INTRODUCTION

0. The extended passage of *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 59.9–61.22— the visionary ascent through the three powers of the Triple–Powered One towards the ultimate apprehension of the supreme principle, the Unknowable— is perhaps the most sophisticated extant elaboration of a complex schema of mystical epistemology whose analogues may be found in a variety of interwoven currents of contemporaneous Gnostic and Platonic thought. I have devoted a number of studies, as well as a large part of my recently completed dissertation, to understanding the structure and intellectual–historical background of this schema, but here I would like to present some current (and still somewhat inchoate) research focusing upon just one particular element of this passage: namely, the enigmatic references to an “image” or “likeness” associated with the foremost principle of the Triple–Powered— Existence (*Huparxis*)— which occur first in the luminaries’ preparatory instructions to Allogenes at 59.9–60.12, and then again in the eponymous visionary’s first hand, post factum account at 60.12–61.22 describing the penultimate phase of ascent just prior to the ultimate apprehension— or “primordial manifestation”— of the Unknowable. I would like to suggest that [a] first, parallel variants of this particular theme of assimilation to an *eikôn* of the transcendent first principle at the penultimate phase of ascent— also hinted at in the closely related Platonizing Sethian tractate *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1)— may be found in (i) the Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* (hereafter, “ACPP”), a text considered important for the history of Platonism, and which is noncoincidentally related to *Allogenes*, and also in (ii) Plotinus himself; and [b] that this theme itself originally derives not from academic Platonism but rather from prior Gnostic thought. This will provide additional support for the opinion that the ACPP— and by extension Plotinus— is dependent upon *Allogenes* or some similar pre–Plotinian Gnostic (possibly Platonizing Sethian) precursor rather than *vice versa.*
PART ONE. THE EIKÔN SCHEMA IN ALLOGENES AND ITS ACADEMIC–PHILOSOPHICAL PARALLELS

1.1. Allogenes. We may begin by considering the following passages from Allogenes [complete passages in Appendix A].

[A1] *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3)

... εἴρηθε εἰκονισμον τοῦ ἐξεσθανεῖται
ἀρισταρχείων ζήτῃ τοῦ θυταπρόσωπον ἐξεσθανεῖται ἐρότε ἐκείνῳ ἐξεσθανεῖται τοῦ τοῦ εὐχαριστερός ἐκείνῳ καταστάσεως ζήτῃ τοῦ ἐπιστολοφορίας ἐκείνῳ

...if you wish to stand, withdraw upon the Existence (*huparxis*), and you will find it standing and at rest, according to the likeness of the one who is truly at rest and who possesses all of them in silence and inactivity.

[A2] *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3) 60.12–61.22

... And when I wanted to stand firmly, I withdrew upon the Existence (*huparxis*), the one which I found standing and at rest according to an image and likeness of that which is is invested upon me by a manifestation of the Indivisible and the one who is at rest.

1.2. *Analysis [A]*. During the course of Allogenes’ ascent, prior to the ultimate pair of “primordial manifestations” by which he apprehends the Unknowable, he must first successively “withdraw upon,” and thus assimilate himself to, each of the three powers—respectively the Blessedness / Mentality, Vitality, and Existence (*huparxis*)—that comprise the Triple–Powered, the triadic quasi–hypostasis that mediates between the determinate noetic realm of the Barbelo Aeon and the utterly transcendent first principle itself. While the phase of Blessedness / Mentality involves silence and an act of self–knowing, and that of Vitality an unbounded and amorphous motion, that of Existence—on the threshold of the ultimate apprehension of the supreme principle—entails the encounter with or assimilation to some kind of an “image” of the Unknowable itself, and is also associated with transcendent stasis and rest. Thus at 59.19–16 (= [A1]), the Luminaries of Barbelo advise Allogenes that the Existence is “according to the likeness (*pine*) of the one who is truly at rest [presumably the Unknowable] and possesses all of them [presumably, all three powers of the Triple–Powered] in silence and inactivity.” More or less the same idea is conveyed by the post factum account, but there is a subtle difference. At 60.30–37 (= [A2]), Allogenes similarly finds the *huparxis* as an “image and likeness” (*ouhikôn mn oweine*)—thus borrowing the language of LXX Genesis 1:271—but in this case the image is not of the supreme principle itself, but rather an image “according

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1 LXX Gen. 1:27: καὶ ἐπὶ ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ´ εἰκόνα ἐμμετέραν καὶ καθ´ ὁμοίωσιν.
undoubtedly has in mind this passage of Zostrianos. It seems that this can be taken in two ways: either in the more literal but peculiar sense that [a] whatever Allogenes has received from the manifestation of the Indivisible has ontological priority as archetype over the actual power of Existence, which is merely its image, or, in the more mundane sense, that [b] x and y share the same image; that is to say, that the expression x is kata ouhikôn mn oueine of y would essentially be a formulaic indication of the identity of appearance(s) of x and y without necessarily implying a relationship of priority / posteriority. Given the demonstrable subtlety and sophistication of the conceptions elsewhere in Allogenes, I lean towards the first interpretation [a].

2 Allogenes, 59.37–60.2: ἂνω [ΚΑΤΑΠΙΤΥΠΟΣ ἘΤΥΨΟΩΝ ΜΗΝ ἘΤΥΨΩΝ ΟΙ ΜΗΝ ἘΤΥΨΩΝ ΕΙΔΗ]|ΠΡΟΥΚΑΤΑΠΙΤΥΠΟΣ ΠΡΟΥΚΑΤΑΠΙΤΥΠΟΣ ΤΗ||ΠΟΙΥ ΚΑΤΑΝΕΙΚΟΜΩΤ. Variants of the conception of mystical self-reversion towards inherent tupoi of the transcendent realities that inhere within the self are suggested by, inter alia, Zost. 5.11–13; 11.9–14; 44.1–5, 17–22; 45.9–46.6; Marsanes 9.21–29; a criticism of this may be detected in Plotinus’ critique of extranoetic intelligibles known only by “impressions” (tupoi) in the intellect at V.5[32], chs. 1 and 2, but esp. 2.2: Όλο τοίου ἕνε, ϊδτε. ἔξω τὰ νοητά εἰσιν, ὀμμεν τύπου ἐν τῷ νῷ τῶν ὄντων λέγειν εἶναι... “One should not, therefore, seek the intelligibles outside, nor declare them to be impressions in the intellect.”

3 Although the topology of the transcendent realm of Zostrianos is somewhat different — for instance, the Triple-Powered is not crystallized as it is in Allogenes into a more or less independent hypostasis but rather abides as three powers within the supreme principle, the Invisible Spirit — a very similar, albeit compressed idea, is expressed; thus in Zost. knowledge of the Invisible Spirit — presumably both the IS’ own reflexive self-knowledge and, simultaneously, that transcendent knowledge to which the mystical aspirant aspires — is described as both inherent within the human aspirant who reverts to or herself, but also as a “reflection and an image” outside of, but presumably just immediately subjacent to, the supreme principle itself, the recursive knowledge having externalized itself; thus Zost. 76.21–25: ΟΥΝΔΟΙΣ ΝΤΑΣ ΕΙΣΙΟΥΟΙΤ ΜΝΑΟΥΟΙ ΤΗΝ ΕΙΣΙΟΥΟΙΤ ΜΝΑΟΥΟΙ ΕΙΣΙΟΥΟΙΤ ΟΙ ΜΝΑΟΥΟΙ ἘΞΕΙΙΩΝ ΟΥΝ ΟΥΕΙΙΚΩΝ... (“His gnôsis exists outside of him, with the one who examines himself as he is within himself, a reflection and an image...). Plotinus undoubtedly has in mind this passage of Zost., as well as perhaps 82.6–13, when he criticizes the Gnostic multiplication of intellects at II.9[33].1.34–40 (a conception, incidentally, that is in fact not so far from his own).
1.3. We may therefore make the following summary observations about the final phases of the ascent in *Allogenes*. [a] To attain the Unknowable, the visionary must first attain an *eikôn* of the transcendent first principle at level of the supreme power of the Triple–Powered—Existence—that abides immediately below that of the supreme principle. [b] This image resembles in turn an analogous image that has already been “invested,” in the past, upon the pre–incarnate Allogenes, and inheres within the core of his own consciousness; implicit is the notion that it is this indwelling aspect of this principle that allows him to recognize the Existence. Finally, [c] the attainment of this image is merely the penultimate phase, and therefore must be transcended at the ultimate phase; we may note that Allogenes’ withdrawal upon the Existence is apparently followed by, rather strictly than coincident with, the climactic pair of “primary manifestations” (60.37–61.6) by which he apprehends, first, “that which exists [a] *within me*, and the Triple–Powered” and second, the “[the Unknowable itself] and the Triple–Powered who exists [b] *within them all*.” [See Appendix Figure 1].

2.1. *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*. Let us turn now to the description of the ascent towards and apprehension of the transcendent deity in the Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* (hereafter ACPP) [See Appendix B], a text that has several broad but almost certainly noncoincidental thematic and terminological parallels with *Allogenes*, one of which being the use of a virtually identical triad mediating the first and second principles.\(^5\) As in *Allogenes*, in the ACPP the ultimate apprehension of the unknowable First One requires an assimilation oneself to an *eikôn* of the first principle. The following two passages of the ACPP concern the apprehension of the first principle. The most notable parallel between the ACPP and *Allog. is the [a] use of a triad whose terms are *huparxis*, *zôê*, and *nous*—a foreshadowing of the so–called Noetic Triad which became formulaic in later, post–Plotinian Neoplatonism—in order to articulate the emergence of a Second One, a noetic principle coextensive with determinate Being, from the First, a transcendent principle that is altogether beyond Being; these two Ones are based upon the first two hypotheses of Plato’s *Parmenides* (respectively 137c–142a and 142c–155e). Also, [b] the notion of the transcendence of Being itself; thus in the ACPP, the First One of the *Parmenides* itself conflated is with the Good *epekeina tê ousias* of the *Republic* 509b9, while in *Allog.* the supreme principle is described as transcending the supreme power of the Triple–Powered, Existence, and also as not having existence, e.g. at 48.14, 65.29, 66.27, etc. Other parallels include [c] the notion of preconception, “first thought,” or “pre–thinking” as faculty of transcendental apprehension (*Allog*. 48.13, 53.10–13; 64.31–32); [d] an emphasis on certain technical conceptions such as stasis and silence at the ultimate phase of ascent; [e] the ascent envisioned as a praxis of contemplative introversion or self–reversion; [f] the use of the term “Unknowable” as almost a proper name for the first principle; and finally [g] the apparently paradoxical, supposedly negative–theological notion of “un–knowing” as a technique for the apprehension of that very Unknowable. Some specific textual parallels are also discussed in J. D. Turner, “The Platonic Context,” Ch. IX, pp. 11–164 in W.–P. Funk, P.–H. Poirier, M. Scopello, and J. D. Turner, *L’Allogène (NH XI,3)*, [Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, section “Textes” 30], Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2004; also *idem*, “Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition,” pp. 147–221 in J.–M. Narbonne and P.–H. Poirier, eds. *Gnose et Philosophie: Études en hommage à Pierre Hadot*, Paris: Vrin, 2009.

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...συμβήσεται σοι ποτε καὶ ἀποστάντι τῶν δὲ ἀυτῶν ὑπὸστάντων τῆς νοημάτως στήναι ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὸν ἀρρήτον προ<πρ>έννοιαν τὴν ἑνεικονιζομένην αὐτοῦ διά σημιγια ὑδε ὑπὶ σημα γιγνωσκοῦσαν ὑδε ὑπὶ ἑνεικονίζεται αὐτοῦ παρακολούθουσαν ὑδε τι καθάτας εἴδουσαν ἀλλ᾽ ὦσαν μονόν εἰκόνα ἀρρήτου τὸ ἀρρήτως ὑδε, ἀλλ᾽ ὦσαν ὡς γιγνωσκοῦσαν, εἰ μοι ὡς χωρῶ λέγειν δύναιο καὶ φανταστικῶς παρακολούθησαι. Ἀλλὰ ἱλεω μὲν γενοίμεθα αὐτοὶ ἀυτοὶ δὲ ἐκεῖνο, ἵνα πρὸς τὸν ἑνθοσιασμὸν τραπέντες τοῦ ἑραννοῦ, ὦ ὦ ἵμεν ἄλλα γνωσόμεθα ποτε, αὐτὸ χωρῆται τι <τῶ> ἄγνωστον ἄξιοι γενοίμεθα.

... it will at some point happen to you, while also standing away from those things substantiated through him, to stand upon an unutterable preconception of him that ‘images’ him through silence, without recognizing that it is silent nor conscious that it is ‘imaging’ him nor knowing absolutely anything at all, but being an ‘image’ of the unutterable alone, unutterably being the unutterable, but not as coming to know, if you can follow me imaginatively insofar as I am able to explain. But let us become propitious to ourselves by ourselves through that one, so that having turned towards divine possession by the lovely thing—which we do not know but at some point come to know—we may become worthy of somehow containing the Unknowable itself.


οὐκ ἔστιν δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ θεός, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ εἰναι καὶ τοῦ ἐστιν ἐξήλλακται αὐτοῦ τὸ προούσιον οὐκ ἔχει δὲ κριτήριον εἰς τὴν γνώσιν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ αὐτάρκες αὐτῇ τὸ τῆς ἀγνώσιας αὐτοῦ εἰκόνισμα παρακεῖσθαιν πάντες εἴδος ὦ τῷ γνωρίζοντι ἔννεφος ἐν σταίσιν.

God is not “such—and—such a thing,” but his pre—existence extracts him from both Being and from the “He is.” [The soul] has no criterion for knowledge (gnòsis) of him, but sufficient for [the soul] is the ‘imaged object’ of the “un—knowing” of him, which rejects any form which coexists with a knowing subject.

2.2. Analysis [B]. At 2.14–27 (= B1) we find an “imaging” process at the penultimate phase of ascent, propaedeutic to the ultimate apprehension: the aspirant is exhorted to “stand upon” the ineffable “preconception” that itself “images” (and is thus in some paradoxical sense also identical to) the supreme Unknowable principle. This eikôn is equated with both [a] silence and [b] cognitive emptiness or unconsciousness, but more importantly with both [c] “un—knowing” and, paradoxically, with [d] “preconception” or “first thought” (pro<πρ>έννοια); these last two terms have a technical sense

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7 The use of the unusual verb eneikonizein is noteworthy, as it occurs elsewhere only 4 times in this text alone but elsewhere only a total of 4 times prior to the 4th century CE, where it begins to be used primarily by Christian authors. Moreover, one of the other pre—4th cent. occurrences in Porphyry, *Ad. Marc.* 11.7, which might appear to support P. Hadot’s attribution of the ACPP to Porphyry. However, as G. Rocca–Serra has shown (in “La Lettre à Marcella de Porphyre et les Sentences des Pythagoriciens,” pp. 193–202 in *Le Néo-platonisme* [Colloque de Royaumont, 9–13 juin 1969], CNRS: Paris, 1971), Porphyry’s letter to his wife is replete with borrowings from diverse pre–Plotinian florilegia and therefore is not good evidence for originally Porphyrian language.
in both the Platonizing Sethian corpus and the ACPP (and are also obliquely employed by Plotinus)\(^8\) to denote the hypernoetic faculty that permits apprehension of the utterly transcendent first One.\(^9\) The equivalence between the *eikôn* and the faculty of “unknowing” is made explicit in a later fragment of the ACPP (10.23–29 = B2); here the mechanism of transcendental apperception is referred to with the peculiar term *eikonisma*, (something to the effect of “imaged object”). It is therefore evident that in order to attain the ultimate apprehension of supreme principle, the aspirant must first attain or construct an *eikôn* of it through contemplative silence and stasis. That the attainment of the *eikôn* is merely a penultimate phase, to be subtly distinguished from the final apprehension, is yet again suggested by the apparent distinction between on the one hand [a] the absolutely transcendent and apophatically—described “Unknowable itself” (*auto...<to> agnoston*: lines 30–31), the principle that one *cannot* know but will only be able to “contain” or to “grasp” (*chôrêsai*) at the ultimate moment, and on the other hand [b] the peculiarly kataphatic *erannos*, the “Lovable”—or perhaps more literally, “lovely thing”—that takes “divine possession” (*enthousiasmos*) of the aspirant who performs a contemplative self–reversion (lines 27–30), a principle that the aspirant does not know but in principle *will* at some point come to know (*gnōsometha*). Thus the subtle differentiation between the kataphatic Lovable which is to be known—the *eikôn*—and the apophatic Unknowable itself, which cannot be known, would seem to suggest a fluidity between identity and difference that is precisely analogous to that of the *pro<ett>ennoiia*, that is said at lines 21–25 both (i) to “create an image of” (*eneikonizetai*)—and also somehow (ii) to “be” the “Unutterable,” i.e., the Unknowable (*to arrêton...ousan*).

2.3. To summarize the significant aspects of these passages, first, [a] the approach to the supreme principle, the First One, requires the attainment or construction of an *eikôn* of that principle, associated with silence and stasis. Second, [b] the *eikôn* is to be discovered within the aspirant’s own self, and is attained through a contemplative self–reversion. Third, although the text is not explicit on this point, [c] the *eikôn* would appear to abide either at or just above the level of the supreme term of the mediatory triad—just as in *Allogenes*, “Existence” (*huparxis*)—since the commentator envisions both the *eikôn* and (at 13.22–23) *huparxis* in parallel terms of transcendent stasis, while insisting (at 13.30–32) that the First One itself is neither static nor in motion, being beyond any delimitation whatsoever, thus also transcending the triad itself (13.13–16). Finally, [d] the *eikôn* is, in one sense, *not*, strictly speaking, identical to the ultimate apprehension, but paradoxically, in another sense

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\(^8\) For *agnoein* as mystical technique in Plotinus, see VI.9[9].7.17–21; cf. also VI.9[9].6.50–52; VI.7[38].39; V.3[49].12.48–53; *Allog*. 64.8–14; *Zost*. 20.11–18; ACPP 9.20–26.; *Or. Chald*. fr. 1, lines 1–4, 10–12. For *pronoœin* in Plotinus, V.3[49].10.43; equivalents in *Zost*., 20.11–18; 58.16–20; 60.10–21.

\(^9\) As I suggested last year at the 2010 colloquium on Plotinus and Gnosticism that coincided with the NNGN meeting in Québec, and as I subsequently tried to demonstrate in my dissertation (U. of Chicago, 2010).
coincident with it, as it permits the ultimate “grasping” of the supreme principle. The attainment of the eikôn may therefore be understood to represent both the penultimate and the ultimate phase of ascent. [See Appendix Figure 2].

3.1. Plotinus. Finally, we may briefly consider some parallels in Plotinus. We find an explicit echo of the concept of the eikôn as mediator of transcendental apprehension in a few Plotinian passages describing the ascent to the One as an interiorization towards one’s transcendental self. I will concentrate here only on the two Plotinian descriptions of ascent that actually contain the specific term eikôn. The first occurs at the very conclusion of his 9th treatise, VI.9[9].11, which is in fact his first fully–developed account of final stages of ascent and the ultimate mystical union with the One (although, to be sure, he had already elaborated many aspects of his ascent schema in earlier treatises), while the second occurs much later, in the Großschrift itself, in V.8[31].10. 

[C1] Plotinus VI.9[9].11.35–45

πὸρείας, ἔχοι τέλος πρὸς τῆς ἀρχέτυπον ἂν αὑτόν, ἰδεῖ µὴν ὁ, ενον οίω ἐκείνου ἔχει µην τις προσοµείω, οὖν ἱλεῖ τοῦτο οὐσία ὣῃ, οὐσίας ἀλλ ἐπέκεινα, ταύτῃ οὐκ γίνεται καὶ · γὰρ τις αὐτός ἐκείνῳ τὸ ἐν αὑτῇ ὄντι οὐκ τῷ ἐν οὖν ὄνη.

...while in itself, and not in Being, [the soul] is in that one, for one becomes also oneself and not in substance, but “beyond substance” by means of this intercourse. And so if one should see oneself having become this, one has oneself as a likeness of that, and if one goes on from oneself as an image to an archetype, one reaches the “end of the journey.”

[C2] Plotinus V.8[31].10.39–11.10 [variant b]

...Αλλά χρῆ εἰς αὐτὸν ἡθὶ µεταφέρειν καὶ βλέπειν ὡς ἐν καὶ βλέπειν ὡς αὐτὸν, ὡσπερ εἶ τις ὑπὸ θεοῦ κατασχεθεῖς φοιβολήττες ἢ ὑπὸ τινὸς Μούσης ἐν αὐτῷ ἄν ποιοῖτο τῷ θεού τῆν θέαν, εἰ δύναµιν ἔχει ἐν αὐτῷ θεοῦ βλέπειν. Εἰ δὲ τὰς ἡµῶν

...But it is necessary to transport it into oneself and to look at it as one and look at it as oneself, just as if someone possessed by a god, taken by Phoebus or some Muse, could produce the vision of the god within himself, if one had the ability to look at the god in oneself. If one of us is unable to see himself, then, when

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10 The specific terminology of eikôn (and its synonyms) is relatively rare in this context in Plotinus, although the general conception is widespread in his works, e.g. the description of the transcendental self as a cult statue (agalma) in I.6[1].9.15–25. Plotinus does often refers to some inherent homologue of the One at the center–point of the human subject through which the aspirant is able to attain the ultimate union; thus at III.8[30].11.22 and VI.7[38].33.30. For other references to an inherent aspect of the human subject—or transcendental self—resembling the One and thus enabling mystical union, see also Plot. I.6[1].9.16–25; VI.9[9].3.20–26, 4.27–28, 8.14–19; V.1[10].10.5–6, 11.5–7, 11.13–14; VI.7[38].31.8, 35.19–25; VI.8[39].15.14–21; V.3[49].14.15. Interestingly, later Iamblichus (De mysteriis VI.4 [255.13–256.2]) refers explicitly to eikones within the soul—i.e. intrapsychic images of the gods—through which one can attain union: Καί ἐτί ἀθρά σὲ τὴν μυστικὴν καὶ ἀπήρητον εἰκόνα τῶν θεῶν ἐν τῇ φυσικῇ διαφυλάττομεν, καὶ τῇ φυσικῇ βι’ αὐτῶν ἀνάγομεν ἐπὶ τούς θεοὺς, καὶ ἀναχείσαιν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν τοῖς θεοῖς συνάπτομεν. (“And still we preserve in our soul, undivided, the mystical and unutterable images of the gods, and we raise the soul up through them towards the gods, and having been raised according to our ability, we attach it to the gods.”)
he is possessed by that god, if he should bring forth the contemplation into an act of seeing, he presents himself to, and looks at, a beautified image of him, but dismisses the image though it is beautiful, coming into unity with him, and, being no longer separate, is simultaneously one and all things with that god, being noiselessly present, and is with him as much as he is able and wishes to be....

4.2. Analysis [C]. At VI.9[9].11.35–45 (= C1) Plotinus’ use of the Platonically–inspired language of transcendence (i.e., ouk en toi onti... ouk ousia, all’ epekeina ousias) suggests that he understands the aspirant to have assimilated to his or her transcendental self beyond Being and Intellect, just prior to the ultimate union with the One. The transcendental self thus abides in a liminal interhypostatic zone somewhere ‘below’ the One but ‘above’ the hypostatic Being–Intellect, and, as elsewhere in Plotinus’ thought, appears to be related to a representation or reflection of the One at the very core of the human subject. What is significant here is that Plotinus describes the mystical aspirant having reached this stage in terms reminiscent of Allogenes (and, curiously, of Genesis 1:27), as both a “likeness” (homoioma) and “image” (eikôn) of the supreme principle. Here we have an explicit confirmation that the attainment of the transcendental self— the self that is apprehended in a sudden, effulgent ‘autophany’— merely represents the penultimate phase of ascent, since Plotinus describes the ultimate moment as a passage out of the self–as–eikôn (aph’ autou metabainoi) and towards its archtype (in language echoing Republic 532e3). This interpretation is further confirmed at V.8[31].10.39–11.10 (= C2), where Plotinus enjoins the aspirant to visualize the divine principle within the self as a beautiful eikôn of the deity that is also in some way an image of the self; here again, the image must be dismissed at the point that the aspirant comes into unity with the archetype. Besides other suggestive textual correspondences with Allogenes and the ACPP, it is interesting that here the final state is explicitly associated with silence or quietude (apsophêti: 11.6). One possible

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11 A similar notion of the ultimate transcendence of the eikôn at the penultimate phase of ascent is also intimated earlier in the chapter, at VI.9[9].11.16–22, where Plotinus constructs an elaborate simile of a devotee who leaves behind the cult images (eikones) of the gods outside the temple to commune with the actual deity within: Οὐδὲ τῶν καλῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἢ δὴ ὑπερήφανον, ὑπερβαΐς ἢ δὴ καὶ τὸν τῶν ἀρέτων χορόν, ὡσπερ τις εἰς τὸ ἑαυτὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔλθῃ τούτοις χαλκοῖς εἰς τοσοῦτον καταλήφθαι τὰ ἐν τῷ νεῶ ἁγάλμαστα, ἀ ξέξελθον τοῦ ἀδύτου πάλιν γίνεται πρῶτα μετὰ τὸ ἐννοο ἑκάμα καὶ τῆν ἕκει συνουσίαν πρὸς οὐκ ἀγάλμα τοῦ εἰκόνα, ἀλλὰ αὐτῷ· ἀ δὴ γίγνεται δεύτερα θέαμα. / “He was not among the beauties, having already ascended beyond even the choral zone of virtues, just like someone enters into the interior of the adyton having left behind in the naos the cult–statues which, upon his emergence back out of the adyton, become the first things [encountered] after the object of contemplation inside, and the intercourse there not with cult–statues or images (eikones), but with the thing itself; for these [statues] become secondary objects of contemplation.”

12 It is not completely clear whether this deity to which this passage refers corresponds to the Intellect or to the One. For instance, one might compare Plotinus’ use of the imagery of divine possession here to that of the ACPP; also, there is an intriguing reminiscence of Allog.:’s Blessedness later in the passage, at V.8[31].11.16–17, where Plotinus refers to an entrance into the “highest blessedness”: Ὑς ἐπὶ χρήμα μικαριστῶν εἴσοδον.
difference with *Allogenes* is that Plotinus’ transcendental self—as-*eikôn* is explicitly said to be *beyond* Being; as we have seen, Allogenes encounters the *eikôn* at the level of Existence itself. However, the difference appears less distinct if one recalls that Allogenes encounters the Existence “according to” (*kata*) the image that was previously invested upon the eponymous visionary himself, which subtly implies that the image with which he has been invested is ontologically prior to that of the Existence. [See Appendix Figure 3].

4.3. Thus far, we have seen that despite several differences between these Plotinian passages and the two previous texts\(^4\) — the most obvious difference being the absence in Plotinus of a clearly articulated triad mediating the interhypostatic domain between the One and Intellect\(^5\) — it is nevertheless evident that the schema is broadly parallel in all three groups. Thus in each case [a] at the penultimate phase of ascent, just prior to the ultimate union, the aspirant recreates or encounters an *eikôn* of the supreme principle that is also associated with transcendent quietude; [b] the *eikôn* is further described as an inherent aspect of the human subject — the self — that in some sense “images” or reflects the supreme principle; and finally, [c] the *eikôn* itself must be dismissed or surpassed at the ultimate moment so as to attain an absolute coalescence with the supreme principle beyond the reach of intellect itself.

5. To venture an interpretation of this common schema, it appears that the inherent *eikôn* of the deity within the self — the *eikôn* through which the aspirant approaches the Transcendent may be

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\(^4\) One problematic issue with which I will not get involved here is the question of precisely where the Plotinian transcendental self—as—mediatory—*eikôn* abides with respect to the various degrees of being, i.e. infinitival (*einaí*) versus determinate *(to on / hé ousia)*. In the ACPP and potentially also the Platonizing Sethian corpus the distinction between *huparxis*, *einaí*, and *on / ousia* is salient, and the term *huparxis* (which does not occur in a technical sense in Plotinus) may be employed to suggest a phase beyond even the most abstract or absolute infinitival being. This is not to say that Plotinus does not on occasion furtively employ a distinction between *einaí*, *on* and *ousia* (I suspect echoing sources he knows are Gnostic) as, for instance, he does in his discussion of ontogenesis in the *Großschrift*, at V.5[32].5.14–19; just that his terminology is neither formulaic nor consistent, so it is very difficult to come to any firm conclusion about the precise status of his transcendental self; all we can say for certain is that it is indeed “beyond being.” On these distinctions in the ACPP and the Platonizing Sethians, see G. Bechtle, *The Question of Being and the Dating of the Anonymous Parmenides Commentary,* *Ancient Philosophy* 20 (2000): 393–414; in Plotinus, K. Corrigan, “Platonism and Gnosticism: The Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides: Middle or Neoplatonic?” pp. 141–177 in J. Turner and R. Majercik, eds. *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, Texts* [SBL Symposium Series, 12], Atlanta: SBL, 2000, esp. 150–152.

\(^5\) Even here the distinction is not as clear as one might initially think. In Plotinus’ very first treatise, at 1.6[1].7.3–12, there is an intimation of the noetic triad in the context of an ascent to the supreme principle: Ἐξετάζων μὲν γάρ ως ἄγιας καὶ ἤ ἔρευς πρὸς τοῦτο, τεῦξεν δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀναβαίνοντα πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐπιστραφεῖ οὖσα καθάρσεις τε καὶ ιματίαν ἀποθέωσεν τῶν πρὸς καὶ τὸ γυμνός ἀνέβαιν; ἐκάθεν δὲ τὰς παρελθόν ἐν τῇ ἀναβάσει πάν τὸν ἄλλοτρον τῶν θεῶν αὐτῷ ἀμβλύως αὐτὸ μόνου ἕξει εἰλικρίνειας, ἀπλοῦν, καθαροῦ, ἄφρο ὤ πάντα ἐξήρτηται καὶ πρὸς αὐτό βλέπει καὶ ἐστὶ καὶ ζήσειν ἑαυτὸν ἀτίος καὶ νοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἐλίκα. / “The attainment of [the Good] is for those ascending towards the above and is for those who have been converted and who shed what we put on while descending — just as with those going up to the [inner] sanctuaries of the temples, the purifications and taking off of the clothing beforehand, and the going up naked — until, in the ascent leaving everything behind inasmuch as it is foreign to god, one should see, by oneself alone, it alone, absolute, simple, pure, from which everything depends and looks to it, and is, and lives, and thinks; for it is cause of life and mind and being.”
understood as the very image by which the transcendent deity manifests itself to itself at the very first eternal moment of ontogenesis.\(^\text{16}\) In other words, the eikôn represents both the primordial— prenoetic—self—manifestation (or self—apprehension) of the transcendent first principle that originally establishes both universal ontogenesis and the genesis of the first prototypical human being, and, simultaneously, the contemplative or visionary replication of this recursive cognition— also understood as the culmination of self—knowledge or self—apprehension— by which the human aspirant attains the ultimate apprehension of (and / or even coalescence with) that transcendent principle.\(^\text{17}\) In a very general sense, then, one may say that the eikôn serves as the apprehensible representation of the inapprehensible deity, the paradoxical ‘image of the invisible God’ that mediates between human experience and that which transcends human experience altogether [see Appendix Figure 4].

**PART TWO. HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

6. At this point we may address the question of the historical interrelationship between these three sources. Whatever their differences, these three groups of passages are unlikely to be totally independent; instead, they appear to rely if not upon the precise language of a single common source—text, at least upon a common fund of conceptions and technical terms, or upon a schema borrowed from a single common source. Whence, then, this notion— shared by the Platonizing Sethians and the author of the ACPP, as well as Plotinus— of an eikôn of the transcendent deity that one must apprehend at the penultimate moment of ascent? Now according to the influential thesis of Pierre Hadot, the ACPP is the work of Porphyry;\(^\text{18}\) and in the opinion of a number of scholars who either follow Hadot’s Porphyrian attribution or think that it was the work of some other post–Plotinian Platonist, the parallels with the Platonizing Sethian tractates could be explained by positing a complex

\(^\text{16}\) I have argued a related point in great detail in my dissertation (“The Platonizing Sethian Gnostic Background of Plotinus’ Mysticism,” U of Chicago, 2010). At the Québec colloquium on Plotinus and Gnosticism last year and subsequently in the diss. I suggested that in both the Platonizing Sethian tractates and the ACPP, the inherent faculty or principle necessary for the final phase of the visionary ascent is equivalently described in terms of, on the one hand, a “First Thought” or the activity of “prethinking” (pronoia or proemnoia, or, if one accepts the emendation, “pro<top>ennoia”), and also, on the other hand, somewhat paradoxically as an act of “un—knowing.” I further proposed that Allogenes coins a precise technical term for both the mystical and ontogenetic modalities of transcendental self—apprehension, namely ”Primordial Manifestation,” (m[ntshôp ouônh ebol = *)pro<top>phaneia?). As I tried to demonstrate in the diss., similar notions occur in Plotinus, even when not expressed with identical terminology.

\(^\text{17}\) In the case of the ACPP, this is made evident at 11.16–24 [see complete passage in Appendix B3]: τις ἰδιότης ὑποστάσεως ἐνεκουσιομένη μὲν τὴν ἀπλότητα τοῦ ἐνός, οὐχ ἱσταμένη δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀκραιφότητος αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ εἰς τὸ εἶναι συμπεριάγοναι αὐτό. / “There is some particularity of the hypostasis, on the one hand ‘imaging’ his simplicity, but on the other hand not standing upon his inviolability, but bringing him around into being.” In the diss. I have discussed this theme at length as it occurs in both Plotinus and the Platonizing Sethians as well as their Gnostic predecessors.

series of intermediary redactions—redactions themselves influenced by the thought of Plotinus and Porphyry—between the original Greek Vorlagen that were read and critiqued in Plotinus’ circle and the eventual Coptic translations buried at Nag Hammadi. According to this view—which I call the “redaction hypothesis”—any parallels between the ACPP and the extant redactions of the Platonizing Sethian tractates would result from Neoplatonic, and especially Porphyrian, influence upon the latter. Furthermore, this hypothesis implies that any parallels with Plotinus could be explained as the latter’s own influence upon his successors. I should make absolutely clear here that I strongly disagree with this hypothesis. Although the entire range of arguments for rejecting the redaction hypothesis and (the concomitant post–Plotinian authorship of the ACPP) are far too complex to elaborate here, for our present purposes I would suggest simply that if one traces the trajectory of the notion of the intermediary eikôn that permits apprehension of or access to the otherwise inaccessible or inapprehensible supreme principle, the evidence points towards the priority of the formulation of this idea in a Gnostic or Christian rather than in a purely pagan or Platonic milieu. The demonstration of this is as follows.

7.1. Victorinus. To begin, we are fortunate to have at our disposal another text with significant parallels to Allogenes, which may help to shed some historical light on the sources of our original passage. As Michel Tardieu and Pierre Hadot have demonstrated, Marius Victorinus’ anti–Arian writings from the mid 4th century contain material derived from a hypothetical common source—a lost Parmenides commentary (not necessarily identical to the extant ACPP)—that was shared also to a greater or lesser extent by the ACPP itself and by Zostrianos, and that also arguably influenced, directly or indirectly, the use of the Noetic Triad in Allogenes as well. What has been perhaps somewhat less remarked is that several Victorinus passages reflect other textual and conceptual parallels with Allogenes that appear to extend well beyond the most obvious common elements such as the permutations of the triadic schema. While these parallels—especially those found in Book I[B]

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21 Especially noteworthy is the textual parallel involving the mutual implication and cyclical predominance of each element of the triad; compare Allog. 49.26–37 with Victorinus Adv. Ar. 1[B] §60.16–19. Although Hadot was certainly aware of the important parallels with Zost. after Tardieu’s important suggestions in 1996, he was (understandably) not aware of those with Allog., which likewise seem to have been neglected in later studies of Victorinus, such those of W. Beierwaltes,
of the Against Arius, composed in 359 CE, according to Hadot—may eventually prove to be quite extensive, for the moment I would simply like to draw attention to the broad conceptual correspondence between our original Allogenes passage (59.9–61.22) and certain passages of Victorinus, primarily from Adv. Ar. I[B] §60–64, which include several of those passages that Hadot classified (in his great 1968 work on Porphyry and Victorinus) among what he called Group II. The hypothetical source represented by Group II would have attempted to explain the emergence of the Second One in terms of the progressive exteriorization of a secondary Existence–Life–Intellect triad from a prefiguration of this triad abiding embryonically within the First One. I would like to draw attention to a few excerpts from the conclusion of the Adv. Ar. I[B], in which Victorinus is specifically trying to interpret the doctrine of the replication of the noetic triad—simultaneously correlated with the three persons of the Trinity (respectively Father, Son, and Spirit)—at the level of the human soul.


... Si istud est, anima nostra iuxta imaginem est, imago est dei et domini Iesu Christi. Si enim Christus vita et λόγος est, imago est dei, in qua imagine perspicitur pater deus, hoc est quod est esse, in vita. Hoc est enim imago, ut dictum. Et si est Christus vita, quod est autem vivere, hoc est λόγος, ipsa autem vita hoc est quod est esse, hoc autem quod esse, pater est et, si rursus ipsa vita hoc est quod intelligere, id autem est sanctus spiritus, et tria ista sunt... If this is so, our soul is “according to the image” of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. If then Christ is life and Logos, he is the image of God, image in which God is perceptible, that is, what is “to be” is (perceptible) in life. For this is the image, as was said. And if Christ is life, and “to live” is the Logos, and if life itself is what it is “to be,” and if “to be” is the Father, and if again life itself is what it is “to intelligize,” which itself is the Holy Spirit, all of these are three, in each one are all three, and the three are

Platonismus und Christentum, Frankfurt, 1998, and M. Baltes, Marius Victorinus: zur Philosophie in seinen theologischen Schriften, München: Saur, 2002. Some of these parallels have been discussed by J. D. Turner, most recently in “Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition” (2009), 199–205 and now “The Platonizing Sethian Treatises, Marius Victorinus’ Philosophical Sources, and Pre–Plotinian Parmenides Commentaries,” pp. 131–172 in J. D. Turner and K. Corrigan, eds. Plato’s Parmenides and its Heritage, Vol. 1: History and interpretation from the Old Academy to later Platonism and Gnosticism, Atlanta: SBL, 2010. Amusingly, R. Majercik, who supports the redaction hypothesis, calls attention (in “Porphyry and Gnosticism”) to the substantial common vocabulary shared by Allog. and Victorinus, including terms such as unalitas (=henotês), praeintellegentia (=proennoia) and proon (preserved in Greek by Victorinus), and argues these terms are all originally Porphyrian. In my view this attribution is incorrect, since all of these terms are demonstrably particular to pre–Plotinian (2nd cent.) Gnosticism; for example, chronologically speaking, the 3rd, 4th and 5th TLG hits for proon are all from Irenaeus’ summary of Valentinian protology, at Adv. Haer, I.1.1.2, 14.4.2, and 14.4.5, respectively.


23 P. Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus vol. 1, 213–344 passim, vol. 2, 21–38. Hadot suggested that this group reflected the use of one or more lost Porphyrian commentaries (on either the Parmenides itself or on the Chaldaean Oracles) that had first formalized the Existence–Life–Intellect triad in an attempt to explain the relationship of the first and second principles. According to Hadot, it was Porphyry who had introduced the noetic triad to Neoplatonic discourse in an attempt to harmonize the Plotinian doctrine of the One with a putative Father–Power–Intellect triad in the Chaldaean Oracles.
omnia et in uno quoque tria et omnino ὁμοοῦσια. Si igitur anima, secundum quod anima est, et animae esse est et vivere et intellegere, tria ergo, superioris triados anima est, ut imago imaginis. Est enim, iuxta quod anima est, in eo quod est esse, et vitam dans et intellegentiam, ante intellegere simul habens ista ὁμοοῦσια in uno, et sunt singula ut sua substantia, non scissione, non divisione, non effusione, nec protentione, neque parte praecissa, sed semiterna tria, sed in motu et in actu, sic anima in eo quod anima ut potentia patrica, vivificatio autem et intellegentia in motu. Ista ergo, esse animae, iuxta imaginem patris et filii, sic autem esse, iuxta similitudinem. Ὅμοοῦσιον ergo etiam ipsa, in sua unalitate, et similii substantia, in triplici potentia; ipsa ergo, ipsa se movens et semper in motu, in mundo motionum fons et principium, sicuti pater et filius ipsius animae motionis et creator et praecausa et praeprincipium. Therefore this: the “to be” of soul is “according to the image” of the Father and the Son, while its “to be such—and-such” is “according to the likeness.”

Si enim futurum est nostrum corpus et caro resurgere et induere incorruptionem et fieri one and entirely consubstantial. If then the soul, inasmuch as it is soul, is the “to be” of the soul and “to live” and “to intelligize,” if it is thus three, the soul is as the image of the image of the superior Triad. For it is, inasmuch as it is soul, with its “to be,” giving life and intelligence, prior to intellection, possessing these together, consubstantial in unity, yet they are individuals as (if) in their own substance, not broken off by slicing, nor division, nor effusion, nor extension, nor by parturition, but always three, each existing in the other which also exists, and this substantially. Thus [the soul] is “according to the image.” And just as the Father is “to be,” while the Son is double, but double in motion and act, likewise the soul as soul is as the paternal power, while vivification and intelligence are in movement. Furthermore, I speak obscurely of a great mystery. Just as the most divine unified trinity has, inasmuch as it is by itself, produced, by shining forth, the soul in the intelligible world in its subsistence and its own substance—this soul that we properly call substance—so likewise the soul, a second unified trinity, has extended a manifestation in the sensible world, because this soul, while always remaining above, has begotten souls which come into this world. Thus this too is “according to the image and likeness.”
spirialis caro, sicuti et salvato noster, iuxta omnia, et fuit et resurrexit et ascendit et futurum est ut veniat, et si post resurrectionem inmutabimur accipientes spiritale indumentum, nihil impedit iuxta imaginem carnis superioris τὸ λόγον hominem factum esse. Ad istud enim testimonium dicit propheta decens: et fecit deus hominem iuxta imaginem dei. [...]

7.2. Analysis [D]. Briefly, without entering into all the intricacies of Victorinus’ thought, the exposition in each of these passages relies on the theme of “image and likeness” in the anthropogony of Genesis 1:26–27. In the first passage, §63.24–61.22 (=D1), Victorinus explains the individual soul as a noetic triad (esse–vivere–intellegere) reflecting a superior triad which is an image of the Father; the soul is therefore (a rather un–Plotinian) “image of an image” (imago imaginis). Victorinus then relates the Father and Son both to the elements of the noetic triad (the Father to “to be,” the Son to both life and intellect) and to a putative distinction between the “image” (imago) and “likeness” (similitudo) of the Genesis anthropogony, which he further correlates with the distinction between absolute and determinate being. What is important to note here is Victorinus’ association of the “image” of the Father with the absolute “to be” (esse) of the human soul, and also—though only implicitly in this particular passage (though explicit throughout §60)—with both stability or immobility, just as in Allogenes we find the Existence (huparxis) correlated with absolute stasis and also with an eikôn that represents both the supreme Unknowable and some inherent aspect of the human aspirant (i.e., Allogenes himself). Similarly, in the second passage, §64.1–8 (=D2), which purports to reveal a “great mystery” (mysterium magnum), Victorinus explains the successive replication of the image of the triad on each successive level down to the individual human soul. The supreme triad—the Trinity—has generated a triadic divine soul (probably to be understood as the Logos) by “shining forth” (effulgenter), and this second soul, while remaining “above,” has “extended

24 According to P. Hadot, “L’Image de la Trinité dans l’âme chez Victorinus,” Studia Patristica VI [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Bd. 81], Berlin (1962) 460, this biblical source text had initiallyVictorinus to find a representation of the trinity in the human soul.

25 For Plotinus’ disparagement of the replication of images, see II.9[33].10.27–34; Porphyry, Vita Plotini 1.5–10.

26 Compare Victorinus’ insistence here on the indivisibility of the triad with the epithet “Indivisible One” (pitapósh) at Allog. 60.35. One might also incidentally note the number of other characteristically Gnostic terms in this Victorinus passage: §63.30: ipsa generans, “generating itself” (i.e., ἀυτογενής); §63.33: praeprincipium, = προαρχής, as a noun attested only, to my knowledge, in Gnostic sources; thus, inter alia, Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I.5.2.16, 38; I.5.3.4, 8; I.6.3.14; Hippolytus Refutatio II.38.4.2; Epiphanius Panarion I.401.2, 445.7, 446.4, 18; II.41.3; Theodoret of Cyrus, Haereticarum fabularum compendium 83.353.29. On the Gnostic and Hermetic origins of the theological use of the term homoousios itself, see P. F. Beatrice, “The Word ‘Homoousios’ from Hellenism to Christianity,” Church History 71:2 (2002): 243–272; J.-M. Narbonne, “L’Énigme de la non–descente partielle de l’âme chez Plotin: la piste gnostique / hermétique de l’ΟΜΟΟΥΣΙΟΣ,” Laval théologique et philosophique 64:3 (2008): 691–708.
a manifestation” *explicavit imaginationem*27 as the human soul, which is therefore itself triadic, according to the “image and likeness.” Here the language is again strikingly reminiscent of *Allogenés*; compare, for instance, §64.1–8 (= D2) to the language of our original passage from *Allogenés* (= A2), which refers to a mysterious prior manifestation of the Triple–Powered that has imprinted an image (or archetype) of Existence within him: “I withdrew upon the Existence, which I found standing and at rest according to an image and likeness of that which is invested upon me by a manifestation of the Indivisible and the one who is at rest...I knew that which exists within me and the Triple–Powered and the manifestation of that of his which is uncontainable.” In both cases [a] an inherent triad has been invested upon or within the soul by a “manifestation” (MV: *imaginatio*; A: *ouònh ebol* = *pro<to>phaneia?*) of the Divine, [b] the manifestation is associated with Being (MV: *in subsistentiam et propriam substantiam*; A: *Huparxis*), and further [c] is expressed with the language of imaging drawn explicitly from the Genesis anthropogony. Finally, in the third passage, §64.15–22 (=D3), Victorinus describes the post–resurrection state of the soul and its (spiritual) “flesh” in the context of salvific ascent, and here, as in *Allogenés*, he describes this in terms of ritual investiture: one will “receive a spiritual garment” (*accipientes spiritale indumentum*) having been “created ‘according to the image’ of that higher flesh of the Logos”; to this we may compare the peculiar turn of phrase in our original passage, in which Allogenés encounters the Existence “according to an image and likeness of that which is invested upon me” (*pê ettoe hiôôt*), suggestive of ritual investiture or the heavenly enrobing in Jewish apocalyptic and Hekhalot literature and also present elsewhere in the broader Sethian corpus.28 The concentration of conceptual and terminological correspondences here is far too great to be coincidental, and we may reasonably suppose that here both Victorinus and the author of *Allogenés* were paraphrasing precisely the same passage of a common source text—the source of Victorinus’ “mysterium magnum”— albeit for quite different ends.

7.3. According to Hadot, the original philosophical text reflected in the passages from Group II would not have included any language of “image and likeness” drawn from the Genesis anthropogony, or indeed any other biblical allusions; rather, this would have been introduced by Victorinus himself, who had before him only one or more pagan Neoplatonic commentaries. In Hadot’s view, this hypothetical Neoplatonic source included the conception of procession through the

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27 On this translation of *explicavit imaginationem* at §64.5, see P. Hadot, *Porph. & Vict.* Vol. 1, 332–335, who wants to render *explicavit imaginationem* as “déroule le reflet,” on the grounds that this reflects a Neoplatonic scheme of emanation through reflection; see also his discussion in *Marius Victorinus, Traité théologique sur la Trinité*, vol. 2 (commentaire), Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960, 892–893; however, in his edition and translation (*idem*, vol. 1, [with text of P. Henry], p. 385) it remains “a achevé la manifestation.”

28 E.g., *Trim. Prot.* (*NHC XIII,1*) 45.16–17.
reflection of images, which Victorinus then would have put into the service of biblical exegesis. In other words, Hadot thought that Victorinus’ notion of the replication of images such as we have seen in passage D2 and evoked especially by the strange phrase explicavit imaginationem (§64.5), had derived from an originally Neoplatonic, indeed even Plotinian, schema of procession—i.e., the emergence of successive ontological strata through acts of self-reflection that we find at all level of Plotinus’ system—and further, that Victorinus himself conformed it into harmony with the biblical notion of the creation of human beings in the “image and likeness” of God. Indeed, so persuaded was Hadot of the independence of Victorinus’ philosophical source text from any biblical allusions that in the Latin texts reprinted in Porphyre et Victorinus, vol. 2, he summarily bracketed off those sections with explicit biblical references from the portions of the passages that he assumed to have derived from the philosophical source for Group II. But we may already begin to detect several difficulties with this interpretation. First, and most obviously—if I am correct thus far, viz. that the above-quoted passages from Victorinus and Allogenès loosely share a common source text—it seems improbable that the allusion to the “image and likeness” was introduced independently in more or less corresponding positions by both authors; it seems much more likely to have been in the common source itself. Second, one might wonder why one should be compelled to assume that a common philosophical source could not also have contained an allusion to the biblical anthropogony. Even though such language is not likely to have been used by strictly pagan Platonists, among the writings of Jewish and Christian Platonists of the first two centuries CE, and at least as early as Philo, it is not uncommon to find Platonically-influenced descriptions of the unique faculty by which humans apprehend the Divine in terms of the eikon of God, which is often equated with Christ or the logos; these authors allude explicitly to the language of the Genesis anthropogony. There is, therefore, no need to assume that

29 After quoting Victorinus Adv. Ar. II[B] §64.17, Hadot (Porphy. & Vict. vol. 1, 331 n. 10) notes: “Victorinus utilise notre texte néoplatonicien pour illustrer la doctrine chrétienne de l’am’ à l’image et à la ressemblance” (Gen. I, 26).  
30 However, Hadot admits in a footnote (Porphy. & Vict. vol. 1, 335 n. 2) that it is attested elsewhere, in particular in Gnosticism.  
32 Philo, De fuga et inventione 101.1–5: ἦ δ’ ὑπεράνω τούτων λόγος θείος εἰς ὑμᾶς ἤλθεν ἵδιαν, ἀτε μηδεί τῶν κατ’ αἰσθήσεων ἐμφανείς ὄν, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς εἰκών ὕπαρχει, τῶν νοητῶν ἀπατείς ἀπατητός ὁ πρεσβύτατος, ὁ ἐγγυτάτω, μηδενός ὁτιοῦ μεθορίου διαστήματος, τοῦ μόνου, ὁ ἄτιμος ἀνεμφόρος, ἠφηρυμένος. / “…The divine logos above (all) these things does not come into a visible appearance, inasmuch as it is not like the things according to the senses, but it is itself an image of the really existing God, the single most ancient of the intelligibles, placed the closest to the only One that truly exists, there being no boundary of separation.”  
33 E.g., Clem. Alex. Stromateis V.14.94; Teach. Silv. (NHC VII.4) 92.24, 31; 115.18–19; Origen, Peri archón, I.2.6 A similar notion of Christ as image of God occurs in already the Pauline epistles, at 2 Cor 4.4 and—as “the image of the invisible God”— at Col 1:15; for a Hermetic use of a similar formula, cf. also C. H. 1 (Poimandres) 12; V.6; VIII.2; XI.15.
this particular aspect of biblical exegesis was original to Victorinus. It may also be worthwhile to note that although eikôn–terminology is used in Plato, Middle Platonism, and even in Plotinus to denote both the instantiation of intelligible Forms in matter and, later, procession from one hypostasis to the next, the notion of image–making remained ambiguous if not actually negative, and virtually always implied a replication of a higher form on a lower ontological level rather than a reascent ascent towards the Divine; we may recall that according to Plato, eikasia, the apprehension by means of images, was the basest form of mental activity (Rep. 511e2).\textsuperscript{34} Thus if I am correct that the explicit biblical allusion was in fact already present in the common source text, this virtually precludes a purely pagan authorship. Indeed, it is somewhat difficult to imagine how a pagan Platonist who was not under some pressure to harmonize Plato with the Bible—such as Porphyry, for instance—would have been the original source for an exegesis that elevated an eikôn to the very threshold of the hypertranscendent domain.

8.1. It is therefore more likely that the common source would be the work of a bibliocentric Platonist, or, what is even more probable, a philosophically-minded Gnostic, which would also better account for the apparent Gnostic conceptions and terminology permeating our four groups of texts. Although we should not expect to find the precise text that served as an immediate common source, it is nevertheless reasonable to seek examples of earlier texts that might provide a glimpse of the confluent currents of thought that inspired the common ideas shared by these texts. Indeed, we would be justified to suspect such texts existed at some point even if we had no extant example.

Remarkably, however, at least one such text does exist, and it emerges precisely from the milieu of

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\textsuperscript{34} For examples of Plato’s more optimistic uses of the language of eikôn, see, inter alia, Tim. 37d7 (time as an eikôn of eternity); 92c7 (the “sensible god,” i.e., the cosmos, as eikôn of the intelligible); more pessimistically, Phaedo 99e1; Soph. 235b–236e; Rep. 509d–511d, Tim. 52c2, etc. Numenius (fr. 16.7 des Places) at one point approvingly calls the Demiurge the eikôn and mimêma of the Good: terminology, incidentally, that was later turned against Plato himself by the Gnostics, who redeployed his own critique of mimêsis in the Sophist and Republic to impugn the mimetic activity of the Demiurge in the Timaeus. As I suggested at the ISNS conference at the U. of Maine in 2002, this subversive Gnostic exegesis of both Genesis and Plato obliged Plotinus himself to part ways with Plato and rehabilitate the notion of the artistic replication of images; still, this is not absolute; note, for example, Plotinus’ resistance to sitting for a portrait, which, he complains, would be an “image of an image” (eidôlo eikôn: Porphyry, Vita Plotini 1.8) On the subtle Plotinian distinction in value between imitation at different ontological levels, see P. Aubin, “L’Image dans l’oeuvre de Plotin,” Recherches de science religieuse 41 (1953): 348–379. The Gnostic use of a Platonic critique of imitation—making does not mean that it was consistently negative in Gnostic thought; as we may see, the same passage of Genesis could be interpreted either optimistically or pessimistically as the need arose. On occasion for example the Valentinians exploited the putative difference between eikôn and homoiôsis to suggest different classes of human beings; thus Tri. Trac. (NHC 1,5) 78.32–34; on the distinction between the terms eikôn and eíne (probably from homoiôsis) and iantn (whose Greek antecedent is uncertain) in this text, see the commentary of H. Attridge and E. Pagels, pp. 313–315 in CGL vol. 1.
‘classic’ or even prototypical Gnosticism. In Hippolytus’ citations of the Simonian Apophesis Megalê—
a certainly pre-Plotinian text putatively ascribed to Simon Magus himself, but more likely the work
of a more sophisticated 2nd century follower of Simon—and we find a striking foreshadowing of the
parallels we have seen in Allogenes and Victorinus.

[E1] (Pseudo—?) Simon Magus, Apophesis Megalê, from Hippolytus of Rome, Refutatio omnium
haeresium VI.12.3.1–4.6 Marcovich

[ί] ἀπέραντον δύναμιν <ἐκίναι> φησὶ τὸν ἑστῶτα <στάντα> στησόμενον. ὄς ἐάν μὲν ἔξεικονισθῇ, ὧν ἐν ταῖς ἐξ
dύναμείς, ἐσται οὐσία, δύναμε, μεγεθεί, ἀποτελέσματ μία καὶ ἵ ἁυτή τῇ ἄγεννητῳ καὶ ἀπεράντῳ
dύναμε, οὐδὲν ὅλως ἔχοσαν ἐνδεέςτερον ἔκεινς τῆς ἄγεννητος καὶ ἀπαραλ–
<λ>ἀκτοὺ καὶ ἀπεράντου δυνάμεως. ἐάν δὲ μείνα [τῇ] δύναμε μόνον ἐν ταῖς ἐξ
dύναμει καὶ μὴ ἔξεικονισθῇ, ἀφανίζεται, φησὶ, καὶ ἀπόλυται, οὕτως ὁς ἡ δύναμις
ή γραμματική [ί] ἡ γεωμετρική ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ ψυχῇ προσλαβούσα γὰρ ἢ
dύναμις τεχνύν[ί]ν, φῶς τῶν γινόμενων (γ)ίνεται, μὴ προσλαβούσα δὲ, ἀτεχνία
καὶ σκότος, καὶ ὀς ὁ τού ἢν, ἀποθνησκοῦτι τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ συνδιαϕεῖρεται.

...The unbounded power is, he says, ‘the one who stood, stands, and will stand.’ Whence, if one should be made
out of an image, being in the six powers, he will be—in terms of substance, power, magnitude, and completion—
one and the same with the unbegotten and unbounded power, generally having no inferiority with respect to
that unbegotten and unchangeable unbounded power. But if one should remain in the six powers in potentiality
only and is not made out of [or into] an image (exeikonishtēi), one disappears, he says, and is
destroyed, just like the grammatical or geometrical capacity in the human soul. For taking up a skill, the light
of things coming into being comes to be, but not taking [one] up, unskilfulness and darkness [come to be]; and
similarly when one was not [made into an image] one is destroyed along with the dying human.

[E2] (Pseudo—?) Simon Magus, Apophesis Megalê, from Hippolytus of Rome, Refutatio omnium
haeresium VI.17.1.1–3.4 Marcovich

’ ἔστιν οὖν κατὰ τὸν Σιμώνα τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἀθάρτον ἑκένον, ἐν παντὶ <ἀνθρώπῳ>
κεκρυμμένον δύναμιν, οὐκ ἐνεργείᾳ, ὡς ἐστὶν ὁ ἐστῶς στὰς στησόμενος: ἐστῶς ἂν
ἐν τῇ ἄγεννήτῳ δύναμει, στὰς κάτω ἐν τῇ ροή τῶν ὑδάτων, ἐν εἰκόνις γεννηθείς,
stησόμενος άνω πάρα τὴν μακάριαν ἀπέραντων δυνάμιν, ἐὰν ἔξεικονισθῇ, τρεῖς
γάρ, φησὶν, εἰσὶν εστῶτες <αιῶνες>, καὶ ἂν τοῦ τρεῖς ἐστὶς ἐστῶτας αἰώνας οὐ
κοσμεῖ ὁ γεννητός, ὁ κατ’ αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τοῦ ὑδάτος φερόμενος, ὁ καθ’ ὦμοιῳ
ἀναπτυλαμμένοις τέλειος ἐπούραν(ίος), <ὁ> καὶ οὐδέμιαν ἐπίνοιαν ἐνδεέςτερον
tῆς ἄγεννητος δυνάμεως (γε)ωνομο, τούτ’ ἑστιν, <φησιν,> ὁ λέγουσιν: ‘ἐγώ καὶ

There is, therefore (according to Simon) that which is
blessed and incorruptible, hidden within every[one], in
potentiality, not actuality: [i.e.] that which is ‘the one
who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand.’ He has stood
above in unbegotten power. He stands below in the
flow of waters, having been begotten in an image
(eikôn). He will stand above, beside the blessed
indefinite power, if he is made out of [or into] an
image (exeikonishtēi). For, he says, there are three who
have stood; and without there being the three aeons
who have stood, the begotten does not ‘adorn.’ [This
begotten one] is, according to them, borne over the
water, and is re–modeled according to the likeness [as]
a perfect celestial [entity], begotten according to a

35 The absolute terminus ante quem of this Simonian material is about 230 CE, the approximate date of Hippolytus’ death,
thus well before Plotinus first written work in 255 CE. In all likelihood this text dates from as much as a century earlier,
roughly mid–2nd century.
mental reflection (epinoia) in no way inferior to the power of the unbegotten [itself]. This is, he says, what they say: "I and you, one; prior to me, you; after you, I." This, he says, is one power divided above [and] below, generating itself, making itself grow, seeking itself, finding itself, being mother of itself, father of itself, sister of itself, consort (suzugos) of itself, daughter of itself, son of itself, mother–father, being one: the root of the entireties.

For Simon explicitly speaks about this in the Apophasis thusly: "I say to you what I say and I write what I write; the writing is as follows. There are two offshoots from the entirety of the aeons, having neither beginning nor limit, from one root, which is the power Silence, invisible [and] incomprehensible; one of these [offshoots] appears from above which is a Great Power, Nous of the Totalities, managing all things, a male, and another (offshoot) is from below, a great god Epinoia, female, generating all things; whence they are ranked in opposing pairs with respect to one another, maintaining conjunction and manifest an intermediate interval, an incomprehensible air, having neither origin nor limit, and in this the Father producing and nourishing all things that have an origin and limit. For this is ‘the one who Stood, Stands, and Will Stand,’ being a masculine–feminine power according to the pre–existent unbounded power which has neither origin nor limit, existing in unity. Proceeding forth from this, the Epinoia in unity became two. And that [Father] was one; for having her within himself he was single. However, he was not first [i.e., temporally prior] but [was, rather] ‘pre–existent,’ for having manifested to himself from himself he became the second. But he was not called ‘Father’ before she named him father. And so since he, bringing himself forward from himself, manifested to himself as his own mental reflection (epinoia), thus also Epinoia, once manifest, did not create <Nous?> but having seen him she concealed the Father within herself—that is, the power, and it is a masculine–feminine power and Epinoia, whence they are ranked in opposing pairs with respect to one another; for power is not distinct from mental reflection (epinoia), they being one. From the things above is discovered power, from those below, mental reflection (epinoia). So it is thus
8.2.1. *Analysis [E]*. In these Simonian passages one can immediately identify several correspondences with each of our previous texts, but especially with *Allogenes*. First, and most importantly, at VI.12.3.1–4.6 and VI.17.1.1–3.4 (= E1 and E2), yet again we find [a] a close association between the assimilation to an *eikôn* and the attainment of the transcendent first principle; salvation is attained by one who has been “made out of [or into] an image” (*exeikônísthê*) of the supreme deity, the Great / Unbounded Power.36 This “imaging” process is equivalent to the attainment of proximity to or even identity with this deity; the aspirant, having attained the status of an *eikôn*, “will be standing beside” (*stêsomenos...para*) the supreme principle; we may recall both Allogenes’ stasis in the *Huparxis* “according to the image and likeness...” as well as the “stand upon an unutterable preconception that images him through silence...” of the ACPP. Furthermore, during this final act of stasis, just as in *Allogenes*, the ACPP, and Plotinus, there is still some minimal separation, or perhaps a simultaneous and paradoxical identity and distinction between the aspirant and the supreme principle itself.37

8.2.2. Second, according to the Simonian author, [b] a divine triad— “the one who stood, stands, and will stand”— inheres within all human beings in potentiality, and only if actualized will the “imaging” process occur.38 This interiorization of the metaphysical structure which the aspirant must negotiate recalls Victorinus’ discussion of the triad within the soul, and the series of “withdrawals” (*r–*

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36 The verb ἐξεικονίζειν / ἐξεικονίζονται (like ἐνεικονίζονται in the ACPP) is so rare outside of Gnostic sources that one might suspect it to be virtually a technical term in Gnosticism; note its use at Hippolytus, *Refutatio* V.17.10.3, quoted infra, passage F16.

37 A subtle distinction is indicated by the preposition *para*.

38 The Simonian passage describing the potential *technê* in the soul has interesting parallel in an early treatise of Plotinus, VI.7[2], IV.7[2], 10.41–46; Ei δ’ ἡ κάθαρσις ποιεῖν ἐν γνώσει τῶν ἀρίστων εἶναι, καὶ αἰ ἐπιστήμην ἐνδον οὖσαν ἀναφαίνεται, αἰ δὴ καὶ ὑστεροῖς ἐπιστήμηα εἶσιν. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἔξω ποι ἐλόμον οὐκ ἐπιγεγίσθη οἷσιν καὶ πρὸς ἅγα καὶ δικαίωσιν πιθηκίζεις καὶ τῶν δ’ ἀριστῶν ἔπειτ’ ἐν αὐτῇ ἑδρυμένα ὑπόσεσα... / “But if purification makes us be in the knowledge [*gnôsis*] of the best things, the inward sciences too will become manifest, those which indeed are truly sciences. For indeed it is not running anywhere outside that the soul “sees temperance and justice,” but herself by herself in the comprehension of herself and of that which she was previously, as if seeing cult–statues established within her.” Compare Allog. 51.17: “he bears the male Protophanes *Nous* according to an *eikôn*, while acting within the individuals, either in craft (*technê*) or in science (*epistême*) or in a partial nature.”
anachôri) into himself by which Allogenes attains—or rather attempts to “stand” within—each of the three powers of the Triple–Powered. 39

8.2.3. Third, [c] as in the generalized triadic model of ontogenesis that we find in Allogenes, the ACPP, and Victorinus, the archetypal anthropogony described in VI.17.1.1–3.4 (= E2) consists of three moments or phases (again described as acts of standing). 40 First (according to the Simonian) in the mythical past, there was a virtual identity with, or prefiguration within, the supreme principle; thus (i) “he stood above in unbegotten power.” Second, there occurs the first act of generation, described in terms of an externalization from the supreme principle in an effluence or “flow” of water down to the nether realm (the sensible cosmos). Thus (ii) “He stands below in the flow of waters, having been begotten in an image (eikôn).” 41 And finally, in an eschatological restoration in the future, the human aspirant is remade into the image of the indefinite power and returns above, where he or she “will stand beside” the supreme principle; thus (iii) “He will stand above, beside the blessed indefinite power, if he is ‘made out of [or into] an image’ (exeikônisthê).” Although this is phrased in terms of a narrative of salvation history, it is also simultaneously envisioned in terms of tripartite model of ontogenesis. In the closely related texts we have seen—Allogenes, the ACPP, and Victorinus (and also, perhaps at least implicitly, in Plotinus)—the triadic process of ontogenesis involves three eternal moments: first, an initial prefiguration abiding within the supreme principle, second, a moment of effluence and burgeoning “life”—note, for instance, the association of Vitality with motion and fluidity in Allogenes—and finally, a moment in which the primordial effluence reverts upon its source (its former self) to acquire delimitation and form and thus to crystallize as the fully determinate second principle. 42 Moreover, in these three Simonian passages, this process is evident in both the eschatological anthropology describing the eventual restoration of the “one who stood, stands, and will stand”—i.e., the triadic aspect of the Unbounded Power that abides within the archetypal human being—and also in the accounts of ontogenesis in VI.17.1.3.1–4 (= latter part of E2) and throughout VI.18.2.1–7.5 (= E3), in which the self–apprehension of the absolutely unified first principle—the Pre–Existent Unbounded Power—produces the first duality, a reflection of the first, which is consequently extruded from that first principle to crystallize as the second. In the case of the latter

39 See Appendix, Figure 5.
40 Although this is described with finite temporal verbal forms, this is simultaneously intended, as in Allog. and the ACPP, as an eternal process, since the three acts of stasis are described as Aeons, “eternities.”
41 The juxtaposition of two separate allusions to Genesis—both to the enigmatic “waters” over which the putative spirit of God hovers at Gen 1:2 and also to the creation of Adam as eikôn of God at Gen 1:26–27—suggests a conflation between universal ontogenesis and the primordial anthropogony.
42 Here the pre–Plotinian Simonian author has foreshadowed the doctrine of remaining, procession, and reversion that became formalized in later Neoplatonism, and especially in Proclus, e.g., El. Theol. §25–39.
passage (E3), this second principle is described, as in all of our other texts, in noetic terms, as “mental reflection” (epinoia).

8.2.4. Finally, as I have already indicated, [d] these Simonian texts abound with allusions to Genesis, not only to the “pneuma of God borne over the surface of the waters” of LXX Gen 1:2—a phrase we know inspired other forms of Gnostic exegesis—and of course to the creation according to the image of God at Gen 1:26–7, but also to the very next phrase in the same line: “male and female he created them” (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς). It seems that this phrase suggested to the Simonian author the notion of an undivided masculo–feminine prefiguration of the second principle abiding within the first; thus “being one, it is discovered to be two; being a masculo–feminine power, it has the female within itself.” Interestingly, Victorinus is likewise inspired by this phrase, perhaps through this or a similar Gnostic text; note his use of the term masculofeminam in a more or less corresponding position at Adv. Ar. I[B] §64.24.

9. We therefore have good reason to suspect that the common source involving this conception—that of an inherent eikôn within the human soul through which one attains the transcendent deity—emerged in a philosophically–minded Gnostic milieu very close to that in which our Simonian material was produced. One might even suppose that this or some very similar text served as at least one immediate precursor of the common source for the Platonizing Sethian corpus, the ACPP, and Victorinus (if indeed the latter two were not dependent upon the former). While we do find language that at least intimates the transcendence of Being—such as the term prohuparchein—what is conspicuously missing from the Simonian material is only [a] the specific negative theology based upon Plato’s Parmenides and [b] the specific triad of Existence–Life–Intellect / Blessedness, although there is of course a fundamental triadic structure of reality. And although the triadization evident in the Simonian material does not expressly involve this particular combination of terms, I see no compelling reason to suppose this could not have been introduced by a Gnostic in the same general milieu as our Simonian author rather than an academic Platonist; as Tuomas Rasimus has recently suggested, an embryonic form of the triad is apparent in earlier Sethian tractates such as the Apocryphon of John. Such an author might have introduced the negative–theological elements drawn

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43 Thus Paraph. Shem. (NHC VII,1) 2.18 ff.; also Hippolytus’ “Sithiano,” Refutatio V.19.11.1 ff.
45 This phrase inspired the Sethian author(s) of Ap. Jn. to envision the luminous Eve / Epinoia as concealed within Adam.
from the *Parmenides* to emphasize the transcendence of the first principle, while developing a derivational schema based loosely upon the Simonian model of reflexive ontogenesis. It is relatively easy to imagine how an originally Simonian triad of aeons envisioned as moments of stasis within a threefold process of emanation and reversion might have come to be expressed in more typically Platonic language of the noetic triad that was already foreshadowed in Sethian source texts.\(^{47}\) This constellation of originally Gnostic conceptions would thus underlie the common source for *Allogenes*, Victorinus, and the ACPP.

10. Moreover, now that we have conjectured a plausible vector from a Gnostic source to our more strictly philosophical texts, it may be significant that the theme of the *eikôn* as mediator of the transcendental occurs elsewhere in Gnostic literature, not only in the related Platonizing Sethian corpus,\(^{48}\) but also in its classic Sethian predecessors and in other diverse currents of Gnostic and Hermetic thought, where it is directly associated with salvation and ascent to the Divine. We may consider, *inter alia*, the following tiny (and far from representative) sample, beginning with the Sethian texts closest to *Allogenes*, and gradually moving further afield into examples from Valentinian, Thomasine, and Hermetic literature.

[F1] Zostrianos (*NHC* VIII,1) 5.15–16

I received baptism in that place, and I received the **image (pine)** of the glories there; I became like one of them.

[F2] Zostrianos (*NHC* VIII,1) 44.1–22

The person that can be saved is the one that seeks himself and its intellect and finds each of them. And how much power this one has! The person that has been saved is the one who has not known about these things in the manner in which they are, but he himself (has known about them) in the *Logos* (?), in the manner it exists within him. **He received their image ...** (eïne) in every place, he having become simple and one. For then he is saved, this one who is able to pass through them all. He becomes all of them. When he

One might even see an allusion to a specifically Simonian use of the triad in the later testimony of Epiphanius, *Panarion* I.243.1–3, who claims that the Simonians practiced rituals involving male and female sexual fluids which they called the mystery of “life, knowledge [and] perfection” (καὶ ταῦτα ἐναι μυστήρια ζωῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς τελειοτάτης).\(^{47}\) Perhaps also derived in part as P. Hadot suggested (“Être, vie, pensée”) from the Stoic physical doctrine of tensile expansion and contraction.

\(^{47}\) E.g., upon Zostrianos’ descent, he receives “a true image” (*OYEIN[E MHE]*: 129.24–25); cf. also Zost. 17.12–15.
wishes, again he separates from them all and he withdraws (ἀναχωρεῖν) into himself; for one becomes divine, having withdrawn into god.

... the airy–earth, the receiver of God, in which place the holy men of the great light receive (an) image (eikôn), the men of the Father of the silent living silence....

[F4] Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1) 45.16–27
You will accept robes from those who give robes and the Baptists will baptize you and you will become gloriously glorious, the way you first were when you were Light. And I hid myself in everyone and manifested myself within them, and every mind seeking me longed for me, for it is I who gave an image (eikôn) to the All when it had no shape (morphê). And I transformed their shapes into other shapes until the time when a shape will be given to the All.

14–15: ...And your image (eikôn) is the mother of every ungraspable one, and it is the power of every unbounded one...
16–18: ...By means of your image (eikôn) we have seen you, we have run to you, we have stood within you, we have received the indestructible crown....

[F6] 2nd Treatise of the Great Seth (NHC VII,2) 51.26–34
And all the matter (hulê) of the archons and the earth–born powers came into a state of trembling, seeing the likeness of the image (eikôn), (the matter) being mixed. And I was the one within (the image), not resembling the likeness (eine) of my word. These will come forth in light forever, and in companionship with each other, in the spirit, since they have known in every respect and in an undivided state that “the One who is” is one, and all of these are one.

[F7] 2nd Treatise of the Great Seth (NHC VII,2) 68.5–13
And those who took on the likeness (eine) of my impression will take on the likeness (eine) of my word. These will come forth in light forever, and in companionship with each other, in the spirit, since they have known in every respect and in an undivided state that “the One who is” is one, and all of these are one.
...And they will exist in the aeon of beauty of the aeon of judgement, being prepared in wisdom, having given glory to the one in the incomprehensible Unity, and they see him because of his desire which is within them. And they all have become as images (eikôn) in his light, and they have all shone; they have all become content in his rest.

[F9] Gospel According to Thomas (NHC II,2) 37.24–35 [from Logion 22]

Jesus said to them, “When you make the two one, when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below and when you make the make and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; and you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image (eikôn) in place of an image (eikôn), then will you enter the Kingdom.

[F10] Gospel According to Thomas (NHC II,2) 41.30–42.6 [from Logion 50]

Jesus said: “If they say to you, ‘Where did you come from?’ say to them, ‘We came from the light, the place where the light came into being through itself, and stood, and manifested in their image’ (eikôn)...”


Jesus said, “The images (eikôn) are manifest to man and the light within them is concealed in the image (eikôn) of the light of the father. He will become manifest, but his image (eikôn) will remain concealed by his light.”

[F12] Gospel According to Thomas (NHC II,2) 47.24–29 [Logion 84]

Jesus said, “When you see your likeness (eine) you rejoice. But when you see your images (eikôn) which came into being before you, and which neither die nor become manifest, how much will you have to bear!”


Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in impressions (tupos) and images (eikôn).
It will not receive truth in any other way. There is a rebirth and an image (eikôn) of rebirth. It is certainly necessary to be born again through the image. The bridal chamber and the image must enter through the image into the truth: this is the restoration.


[The believer] has on the one hand the inscription through Christ, the Name of God, and on the other, the Spirit, as an image (eikôn).

[F15] (Hermetic) Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth (NHC VI.1,6) 57.3–10

Lord, grant us the truth in the image. Allow us through the spirit to see the shape (morphê) of the image (eikôn) that has no deficiency; and receive the impression (tupos) of the Pleroma from us through our praise.

[F16] Hippolytus of Rome, Refutatio omnium haeresium V.17.8.1–10.5 Marcovich

Thus no one, he [the Peratic author] says, is able to be saved nor to ascend without the Son, who is the Serpent. For just as (he says) [the Son] brought the paternal ‘characters’ down from above, so also he carries from here up again those who have been awakened from slumber and who have become paternal ‘characters,’ transporting the hypostatic ones from here to the Unhypostatic one there. This, he says, is the saying: “I am the Door” [John 10:7]; for, he says, [the Serpent] transports ‘those who close the lids of their eyes,’ just as naphtha sucks in fire, but nothing else, from everywhere to itself, or rather just like the magnetic stone [attracts] iron but nothing else, or just like the spine of the sea hawk [attracts] gold but nothing else, or just like bran alone is led by amber; so also, he says, in this way the perfect, consubstantial race that is made in an image, but nothing else, is also sent down by him.

11. This admittedly incomplete list of examples would appear to confirm our suspicion that the theme of the salvific eikôn— whether as [a] inhabited or possessed by the angelified or divinized aspirant, as in F1, F2, F3, F4, F7, F8, F9, F13 and F14, as [b] the apprehensible manifestation of the transcendent deity, as in F5, F6, F10, F11, F13 again, and F15, or as [c] the defining attribute of the
community of spiritual elect, as in F16—was quite widespread in Gnostic thought, and was likely based in part on a particular exegesis of the Genesis anthropogony. This in turn supports the notion that the assimilation to the image that we find at the penultimate moment of ascent in Allogenes as well as the corresponding theme that we find in our apparently more philosophical texts (the ACPP and Plotinus) derives from an originally Gnostic conception: namely, that salvation—understood as an ascent to an absolutely unknowable principle—was accessible only through the mediation of an eikôn of the unknowable principle that inheres within the human aspirant.

CONCLUSION

12. In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to make one final, brief observation in support of my conjecture, although a full discussion will have to wait for a future study. As I have already suggested, the image that mediates between the human intellect and the unknowable principle beyond the grasp of intellect was understood—both by various Gnostics and by Plotinus—to be a replication of, or even identical to, the reflexive self-manifestation of the supreme principle at the first moment of ontogenesis. To give but one paradigmatic example, one might consider the ontogenetic passage in both versions of the Apocryphon of John, in which—as in the ACPP—the “preconception” (tepronoia) or “primordial thought” (tehoueite nennoia) of the supreme principle is explicitly described with the term eikôn.


It is he who intelligizes himself in the light that surrounds him, which is the spring of living water, which is full of purity, and the spring of the spirit which poured forth living water from within it. He was providing all the aeons and their worlds, and in every likeness he sees his own image (eikôn) in the pure light—water that surrounds him; and his thought became an actuality; she appeared; she stood before him in the brilliance of his light. She is the power (dunamis) that is before everything, the Pronoia of the All, who shines in the light of the invisible image (eikôn), the perfect power (dunamis). Barbelon, the aeon that is perfected, the glory giving glory to him, since she appeared by means of him. And she gave glory to him, she who is the Primordial Thought, his image (eikôn).
Of particular interest is the fact that in several of these Gnostic systems, this incipient principle—the first thought or eikon of the deity whose emergence initiates ontogenesis—is also considered to have a close relationship to the primordial human being, thus establishing a close connection between the precise metaphysical structure of the Pleroma and the constitution of the human subject. This is perhaps less easy to discern in the Apocryphon of John, where it is only much later in the text that the emissary or avatar of Pronoia, that is, Epinoia—the reflection of the primordial aqueous light in which the Invisible Spirit apprehends his own reflection—is said to have hidden herself within Adam, but it is explicit in the early and presumably proto–Sethian tractate Eugnostos.


In the beginning, he thought to have his likeness (eine) become a great power. Immediately, the archê of the light manifested as Human Being, immortal and masculofeminine.

Generally speaking, in these systems, the eikon of the deity is the archetype of the primordial human—the luminous or heavenly Adam—who himself serves as the heavenly paradigm of humanity, and leaves a trace upon, or even abides within, the terrestrial Adam. In other words, the eikon of the transcendent deity, a residue from the first moment of ontogenesis—or perhaps its second or third


50 Adam’s recognition of the Epinoia of light concealed within him as his “likeness” (eine) represents the first moment of salvation; thus II.23.9: “and he recognized his image” (ΔΡΩΝ ΔΙΚΟΥΝ ΤΕΙΧΕΙΝ); IV.36.1: “and he recognized his companion–image” (ΔΡΩΝ ΔΙΚΟΥΝ ΤΕΙΧΕΙΝ).

51 Here we can detect a subtle allusion to the Genesis anthropogony, both to the imaging process and to the interpretation of the phrase “male and female he created them” in terms of an androgynous principle.

52 Such an idea may be found already in Valentinus, frag. C Layton [=fr. 1 Völker] apud Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis II.8.36.2.1–4.4 Fruchtel: ἐοικε δὲ καὶ Ὀὐαλεντῖνου ἐν τινὶ ἐπιστολῇ τοιαῦτα τινὰ ἐν νῷ λαβὼν αὐταῖς γράφει ταῖς λέξεσι: «καὶ ὡσπερι φόβος ἐπ’ ἔκεινος τοῦ πλάσματος ὑπήρχε τοῖς ἄγγελοις, ὅτε μείζονα ἐφέξητο τῆς πλάσεως διὰ τῶν ἀναρτῶν ἐν αὐτῷ σπέρμα δεδώκατα τῆς ἄνωθεν ὅψις καὶ παρρησιαζόμενον: οὕτω καὶ ἐν ταῖς γενεαῖς τῶν κοσμικῶν ἀνθρώπων φόβοι τὰ ἔργα τῶν ἀνθρώπων τοῖς ποιοῦσιν ἐγένετο, ὅλων αὐθαίρετας καὶ εἰκόνες καὶ πάνθ’ ἃ κεφαλήν ἀνόσιον εἰς δύομα θεού· εἰς γὰρ δύομα ἀνθρώπου πλασθεὶς ἀδαί φόβον παρέσχεν πρόοντος ἀνθρώπου, ὡς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐν αὐτῷ καθεστῶς, καὶ καταπλάγησαν καὶ ταχὺ τὸ ἔργον ἡράνισαν.» / “It seems that Valentinus, too, in some letter (having some such thing [similar to Basilides] in mind) wrote these phrases: “And just as if fear overcame the angels in the presence of that modeled form because it uttered sounds superior to its modelled [nature], by means of the seed of an essence from above within him having been invisibly given, and who spoke freely; thus also in the worldly races of humans, the works of humans became objects of awe for their makers, like statues of men and images and all those those things [human] hands accomplish in the name of God. For Adam, modeled in the name of the Human Being, produced the awe of the pre–existent Human Being, as precisely this stood firmly within him, and they were stricken and immediately made the work disappear.”
generation copy—abides *congenitally* within the structure of the human being, and is understood as an innate faculty within the soul, intellect, or *pneuma* (depending on the precise anthropology). The rationale behind this scheme seems to be as follows. Since the divine self–manifestation was understood as the *eikôn* of God, Gnostic thinkers often hypostatized this *eikôn* as a second principle immediately beside or subjacent to the first deity, and conflated it with the “image” after which God creates the first human being.\(^53\) Thus Adam is not patterned directly after God himself, but rather *kata eikona...kai homoionsin*, “according to the *image and likeness*,” understood as a secondary, intermediary principle,\(^54\) which was also understood to be the unique manifestation of the entirely unmanifest deity. According to this logic, then, the residue or pattern of this *eikôn* also lies at the very origin of humanity and is concealed within the core of every human being. In other words, this particular Gnostic soteriological schema—deriving from an optimistic exegesis of the Genesis anthropogony—appears to have implied that the mediator of the absolutely transcendent abides, paradoxically, within the very interiority of the human subject. These kinds of speculations among Sethians—who, after all, undoubtedly noted that Seth himself was specifically created in the “image and likeness” of Adam (Gen 5:3)—might explain why Allogenes’ series of *anachôrêseis* is in fact an interiorization into himself, and why he encounters the Existence in his own “image and likeness.”

This might further explain why Plotinus’ ascent to the One requires first an introversion into the self. More strikingly, it might explain why the author of the ACPP refers devotional language to his or her self while simultaneously invoking the *eikôn*—as *protennoia*: “But let us become propitious to ourselves by ourselves through that one…” Such a scheme would have become increasingly useful among late antique thinkers as the Divine was progressively envisioned to abide at an ever greater


\(^{54}\) This follows the logic of two more widespread Gnostic tendencies: first, the selective use not of allegory *per se*, but rather of the overly *literal* reading of scripture (for this idea I am indebted to Nicola Denzey Lewis); and second, the tendency to reify almost any term or concept, even when clearly a mere verbal expression, into an objective metaphysical principle.
remove from ordinary human intellection. This notion was far too compelling, I would suggest, to remain within the narrow confines of the sectarian discourse in which it originated, and thus overflowed easily into academic philosophy, inspiring even those who—like Plotinus, in my opinion—self-consciously sought to rid themselves of the Gnostic world-view within which they came of age.

* * * * * *
Appendices


O Allogenes, behold your Blessedness, how silently it abides, by which you know your self according to yourself. And withdraw upon the Vitality by turning to yourself, (i.e., to) the one that you will see moving. And if you are unable to stand, fear nothing. But if you wish to stand, withdraw upon the Existence, and you will find it standing and at rest, according to the likeness of the one who is truly at rest and who possesses all of them in silence and inactivity. And if you receive a manifestation of this one by means of a First Manifestation of the Unknowable One—the one one whom you will come to know—you must ‘unknow’ him. And if you become afraid in that place, withdraw to the rear, on account of the activities. And if you are made perfect in that place, remain at rest. And according to the impression (tupos) that is within you, know that it is the same with all these things, according to the same pattern. And do not dissipate further, so that you will be able to stand, and do not desire to be active, lest you fall in any way from the inactivity within you of the Unknowable. Do not know him, for it is impossible; but if by means of a luminous thought you know him, ‘unknow’ him.
While I was listening to those things which those there said, there was within me a stillness of silence, and I heard the Blessedness by which I knew my self according to myself. And I withdrew upon the Vitality as I turned towards it [or: to myself], and I became a companion with it to enter within (together) with it, and I stood, not firmly but still. And I saw an eternal, intellectual motion that pertains to all the formless powers, which is unlimited by limitation. And when I wanted to stand firmly, I withdrew upon the Existence, which I found standing and at rest according to an image and likeness of that which is invested upon me by a manifestation of the Indivisible and the one who is at rest; I was filled with a manifestation by means of a Primary Manifestation of the Unknowable; as though ‘un–knowing’ him, I knew him and received power from him, and having received an eternal strength, I knew that which exists [a] within me and the Triple–Powered and the manifestation of that of his which is uncontainable. And by means of a Primary Manifestation of the First who is unknowable to them all— the god who is beyond perfection— I saw him and the Triple–Powered who exists [b] within them all. I was seeking the the ineffable and unknowable god— whom if one should know him, one would absolutely ‘unknow’ him— the mediator of the Triple–Powered, the one who abides in stillness and silence, and is unknowable.

The all–glorious Youel made a revelation to me and said: “No one hears these things except the Great Powers alone, O Allogenes. They invested a great power upon you, that which the the eternal Father of the Entirety invested upon you before you came to this place, so that those things that are difficult to separate you will separate and those things that are unknowable to the multitude you will know, and you separate you will separate and those things that are invested upon you before you came to you will know.”
Both the thinker and the object of thought are in existence, but the thinker, when the intellect changes from existence into the thinker, in order that it should return to the object of thought and see itself, is life; for this reason, [Intecllet] according to life is indefinite. And since all being acts, [the activity] according to existence would be the activity of standing, that according to thought would be an activity turning towards itself, that according to life an activity inclining out of existence.


Καὶ τὸ νοοῦν καὶ τὸ νοοúdenuν ὑπάρξει, τὸ δὲ νοοῦν, ἢν ὁ νοῦ[ς μετε]ξ[έλθη] ἀπὸ τῆς ὑπάρξεως εἰς τὸ νοοῦν, ἵνα ἐπανέλθῃ εἰς τὸ νοητὸν καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἴδῃ, ἔστιν ζωῆς διὸ ἀόριστος <ὁ> κατὰ τὴν ζωήν. Καὶ πασῶν οὐσῶν ἐνεργεῖαν καὶ ὡς κατὰ μὲν τὴν ὑπάρξειν ἐστῶσα ἄν εἰς ἡ ἐνέργεια, κατὰ δὲ τὴν νόησιν εἰς αὐτὴν στραφείσα ἐνέργεια, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ζωῆς ἐκ τῆς ὑπάρξεως ἐκνεύσασα ἐνέργεια.
Figure 1. Schema of Ascent in *Allogenes*

- **Unknowable**
  - "Primordial Manifestation"
  - with which *Allogenes* = "First Thought" is invested
  - Imaging process?

- **Triple-Powered One**
  - **Existence / Huparxis** as *eikôn*
  - **Vitality**
    - undivided motion
  - **Blessedness / Mentality**
    - silence, self-knowing

- **Barbelo Aeon**

Path of ascent
Figure 2. Schema of Ascent in the Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides (ACPP)
Figure 3. Schema of Ascent in Plotinus VI.9[9].11.35–45

**Domain of the One**

- οί ἄρι αὐτοῦ μεταβαίνοι ως εἰκών πρός ἀρχήτυπον, τέλος ἂν ἕχοι τῆς πορείας."
- "ἕχει ὁμοίωμα ἐκείνου αὐτοῦ...."

**Hyperontic Realm**

- "οὔκ ἐν τῷ ὑπη πη ἐν ἐκεῖνῳ..."
- "οὔκ οὐσία, ἀλλ' ἐπέκαυνα οὐσίας...."

**Interhypostatic Realm**

- Transcendental Self Above Being and Intellect (εἰκών, ὁμοίωμα)

**Hypostatic Being—Intellect**

- Self as Intellect
Figure 4. Generalized Schema

First (transcendent) Principle

Eikôn of First Principle

Human Intellect
**Figure 5. Structure of the “Standing” Aeon in Pseudo–Simon Magus, Apophasis Megalê, from Hippolytus of Rome, Refutatio omnium haeresium VI.17.1.1–3.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal location</th>
<th>Vertical situation</th>
<th>Spatial relation to Supreme Principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“He has stood above in unbegotten power.”</td>
<td>mythical past</td>
<td>within the supreme principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He stands below in the flow of waters, having been begotten in an image (eikôn)”</td>
<td>present</td>
<td>(outside) in flow of waters (of generation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He will stand above, beside the blessed indefinite power, if he is ‘made out of an image.’”</td>
<td>eschatological future</td>
<td>beside the supreme principle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*mythical past*\(^\text{above}\)*within the supreme principle*\(^\text{present}\)*below*\(^\text{(outside)}\)*in flow of waters (of generation)*\(^\text{eschatological future}\)*above*\(^\text{beside}\)*the supreme principle