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NATURE, MAN AND SOCIETY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West

with a preface by Etienne Gilson

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ess. Laicism and scientism afflicted those years like a malignant fever; but it proved in the end to be benign, and its crisis signaled growth. Christ remained on the portal of Chartres as the savior of his creation.

Theology, too, benefited by the crisis, for its rational character was strengthened within the very framework of its guiding faith. It was none other than Alan of Lille, that advocate for Nature, who elaborated the theoretical "rules for theology," that is, who defined the method according to which faith-knowledge, like any other intellectual discipline, was organized and built upon internal principles which gave it a scientific turn and value.\textsuperscript{101} Alan did not regard reason as opposed to faith any more than he regarded secular as opposed to sacred; he distinguished between them, but only to unite them. "We have to do with diverse, not adverse, things," Alan said. Dane Nature say in her concern to maintain the supreme dignity of Lady Theology.\textsuperscript{102} Certain "spirituals" would become worried about such confidence in reason; the century of Albert the Great, of Bonaventure, and of Thomas Aquinas would prove them wrong.

Thus we see that without any weakening of the contempt for the world exercised at Citeaux or of the monastic theology that supported it, and without the benefit of any genius to give final expression or complete balance to the new ideas, the twelfth century featured an essentially religious discovery of the universe through a discovery of Nature—Nature which, as the earthy and impious Jean de Meun puts it, is "God's chambermaid." And Alan of Lille, one notes, was to end his days at Citeaux—at the very moment that St. Dominic relieved the faltering Cistercians by taking pastoral charge of a new civilization, which Thomas Aquinas was to portray theologically and humanly.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Regulae theologicae} (PL, CCX, 622–84).

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{De planctu Naturae} (PL, CCX, 446): "Nec mirum si in his theologia suam mihi familiaritatem non exhibet, quoniam in plerisque non adversa sed diversa sentimus. Ego ratione fidem, illa fide comparat rationem; ego scio ut credam, illa credit ut sciat; ego consentio scienis, illa sentit consentiens; . . ." (It is not odd that Theology does not exhibit any kinship to me in these matters, since for the most part we have to do with diverse, not adverse things. I supply faith with reason, she furnishes reason with faith; I know in order that I may believe, she believes in order that she may know; I consent when I know, she knows when she consents.)

\section*{The Platonisms of the Twelfth Century}

Perhaps one could measure the power of a mind by observing the varied systems of thought which its own intellectual constructions have more or less directly inspired in the course of history. Aristotle inspired Themistius, Averroes, and Thomas Aquinas; Descartes inspired Malebranche and Comte; Hegel nurtured Marx and Croce; in theology, Augustine was authentically represented in the quite different thought of Bonaventure and Thomas and compromised in that of Jansenius. That one man's thought should bring forth such varied progeny will seem less paradoxical if one reflects that master-insights never find complete expression in a single conceptual system and consequently they lend themselves readily to further adaptation, even to frank distortion that nonetheless preserves an undeniable kinship with the original.

Plato affords the major instance of this phenomenon, and historians have some difficulty in sorting out the currents of thought traceable to him. These Neoplatonisms that recur century after century comprise a family with little coherence, despite the profound perceptions radically common to them all.

Precisely in the area of Plato's influence, the twelfth century furnished a spectacle of the clearest debt yet with the most tangled lines of descent; an undeniable core of common perceptions did not inhibit a certain amount of picking and choosing, and the resulting systems of thought represented incompatible and bewildering syncretisms. Moreover, with religious values, themselves highly diverse, intruding into these syncretisms as they already had into the Platonism of ancient times, it becomes impossible to lay out a complete intellectual map of the developments. Alan of Lille, disciple
of Gilbert of La Porrée, took intellectual nourishment from the *Timaeus* and from Proclus at the same time, but finished his days as a Cistercian and a spiritual son of St. Bernard. The course of his life encountered several “conversions.” From the thought of Hugh of Saint-Victor to the tightly articulated system of Thomas Aquinas, the Neoplatonism borrowed from Augustine remained incompatible with that taken from pseudo-Dionysius, and even more incompatible with that of Avicenna, despite the ingenious attempt of Duns Scotus to combine them.

Two characteristics were common to the thinkers of this time. In the first place, all of them must be linked with the family of those whom historians have called Neoplatonists. To be sure the *Timaeus* provided the strong nourishment of Plato’s own text for certain of these thinkers — those of Chartres; but even these men, whether by recourse to Macrobius or by recourse to the synthesis of Aristotle and Plato propounded by Boethius, encountered Plato’s thought in different contexts. The resulting distortion is the more evident since apart from the *Timaeus* and a few other fragments, as we have seen, the Plato of history, the Plato of the Symposium and the Laws, of the Good (Republic vi), and of the One (Parmenides) remained unknown throughout the century. For the most part Platonic tradition came to these men from authors of the late empire and above all from the doctors of the church.

Derivation from Christian sources greatly strengthened the second principal trait of this Neoplatonism — its religious orientation, which among non-Christians had taken the form of theurgy. Indeed, the principal reason for the innate prestige which all forms of Neoplatonism enjoyed among Christians was their capacity for expressing religious values of moral thought and action, even those proper to the Christian religion. Testimony to this capacity had been given — and continued to be given in the twelfth century — by Augustine’s confession of faith under the spell of the Platonists and by the affinities, spontaneous or cultivated, between mystics and pseudo-Dionysius.¹

¹ Plato’s prestige was everywhere paramount in the twelfth century: Adelard of Bath De eodem et diverso (Willner, p. 4) and John of Salisbury Polycraticus vii.6 (Webb, II, 111; Pike, p. 233) called him the princeps

These two characteristics can be seen in certain governing ideas that recurred in twelfth-century teachings, or in reflections that were commonly accepted and that underlay all ultimately divergent elaborations of thought. One can find these ideas, these intuitions, everywhere — from Chartres to Citeaux, from Toledo to the schools of Paris, not to mention Byzantium — in commentaries upon pseudo-Dionysius and in expositions of the *Timaeus*. They include the opposition between the intelligible and the sense-perceptible worlds; the transcendence of the Demiurge as creator; the presence of that Demiurge in all reality, in its very being; man’s progressive assimilation to God as his goal, as the summit of human activity; and in written discourse, the image of light everywhere zealously employed.

philosophorum (prince of philosophers); John praised his doctrine, *ibid*. vii.5 (Webb, II, 104–11; Pike, pp. 227–33), though he also admitted that Aristotle nomen philosophi pre ceteris meruit (merited the title of philosopher before all others), *Meta* l. iv.7 (Webb, p. 171; McGarry, p. 213) — the admission signals a new era as the full penetration of Aristotle begins: Abelard Theologiae christianae i (PL, CLXXVIII, 1144A) called him ille maximus philosophorum Plato (Plato, that greatest of philosophers) and in *Dialectica* pars i, lib. 2 (V. Cousin, ed. Ouvrages inédits d’Abélard [Paris, 1936], pp. 205–6) that *primum totius philosophiae duceem* (supreme commander of all philosophy): Isaac of L’Etole Sermones 24 (PL, CXCIV, 1679C) exalted him as *magnus ille gentium theologiae* (that great theologian of the gentiles). At Citeaux, however, Plato, like Aristotle, was slighted by the anti-philosophical spirit; cf. St. Bernard *In festo Apost. Peii* sermo i, 3 (PL, XLXXXIII, 407): “Quid ergo docuerunt vel docent nos apostoli sancti? Non piscatoriam artem. . . . non Platonem legere, non Aristotelis versatius invenire.” (What, then, did the holy apostles teach us? Not the art of fishing. . . . not to study Plato, not to turn Aristotle’s subtleties inside out.) Richard of Chuny, in his *Chronica*, circulated the legend that Plato’s body had been found in a tomb and bore on its breast a golden tablet inscribed, “I believe in the Christ who will be born of a virgin”; the legend is referred to by Martin Polonus (MGH, *Scrip* tores, XXII, 461), by Roger Bacon *Metaphysica*, *sive de viis contractis in studio theologiae* (ed. Robert Steele [Oxford, 1905], p. 9) and by St. Thomas *Summa theolog. II* ¹ II*, q.2, a.8, ad 3 (Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, III, 15; Aquinas, *Summa*, IX, 45). The title “theologian” had commonly been given to Plato by Christian writers, as in the letter of Theodoric (= Cassiodorus) to Boethius: *Plato theologus, Aristoteles logicus* (Plato the theologian, Aristotle the logician) — a division of titles disputed in the last third of the century upon the discovery of the Liber de causis, attributed to Aristotle [see below, n.66]. Cf. C. Bauemker, “*Der Platonismus im Mittelalter,*” in *Studien und Charakteris* tiken zur Geschichte der Philosophie insbesondere des Mittelalters (BGP, XXV, 1–2), p. 147. On Christian Neoplatonism as a whole — its content, tendencies, variants — see R. Arnou, “Platonismus des Pères” *DTC*, XII, 2258–2392.

51
as well by mathematicians as by men of literary bent. To these one must add the constant effort demanded by Christian orthodoxy against two problematic themes found in all Neoplatonisms: the need to limit the role accorded to beings intermediary between God and man, and the need to affirm the absolute character of creation as against the alleged eternity of matter.

It will be necessary to survey the common reactions to the latter two problematic themes—reactions traditional in Christian ambience but now expressly elaborated—before turning our attention to particular characteristics of each of the several currents of Platonism as revealed in highly significant stages of their influence. For, as Gilson has observed, “All forms of Platonism are closely related to each other. Exchanges between distinct currents are not rare, but to distinguish these currents from one another would be a step forward.”

\[2\] The image of light was far more than a literary figure; it was the consistent effect of the metaphysics of emanation, which saw not only intelligences but nature itself as filled with the light of the supreme and motionless One and as becoming assimilated to the One through conscious or unconscious contemplation of it. Whether in St. Augustine or pseudo-Dionysius, in Alexandrian theology or the liturgy, one of the best established commonplaces of Christian thought is the connection seen between such “light” and Biblical uses of the image, all the way from religious exaltation of the sun in the Old Testament to the concept of the Logos, light of men. The entire stock of such commonplaces was common during the Middle Ages. Cf. R. Bultmann, “Zur Geschichte der Lichtsymbolik im Altertum,” Philologus, XCII (1948), 1–36; F. J. Doeller, Sol salutis: Gebet und Gesang im christliche Altertum (Münster, 1925); O. Semmelroth, “Gottes auszustehendes Licht: zur Schoepfungs-und Offenbarungslehre des Ps.-Dionysius Areopagitis,” Schol., XXVIII (1953), 481–503.

\[3\] Etienne Gilson, La philosophie au moyen age (Paris, 1944), p. 380. It is both such distinctions and such shared exchanges that I should like to observe here, rather within the twelfth century than in the original constitution of the different Platonisms. Cf. M. de Gandillac, “Le platonisme au XIIe-XIIIe siècle,” Association Guillaume Budé: Congrès de Tours et Poitiers (3–9 septembre 1953) (Paris, 1954).

\[4\] Expos. in Hier. Cael. iv (PL, CLXXV, 992). From the outset, the characteristically pseudo-Dionysian concept of formatio (formation) enters into the commentary and is invested, moreover, with an Augustinian sense typical of Hugh. Cfr. ibid. ii ad init. (PL, CLXXV, 937): “Proprius hoc ergo unum lumen in multa se lumina participatam profunde, ut multis illuminatos ad unum lumen reformet, ut dum illud participando multi accipierent, in ilium forma omnes unum apparent.” (Hence, therefore, the one Light, through participation, shed itself upon the many in order that it might reform the many, so illuminated, towards the one Light; so that the many, while receiving that Light through participation, might all appear one in its form.) Here one sees a fidelity to the original doctrine of pseudo-Dionysius. Cfr. R. Roques, L’univers dionysien (Paris, 1954), Chap. 3, “L’activité hiérarchique.”

\[5\] “Prima enim et vera unitas, quae est unitas sibi ipsi, creavit aliam unitatem, quae esset infra eas.” (For the first and true Unity, which is Unity in and of itself, created a second unity below itself.) P. Correns, ed., Die dem Boethius falschlich zugeschriebene Abhandlung des Dominicus Gundissalmenus De Unitate (BGPM, I, 1), p.5.
Here, under the Boethian vocabulary, one recognizes the emanation of the First Intelligence, which had within itself a principle of division, since on the one hand it was an intellectual nature participating in a certain way in God's necessity through knowledge of Him, and on the other hand it was a created nature and therefore, in itself, only a "possible" being. The theory of the First Hypostasis (Plotinus De causis; later taken up by Avicenna) was here Christianized with little cost.

On this point all twelfth-century authors benefited by St. Augustine's own vigorous reaction, which was not only protective of orthodoxy but derivative from a spiritual life dominated by ineffable intimacy between God and the soul. This intimacy would have been jeopardized by any intermediary whatever, above all by a cosmic intermediary. The immediate vision of God was the sole object of Augustine's hope. Cistercians, Carthusians, Victorines, all shared and felt even more intensely this unrelenting and holy demand of their common master.

The problem of the creation of matter was no less crucial for Christians than the immediacy of man's relationship to God; at the same time it lay closer to the heart of the Platonic system and its radical obscurities. The ancient commentators, through the Hermetic writers, had all run afoul of the ambiguous hyle, or primordial matter; and medieval thinkers had the same difficulty, intensified by the rigorous inquiries constantly made into their orthodoxy. They countered with an explicit answer to the

alteritas, quia est primus a Deo creatus, et primus post Deum mutabilis factus; hic tamen non tantum dictur habere varietatem, quantum habet subcaelestes. Unde quia alteritas prima est pluralitas, in eo non dictur esse pluralitas, sed sola alteritas." (In the superficicale is Unity; in the celestial, twoness; in the subcelestial, manifoldness. . . . Celestial being is the angel, in whom twoness is first to be found, because it was the first being created by God and, after God, was the first being made subject to change, though it has less variety than the subcelestial order. For this reason, it is only twoness and not manifoldness that is predicated of the angel, though twoness is the first order of manifoldness.)
weighty problem imposed on them by the system, but not without laborious and revealing efforts.

The system as it reached them had been stylized and took no account of divergent forms of Platonism; it proposed three coeternal principles to explain the origin of the world—God, matter, ideas. Apart from the identification of the Demiurge (Opifex) with God, this was authentically the Plato of the Timaeus, free of the Plotinian conception of the One. With this proposition there was categorical disagreement. “On this point our authors differ from the philosophers,” Hugh of Saint-Victor declared, “namely, the philosophers claim that God is only an opifex, a shaping agent, and that there are three ultimate principles—God, matter, and archetypal ideas; our authors, on the other hand, claim that there is but one ultimate principle, and that this is God alone.”

About the same time, Hugh of Rouen observed: “There were men . . . who said that there are three coeternal things—God, matter, and all forms—and they thought that God was not the creator but only a shaper who had by no means created either matter or the forms but merely knew how to join and fit them to one another.”

Peter Lombard settled Plato’s case for the following centuries when he wrote: “Moses says that the world was made by God as creator, and he avoided the error of certain men who supposed that many first principles existed without a first principle. For Plato thought there were three sources of things, namely God, an exemplar, and matter, with matter being...

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10 Expos. in Heptateuchon iv. (PL, CLXXV, 33): “In hoc differunt auctores nostri a philosophis, quad philosophi Deum opificem tantum, et tria ponunt principia: Deum, materiam, et archetypas ideas; nostri vero unicum ponunt principium, et hoc Deum solum.”

11 Tract. in Hexameron i, 10 (PL, CXCI, 1251): “Fuerunt homines . . . tria esse coetera dicentes, Deum sollicit, atque materiam, et formas omnes, Deum non creatorem sed opificem astitantes, qui materiam et formas minime creasset, sed conjungere nosset et simul aptare potusisset.” The whole paragraph in the source should be read.

12 Quatuor libri sententiarum ii. d. 1, c. 1 (PL, CXCH, 651): “Moyses . . . a Deo creatore mundum factum refert, eldens errorem quorundam plura sine principio fuisset principia opinantium. Plato namque tria initia existimavit, Deum sollicitum, exemplum, et materiam, et ipsum increatum sine principio, et Deum quasi artificem non creatorem.”

13 Summa Quoniam homines” (Glorieux, pp. 128–9): “Item qua insania ductus Plato asseruit quandam inordinatam materiam mundi prevenisse exordium.”

14 Theol. christ. iv. (PL, CLXXVIII, 1286).

["Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created. . . . Was the heaven then or the world . . . always in existence and without beginning? or created, and had it a beginning? Created, I reply. . . . But the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible. And there is still a question to be asked about him: Which of the patterns had the artificer in view when he made the world—the pattern of the unchangeable, or of that which is created?"

B. A. Jowett, tr., The Dialogues of Plato (New York, 1937), II, 12–13.]
eternal duration that it was coeternal within the universe and motionless in an infinitesimal space—thus the duration of the temple is a condition of the condition of the element, through the element of the duration of the temple. The temple, as a condition of the condition of the duration of the temple, is a condition of the condition of the element, through the element of the duration of the temple.

In this way, the eternity of matter consists within this having been coeternal within the universe and motionless in an infinitesimal space—thus the duration of the temple is a condition of the condition of the element, through the element of the duration of the temple. The temple, as a condition of the condition of the duration of the temple, is a condition of the condition of the element, through the element of the duration of the temple.

The Platonicism of the Twentieth Century
and matter did not arise; the notions of cosmos and of nature were missing. Creation was not a making, a fabricating, nor was it the blazing forth of the ideal One in the material many; creation implied the passage of time. The Hebrew concept of becoming, precisely the opposite of the Greek concept of becoming, required the coexistence of time and eternity. The creator had need of nothing, and he alone stood eternal in his complete self-sufficiency; but the divine eternity did not do away with time any more than time did away with the truth of things. It ran counter to the biblical sense of history when thirteenth-century metaphysicians separated time from creation in order to admit the possibility of a creation ab aeterno. It also ran counter to the biblical sense of history when John of Salisbury warmly accepted, almost with religious fervor, the Platonic and Augustinian view that only eternal realities were true and truly were —those realities, namely, which were “untroubled by invasion or passion or injury to their power or by the passage of time, but which ever persevere in the vigor proper to their condition.”22 The ambiguity of Bernard Sylvester’s De mundi universitate came from the same opposition, and his Platonic rationalization of the book of Genesis was a paradoxical undertaking even though theologically legitimate.23 Outside Chartres, all the masters of the twelfth century held to the historical reality of creation as essential to creation ex nihilo, including the creation of matter.

The Enduring Influence of Augustine’s Platonism

In order to lay bare the hidden contours of the evolution of theology in the twelfth century, we must not only be alert to the various kinds of Platonism, all highly volatile and constantly emerging at this time; we must be no less aware of the enduring influence of Augustine’s Platonism as the common ingredient of all these syncretistic forms. Such was the force of his prestige that it did not enter the mind of any of the masters or the “spirituals” of this century, as it did the minds of men in the thirteenth century, to discriminate within the thought of this Christian doctor between things original with him and those deriving from the direct influence of pagan philosophers, and therefore allowing room for questioning. Thus, what has earlier been said of Augustine’s religious prestige is equally true of his philosophic prestige. It was only when the followers of Gilbert of La Porée undertook a critique of the theory of ideas in the second half of the century that the way was prepared for such discrimination. Alan of Lille, in order to relieve Augustine of any discreditable subservience to Plato, proposed that there are five ways of speaking which are not all equally employed in one’s references to another’s thought.24

To be sure, the influence of Augustine was very unevenly distributed. Peter Lombard retained only vague, general perspectives from the “philosophy” of his master, whereas the De causis primis et secundis expressly and systematically integrated fundamental ideas from Augustine into its Avicennian synthesis. St. Bernard, imbued as he was with Augustinian thought, allowed its outlines and even its vocabulary to become blurred by his own personal experience, whereas William of Saint-Thierry preserved the features of Augustinian thought more carefully, even when making the most original adaptations of it. Almost universally, except among the followers of Gilbert of La Porée, there was an unconscious absorption of Augustine’s Platonism, which bound together the most incompatible pseudo-Dionysian and Augustinian elements, to the enrichment of the latter. The causae primordiales (primordial causes) of pseudo-Dionysius, lifted from context, were bracketed with Augustine’s rationes aeternae (eternal ideas), as John the Scot had wanted them to be. The cosmic symbols of pseudo-Dionysius were mixed in with the imagery of the African rhetorician. Bernard Sylvester wove together texts from Augustine’s works on Genesis and texts from the Timaeus. It was only toward the end of the century that, without always admitting it, theologians who had grown increasingly sensitive to intellectual techniques and structures and to ways of stating

22 “. . . que nec incursionum passionumve molestiam metuunt, non potestatis injuriam, non dispendium temporis, sed semper vigore conditionis sue eadem perseverant.” Metalogicon iv. 35 (Webb, p. 204; McGarry, p. 238).
23 Gilson [see ref. cited above, p. 30, n. 64] stresses the basic Christianity that underlies the paganism of the work’s form. [Cf. Parent, pp. 16–17.]

24 Glorieux, p. 129.
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Augustine's orientation toward an interior life that took external objects as mere occasions for its enrichment favored a theology of grace which provided for the free play of divine benevolence through personal encounter between God and man, irrespective of the order or disposition or intelligibility of nature; nature became thereby a mere field for man's interior experience. Platonic dualism, by this route, came to foster a distinction between grace and nature far different from the pseudo-Dionysian conception of the supernatural. In the same way, Augustinianism instilled into Christian spirituality the radical indifference of the Platonic  ἐμπίρεια  (essence) to the world of concrete things in which men presently live. The biblical feeling for historical actuality, more keenly felt by the evangelical reformers at the end of the century, ran counter to all this; and it joined forces, curiously, with an Aristotelian outlook readily critical of the Platonic ideas. The realism of the incarnation was to favor the restoration to theology of secondary causes in both time and space.

The Platonism of the Timaeus and of Boethius

The more one observes how Augustine put the resources of Platonism to work in the service of Christian grace, the more curious one becomes about other elements of Platonism which, even before the rediscovery of Aristotle, were to encourage theologians to develop an awareness of nature and natural causality operating under the free play of divine grace. The time had arrived when the opposition, found in all Platonism, between the unknown, mysterious God and the cosmic God was going to worry the most evangelical Christian thinking, strained as it already was by the quite different emphases and viewpoints of the two creation accounts in the opening pages of the Bible (Gen. 1, 2). The text of the Timaeus furnished the literary and doctrinal source for this opposition, which Boethius had already imported into the Latin tradition in contradistinction to the experience of Augustine.

The intimate connection established between the Timaeus and Boethius in one of the most lively areas of twelfth-century philosophy was not a matter of chance. Was not the much admired poem found in Book III, metre 9 of the Consolation regarded as a summary, in twenty-eight verses, of Plato's whole treatise? Moreover, ancient manuscripts of the Latin version of the Timaeus contained numerous passages from Boethius in their margins. The masters of Chartres were to find in both texts not only their common inspiration but the scholarly authority upon which they based their teaching. Anticipating the curricula of thirteenth-century universities, they commented at the same time upon the Platonic dialogue, the Consolation, and besides these, upon Boethius's opusculum, the De Trinitate.  

a. The Platonism of the Timaeus

Chalcidius, through his translation, had long made the Timaeus accessible to the Latin West; and from it men of the Middle Ages nourished their admiration for Plato, since his other works were practically unavailable to them.  

In the twelfth century, this dialogue was everywhere found in monastic and episcopal libraries; it was cited by Abelard, the masters of Saint-Victor, John of Salisbury, and Alan of Lille; Adelard of Bath consciously took from it the title of his De eodem et diverso (On the One and the Many). But since Chalcidius's translation omitted that part of the dialogue concern-

28 Reference might often be made to the valuable account, based on unpublished manuscript materials, of Tullio Gregorini, "Notizie sulla storia del platonismo medievale," GCFI, XXXIV (1955), 346–84, as well as of Parent. On the abundant commentary literature on the Consolation and the Timaeus see Pierre Courcelle, "Etude critique sur les commentaires de la Consolation de Boèce (IXe–XVe siècles)," AHDL, XII (1939), 6–140; and R. Klibansky, The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages (London, 1939) [see also his "The School of Chartres," in Marshall Clagett, Gaines Post, and Robert Reynolds, eds., Twelfth-Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society (Proceedings of a Symposium Sponsored by the Division of Humanities of the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Nov. 12–14, 1957; Madison, 1961), pp. 3–14].

ing man (it contains only sections 17–53), it shifted the emphasis of the work toward cosmology and made it appear to be a study of the origins and the order of the world. “Thus, we can say,” said William of Conches at the beginning of his commentary, “that the matter of this book is natural justice or the creation of the world.” This narrowed even further men’s view of Plato’s thought; but even so, there was enough here to furnish sustenance to minds newly responsive to nature as well as to the problems posed by nature’s creation and its relationship to God.

The commentary Chalcidius wrote, like all commentaries, can strike one as uninspired; yet, for all its run-of-the-mill knowledge, it conveys precious information about the fruitful history of Plato’s treatise (Chalcidius drew upon the commentary of Iamblichus and even more upon that of Porphyry, who died in 305 A.D.), and it provided effective lexical tools for a period in which a new philosophical vocabulary was being invented. Furthermore, it is important to note that Chalcidius did not employ the forms and method characteristic of Plotinian thought, but rather the Hellenistic conception of the world based upon a search for cosmic harmonies—one thinks of Posidonius, another commentator on the Timaeus, whose philosophy embraced not only the dynamic continuity among things but the harmonies of man and nature. Throughout the twelfth century, then, Chalcidius’s translation and commentary constituted a major part of the basic Platonic deposit underlying successive inroads of Neoplatonism.

30 “Unde possimus dicere quod materia huius libri est naturalis iusticia vel creatio mundi” (Parent, p. 142, Jeanneau, p. 59). On William’s story concerning the translation’s having been undertaken by the “archdeacon” Chalcidius at the request of Bishop Osius, see Jeanneau, p. 63, or PL, CLXXII, 247–8 (text mistakenly attributed to Honorius of Autun).
31 Consult B. W. Switalsky, Des Chalcidius Kommentar zu Platos Timaeus, in BGPM, III (Münster, 1902). That note in and through St. Augustine the Middle Ages received elements that derived from an earlier Platonism, ante-
cedent to Neoplatonic developments; pre-Neoplatonic elements are found in some works of the Cappadocian fathers as well. As a result, in the Middle Ages the term platonici (“Platonists”) complicated the confusion between original Platonism and Neoplatonism; bit by bit, it seems, the term came to designate philosophers who favored “separate Ideas.”

Of the same sort was Macrobius (end of the fourth century), zealous student of both the Enneads and the Timaeus as commented by Porphyry, whom he followed with the veneration of a disciple. An author of secondary rank, his commentary on Cicero’s Somnium Scipionis (ed. Franciscus Eyssenhardt [Leipzig, 1893]; tr. William Harris Stahl, Macrobii’ Commentary on the Dream of Scipio [New York, 1952]) nonetheless provided an important source for medieval Neoplatonism. Its importance derived from its definitions of the soul (i. XIV, 19) and statements concerning the soul’s immortality and incorporeality. Abelard included Macrobius among those pagans whose works [interpreted per involucrum] contained Christian revelation [see Taylor, p. 182, n. 26, for brief discussion and bibliography on such interpretation; cf. Edouard Jeanneau, “La notion d’integumentum,” AHDL, XXIV (1957), 35–100, and M.-D. Chenu, “Involucrum: le mythe selon les theologiens medie-
vaux,” AHDL, XXII (1955), 75–79]. Macrobius was drawn upon to support personal immortality against Avicenna, as by William of Auvergne. He was among the authorities used to support the conception of a world soul; he transmitted Pythagorean ideas on the properties of numbers (In Somn. Scip. i.V–VI); he made known and propagated the Plotinian analysis of the development of virtues used by theologians in their accounts of spiritual experience.

32 He distinguishes expressly between “commentary” solam sentientiam exequiis (expounding the thought only) and “gloss,” which attends to conti-
nuatio litterae (the literal statement): “... quia commentatores litteram nec continuantae nec exponentes soli sententiae serviant” (for commentators, neither following through nor explicating the literal sense, want the underlying thought only); cited in Parent, pp. 19, n. 3, and 136, n. 1, and Jeanneau, P. 57.

33 The conception of the world as a whole was not incidental but essential to the Platonic world view; cf. Timaeus 33A: “... and so the Demiurge put the whole together in order that, first of all, the whole should be as perfect a living being as possible, formed of perfect parts; and in the second place, that it should be one.” The medieval commentator was aware of the centrality of this conception; cf. William of Conches’ statement, cited in Parent, p. 65, n. 129: “Plato enim non de creazione alienius rei in mundo contente egest de ipso universo in quo omnia continetur. Unde per hoc omne institutionem nec hoc nec illud voluit significare, sed ipsum universitatem quae in suo genere id est in genere rerum sensibilium optima est et perfectissima.” (Plato did not the creation of any object contained in the world but the very universe in which all things are contained. Hence by ‘put the whole thing together’ he did not mean this or that particular thing but the very universe, which—it must be said—is, in the genus of sensible objects—the last and most perfect.) Ibid., p. 149, and Jeanneau, p. 127: “Dixit [Plato] ‘omne’ quia mos fuit antiquorum mundum quoddam ‘omne’ vocare.” (Plato says ‘whole’ because it was the custom of the ancients to call the world a certain ‘whole.’)
terned upon a model, a changeless and eternal exemplar, a self-subsistent Living Being comprehending in itself the natures of all things. (It is well known what varied adaptations this great Platonic theme has undergone.) The world’s construction (its creation, as Christian commentators called it) was the work of an Artisan, Efficient Cause, or Demiurge, who acted out of self-diffusing goodness. (Twelfth-century commentators did not find emanationism in their text; that was the product of influences from pseudo-Dionysius and John the Scot.) The world had a soul, the ordered principle of its movements and cause of life. Underlying the organization of the world was matter (itself also created, said Christian commentators). Man, center of this universe, reflected in himself all its elements and was a “microcosm” in order that he might dominate it all by his intelligence. (Their Christian belief led commentators to alter this theme profoundly in the direction of Augustine’s imago Dei.) Finally, the Timaeus furnished twelfth-century authors with assorted elements of physics—the heavenly spheres, the elements, the concept of space—which provided competition for the Ptolemaic ideas that translators had been bringing into circulation since the beginning of the century.

Apart from the theory of ideas, there were three other problems around which discussion centered in the schools:

First, identification of the Platonic demiurge (opifex) with God. This completely destroyed the balanced structure of the Platonic system, as men of the time well knew and clearly said when they outlined and rejected out of hand the theory of the three coeternal principles. The identification of God with the opifex of the Timaeus made for some interesting speculative possibilities; but it also entailed equivocal points that the criticism of Simon of Tournai, among others, sought to resolve.

Second, when one superimposed the Timaeus upon Genesis, how could one picture the actual unfolding of creation? Respectfully but firmly both Hugh of Saint-Victor and the masters of Chartres, and surely Peter Lombard himself, discarded Augustine’s idealist view that the successive “days” had only a logical significance; the Bible’s historical orientation and Plato’s realistic physics worked against such a view. Moreover, as to the construction of the cosmos, a sharp and very revealing controversy arose over primitive chaos, some authorities basing their contentions on the text of the Timaeus and Chalcidius’s interpretation and advocating an initial disorder, others (especially William of Conches) adopting a decided naturalism and teaching that from the beginning the laws of nature operated according to an intrinsically determined order and not according to some arbitrary benevolence on the part of the Divinity.\footnote{See M.-D. Chenu, “Nature ou histoire? Une controverse exégétique sur la création au XIIe siècle,” AHDL, XX (1953), 25–30.}

Third, the theory of the world soul. Accepted by Abelard and his disciples and by all the masters of Chartres with a range of interpretations that William of Conches classified neatly,\footnote{Philosophia mundi i.15 (PL, CLXII, 46; false attribution to Honorius of Autun). Three interpretations: it was a natural energy given things by God; it was an incorporeal substance animating the universe and present in its parts; it was the Holy Spirit. See Gregory.} it was very quickly discarded, possibly not so much through Citeaux’s abrupt rejection of it\footnote{Arnold of Bonnaeval (friend of St. Bernard) De operibus sex diorum (PL, CLXXXIX, 1515): Disputatio altera adversus Abaelardum (PL, CLXXX, 321–2; not by William of Saint-Thierry but by a Benedictine abbot at the request of Hugh of Rouen).} or through narrow-minded attackers as through the mature reflection of theologians. In fact, this was one of the pagan ideas most difficult to reconcile with the biblical outlook to the extent that it reduced the Holy Spirit’s role in history to presiding over cosmic evolution. Augustine, however, had not rejected it; and Basil had accepted the identification of the Holy Spirit with the world soul—so seductive did Plato prove as a means of understanding Christian mystery.

But apart from any fallacious attempt to harmonize the three hypostases of Plotinus with the three persons of the Trinity, the experimental identification of the Holy Spirit with the world soul being the third of these, Plato presented certain distinct intellectual advantages as against Aristotle. As Emile Bréhier remarks, “Aristotle, in a sense, expunged the soul from his image of the universe; the primary moving principles of the heavens are minds; the soul appears only in living sublunar bodies, as bodily form, and is a wholly intellectual concept formulated by a physiologist in search of the
principle of corporeal functions; the soul as the seat of destiny has disappeared."\textsuperscript{37} Platonicists, on the other hand, believers in the substantial unity of the cosmos and in the mutual sympathy of its parts, saw souls as having a cosmic function: they were destined to play the same role in the moment-to-moment governance of small things that the world soul played in the whole. Soul was the intermediary between the intelligible world and the world of sense perception. The fathers, no less, had severely criticized Aristotle’s definition of the soul. Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa (Nemesius) was the source of such criticism in the Middle Ages. Aristotle’s definition, he held, seriously imperiled the substantiality of the soul and thus its immortality.\textsuperscript{38}

The rising influence of pseudo-Dionysius, whose hierarchy provided no place for the world soul, preserved to advantage these Platonic values of the cosmic interrelationship of souls. In adopting them, St. Thomas broke with Aristotle’s view of the structure of the cosmos.

In all the interpretations made of the Timaeus and in all the uses made of it in theology, two features of Plato’s method caused problems. One was a literary feature, but of great importance philosophically; namely, the use of fables or myths, and above all of the cosmicgenetic myth involving the demigure, which accounts for the ambiguities of what men commonly call Plato’s theology. Twelfth-century thinkers took judicious stock of the role of myth. William of Conches, after having observed its use by Boethius, proposed to explain its further use by Plato.\textsuperscript{39} Abelard saw myth as a necessity for philosophy when it came to the discussion of mysterious realities.\textsuperscript{40} Alan of Lille saw “colors” (the term applied to these integumenta in rhetoric) as arising from a necessary intellectual modesty.\textsuperscript{41} But none of these men measured the role of Platonic myth with any profundity. Abelard, wishing to free Plato from gross animism, saw mere metaphor in this involucrum.\textsuperscript{42} At Chartres, myth was converted into decorative allegory; the commentator interested in ideas was consequently led into making tendentious interpretations that pretended to find in the text a purely reasoned solution to the problem of the world’s origin.\textsuperscript{43}

The second feature is still more important, touching on the very per fabulosa quaedam involucra loquitur consueverat.” (Philosophy always dismisses publishing its secrets in plain words; especially concerning the soul and the gods, it covers up what it has to say under fabulous disguises.) Cf. H. Ostlender, ed., Peter Abelard’s Theologia “Summi Boni” in BPGM, XXXV, ii-iii (Münster, 1939), 14.


\textsuperscript{38} De natura hominis (PG, XL, 560).

\textsuperscript{39} Comm. in Boet. de Consol. (MS. Orléans 274, f. 37a): “Quod Plato voluisse omnes animas simul creatas fuisset, nescuum inventur; sed impositis esse stellas et descendere per planetas, hoc quidem inventur. Sed dictum est hoc in O qui perpetua per integumentum, et hoc idem ostendemus, Deo annuente vitam, super Platonem.” (That Plato intended all souls to have been created at once is nowhere found; but that they had been placed upon stars and descended through the planets, this one does find. The same point was made allegorically in the poem ‘O qui perpetua’ [De cons, iii.m.9] and, if God grants me life, I shall show that the same is true in Plato.)

\textsuperscript{40} Intro. ad theol. i.19 (PL, CLXXVIII, 1022): “Semper philosophia arcana sua nudis publicare verbis designata sit, et maxime de anima et de dis

\textsuperscript{41} De planctu Naturae (PL, CCX, 452): “Nolo enim ut prius plana verborum planitie explanare posita, vel profanis verborum novitativus profanare profana; verum, pudenda aures pudicorum verborum phaleris inaurare, variisque venustom verborum coloribus investire.” (I do not wish, as before, to expose my designs on the open surface of words, or to violate unholy things with novel and unclean words; rather to overlay shamefaced things with the golden adornments of chaste words and to clothe them with the contrasting colors of beautiful words.) Nature’s interlocutor questions her about the substance of metaphors which do not satisfy him (ibid., 454): “Quamvis enim plebs aures sub integumentali involucro aurem, ejus naturam depinxerint, tamen nulla certitudinis nobis reliquerunt vestigia.” (Although a good many authors have represented its nature under the enveloping concealment of figures, yet they have left us no roads to certainty.)

\textsuperscript{42} Intro. ad theol. i.20 (PL, CLXXVIII, 1023): “Clarum est quae philosophis de anima muni dicuntur, per involucrum accipienda esse. Alioquin summum philosophorum Platonem summum stultorum reprehendere erimus. Quid enim magis ridiculosum quam mundum totum arbitram unam animal esse rationem, nisi per hoc integumentum sit prolatum.” (Clearly, what philosophers say about the whole world soul must be taken under a figurative veil. Otherwise, we should despise that greatest of philosophers, Plato, as the greatest of fools. For what could be more ridiculous than to suppose that the entire universe is one big rational animal, unless by this a figure were expressed?) Cf. Ostlender, op. cit., pp. 15–16 [and articles by Jeannneau and Chenu cited above, n. 31].

\textsuperscript{43} Boethius had already done the same; so had Proclus in his commentary on the Timaeus. In Plato, the gods belonged to the order of myth and of existence; they were causes of ‘becoming.’ Thereafter, the Good, the Ideas (creative), and Being itself acquired the status of causes of essence or nature, above nature but part of its dialectical extension and in line with it. Boethius was to use abstract language on such points, and his figures were to be no more than allegorical. So it developed throughout the Middle Ages. The controversy of Bernard Sylvester did not escape from this fate which Platonism had undergone. Alan of Lille provided a perfect example of it in his allegorical description of Nature and Love.
inspiration of Plato, on what we might call his "Socratism." Underlying Plato's thought was the intellectual orientation of his master, and it lent to his thinking, if not to his system, a moral bias, a responsiveness to values, an existential character—resources that would have made him receptive to the idea of creation despite all else, and that Aristotle did not preserve. Medieval thinkers were ignorant of the genius of Socrates and of his orientation of philosophy toward human values and problems. Augustinianism did not succeed in making up for this lack, whether in philosophy or in intellectual life. Faithfully and single-mindedly, commentators on the Timaeus developed their "philosophy of the world," and their knowledge of physical things did not inspire them to any significant reflection upon themselves or to any progress in self-knowledge. The omnipresent God, that forma essendi (form of existence) of every creature, whom one finds in Thierry of Chartres' teaching, or, later on, the One of Gilbert of La Porée's followers—none of these shared the qualities of Augustine's God in the Solutiofis. Of Augustine they read and reread his various treatises on Genesis, preserving in their harmonizing endeavors. Their schematization of the modi universitatis (modes of the universe) included Augustine's seminales rationes (seminal causes), and their possibilitas absoluta (absolute possibility) defined his materia informis (matter without form). But Platonic though both vocabularies were, they were obviously different.  

b. The Platonism of Boethius

Though one can speak of the Augustinianism of Boethius, and though the author of the Consolation contributed to an Augustinian reading of the Timaeus of which the terminology just mentioned preserves traces, it is nonetheless true that he read the works of Plato with other eyes than Augustine's, with greater scholarly fidelity and without that religious and philosophical transformation to which the Christian doctor subjected them. In truth, Boethius, even in his lofty

spiritual aspirations, remained a man formed by the school—the school of Ammonius of Alexandria, which made him a follower of Proclus as distinct from other strains of Neoplatonism—and he retained the learning, the techniques, and the methods of the school. Yet he was far from being weak in personality; he showed this in his curiosity, his preferences, his interiorized convictions, his nobility. His extraordinary success throughout the Middle Ages testifies indisputably to his personal appeal.

Here, in brief, are the elements and qualities that he contributed to the Platonic syncretism of the twelfth century and, beyond that century, to the whole outlook of medieval philosophy:

1. First of all, there was his express purpose to reconcile Aristotle and Plato—even though the realization of this purpose was cut short by his death. He wished "to bring the thought of Aristotle and Plato somehow into harmony" and to show that "these two philosophers are not at odds in everything as a great many persons suppose, but that they agree in a very large number of points, including the most important points in philosophy."

We have here the resolution of a disciple who, in his admiration for two masters, was unwilling to choose between them, between the two truths they propounded. But we have also a modest mind's expression of two intellectual needs which were as imperious as they were in fact irreconcilable in the conceptions they produced of the universe. According to the one the truth about the universe was to be found in unchanging and identical essences distributed among a multiplicity of individuals, while according to the other that truth was to be found in the concrete particular realities which we experience and which alone exist. Bernard of Chartres approved of Boe-

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44 The combination of these two vocabularies—Augustine's and Boethius's terms for Platonic concepts—is evident in various works of Chartrian provenance; e.g., see Wilhelm Jansen, ed., Der Kommentar des Clarenbaldis von Arras zu Boethius De Trinitate (Breslauer Studien zur historischen Theologie, Band VII; Breslau, 1926), p. 64; cf. Parent, pp. 207–13.

45 See Pierre Courcelle, Les lettres grecques en occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore (Paris, 1948), "L'Orient au secours de la culture profane: Boèce," pp. 257–312, where both the dependence of Boethius upon Ammonius and the original features of his Neoplatonism are clarified.

46 [For a detailed consideration of the influence of Boethius by Chenu, see TDS, Chap. VI, "Aetas Boetiana," pp. 142–58.]

47 "... Aristotelis Platonisique sententias in unam quodammodo revocare concordiam, eosque non ut plerique dissentire in omnibus, sed in plerique et his in philosophia maximis consentire demonstram." De interpretatione, editio secunda, ed. Carolus Meiser (Leipzig, 1880), p. 79.
thius's project; but John of Salisbury, whose keen perceptiveness was greater than his powers of intellectual construction, observed with wry humor that it would be rather difficult to reconcile after death two men who had managed to disagree with one another all their lives.\footnote{Metal. ii.17 (Webb, p. 94; McGarry, p. 115): “Egerunt operosius Bernardus Carnotensis et auditores eius ut componerent inter Aristotilem et Platonem, sed eos tarde venisse arbitratur et laborasse in vanum ut reconciliarent mortuus quidque quidquid in vita ludit, dissererunt.” (Chartres and his students labored strenuously to compose the differences between Aristotle and Plato, but I think they arrived on the scene too late and labored in vain to reconcile two dead men, who, as long as they were alive and could have agreed, disagreed.) In the thirteenth century the ascendancy of the works of Aristotle arrested but did not destroy this ambition to reconcile the two ancient philosophers, a persistent idea of the twelfth century. Herman of Dalmatia noted the disagreement between their two definitions of the soul but, in his De essentia, sketched a plan for coordinating them (cited in Haskins, Studies, p. 61); Hugh of Saint-Victor, in his Didascalicon (ii.1 [Buttimar, pp. 23–25; Taylor, pp. 61–63]) combined the Platonic division of the sciences, as rendered by Boethius, with that of Aristotle. Augustine, following Porphyry, had already believed confidently that philosophy was one: “... non defuerunt acutissimi et solertissimi viri, qui docerent disputationibus suis Aristotelem ac Platonem ita sibi concineri, ut imperitus minusque attentis dissentire videantur; multis quidem saeculis multisque contentionibus, sed tamem eligiata est, ut opinor, una verissimae philosophiae disciplina.” (There has been no lack of most keen and skilful men who have taught that Aristotle and Plato so cooperate in their disputes that to unskilled and inattentive minds they appear to disagree. Many have been the centuries and many the contentions; but, as I think, a single discipline of philosophy must truly has filtered through). Contra academicos iii.19.42 (PL, XXXII, 956).} William of Conches had observed this point well: “Boethius vero in utroque fuit nutritus: in aristotelica, in dialectica et logica; in platonica, in philosophia.” (Boethius, however, was nurtured by both systems: by the Aristotelian in dialectic and logic; by the Platonic in philosophy); In Boetium de Consol. (2nd version), MS Paris BN lat. 6406, fol. 9r.

his followers handled Boethius with the most faithful respect and managed to preserve a large measure of Aristotelianism, even though substantial intrusions of Neoplatonism of Proclus's type were to invade their early syncretism. Gilbert's speculation about the Trinity unmistakably revealed the determining influence of Boethius's conception upon theology itself.

Among spiritual writers the absolute primacy of Augustine left little room for Boethius and his school training. Only here and there did Boethius contribute a few elements of vocabulary or definition to a certain conceptualism which introduced a humanistic strain into their mystical thought. So it was with Alcher of Clairvaux and above all with Richard of Saint-Victor. But the “philosophy” of Boethius's Consolation could only strike these monastic authors as too profane—a view with which the evangelical at the end of the century effectively agreed.

2. The immediate effect of this yoking together of Plato and Aristotle was to divide the life of the mind into two levels, irreducible despite their permanent connection. Platonism itself had already promoted such bifurcation by defining ultimate reality as independent of those limited forms in which the mind knows objects. But for the Middle Ages Boethius was the author of one of the most widely accepted formulations of this noetic dualism. He held that there were two orders of object—intellectabilia (intellectible objects), which included only the Divinity, ever one and identical, inaccessible to all approach through the sense-perceptible world; and intelligibilia (intellectual objects), which included created spirits, among them the human soul, accessible through their introduction into the world of sense. To these two orders corresponded two types of knowledge, one rooted in the intellect (intellect), the other in the ratio (reason); Aristotelian noetic took over in the latter. Spiritual writers joined the masters of the schools in following Boethius's dualism in order to give account of their mystical experiences. The numerous treatises De anima, Cistercian or other, introduced these Boethian categories into their diverse vocabularies. Richard of Saint-Victor based his analysis of the degrees of contemplation on the Boethian distinctions. For Thierry of Chartres, the understanding that was derived from the intellect had religious value in itself; it alone made
proof of God; it was the properly theological faculty, while reason was the faculty that dealt with predicamental and quantified being.

3. The influence Boethius exercised upon metaphysics was still more decisive. Some of his propositions became so classic that often a later writer such as St. Thomas was unable to reject them out of hand but had instead to adapt them. In fact, before Aristotle became influential (the text of his *Metaphysics* began to circulate about 1240), Boethius reigned in schools wherever metaphysical analysis of creation nourished the contemplation of God, as it had in his theological *opuscula*. The composite condition of created beings, the simplicity of the divine Being—here was the central theme, Neoplatonic insofar as it stressed the primacy of the One, but Aristotelian in its treatment of everything involving form. God was pure form; other beings were composed of form, their *quo est or esse* (that by which they exist, their *being*), and the subject possessing this form, the *quod est* (that which exists, which has being). A realist interpretation of this distinction was to lead Gilbert of La Porée beyond the Boethian exegesis of kindred spirits at Chartres and to upset, if not the orthodoxy of his theology, at least the balance of his teaching on the Trinity. Although God was the *forma essendi* (form of the being) of every creature—and on this point Gilbert mixed Boethian propositions with Augustinian ideas—nonetheless created beings were only incarnate reflections, epiphanies of God, belonging to the intelligible order. They had their own integrity; and the divine activity did not substitute itself for their own any more than the divine form substituted itself for their form, united to matter. One sees here the influence of the Aristotelianism of Boethius, even in the affirmation that God is ontologically present in created beings. Without excluding the Platonic ideas or forms from his thought, Gilbert had overcome the radical separation of the Platonic *ousia* from the everyday world of concrete actualities in which we live. John of Salisbury was to perceive very clearly this movement in the direction of Augustinian Platonism.\(^{50}\) It was not a philosophical operation only, but the basis of a wholly new religion, theology, and spirituality. As to the pantheism of Amaury of Bene, decked out as it was in a whole panoply of Boethian terms, it was possible only through the gross wrenching of these terms from their original meaning.

4. Boethius gave the natural sciences their statute of autonomy. He was, and right up through St. Thomas he would remain,\(^{51}\) the great authority for a systematization of knowledge differentiated according to its objects. He saw theology, its transcendence assured, as making use, in its constructive task, of rational concepts which retained their proper validity in the sphere of faith and which were adequate to the formulation of theological problems. Here too, following a century of commentators, St. Thomas drew heavily upon the work of Boethius; and the celebrated axiom, “Authority is the weakest source of proof,”\(^{52}\) repeats Boethius’s own standard of judgment. It was not simply as a logician that Boethius formulated a number of concepts destined to common currency among theologians—such concepts as “nature,” “person,” “substance,” “eternity,” “providence”—but as a religious thinker who trusted the work of man’s reason. The *Consolation*, deliberately constructed upon a purely rational foundation, is an extreme instance of theological reliance upon reason. It was not at all a “profean,” a “pagan” work; no medieval writer, not even the most anti-intellectual among them, would ever have taken it for that. From this point of view and on this ground, Boethius was the first of the scholastics—a title one would not think of bestowing upon Augustine. He succeeded in using the logic of Aristotle in a domain of inquiry to which it could claim no special right of entry—the domain of the First Being and of pure spirits.

Such, then—and very different from that of Augustine—was the Neoplatonism of Boethius. The distinction between the two reached stealthily but effectively into the twelfth century and was revealed in even such a mild dispute as the exchange of letters between Nicho-


\(^{51}\) Thomas Aquinas *Comm. in Boetii De Trin.* qq. 5, 6 (Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, XVII, 379–96).

\(^{52}\) “Locus ab auctoritate est infirmissimus,” *Summa theol.* I, Q.1, a.8, ad 2 (Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, I, 8; Aquinas, *Summa*, I, 13) [cf. Boethius *In Topica Ciceronis commentaria* vi (PL, LXIV, 1166 ff.) and *De differentiis Topicis* iii (ibid., 1199 C)].
las of Clairvaux and Peter of Celle about the primacy of unity (as conceived by Plato) and simplicity (as conceived by Augustine). The audiences to which Boethius and Augustine appealed were quite different. The Augustinianism of Boethius, including that of his De Trinitate, which theologians read side by side with Augustine's De Trinitate, echoed not so much the personal reflections of Augustine as certain Neoplatonic commonplaces suggestive of Proclus. Attempts to harmonize Boethius and Augustine were legitimate but not wholly successful. Boethius's philosophy of liberty and his theology of divine foreknowledge were taught in the schools; and St. Anselm, anticipating many others, utilized the famous passage on contingency from Boethius's commentary on chapter 9 of Aristotle's Peri hermeneias (On Interpretation), in rivalry with Augustine, in his Concordia praescientiae Dei cum libero arbitrio (Harmony of the Foreknowledge of God with Free Will). But Boethius's philosophy and theology could never match the Christian flavor or spiritual quality of Augustine's De gratia et libero arbitrio (On Grace and Free Will), used by St. Bernard in his work of identical title.

Of the Timaeus, which helped form his thought, Boethius achieved one of the most intelligent adaptations in the long history of the work. Not only did he take over, as did all Christians, the three principles discussed above, but he pushed far along the Christianization of the providence of the God demiurge. The famous metre, O qui perpetua, of Consolation III, m.9, possessed great religious depth, despite the ostensible naturalism of its terminology. Among

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54 Pl., XLVIII, 507 ff.
55 PL, CLXXII, 1001–1030 [English translation with valuable notes by W. Williams, Concerning Grace and Free Will (London, 1920)].
56 "O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas" (O thou who governest the world by thine Eternal Thought), The ratio perpetua is the eternal reason of God and the supreme model of all the beings of the world, governing them by its thought; for this model is the life of the world. Eternal preexistence in the divine exemplar gives meaning to terrestrial existence, a reflection of true existence. Its philosophical character admitted, the Consolation was nonetheless subject to increasingly Christian interpretation, certainly by John the Scot and by twelfth-century commentators; see Pierre Courcelle, "Etude critique sur les commentaires de la Consolation de Boëce," AHDL, XII (1939), 5–10.

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Neoplatonists his stress upon the divine unity placed him in a tradition different from that of Augustine, who stressed the divine ideas—a tradition that exercised a recurring influence upon theologians and mystics and was soon reinforced by the influence of pseudo-Dionysius.

Finally, Boethius was a man of the Latin West, whereas pseudo-Dionysius, also a disciple of Proclus, was subject to the alien culture of the East. The Platonism of Boethius tended toward abstraction; it excluded the symbolism and myth equally to be found in Plato and favored the conceptualized dialectic congenial to the schools of the Middle Ages, where the science of theology had to become more and more cognizant of metaphor, including the "divine names" which it found in the Bible and was prone to treat as common anthropomorphism. Western theology was to nurse a continual mistrust of the East; and the allegorizing which western theology came to cultivate to excess in its biblical exegesis, in its liturgy, in its analysis of the sacraments, and in its pastoral efforts was only an intellectualized and aristocratic distortion of the symbolic mysteries of Christianity.

The Introduction of Pseudo-Dionysius

The One, the Good, Being—it is in their different handling of these three inseparable denominations of the supreme reality that the

140. Its inspiration has justly been recognized in Alan of Lille's fine poem on Nature, even in the form of the opening line: "O Dei proles, genitrixque rerum" (See above, p. 19, and n. 38).
57 The mystical theme of god's solitude was nurtured by the metaphysics of the One. Cf. Bernard Sylvester De mundi universitate (Barach-Wrobel, p. 61): "Unitas non incepserat: simplex, intacta, solitaria, ex se in se permanens, infinibili et aeterna." (The divine Unity had no origin: simple, integral, solitary, it endures in and from itself, endless and eternal.) The undeniable religious depth of such a statement springs from the Boethian metaphysics of the school of Chartres. Cf. Gilbert of La Porée Comm. in lib. de Trinitate (PL, LXIV, 1269): "Vere est [Deus] unum, et adeo simplex in se, et sine suo quae adesse possunt solitarium, ut recte de hoc Uno dicatur quod de ipso principio cujus osuisia est dicitur, scilicet est id quod est." (Truly is God one, and so simple in himself, and so solitary without added attributes, that we rightly say of this One what is said of the very principle of which he is the existence, namely: He is that which is.)
varieties of Neoplatonism are to be distinguished. The terms continuously slip, so to speak, and the resulting syncretism lessens the hard and fast supremacy of the One over Being upon which Plotinus had insisted. The masters of Chartres, following Boethius and before the new translations of Boethius had appeared, devised a number of excellent formulas which with greater or less deliberateness combined the themes of the One and Being. The study of pseudo-Dionysius, which became quite intense starting in the second third of the twelfth century, introduced an original treatment of the doctrine of the One and the Good into the store of ideas already twice translated into Latin by Augustine and by Boethius. A tone hard to define, an extravagant vocabulary, and highly attenuated concepts of cosmic import were brought in from the world of Proclus, a world vastly different from that of Augustine with his sensitivity to the interior movements of the soul and his resonant spiritual rhetoric. “Contemplation” as hitherto understood in the West took on the mystical dimension of *theoria*; “ignorance” came to suggest the darkness of the negative way; “mind,” for all its original profundity, became charged with the sacred connotations of the intranslatable *nous*. In his characteristic manner, Hugh of Saint-Victor witnessed to these changes from the first. Within the constraining limits of his textual commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, he not only rejected and imputed to John the Scot one or another doctrine that he judged heterodox, but he constantly adapted terms, concepts, and whole sets of ideas within the Augustinian categories that provided his enduring frame of reference.

The concept of “hierarchy” was the cornerstone of the system of pseudo-Dionysius; it dominated and supported everything else within that system and accounted for its spirit. *Ordo sacer* (sacred order)—this Latin rendering of the term conveyed very little of the meta-

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58 Boethius inspired equally the traditions stressing the One or the Good. In his *De hebdomadibus* he calls the genesis of beings a “fluxus a prima bonitatis” (outflow from the First Good) (*PL*, LXIII, 3111); but one of his first axioms is: “Omne quod est icidico est quia unum est.” (The whole that exists, exists because it is One.) (*PL*, LXIV, 83). In taking its place with the opuscula of Boethius, the *De unitate* of Gundissalinus weighted the tradition in favor of the One. Alan of Lille’s *Regulae* had the same effect.


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physically and religious richness of the original concept, which, despite this weakening and despite the loss of fundamental features, was to exercise an astonishing attraction. Communication of divinity

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60 *Ordo* and *hierarchia*—we have here an example of completely different terms—in origin, conception, social and ideological reference—even when they are interchanged. Both were rich terms, unhappily impoverished by legalistic handling. Their difference may be schematized thus:

**Implications of *ordo***:

—order of the state with particular reference to justice; general social structure.

—order as a framework established by law in the public interest or domain (*res publica*); so used in Roman legal terminology.

—*ordo* as an institutionalized group—political, economic, religious (*ordo* militaris, *ordo* equester).

—*ordo* in reference to offices performed, or to prerogatives, rights, and franchises enjoyed in virtue of *status* (position) in feudal or communal law (cf. St. Thomas *Summa theol.* I. q. 106 a. 2: “Diversitas ordinum secundum officia”).

—*ordo* as the intrinsic discipline of a rule (*ordo* regulae, *ordo* disciplinae).

—*ordo* as used by the church of functions and ministries (*ordo* monasticus, *ordo* canonicius, the sacrament of major orders or the order of priesthood).

—*ordo* as used of ceremonies or rites (*ordo* missae, ordinis et consecrationes, confusing the order of knighthood through the order or ordination of dubbing).

**Implications of *hierarchia***:

—hierarchy as a first principle having sacred value (literally *te opó  ἀρχή*, sacred beginning).

—hierarchy in virtue of emanation from the divinity.

—hierarchy as implying ontological value; natural, rather than by will or juridical fiat of men.

—hierarchy as expressing an order, a *σύνος* or arrangement, primarily in a mystical sense; a holy disposition on the part of God, a “super-essential harmony.”

—hierarchy as dynamic in character.

—hierarchy to suggest a religious sense extending beyond the juridical, or when the divine disposition extends moral and social laws.

along a descending scale, along an emanation of the multiple forms of being, rank on rank, all participating directly but differently in God, whose fulness was thus manifested through them (the provision for direct participation avoided the emanationism of Proclus but not the peril of a theory of intermediaries): such was the grand vision which intoxicated pseudo-Dionysius and provided the master plan within which the universe and man, God and Christ, the sacraments and contemplation, body and soul, light and shadows, symbols and negations all found a sublime explanation. In our time, the analogue of this total hypothesis is the theory of evolution.

The concept of hierarchy clearly presupposed the classic Platonic thesis of two worlds, the worlds of intellect and of sense; but it altered this thesis profoundly by taking the sense-perceptible world as a field in which symbols were in play. To be sure, this approach to the world was native to Platonism, but its wholesale extension transformed the basic character of the system and, when blended with the symbolism of the Christian sacraments, gave it a religious profundity as potentially fruitful as it was ambiguous. This symbolism screened divine truths from the eyes of the throng, the uninitiated. The “sign” of Augustine and the “symbol” of pseudo-Dionysius belonged to two quite different Platonisms.

Pseudo-Dionysius remained entirely faithful to Neoplatonism, which was essentially a method of approach to intelligible reality, not an explanation of the world of sense by means of that reality. But for him this method was to be conceived as an ascent that began from the lowest material level, on which the mind of man found its connatural objects—objects whose value for knowledge, for sacred knowledge, lay not in their own coarse material natures but in their symbolic capacity, their “anagogy.” “Anagogy” was not only wholly different from the technique of metaphor employed by scripture or the poets;\(^\text{61}\) philosophically speaking, it was also totally different from the Augustinian (later, the Cistercian and Victorine) “image” and from Aristotelian abstraction from sense-perceptible particulars. Both of the latter were to make pseudo-Dionysian “anagogy” and “theophany” almost unintelligible to men of the West.

This anagogy, this ascent or conversion, this hierarchial activity took place through three distinct but simultaneous operations: purification, illumination, perfection. The popularity and success of this doctrine and formula are well known. Both became commonplace among theologians and even more among spiritual writers. But the doctrine lost its proper shape when translated into the Latin tongue, which often reduced the operations of pseudo-Dionysian “initiation” to moral activity on the part of incipientes, proficiens, and perfecti (beginners, proficients, the perfected). The very terms lacked sacred character and turned what was properly a transcendent divine operation into a matter of ascetic law; indeed, the words νόμος (arbitrary enactment) and θερμός (law) were both rendered by lex (law) in Latin. The price paid for such success, however, did not vitiate the functional analysis through which pseudo-Dionysius had built the religious potentialities of Proclus’s philosophy into an integrated doctrine.

Increasingly important as a challenge to the Aristotelian concept of “substance,” the concept of “hierarchy” shattered the metaphysical scheme which locked up each nature within its own ontological perimeter. This concept entailed natures so universally and normally open to causal influence from the being above them that the action of that superior being was intimately involved in their own natural acts. This “sympathy,” this continuatio as it was translated in Latin, was of a piece with the Plotinian idea of “participation”; it clothed reality with qualities deriving from a mysterious kinship and invested the unitary order of the universe, emanating from the One, with a religious value.

From this conception of “hierarchy” derived the sacredness of knowledge, which, submissive to the laws of hierarchy, was the proper possession of the “perfect.” The Greek idea of ἐνεργημα (certain knowledge), as typically happened in Neoplatonic tradition, was realized through the cathartic and mystical operation of a θεοπλα (contemplation), a term which Latin spiritual writers, though not the scholastics, took over bodily and contrasted to scientia

\(^{61}\) Pseudo-Dionysius was not untouched by poetry or rhetoric. He treated scriptural images as ontological symbols, not as literary figures subject to grammatical and psychological analysis. He was thus profoundly different from the humanists of western monasticism, who taught the seven liberal arts as propaedeutic to scriptural interpretation.
(scientific or demonstrable knowledge), which for them usually retained a secular meaning. A great many spiritual writers placed confidence in such contemplative understanding, for it breathed an optimism quite unlike the ascetical empiricism of certain reformers. If this process of contemplation divinized men, it was because it showed them the theophanies truly found in all beings and revealed in the universe a cascade of illuminations descending from God who nonetheless remained invisible in himself. This was not at all a matter of pantheism but of mystical emanation with an undergirding of agnosticism, and it was to become the most seductive and disruptive of the original expressions of the philosophy of “participation” found in Christendom.

The most prominent trait of this “hierarchy”—one which Christianized the structure of Neoplatonism but at the same time limited the originality of the Christian world view—was its mingling of cosmology and soteriology, its combining of God as creator and God as savior into one. In western tradition, thanks in large part to Augustine, the two had been kept separate; and their separateness was reflected in the major distinction between nature and grace. It is not that pseudo-Dionysius was at all infected by naturalism or that he linked the divinization of man to progress or evolution in the cosmos. Quite the contrary, even in underlying moral outlook, he was wholly theocratic and seemed to transplant into Christendom the theurgic prayer of Iamblicus. But the law of divinization impinged upon the interior life and liberty of men’s souls only in and through the objective order and from outside the activity of the hierarchy; the divinely willed predeterminations provided for within this system had nothing in common with the impromptu character of grace as Augustine conceived it. Here one sees an ingenious translation of the Platonic metaphysics of participation into a Christian structure. In the course of this translation the concept of “analogia” was forged—a new and sensitive concept in later ideological syncretism, which threatened the vision of pseudo-Dionysius with devaluation, with invasion from Aristotelian conceptualism and Augustinian supernaturalism at the same time. Moreover, the psychological reality of grace and of free will, of the two liberties, God’s and man’s, which the Pelagian controversy established for good in the West, could not easily be fitted into the closed system of action required by the hierarchical destiny of created beings. On this point the Christianity of pseudo-Dionysius yielded to Neoplatonism and its restraining interventions from above. John the Scot was the scapegoat who ran away with this stubborn point, over which no one felt free to attack the prestige of pseudo-Dionysius.

Where pseudo-Dionysius broke with Proclus and reverted to the personal God of Christianity, it was out of a just conception of the incommunicable transcendency of the supreme principle which was simultaneously One, Being, Life, and Intelligence. “The One, whom we may still not call ‘being’...,” Iamblichus had said. The emanationism and the henads of Proclus were eliminated. There was a decisive effort on the part of all Christian Neoplatonisms to this end. Among the transcendentals, “the Good” became the supreme qualification; God was pure and simple ἐρως (love) who extended his action to the very last and least of beings and drew them toward himself. Bonum est diffusivum sui (Good is self-diffusing): the Latin axiom everywhere testified to the influence of pseudo-Dionysius—a decidedly Christian influence, for grace ruled over his system; and such knowledge as one could have of it came from a revelation, from the wisdom of God which was the only true “philosophy.” Apollonians the Greek was right to call pseudo-Dionysius a parricide who had dispossessed the Greeks of their wisdom.62

On the other hand, in the contemplative understanding taught by pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism threatened the basically Christian originality of the incarnation by tracing it to the procession of the many from the One in the generous self-diffusion of the Good; it threatened all elements of the “mystery” by viewing the sacraments, even the eucharist, less as participations in the humanity of Christ than as rites symbolic of union with the Perfect One; it threatened to reduce the religious history of sinful man to a fall into multiplicity followed by a return to divine unity.

All this is the antithesis of what one finds in Augustine, whose

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62 See the letter of Dionysius to Polycarp, Epistula VII (PG, III, 1080). [The letter Dionysius supposedly wrote to Apollonians, Epistola XI (PG, III, 1119), is a medieval forgery based upon the former.]
Christian conversion had nothing in common with Plotinian conversion or even with the “hierarchical” conversion of pseudo-Dionysius. Here now was an interior experience which Latin writers would associate with the *pati divina* (divine undergoing) of which pseudo-Dionysius spoke to Hierotheus in a magnificent but solitary passage. Moreover, the *anagogia* (ascent, or return) of pseudo-Dionysius developed within a metaphysical order and within a symbolic play from which literal history, even sacred history, was dismissed as beneath notice and which no longer served to provide men with strings of facts but rather to “initiate” them, through its symbols, into the *telēmōnia* (consummation, perfection) of the Divine Life. The second generation of Gilbert of La Porée’s followers, who drew upon pseudo-Dionysius to fortify the Neoplatonic doctrine on the One that they had received from Boethius, manifested the contempt felt by all Platonists for contingent events, even sacred events, of history. This contempt underlay their impatience with the skimpy Augustinianism of Peter Lombard.

Boethian humanism—logic-oriented, academic, Aristotelian—was alien to the spirit of pseudo-Dionysius. For Boethius the human sciences had their own independent apart from the hierarchical analogy, or ascent, for which they might prove a sound propaedeutic. In an effective encounter, however, his philosophy of the One was to help gain acceptance for the pseudo-Dionysian “One” and for the axioms deriving from it. Furthermore, critical analyses of the Platonic ideas and of the “divine names” combined Boethian epistemology fruitfully with the negative theology of pseudo-Dionysius—a feat which established syncretism as something more than facile harmonizing.

Pseudo-Dionysius’s critical analysis of the divine names was, without a doubt, his most admirable Christian adaptation of Neoplatonic method. In this analysis he remained at the same time the faithful disciple of his Greek masters and the creator of a Christian theology. The *via negativa* (way of negation) of his treatise *On the Divine Names* brought into the West, especially through his ceaseless efforts to create new terminology, the entire store of Platonic dialectic concerning the ineffable, the *etéres dêi oüras* of *Republic* 509b which Plotinus and Proclus had already echoed. For three centuries, gener-

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64 Theodore Silverstein, ed., “Liber Hermetis Mercurii Triplicis de Vr erum principiis,” *AHDL*, XXII (1955), 217–302, where, along with the text, there is an analysis of its sources, content, and influence. Traces of it are found in Bernard Sylvester *De mundi universitate* and John of Salisbury *De septem septenis* (PL, CXCIX, 960–2). [On correspondences between this text and details of Hugh of Saint-Victor’s *Didascalicon*, see Taylor, introduction, III: “The Readaptation of Heterodox Cosmological Texts and Themes” (pp. 19–28); cf. pp. 188–9, nn. 52, 53, 55, and p. 208, n. 8.] Roughly of the same period were Hugh of Santalla *Hermetis Trismegisti Liber de secretis naturae et occultis rerum causis ab Appollonio translatus* (MS Paris BN lat. 13951, fol. 1–31; analyzed by F. Nau, *Revue de l’Orient chrétien*, XII [1907], 99–106; traces in Herman of Carinthia *De essentiis*) and Adelard of Bath *Liber prestigiorum Thebidi secundum Ptolemeum et Hermetem* (see Haskins, *Studies*, p. 30); but these contain derivative and scattered astrological elements of Hermetic philosophy.
phorum (Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers) and the Summa of Alan of Lille.

Once again a metaphysics of the One was emphasized, but with accents peculiar to the corpus Hermeticum. There was a keen perception of the transcendent as rooted in the One. In its total and adequate awareness of itself, the One was an Intellect (φονησ), a movens immobiles (immoveable mover). As Being and Cause, it was Life. As Intellect and Life, this One engendered within itself as through a divine birth-process—something quite different from the production of beings through emanation. In this feature, medieval thinkers were pleased to recognize a presentiment of the Christian Trinity. Mathematical expressions and figures (the circle, the sphere, the point) were favorite means for describing emanation from the Monad. Delight was taken in epigrammatic formulas and axioms in repetitive and even alliterative chains; the Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers was not wide of the mark in attributing its remarkable definitions of God to Hermes Trismegistus. The most metaphysical expressions were charged with a religious character.

The mysticism of regeneration, of knowledge through interversion, of an aristocratic piety tied to a theurgic type of salvation, did not derive from Hermetic sources. This was because the Hermetic writings did not have any systematic coherence. Unlike those of pseudo-Dionysius and Boethius, therefore, they did not circulate except in excerpts lifted from context rather as propositions that had been taught than as accounts of experience.

Finally, in line with Neoplatonic tradition, Hermetic authors did not distinguish between God as principle of the cosmic order and God as supreme idea and sole true reality; instead, they combined the two to support an idealist theology of creation and a lofty conception of transcendance paradoxically consistent with immanence.

The Introduction of Muslim Neoplatonism

A new tributary was to swell the stream of Neoplatonism still further. Heir and depository of Greek science and philosophy for three centuries, the Muslim world was to pour its riches into the Christian West, which, though on crusade against Islam, was aware, at least in frontier regions such as Sicily and Spain, of the wealth and truth possessed by the adversary. The basic homogeneity of the Neoplatonic inspiration showed itself once more, this time in the contribution—as yet rudimentary but already important—which it made through Muslim culture to the converging influences of Augustine, pseudo-Dionysius, John the Scot, and Boethius. In the last third of the twelfth century, the first lot of Muslim works passed through the scriptorium of the Toledo translators and added yet another metaphysical and religious variant to the shifting forms of Neoplatonism already existing in the West. Thus began a protracted period of crises that was to end only at the beginning of “modern times,” after the Middle Ages, through repeated struggles, had absorbed Muslim thought. The condemnation of 1210 revealed, in a manner as confused as the thing it denounced, a keen awareness of this ideological invasion, at the heart of which, it seems, lay a Muslim emanationism Neoplatonic in character.

a. The Liber de causis

The little treatise De causis (Concerning Causes), destined to have a great future, came to circulation toward the 1180's. It was a Latin translation made by Gerard of Cremona (died in 1187) from an Arabic text, probably of the ninth century. A concise and original reworking of the Elementatio theologica of Proclus, it circulated under the title Liber Aristotelis de expositione bonitatis purae (The Book of Aristotle Concerning the Pure Good)—a title which gave further evidence of the guise under which Aristotle made his appearance at this moment in the West after having been considered a mere logician in the early Middle Ages. There were as yet only a few traces of the use of the De causis—in Alan of Lille; in the De fluxu entis (On the Outflow of Being), also entitled De causis primis et secundis (On the First and Second Causes); in the De

68 O. Bardenhewer, ed., Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift über das reine Gute, bekannt unter den Namen Liber de Causis (Fribourg, 1882). It is improbable that the Arabic De causis was the work of a muslimizing Christian of Toledo in the twelfth century, as Thiry and Alonso have suggested.

67 See above, n. 6.
statibus hominis interioris (On the States of the Interior Man);⁶⁸ and in the Speculum specificationum (Mirror of Speculations), written by Alexander Neckham between 1204–13. Despite its limited use at this early period and despite a syncretism that restricted its originality, the De causis had an influence worthy of careful description upon doctrine and literature. One had to wait for St. Thomas to solve the enigma of its origin and to perceive the framework of its thought.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, from 1180 on men recognized the resources it offered to a Christian seeking a way to purge the metaphysics of the One of emanationism. For that matter, it was itself clearly the product of a mind that wished to bend Proclus's hypostases to the service of the Judaeo-Muslim doctrine of a creator-God.

As its first resource, the De causis offered a complete and systematic explanation of the world in a series of theorems compact in their formulation, delightful to the mind, and exhibiting a real genius for metaphysics in their analysis of such great categories as the one and the many, the changing and the changing, cause and effect, whole and part, being, and intelligence. Not since Proclus had a Neoplatonic manual followed a method so deductive and so consistent in its idealism.

 Obviously, the concept of causality was most fully exploited and developed with a metaphysical richness that neither Augustine nor even pseudo-Dionysius in his "way of causality" had achieved. Whereas in pseudo-Dionysius the Neoplatonic system was vitalized by a dynamic hierarchy that provided an ontological law and a religious thrust, here in the De causis the levels of being remained fixed and self-enclosed, with each reality deriving its participation in higher realities from within. Furthermore, the book preserved the integrity of the spiritual life, which had been central for Plotinus but which had disappeared in Proclus. It did so by affording a profound meditation upon eternity and by asserting the immanence of the First Cause in its effects and the presence of these, in turn, in the

First Cause. The treatise On the States of the Interior Man profited by these considerations in its description of the soul's pilgrimage toward beatitude. In the De causis—this Muslim adaptation of Proclus's Elementatio theologica—God existed, and not merely the One with its henads. While concentrating the transcendent realities within himself, He became, if not a person, at least an existence, an esse. This is a long way, however, from the "definitions" of God in the Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers, an admirable expression of the mystical metaphysics of the twelfth century.

However, it was in its adaptation of the concept of "procesion" to creation that the De causis opened up traditional Neoplatonism to theologians. The First Cause, now including the fullness of transcendental perfections—one, good, intelligence, soul, the one supreme and universal form—was the creating cause as well. The fourth proposition of the De causis became classic—Prima rerum creatarum est esse (the first of created things is being)—and this esse, as the first form of all reality, defined the radical dependence of that reality upon the primum esse (First Being). But twelfth-century masters, completely dominated by the notion of "formation" typical of Platonic idealism not only in the De causis but in Augustine and Boethius or Proclus and Avicenna, were as yet unable to isolate "creation" properly so called, namely as the cause of total existence. The treatise On First and Second Causes prepared the way for their discernment of creation⁷⁰ but did not itself depart from the thesis of the De causis that several creative principles, each according to its own formality, came together in the production of beings.

b. Avicenna

Acquaintance with Avicenna, who was just being made known to the West by the Toledo translators, strengthened the hold that this

⁶⁸ This is the title supplied for the anonymous and anecphalic treatise on the spiritual and cosmic journeys of the soul; text edited and analyzed by M.-Th. d'Alverny, AHDL. (1940), 239–99.


same metaphysical structure—its problems and solutions—had upon men. Knowledge of Avicenna was as yet mostly sketchy. If Gundissalinus, given the advantage of his situation in Toledo, had a good view of the totality of Avicenna’s thought, those who made use of that thought in other centers took from it, apart from certain Neoplatonic commonplaces, only the most conspicuous elements of his cosmology and psychology. No doubt it is with these first infiltrations of Avicenna that one must identify the *commenta Aristotelis* (comments upon Aristotle) that were denounced in 1210 and associated with Amaury of Bène.71

Except in Gundissalinus, the influence of Avicenna brought “the Cause” to greater prominence than “the One” and “the Good” in ongoing Neoplatonic tradition. One sees this in the later disciples of Gilbert of La Porée, for instance, in Ralph of Longchamp’s commentary on the *Anticlaudianus* of Alan of Lille, about 1205; in the treatise *On First and Second Causes*, which attempted without much success to combine Augustine, John the Scot, and the *De causis* with Avicenna; and in the treatise *On the States of the Interior Man*, which was textually closer than others to Avicenna and faithful to his hierarchy of beings.

Twelfth-century authors as yet made no use of Avicenna’s famous thesis concerning the accidental quality of existence or of his metaphysics of essential, not merely temporal, contingency. In the fragments of the *Shifâ* that they read, they did not avail themselves of its meticulous analysis of the creative act, tied as this analysis was to subtle Arabic terminology untranslatable in stiff and plain Latin phrases. Thus it was in quite elementary fashion that they, above all Amaury, handled the concept of *esse* (being) which Avicenna had subjected to the classical dialectic of Neoplatonism in the style of the *De causis*.72 And yet, thanks to Avicenna, they began to recog-

The Platonisms of the Twelfth Century

nize that the diversity of beings sprang not from a limitation inseparable from emanation as such, but from the conscious intention of the First Cause; this recognition gave a setback to pure emanationism by providing for the ultimate will of the creator.

The *De immortalitate animae* (*On the Immortality of the Soul*) of Gundissalinus, the *De anima* (*On the Soul*) attributed to him, and the treatise *On the States of the Interior Man* first introduced the West to Avicenna’s metaphysics of the soul and his related analysis of the theory of knowledge. The whole was framed within a cosmology featuring the stars, animate heavens, and the like, which struck men’s imaginations, if one may judge by graphic representations that accompany the manuscripts.73 Here again, certain curious points of contact with the accounts of the soul given by Christian spiritual writers, even at Citeaux,74 allowed for some contribution to the synthesis of these thinkers; one such involves the doctrine of the two “faces” of the soul, which, preserving its Augustinian character in Gundissalinus, is found in the distinction between *intellec tus* and *intelligentia* (intellect and understanding) in the treatise *On the Soul* attributed to him.

Those who gave or were yet to give a religious cast to their transcendental dialectic likewise drew upon Avicenna with good reason. The Muslim philosopher was of a completely different stamp from Proclus, whose theurgic piety was excluded from his manuals of metaphysics. Avicenna was a mystic, and his philosophical concepts were not divorced from his mystical experience. Even when William of Auvergne would denounce Avicenna’s *deliramenta* (mad ideas), he could not have escaped from the religious influence of one whom he called “so great a philosopher.”75 Moreover, the *theoria* of pseudo-

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72 A jamming together of the technical terminology of Boethius and that of Avicenna on *esse*—“forma,” “quo est”—worked against the originality of the Muslim philosopher, even in Albert the Great. St. Thomas reversed that influence, both in terminology and in doctrines, to the benefit of Avicenna.

73 See illustration reproduced in M.-Th. d’Alverny (cited above, n. 68), p. 268.

74 See de Vaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 172, 175; striking likenesses are to be found between Gundissalinus’s *De anima* (last chapter) and Isaac of L’Etoile.

75 *De legibus* (see the Orléans, 1674 ed., of William’s works: Vol. I, p. 54a): “Cujusdam tanti justior quan to deliramenta tantus philosophus magis videre potuit et videre neglexerit.” (His condemnation is the more just because of those mad ideas which so great a philosopher could more easily have judged and which he failed to do.)
Dionysius blended well with the vision of things in God evoked by
Avicenna's analysis of their subtle being. This was not the case with
the *De causis*.

**Conclusion**

Were these Neoplatonisms of the Middle Ages anything more
than sketchy and confused offshoots of the great works of Plato, of
Plotinus, of Avicenna? Ignorance of a great part of the work of these
men, indirect and fragmentary transmission of their texts and teach-
ings, indecipherable translations and the poverty of the Latin vocab-
ulary, an experimental synthesis which picked apart the best con-
structed systems—all of these seriously restricted the authenticity
and the quality of these Neoplatonisms. At the same time, scholars
have justly reacted against an earlier and excessively harsh judgment
which concealed the originality of this Latin Platonism of the twelfth
century and refused to see in it anything more than a patchwork
product. To be sure, no genius rebuilt, from within, a new system
based upon Plato's inspiration, as St. Thomas was to do with Aris-
totle in the following century. Even less was this a renaissance, a
rebirth, in the manner provided by the historical reconstruction of
the Quattrocento. Nonetheless, the intellectual curiosity and the pro-
tracted labors of the twelfth-century masters gave both unity and
character to the Platonic materials with which they dealt, whether in
their schools or in their meditations.

As Christians, as students of the Bible, as theologians, these mas-
ters tried to overcome the antagonism they endlessly encountered
between Semitic religion and Hellenic intellectualism, between the
gospel and Greek naturalism, by a convinced determination to har-
monize them. The fathers had certainly pointed the way. Philo
among the Jews and Avicenna among the Arabs had anticipated the
effort made by twelfth-century masters to bring together the God
of nature with the God of history and of the Bible. After much fum-
bbling and many setbacks, they raised their endeavors to the level
of theological knowledge, the great task of which is precisely to use

the resources of reason to build up faith in the mystery of God from
within the faith itself. The task remains and is renewed from century
to century, and it finds its unity and its validity less in its philosophi-
cal materials than in its confronting these materials with the same
promises and the one light of Christian Revelation. The masters of
the twelfth-century were intellectually and institutionally theolo-
gians, not philosophers. The historian of philosophy cannot give
them full treatment. To de-existentialize creation, to lift the history
of individual souls into the eternal order of things, to fill up the chasm
dividing an essentialist Platonic ontology from a theology of history
—to these immense tasks five generations devoted themselves with
tenacity; and ancient Platonism, already prolific in countless ways,
found a new fruitfulness in their works. Testimony to its vitality is
found in the very opposition the enterprise encountered, not only
from the monastic theology of a Rupert of Deutz or from Citeaux,
but from certain professional experts in theology as well. Robert of
Melun, one of the adversaries of Gilbert of La Porree at the Council
of Reims, denounced its contaminating effect upon doctrine and
even upon biblical language: "As for that quotation I gave you—
'the causes or reasons of things are inferior to the creator but supe-
rior to the creature'—I have never heard anyone cite any passage of
scripture where this quotation can be found or clearly implied, nor
can I find it in scripture myself, no matter how hard I try. Indeed,
these words—'the causes or reasons of things are inferior to the
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in either Augustine, with his transformation of Neoplatonism
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76 See Klubansky, *Continuity of the Platonic Tradition* (cited above, n. 28).

77 *Sententiae*, i.XI.12 (Martin, II, 269): "Quod autem dixi scriptum esse
*Rationes rerum infra creatorem esse et supra creaturam*, nec scripturam in qua
hoc reperiri possit aut certo vocabulo designari audivi, nec in aliqua scriptura,
in quantum valeo, legi. Verba vero haec *Rationes rerum infra creatorem sunt
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In this fashion, then, and bending before the necessities which always dominate even the most flexible accommodations, Christians of this century revived various tensions internal to Platonism itself: the tension between the cosmic God of the Timaeus and the hidden God of Plotinus and Hermes Trismegistus; between an optimistic vision of the world and a pessimistic dualism of matter and spirit; between a rational theology and theurgic mysteries; between the way that leads from the many to the One and that leading from the One to the many. Alan of Lille was the best witness of these tensions. The realism of Christian history, the inevitable personalism of grace, the inviolable mysteries of the divine plan—these both illuminated and screened the Platonizing in which theology deliberately engaged. Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius could not easily be reconciled; Boethius seemed too pat. Some refused Platonism as too rational; others were led astray by it into heresy. Plato led some to scorn the world of sense, others to rejoice in exuberant contact with nature and to become interested in the sciences and arts. All accepted the duality of the human mind, its face turned upwards toward ecstasy; and thus they deviated from the biblical monism, in which man was caught up in the drama of sin and grace in all his concrete reality, and in which God's action became incarnate in order to make contact with creation precisely in its physical reality.

But whatever the variants of Neoplatonism, it remained, as Emile Bréhier called it, "a description of the metaphysical landscapes through which the soul is transported as it undergoes what might be described as spiritual training." It was precisely its religious character that attracted men of this time. In their schools or in their cells, it was for them a means of access to the intelligible Reality. Despite its awkward conflation of disparate elements, the treatise On First and Second Causes was a theological work, not a venture-some sortie into metaphysics. Moreover, they considered knowledge, or contemplation, as having an ontological worth—what an exaltation of faith! Here we are far from Aristotelian intellectualism, from Plato himself. The concept of creation was a religious one;

God was no mere architect. By itself, metaphysics could only lay hold upon the paradoxes attending this concept; it was peculiar to Hebraic thought.

Yet, many, though nourished by the Consolation of Philosophy and closer to the Timaeus, used this supreme intelligible Reality to explain the sense-perceptible world and not merely to mount toward Being that is self-existent and divorced from the world. The followers of Gilbert of La Porée combined the cosmic mysticism of the Greek fathers with the epistemological rationalism of Boethius. Hugh of Saint-Victor, faithful Augustinian that he was, drew up an ordo disciplinae (order of study or discipline) which soon entered into the Aristotelian naturalism that characterized medical studies from 1200 on. And yet the appearance of Aristotle was to provoke a violent reaction not only from the orthodoxy but from the sensitivities of Christians.

Was Platonism, then, to be the only philosophy congenial to the theologian? St. Thomas showed that it was not. In his work, faith in search of understanding had recourse to Aristotle—to his anthrop-ology, his metaphysics, his method—in order to build itself into a "science," a project which neither Platonic inspiration nor Platonic techniques could authorize. Strange outcome, this, for the genius of Aristotle, which had never taken the transcendent as its object. Yet it provided the means for estimating the scope and establishing the methods proper to man's earthbound reason, if only to permit its attaining to the First Being, whereas Platonism impugned these for the sake of methods independent of the structures of man's intell-igence.

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80 See L. B. Geiger, La participation dans la philosophie de saint Thomas d'Aquin (Paris, 1942), p. 449: "If men went beyond Aristotle here, Aristotle was not betrayed. One may go so far as to say that Aristotle's logic, just as he elaborated it, remained intact, for it was still the only logic having empirical and rigorous worth and did not stretch beyond the world of sensible sub- stances for which Aristotle himself used it. What St. Thomas added to it was not a new logic; it was a new use of the unique logic of Aristotle in a negative
THE PLATONISMS OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

A rarified outcome as well, for Aristotelianism did not destroy Platonic "spiritualism," to which Christians still turned spontaneously, though not without some handicap to their appreciation of the spirit of the gospel, to their appreciation of historical reality, to their worldly effectiveness. Nor did Aristotelianism diminish in any way the nobility and the truth of twelfth-century Neoplatonism—a fact that rules out any simplistic contrast between "the Aristotelianism of the scholastics" and "the Platonism of the fathers," a distinction which represents a historical error and a misunderstanding of theology.

form in a domain it had not penetrated—that of pure spirits and the First Being.

"But since this was an extension made negatively, Aristotle's logic was not totally abandoned. It was retained as the permanent basis of the boldest efforts to express the nature of separated substances and of God: negative knowledge, as St. Thomas understood it, far from denying the primacy, quoad nos, of man's apprehension of the sensible world and his rational knowledge, implied that such primacy was its most essential character."

In consequence, the laws, the very existence, of such negative knowledge of the mystery of God are not simply an outgrowth of the affective side of human nature but a structural necessity imposed by the rational struggle of the theologian to lay hold upon the divine object. The too hasty syncretism of Neoplatonists in the twelfth century arrested this process only momentarily.

The Symbolist Mentality

"POETRY'S LYRE RINGS with vibrant falsehood on the outward literal shell of a poem, but interiorly it communicates a hidden and profound meaning to those who listen. The man who reads with penetration, having cast away the outer shell of falsehood, finds the savory kernel of truth wrapped within." Thus does Alan of Lille declare the principle of his art, which uses metaphor and, even more, myth—the myth of Nature, the myth of Fortune, the myth of Venus, which support the play of his art through a long narrative—not as mere literary devices or tropes to give a poet's touch to some intellectual reality, but as consistent means for signifying the inner substance of things. They are not therefore part of a psychological game played by an esthete, even though literary elegance—elegans pictura—is also involved; at stake is the discernment of the profound truth that lies hidden within the dense substance of things and is revealed by these means.

One might have taken the same sort of declaration from a professor of the "arts of poetry" in the schools or, better still, from the works of Chrétien of Troyes or from Arthurian romance—did not

1 "At, in superficiali litterae cortice falsum resonat lyra poetica, sed interius, auditoribus secretum intelligentiae altioris eloquentiae, ut exteriori falsitatis abjecto putamine, dulciorem nucleum veritatis secreto intus lector inveniat"; Alan of Lille De planctu naturae (PL, CCX, 451C). This statement on the use of myth, Alan puts into the mouth of Dame Nature. Cf. R. de Lage, p. 117: "One surmises that this author found pleasure in the difficulty of working out a metaphor, and one can judge him successful. His ingenuity does not entitle one to lavish praise upon the ease and inventiveness Platonism afforded him; selection and arrangement would have been a crushing task for a twelfth-century author. Yet one must grant Alan of Lille a certain talent for the difficult art he chose as a vehicle for his ideas."
three centuries, the Muslim world was to pour its riches into the Christian West, which, though on crusade against Islam, was aware, at least in frontier regions such as Sicily and Spain, of the wealth and truth possessed by the adversary. The basic homogeneity of the Neoplatonic inspiration showed itself once more, this time in the contribution—as yet rudimentary but already important—which it made through Muslim culture to the converging influences of Augustine, pseudo-Dionysius, John the Scot, and Boethius. In the last third of the twelfth century, the first lot of Muslim works passed through the scriptorium of the Toledo translators and added yet another metaphysical and religious variant to the shifting forms of Neoplatonism already existing in the West. Thus began a protracted period of crises that was to end only at the beginning of “modern times,” after the Middle Ages, through repeated struggles, had absorbed Muslim thought. The condemnation of 1210 revealed, in a manner as confused as the thing it denounced, a keen awareness of this ideological invasion, at the heart of which, it seems, lay a Muslim emanationism Neoplatonic in character.

a. The Liber de causis

The little treatise De causis (Concerning Causes), destined to have a great future, came into circulation toward the 1180’s. It was a Latin translation made by Gerard of Cremona (died in 1187) from an Arabic text, probably of the ninth century. A concise and original reworking of the Elementatio theologica of Proclus, it circulated under the title Liber Aristotelis de expositione bonitatis purae (The Book of Aristotle Concerning the Pure Good)₆⁶—a title which gave further evidence of the guise under which Aristotle made his appearance at this moment in the West after having been considered a mere logician in the early Middle Ages. There were as yet only a few traces of the use of the De causis—in Alan of Lille; in the De fluxu entis (On the Outflow of Being), also entitled De causis primis et secundis (On the First and Second Causes);₆⁷ in the De

₆⁶ O. Bardenhewer, ed., Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift über das reine Gute, bekannt unter den Namen Liber de Causis (Fribourg, 1882). It is improbable that the Arabic De causis was the work of a muslimizing Christian of Toledo in the twelfth century, as Théry and Alonso have suggested.

₆⁷ See above, n. 6.
statibus hominis interioris (On the States of the Interior Man); and in the Speculum speculationum (Mirror of Speculations), written by Alexander Neckham between 1204–13. Despite its limited use at this early period and despite a syncretism that restricted its originality, the De causis had an influence worthy of careful description upon doctrine and literature. One had to wait for St. Thomas to solve the enigma of its origin and to perceive the framework of its thought. Nonetheless, from 1180 on men recognized the resources it offered to a Christian seeking a way to purge the metaphysics of the One of emanationism. For that matter, it was itself clearly the product of a mind that wished to bend Proclus's hypostases to the service of the Judaeo-Muslim doctrine of a creator-God.

As its first resource, the De causis offered a complete and systematic explanation of the world in a series of theorems compact in their formulation, delightful to the mind, and exhibiting a real genius for metaphysics in their analysis of such great categories as the one and the many, the unchanging and the changing, cause and effect, whole and part, being, and intelligence. Not since Proclus had a Neoplatonic manual followed a method so deductive and so consistent in its idealism.

Obviously, the concept of causality was most fully exploited and developed with a metaphysical richness that neither Augustine nor even pseudo-Dionysius in his "way of causality" had achieved. Whereas in pseudo-Dionysius the Neoplatonic system was vitalized by a dynamic hierarchy that provided an ontological law and a religious thrust, here in the De causis the levels of being remained fixed and self-enclosed, with each reality deriving its participation in higher realities from within. Furthermore, the book preserved the integrity of the spiritual life, which had been central for Plotinus but which had disappeared in Proclus. It did so by affording a profound meditation upon eternity and by asserting the immanence of the First Cause in its effects and the presence of these, in turn, in the

First Cause. The treatise On the States of the Interior Man profited by these considerations in its description of the soul's pilgrimage toward beatitude. In the De causis—this Muslim adaptation of Proclus's Elementatio theologica—God existed, and not merely the One with its henads. While concentrating the transcendent realities within himself, He became, if not a person, at least an existence, an esse. This is a long way, however, from the "definitions" of God in the Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers, an admirable expression of the mystical metaphysics of the twelfth century.

However, it was in its adaptation of the concept of " procession" to creation that the De causis opened up traditional Neoplatonism to theologians. The First Cause, now including the fulness of transcendental perfections—one, good, intelligence, soul, the one supreme and universal form—was the creating cause as well. The fourth proposition of the De causis became classic—Prima rerum creaturarum est esse (the first of created things is being)—and this esse, as the first form of all reality, defined the radical dependence of that reality upon the primum esse (First Being). But twelfth-century masters, completely dominated by the notion of "formation" typical of Platonic idealism not only in the De causis but in Augustine and Boethius or Proclus and Avicenna, were as yet unable to isolate "creation" properly so called, namely as the cause of total existence. The treatise On First and Second Causes prepared the way for their discernment of creation but did not itself depart from the thesis of the De causis that several creative principles, each according to its own formality, came together in the production of beings. In this matter the Aristotelianism of Boethius would seem to have offered greater stimulus to metaphysical reflection by providing beings with an ontological constitution of their own without excluding, indeed right within, their participation in the transcendent.

b. Avicenna

Acquaintance with Avicenna, who was just being made known to the West by the Toledo translators, strengthened the hold that this

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68 This is the title supplied for the anonymous and anachepalic treatise on the spiritual and cosmic journeys of the soul; text edited and analyzed by M.-Th. d'Alverny, AHDL, (1940), 239–99.


same metaphysical structure—its problems and solutions—had upon men. Knowledge of Avicenna was as yet mostly sketchy. If Gundissalinus, given the advantage of his situation in Toledo, had a good view of the totality of Avicenna's thought, those who made use of that thought in other centers took it, apart from certain Neoplatonic commonplace places, only the most conspicuous elements of his cosmology and psychology. No doubt it is with these first infiltrations of Avicenna that one must identify the commenta Aristotelis (comments upon Aristotle) that were denounced in 1210 and associated with Amaury of Bène.  

Except in Gundissalinus, the influence of Avicenna brought "the Cause" to greater prominence than "the One" and "the Good" in ongoing Neoplatonic tradition. One sees this in the later disciples of Gilbert of La Porrée, for instance, in Ralph of Longchamp's commentary on the Anticlaudianus of Alan of Lille, about 1205; in the treatise On First and Second Causes, which attempted without much success to combine Augustine, John the Scot, and the De causis with Avicenna; and in the treatise On the States of the Interior Man, which was textually closer than others to Avicenna and faithful to his hierarchy of beings.

Twelfth-century authors as yet made no use of Avicenna's famous thesis concerning the accidental quality of existence or of his metaphysics of essential, not merely temporal, contingency. In the fragments of the Shi'fu that they read, they did not avail themselves of its meticulous analysis of the creative act, tied as this analysis was to subtle Arabic terminology untranslatable in stiff and plain Latin phrases. Thus it was in quite elementary fashion that they, above all Amaury, handled the concept of esse (being) which Avicenna had subjected to the classical dialectic of Neoplatonism in the style of the De causis.  

And yet, thanks to Avicenna, they began to recog-
Dionysius blended well with the vision of things in God evoked by Avicenna's analysis of their subtle being. This was not the case with the *De causis*.

**Conclusion**

Were these Neoplatonisms of the Middle Ages anything more than sketchy and confused offshoots of the great works of Plato, of Plotinus, of Avicenna? Ignorance of a great part of the work of these men, indirect and fragmentary transmission of their texts and teachings, independant translations and the poverty of the Latin vocabulary, an experimental syncretism which picked apart the best constructed systems—all of these seriously restricted the authenticity and the quality of these Neoplatonisms. At the same time, scholars have justly reacted against an earlier and excessively harsh judgment which concealed the originality of this Latin Platonism of the twelfth century and refused to see in it anything more than a patchwork product. To be sure, no genius rebuilt, from within, a new system based upon Plato's inspiration, as St. Thomas was to do with Aristotle in the following century. Even less was this a renaissance, a rebirth, in the manner provided by the historical reconstruction of the Quattrocento. Nonetheless, the intellectual curiosity and the protracted labors of the twelfth-century masters gave both unity and character to the Platonic materials with which they dealt, whether in their schools or in their meditations.

As Christians, as students of the Bible, as theologians, these masters tried to overcome the antagonism they endlessly encountered between Semitic religion and Hellenic intellectualism, between the gospel and Greek naturalism, by a convinced determination to harmonize them. The fathers had certainly pointed the way. Philo among the Jews and Avicenna among the Arabs had anticipated the effort made by twelfth-century masters to bring together the God of nature with the God of history and of the Bible. After much fumbling and many setbacks, they raised their endeavors to the level of theological knowledge, the great task of which is precisely to use the resources of reason to build up faith in the mystery of God from within the faith itself. The task remains and is renewed from century to century, and it finds its unity and its validity less in its philosophical materials than in its confronting these materials with the same promises and the one light of Christian revelation. The masters of the twelfth-century were intellectually and institutionally theologians, not philosophers. The historian of philosophy cannot give them full treatment. To de-existentialize creation, to lift the history of individual souls into the eternal order of things, to fill up the chasm dividing an essentialist Platonic ontology from a theology of history—to these immense tasks five generations devoted themselves with tenacity; and ancient Platonism, already prolific in countless ways, found a new fruitfulness in their works. Testimony to its vitality is found in the very opposition the enterprise encountered, not only from the monastic theology of a Rupert of Deutz or from Citeaux, but from certain professional experts in theology as well. Robert of Melun, one of the adversaries of Gilbert of La Porree at the Council of Reims, denounced its contaminating effect upon doctrine and even upon biblical language: "As for that quotation I gave you—"the causes or reasons of things are inferior to the creator but superior to the creature"—I have never heard anyone cite any passage of scripture where this quotation can be found or clearly implied, nor can I find it in scripture myself, no matter how hard I try. Indeed, these words—"the causes or reasons of things are inferior to the creator but superior to the creature"—smack more of Platonic thought than they do of the Church's." It was necessary to bring in either Augustine, with his transformation of Neoplatonism through his own brilliant experience, or pseudo-Dionysius, with the reputation his mysticism and his legend enjoyed. Peter Lombard, insensitive to Neoplatonism, ignored pseudo-Dionysius and impoverished Augustine.

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The Symbolist Mentality

3

Poetry's Tyres

The Patriarchal Century

A Rough Outcome as Well, for Aristokratism did not destroy...