinian thought might escape Heidegger's critique of *onto-théologie*.¹³⁵ But he also reflects on how in virtue of the development of the Porphyrian interpretation of his Master it might find an absolute *ontologie*. This way

consistera à approfondir la notion d' être, plutôt que de la 'dépasser' au profit de quelque non-étant, et, en particulier, à remonter de l'*on* participe à l' être - infinitif, c'est-à-dire à l'acte d' être , absolument simple et indéterminé, puisqu'il est le fondement de toute détermination.¹³⁶

Aubenque also suggests how Neoplatonism might belong to a Derridean deconstruction of *ontologie*. Evidently some of the questions which occupied Trouillard are now of a strictly philosophical interest.

Jean-Luc Marion is both the head of the Department of Philosophy at the Sorbonne and a (perhaps the) leading French Catholic theologian. The context of Marion's postmodern turn to Neoplatonism is defined as much by Levinas¹³⁷ as by Heidegger and his *dépassement de l'ontologie*, and is not so much by a *hénologie* as rather by a leap *hors-texte* to the Good or charity. His use of the Pseudo-Dionysius requires the mention of another of the priest scholars who recuperated Neoplatonism in this century, René Roques.

¹³⁴ For further relevant bibliographical indications to the work of Trouillard, Duméry, Breton and critics like Y. Labbé, see W.J. Hankey, *God In Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13-14.

¹³⁵ Pierre Aubenque, "Plotin et le dépassement de l'ontologie grecque classique," *Le Néoplatonisme (Royumont 9-13 juin 1969)*, 101-108 at 101. For a reflection on this article see Lafont, "Écouter Heidegger," 384, note 35. See also Aubenque's "Néoplatonisme et analogie de l' être," *Néoplatonisme, mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard*, 63-76

¹³⁶ Aubenque, "Plotin," 107.

¹³⁷ See E. Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l' idée*, Paris, Vrin, 1982.

"M. l'abbé R. Roques" is listed as an *Auditeur assidus* of Festugière when the latter was teaching Aristotle's *De Caelo* in the V^e section of the École pratique des Hautes Études in 1948-49. Roques joined Paul Vignaux (appointed as Gilson's successor in 1934) teaching the history of medieval theology in the same section in 1960 and stayed until 1985 when he was succeeded by Alain de Libera. Mainly Roques lectured on Anselm, Eriugena, and above all on the Pseudo-Dionysius. His writing and teaching about Denys was crucially important in the revival of the study of the patron saint of France. Roques' *L'Univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*¹³⁸ was a turning point in that revival.

In the 1960s the École pratique des Hautes Études was central to the positive turn toward Neoplatonism among patristic scholars, medievalists and philosophers. In the IV^e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques, there were Pierre Courcelle in "Littérature Latine d'époque chrétienne" and Jean Pépin in "Textes et Doctrines de la fin de l'Antiquité." Many of Pépin students crossed the vestibule of Staircase E to the V^e section, "Sciences religieuses." In the year that Roques was appointed, Trouillard and G. Madec (who went on to study the philosophical sources of Augustine) joined Saffrey among the auditeurs of Festugière. Another medievalist, a great student of Eriugena, M. l'abbé Édouard Jeuneau, joined the class in 1963-64. By 1968 Jean-Luc Marion was attending Pierre Hadot's lectures on Latin Patristics and in Roques' class Jean Trouillard was delivering a "Conférence libre" on "Proclus et Érigène: Quelques aspects de la théorie de l'âme."¹³⁹ Pčre É.-H. Wéber, o.p. whose work on Aquinas, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and Eckhart is important for understanding Latin Neoplatonism, was studying with Roques and Hadot.¹⁴⁰ Along this same road we find Alain de Libera who succeeded Roques in 1985 and among whose prodigious output we find studies of the Rhenish Neoplatonic spirituality.¹⁴¹

By 1972-73 Marion was making his own contribution to Roques' class. In that academic year, the class studied a paper by Jean Trouillard on "La lumière intelligible selon Platon" and one by Marion on "Distance et louange: du concept de réquisit (*aitia*) au statut trinitaire du langage théologique selon Denys le Mystique."¹⁴² We are not far from *L'idole et la distance* (1977) where the section on Denys is entitled "La Distance du réquisit et la discours de louange: Denys."

¹³⁸ Paris: Aubier, Éditions Mouton, 1954. See idem, *Structures théologique de la Gnose q Richard de Saint-Victor. Essais et analyses critiques*, Bibliothèque de l'École pratique des Hautes Études, Section des sciences religieuses, 72 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).

¹³⁹ See *Annuaire EPHE V^e*, t. LXXVI, (1968-69), 197-202.

¹⁴⁰ For texts which bring together our concerns see *Maître Eckhart a Paris. Une critique médiévale de l'ontothéologie. Les Questions parisiennes no 1 et no 2 d'Eckhart. Études, Textes et Traductions*, par Émilie Zum Brunn, Zénon Kaluza, Alain de Libera, Paul Vignaux, Édouard Wéber, Bibliothèque de L'École des Hautes Études, section des Sciences Religieuses, 86 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), and his contribution to "*Celui qui est.*" *Interprétations juives et chrétiennes d'Exode 3.14*, éd. A. de Libera et É. Zum Brunn, Centre d'études des religions du livre, CNRS (Paris: Cerf, 1986).

¹⁴¹ See for example his *La mystique rhénane d'Albert le Grand q Maître Eckhart*, (Paris: Seuil, 1994) [1st edition 1984] and idem, *Eckhart, Suso, Tauler et la divinisation de l'homme*, (Paris: Bayard, 1996). On what is at issue in looking at mediaeval philosophy in terms of Neoplatonism, there is André de Muralt, *Néoplatonisme et Aristotelisme dans la métaphysique médiévale*, (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

¹⁴² The text appeared in *Résurrection*, 38, 89-122.

In *L'idole et la distance* the religious side of Neoplatonism provides a way around Heidegger's naming of the idols of Western ontology: Denys's negative theology is radicalized to stand against Neoplatonic theory: "Le nom le plus approprié ne se trouve donc pas plus dans l'Un plotinien que dans la plus grossière idole sensible"¹⁴³ as well as against the objectifications of ontological metaphysics and objectifying subjectivity:

la distance, interdisant radicalement de tenir Dieu pour un objet, et pour l'étant suprême, échappe à l'avatar ultime d'un langage de l'objet - la clôture du discours, et la disparition du référent.¹⁴⁴

Marion does not see himself as a Neoplatonist but rather associates himself with Denys in that understanding of the pseudo-Areopagite which conceives him to execute a radical Christian subversion of Platonic philosophy. Thus his Christian theological transcendence of the historical conditions of philosophy in shooting "for God according to his most theological name - charity" is also Augustinian. The separation of theology from philosophy is crucial to Marion's project but is philosophically determined by his relation to Heidegger.¹⁴⁵ Marion's own intentions do not prevent his position from occurring within the logic of the appropriation of Neoplatonism as a solution to problems philosophy now perceives in modern subjectivity. And, in fact, both Augustine and Aquinas are given a Neoplatonic interpretation to accommodate their Western ontological metaphysics to a post-Heideggerian world.

To move to an emphasis on will and charity in Augustine is not to move against Plotinus, for whom we are related to the One through "Intellect in love."¹⁴⁶ In *L'idole et la distance* and in *Dieu sans l'être*, Aquinas was placed with the onto-theologians because he made "being" the first of God's names. But in the "Preface to the English Edition" of *God Without Being*, and in "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théo-logie," and later works,¹⁴⁷ the teaching of Thomas has been Neoplatonised by Marion as a *théo-onto-logie*. Thus God is before being which he gives even to himself. Aquinas is shifted toward Denys and Proclus.

¹⁴³ *L'idole et la distance*, 185.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 178-79.

¹⁴⁵ See Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas," 150-163 and "Theoria versus Poiesis," 388-397 on this.

¹⁴⁶ See Hankey, "Stephen Menn's Cartesian Augustine," 48, 19-29 and 59 and idem, "Self-knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern Retrieval," *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter*, 4 (1999), in press and I. Perczel, "L'intellect amoureux' et l'un qui est'. Une doctrine mal connue de Plotin," *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 15 (1997), 223-264 which adopts a position opposed to an Hegelian and Augustinian intellectualist interpretation of Plotinus and extends Trouillard and Hadot.

¹⁴⁷ *Revue Thomiste*, 95:1 (1995), [*Saint Thomas et l'onto-théo-logie*], 31-66, his *retractio* is at 33 and 65; for Marion's shift or "recantation" here, see Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas," 150-52 and Géry Prouvost, "La tension irrésolue: Les *Questions cartésiennes*, II, de Jean-Luc Marion," *Revue thomiste*, 98:1 (1998), 99-101. For later treatments of Aquinas, see Marion, "The Idea of God," 265-67.

Marion was not the only phenomenologist to take a theological turn and to associate it with a Christian Neoplatonist.¹⁴⁸ Michel Henry turned to Eckhart,¹⁴⁹ a move which it was inevitable that someone within this world would take. His is the complementary approach to that of Marion.¹⁵⁰ Whereas Marion aims to prevent the reduction of the source of knowledge to the conditions of the subject, Henry wants to protect the affectivity of the subject against objectification and his analysis is of its internal structure. But there is another difference. As I have indicated, Marion wants to keep philosophy and theology strictly apart. While his contribution to phenomenology is to add to it a theory of donation, there is to be no move from within phenomenology to a transcendent Giver. Reaching a transcendent Giver would require phenomenology to become metaphysics: "nous n'insinuons *pas* qu'elle réclame un donateur transcendant ... nous ne sous-entendons *pas* que cette phénoménologie restaure la métaphysique."¹⁵¹ It would destroy itself as phenomenology by a theological enterprise beyond its power. Henry understands Marion's refusals in terms of a proper post-Heideggerian determination not "de soumettre Dieu au préalable de l'être"¹⁵² but sees in his following of Eckhart a way around this problem.

With Henry the auto-affectivity of the self is represented as true Christianity.¹⁵³ Dominique Janicaud puts the character of this auto-affection thus:

"L'immanence est le mode originaire selon lequel s'accomplit la révélation de la transcendance elle-même et, come telle, l'essence originaire de la révélation." ... l'essence de la manifestation se révèlera au sein de l'affectivité, non celle d'un sujet individuel, dérisoirement subjective, mais celle de la révélation elle-même, absolue en son expérience intérieure.¹⁵⁴

The self must then be in immediate union with the absolute and is only by that union. Henry turns to the young Hegel, who is also criticised for dividing the sensible from the intellectual, and above all to Eckhart for support for such a view. Because the God of

¹⁴⁸ On the turn see Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Paris: Editions de l'Eclat, 1991). Chapter IV "Les Surprises de l'immanence," 57-77 is devoted to Henry. The major proponents of this "theological turn" published a volume entitled *Phénoménologie et théologie*, présentation de Jean-François Courtine (Paris: Critérian, 1992), with essays by Michel Henry, Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Louis Chrétien. Very recently Janicaud has added yet another volume to this controversy: *La phénoménologie éclatée* (Paris: Editions de l'Eclat, 1998). See Schmutz, "Escaping the Aristotelian Bond", 186ff.

¹⁴⁹ Michel Henry, "La signification ontologique de la critique de la connaissance chez Eckhart," in his *L'Essence de la manifestation*, 2 vols. Épiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), ii, 532-548 and idem, "Parole et religion: la Parole de Dieu," in *Phénoménologie et théologie*, 129-60 at 137ff.

¹⁵⁰ For a recognition by Marion of the Henry's work on the auto-affectivity of the subject despite their differences, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant Donnée. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Épiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 321-23 and 365, note 2.

¹⁵¹ Marion, *Étant Donnée*, 11, see also 8, 10 and 329.

¹⁵² Henry, "Parole et religion," 144; idem, *C'est moi la vérité. Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 198.

¹⁵³ Henry, *C'est moi la vérité*, passim.

¹⁵⁴ Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique*, 58-59 quoting *L'Essence de la manifestation*, 279-80.

Eckhart is beyond all representation, He is also at the heart of the self, He determines "l'essence de l'immanence et la constituée."¹⁵⁵

La vie s'auto-affecte comme moi-même. Si avec Eckhart on appelle la vie "Dieu", alors on dira avec lui: "Dieu s'engendre comme moi-même." Mais ce Soi engendré dans la Vie, ne tenant la singularité de son Soi que de son ipséité et ne tenant son ipséité que de l'auto-affection éternelle de la vie, porte en lui celle-ci, pour autant qu'il est porté par elle et n'advient à chaque instant à la vie que par elle.¹⁵⁶

The life is communicated to each from the Son so there is nothing which does not contain in itself this eternal essence of the life. Henry concludes this passage with a quotation from Eckhart: "Dieu m'engendre comme lui-même."

We are again with a Christian Neoplatonism which depends on the radical difference of the One and *Nous*. This difference allows God to be both the external source of knowledge beyond reduction to objective conception and also the internal constitution of the subject so that it is not dependent on its self-objectification. The One-non-being is altogether beyond grasp and representation, and therefore metaphysics is impossible, but it is also the immediacy of my life, and therefore experience is the life of Divinity. Theology is beyond philosophy become phenomenology, but also there is no separation of the visible and the invisible: "C'est moi la vérité." "Dans le christianisme rien ne s'oppose à la réalité, il n'y a rien d'autre que la vie."¹⁵⁷ In virtue of the indetermination of the One we are at both sides simultaneously. It is difficult to see where we can move beyond this point without giving some content to the One. The difference of the One and *Nous* on which the history we have traced depends needs to be reconsidered and that consideration must not be pre-determined by what Heidegger will allow.

Having reached this conclusion to phenomenological and Catholic theological Neoplatonism in France we are ready to conclude with three Neoplatonic scholars whose relation to the texts is not so totally determined by the logic of a contemporary philosophical movement and by the needs of Catholicism in crisis.

The first of these is the successor of Pierre Hadot in the V^e section of the École pratique des Hautes Études, Philippe Hoffmann, whose interests are equally philological, historical and philosophical. He has held Hadot's chair in "Théologies et mystiques de la Grèce hellénistique et de la fin de l'Antiquité" since 1986 and was a student of his predecessor. Equally, however, Hoffmann worked under Jean Irigoin, Professor of Greek in the IV^e section and in the Collège de France and continues his approach to texts. That approach is one particularly suited to Neoplatonic studies and matches approaches of Hadot which Hoffmann also finds helpful.

¹⁵⁵ Henry, *L'Essence*, 553.

¹⁵⁶ Henry, "Parole et religion," 137.

¹⁵⁷ Henry, *C'est moi la vérité*, 297. This is written in opposition to Hegel.

For Irigoin the whole history of a text with all the circumstances of its transmission are of interest: "La tradition d'une oeuvre, c'est le processus au terme duquel elle est parvenue entre nos mains, c'est en même temps l'influence qu'elle a exercée au cours des siècles dans les milieux les plus divers." There are two directions in the study of the textual tradition. One goes backward in search of unity looking for

l'archétype, faute de l'autographe original, ou l'ancêtre présumé. En sens contraire, l'étude de la tradition se rapproche de la constitution d'une généalogie descendante: on cherche à retrouver, en suivant le cours du temps, tous les témoins d'un texte ou tous les descendants d'un individu.¹⁵⁸

For those working with Platonic texts, at one and the same time attempting to establish solid critical texts and also attempting to understand the Neoplatonists' transforming reception of their sources and authorities, working in these two directions is necessary. Hoffmann has used this bipolarity to place himself inside Neoplatonism.¹⁵⁹ Another requisite of such an interiority comes from Pierre Hadot. Hadot has pointed to the fact that the misunderstandings which constitute such a large part of the history of philosophy are in fact creative.¹⁶⁰ Hoffmann refers to the importance of this idea in his writing and teaching.¹⁶¹

Beyond his work with the transmission, presentation and reception of texts, Hoffmann's activity falls into three main groups. First there is his own central work: the study of the interpretation and transformations of the *Categories* of Aristotle within Neoplatonism, a task which demands a subtle sense for the difference between sources and results, extensive knowledge of the history of philosophy and a understanding of its most abstract logic. It is work for someone willing to labour patiently on the inside, not demanding to carry off early fruits for some external purpose. Nonetheless, it matches Alain de Libera's work on the history of the universal.¹⁶² Then there are his continuations of Festugière's work on religion and Hadot's presentation of philosophy as way of life. With regard to religion, one might note Hoffmann's study of the Neoplatonic notion of 'bonheur'¹⁶³ and, remarkably, of "implications religieuses de la logique

¹⁵⁸ Jean Irigoin, *Chaire de Tradition et critiques des textes grecs, Leçon Inaugural* faite le Vendredi 18 avril 1986 (Paris: Collège de France, 1986), 19.

¹⁵⁹ I note the title of what he assembled for the 1998 defence of his *Habilitation à diriger des recherches* "Recherches sur la tradition matérielle et doctrinale des textes philosophiques de la fin de l'Antiquité."

¹⁶⁰ See Pierre Hadot, "Philosophie, exégèse et contre-sens," dans *Akten des XIV. Internationalen Kongresses für Philosophie* (Wien, 1968), pp. 333-339 reprinted in idem, *Études de philosophie ancienne, L'âne d'or* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998), 3-10.

¹⁶¹ See for example, P. Hoffmann, "La fonction de prologues exégétiques dans la pensée pédagogique néoplatonicienne," in *Entrer en matière: Les prologues*, éd. J.D. Dubois et B. Roussel (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 210 and *Annuaire EPHE V*, t. CV, (1996-97), 303.

¹⁶² See *Annuaire EPHE V*, t. CI, (1992-93), 242 and Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age*, Des Travaux (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

¹⁶³ *Annuaire EPHE V*, t. CV, (1996-97), 303-309.

néoplatoniciennes."¹⁶⁴ Finally, with Dominic O'Meara, Hoffmann has extended Hadot's interest by a needed exploration of how Greek Neoplatonism dealt with political life.¹⁶⁵

The two Canadian Neoplatonic scholars with whom I conclude are philosophers and historians of philosophy, but like Hoffmann their Neoplatonism does not serve pre-established philosophical, theological or religious demands.

A French Canadian Conclusion

Jean-Marc Narbonne is the Doyen of the Faculté de Philosophie at Université Laval. A student of Georges Leroux, Jean Pépin¹⁶⁶ and W. Beierwaltes his thesis on *Ennead* II.4.12 has been published in a series edited by his Parisian teacher.¹⁶⁷ His freedom from a use of Neoplatonism which presupposes the fundamental validity of the Heideggerian criticism of the history of metaphysics is indicated by the title (and borne out by the contents) of his general book on the philosophy of Plotinus: *La métaphysique de Plotin*.¹⁶⁸ He objects, for example, to Marion's adoption of charity so as to concede Heidegger's analysis of ontology. He is working at present on a major book, *Hénologie, ontologie et différence ontologique (Plotin-Proclus-Heidegger)*, which will argue against Heidegger's account of the history. The book is anticipated by an article, "'Henōsis' et 'Ereignis': Remarques sur une interprétation heideggérienne de l'Un plotinien," published this year.¹⁶⁹

This important article does not subscribe to a radically negative interpretation of Plotinus's hénologie. Narbonne notes that for Trouillard, in opposition to the language of being, the language of the One:

¹⁶⁴ *Annuaire EPHE* V, t. CIII (1994-95), 267-270.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 263-64; *Annuaire EPHE* V, t. CIV (1995-96), 305-306 and Dominic J. O'Meara, "Évêques et philosophes-rois: Philosophie politique néoplatonicienne chez le Pseudo-Denys," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident*, 75-88; *idem*, "Vie politique et divinisation dans la philosophie néoplatonicienne," *Chercheurs de sagesse. Hommage à Jean Pépin*, publié sous la direction de Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, Goulven Madec, Denis O'Brien, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 131 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1992), 501-10; *idem*, "Aspects of Political Philosophy in Iamblichus," in *The Divine Iamblichus. Philosopher and Man of Gods*, 65-73.

¹⁶⁶ From 1968, Chargé de conférences in "Textes et doctrines de la fin de l'antiquité" in the EPHE section IV. For bibliography see Goulet-Cazé, Madec, O'Brien, (éds), *Chercheurs de sagesse. Hommage à Jean Pépin*, ix-xxxiv. He worked mainly but by no means exclusively on Augustine and Plotinus.

¹⁶⁷ Plotin, *Les deux matières [Ennéade II, 4 (12)]*, introduction, texte grec, traduction et commentaire par Jean-Marc Narbonne, Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique 17, sous le direction de Jean Pépin (Paris: Vrin, 1993); see also Plotin, *Traité 25 (II, 5)*, par Jean-Marc Narbonne, Les Écrits de Plotin sous le direction de Pierre Hadot (Paris: Cerf, 1998).

¹⁶⁸ Paris: Vrin, 1994.

¹⁶⁹ Jean-Marc Narbonne, "'Henōsis' et 'Ereignis': Remarques sur une interprétation heideggérienne de l'Un plotinien," *Les Études philosophiques*, (1999), 108-121. See also his "Aristote et la question de l'être en tant qu'être Réflexions à propos de *The Question of Being* of S. Rosen," *Archives de Philosophie*, 60 (1997), 5-24.

ne promet aucun science de Dieu. Il en est l'exclusion. Il signifie une théologie négative radicale. Il n'autorise que des symboles et des invocations.¹⁷⁰

For Narbonne the Plotinian One is "positivement *infini*." And so "l'Un ... 'est' d'une certaine manière, mais son mode d'être, comme simplicité et comme infinité, dépasse justement tout ce que l'on connaît et peut jamais espérer saisir de l'être." It is an "'objet' en lui-même *in-objectivable*."¹⁷¹

Narbonne concludes against Reiner Schürmann's "L'hénologie comme dépassement de la métaphysique,"¹⁷² that Plotinian hénologie is not:

la voie à quelque absence of retrait du fondement, mais bien plutôt à la représentation d'une fondation absolue, puisque l'Un est pour lui le fondement infini de tout fini possible. ... [L]a métaphysique de Plotin est sans conteste une *théologie négative*, i.e. une métaphysique de la fondation et par là une onto-théologie. Mais le point culminant de cette onto-théologie n'est ni un *ontos* ni un théos ... mais un *apeiron*.¹⁷³

Narbonne subscribes, then, neither to the dominant philosophical problematic within which the return to Neoplatonism has been situated nor to the characterisation of Neoplatonism intended as a solution.

¹⁷⁴ Because of where this article has been written and is published and also because of the endeavour to free subjectivity from its supposed closure in modern metaphysics which is at the centre of the development it has traced, it is appropriate to close with remarks of another French Canadian scholar and teacher, a former student of Pierre Hadot at the École pratique des Hautes Études and teacher of Jean-Marc Narbonne. In a edition of the Greek text of *Ennead* VI.8 of Plotinus with a French translation, extensive commentary and introduction, Georges Leroux has written about the freedom of the One in terms which recall many of the questions, solutions and figures we have encountered in this survey of a one hundred years of French Neoplatonism.

In this *Ennead*, as it is rightly represented by Professor Leroux, we encounter in the freedom of the One what attracted our French philosophers, theologians and scholars to Neoplatonism. Equally, so far as the doctrine found in *Ennead* VI.8 gave a Plotinian

¹⁷⁰ Trouillard, "Un et être," *Les Études philosophiques*, (1960), 190 quoted by Narbonne, "'Henōsis'," 120, note 1.

¹⁷¹ Narbonne, "'Henōsis'," 120.

¹⁷² Reiner Schürmann, "L'hénologie comme dépassement de la métaphysique," *Les Études philosophiques*, (1982), 331-350.

¹⁷³ Narbonne, "'Henōsis'," 120-121.

¹⁷⁴ Plotin, *Traité sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un [Ennéade VI, 8 (39)]*, Introduction, texte grec, traduction et commentaire par G. Leroux, Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique 15, sous le direction de Jean Pepin (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 86; see idem, "Human Freedom in the Thought of Plotinus," *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 292-314 and J.-M. Narbonne, *La métaphysique de Plotin* (Paris: Vrin, 1994), 28ff.

authority to the commentary on the *Parmenides* ascribed by Pierre Hadot to Porphyry with such momentous consequences for the understanding of Augustine's alternative to the One, we meet the origins of the opposed ontological and noetic account of subjectivity. When we add to these intellectualist accounts of Plotinus as well as voluntaristic accounts of Augustine we have the alternatives between which philosophy and theology have moved in trying to refund or reorient Western subjectivity. All have some basis here. This *Ennead* is evidently worth our concluding attention.

In it, the One above being as absolute source is "hyper-volonté et hyper-Intellect":

... nous sommes donc mis en présence d'un noyau primitif, originaire, commun à la fois à la prédication de la volonté et à la conception de l'Un héritée du *Parménide* de Platon: le cœur de l'argument ... c'est cette absolue indépendance de l'Un, radicale plénitude et suffisance. En parlant à son sujet de liberté, Plotin ne se fonde sur aucune tradition antérieure. Il crée pour ainsi dire cette signification de la liberté comme origine et fondement, comme absolu, qui servira dans toute la tradition de la métaphysique de la subjectivité à penser non seulement Dieu comme sujet, mais le sujet humain comme dépôt et recueil d'une liberté fondamentale.¹⁷⁵

Leroux mentions also what he cannot treat, "cette histoire qui aboutit à Schelling" and "la critique heideggerienne de la subjectivité".¹⁷⁶

From what we have found it should be evident that Hegel, Schelling and Heidegger determine the philosophical questions at issue in the French endeavour to open modern subjectivity through the retrieval of Neoplatonism in this century. Further study which considers their role in it more directly than this summary history has done would be of great use.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Leroux, *Traité sur la liberté*, 87.

¹⁷⁶ A shorter version of this essay will appear as "Le Rôle du néoplatonisme dans les tentatives postmodernes d'échapper à l'onto-théologie," in *Actes du XXVII^e Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française*, 2 vols. (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000). I am grateful to Henri Saffrey, Olivier Boulnois, Jean-Luc Marion, Bruno Neveu, Philippe Hoffmann, Ruedi Imbach, Jean-Marc Narbonne who gave guidance and encouragement to the project and to the Faculty of Graduate Studies Research Development Fund of Dalhousie University and the Research and Travel Fund at the University of King's College which partly supported it.