BRILL

ORIENS 52 (2024) 1–36

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Ventriloquizing Islamic Neoplatonism through Presocratic Thinkers: the Use of Ancient Greek Authorities in the Arabic Plotinus and Pseudo-Ammonius

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Accepted 16 January 2025 | Published online 27 March 2025

Abstract

This article discusses how Plotinus' use of the Presocratics in *Enneads* IV 8[6] has been creatively reworked in its Arabic translation-cum-adaptation known as the *Plotiniana Arabica*. While Plotinus interprets the archaic views of Heraclitus, Empedocles and Pythagoras through the prism of Platonic eschatology, the Arabic paraphrase boldly remolds the Greek source text in conformity with the teachings of the Qurʾān. Accordingly, the "Presocratic" eschatology of the Arabic Plotinus is further juxtaposed here with the related doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius, which likewise projects Islamized Neoplatonic teachings onto various Presocratic thinkers. The ingenious changes introduced into the *Plotiniana Arabica* and the artful fabrications of Pseudo-Ammonius not only reveal the original philosophy underlying these treatises, but also reflect their common ideological objectives.

Keywords

Arabic Plotinus – Plotinus – Pseudo-Ammonius – Neoplatonism – Presocratics

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how Plotinus' account of the Presocratics in *Enneads* IV 8[6] has been creatively reworked in its Arabic translation-cum-paraphrase known as the *Plotiniana Arabica*. Although the focus of the present article is on the selective and corrective adaptation of *Enneads* IV–VI that was produced in the circle of eminent translators led by al-Kindī in ninth-century Baghdad, it should be noted at the outset that the Medieval text under analysis builds on a long philosophical tradition which cannot be exhaustively covered here. It will suffice to note that the emergence of Presocratic thought in the sixth century BCE marks the beginning of Hellenic philosophy, whereas Plotinus (d. 270 CE) ushers in the last phase of pagan Hellenistic metaphysics (which is usually taken to end with the closure of the Platonic Academy in Athens by the Byzantine Christian Emperor Justinian I in 529 CE). This means that the archaic views of Presocratic thinkers were interpreted first through the metaphysical lens of Neoplatonic polytheism and then through those of Abrahamic monotheism of the Syriac Christian and Arab Muslim traditions. Let us briefly touch upon the background of the sources to be discussed below.

In 1882 Friedrich Dieterici published the *editio princeps* of a treatise entitled *Kitāb Uṯūlūǧiyā Arisṭāṭālīs wa-huwa l-qawl ʿalā l-rubūbiyya* (*Aristotle's Book of Theology That is the Discourse on Divine Sovereignty*).[1] That Plotinus' *Enneads* were translated into Arabic as the *Theology of Aristotle* was not only symptomatic of the development of Arabic philosophy (which made the harmonization of Platonism and Aristotelianism one of its major objectives), but also conducive to the authoritative spread of Neoplatonism (flavored with various Peripatetic conceptions) in the Arabic-speaking world. However, several decades after the *editio princeps* of the *Theology*, two other Arabic Plotinus texts have been identified: Paul Kraus drew attention to the so-called *Risāla fī l-ʿilm al-ilāhī* (*Epistle on Divine Science*),[2] whereas Franz Rosenthal to the collection of sayings ascribed to *al-Šayḫ al-Yūnānī* ("the Greek Sage").[3] As

1 Friedrich Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus arabischen Handschriften zum ersten Mal herausgegeben* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1882). One year later, the scholar provided his edition with a German translation: Friedrich Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus dem Arabischen übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883).

2 Paul Kraus, "Plotin chez les Arabes: remarques sur un nouveau fragment de la paraphrase arabe des *Ennéades*," *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte* 23 (1940–41): 263–95.

3 Franz Rosenthal, "Aš-Šayḫ al-Yûnânî and the Arabic Plotinus Source," *Orientalia* 21 (1952): 461–92; 22 (1953): 370–400; 24 (1955): 42–66.

the vocabulary and style of these texts show them to come from the same Arabic Plotinus source, the two have been included in the later edition of the *Plotiniana Arabica* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī.[4] While this edition still left many things to be desired,[5] the ongoing work of Cristina D'Ancona has now yielded an excellent edition with an Italian translation and extensive commentary that constitutes a true landmark in our understanding of the Arabic Plotinus.[6]

As already observed, the *Plotiniana Arabica* originated in the Kindian circle. On the basis of various linguistic and terminological similarities, Gerhard Endress has identified certain translation characteristics that were typical of

4 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Aflūṭīn ʿinda l-ʿarab. Plotinus apud Arabes. Theologia Aristotelis et fragmenta quae supersunt* (Cairo: Maktabat al-naḥda al-miṣriyya, 1955). For an illuminating discussion of the Arabic Plotinus corpus, see Maroun Aouad, "La *Théologie d'Aristote* et autres textes du *Plotinus Arabus*," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Goulet (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1989), 541–93. It may not be superfluous to note here that the Arabic Plotinus corpus also contained material from the Arabic adaptation of Aristotle's *Parva naturalia*, on which see Rotraud Hansberger, "Plotinus Arabus Rides Again," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 21 (2011): 57–84. For useful surveys of the *Plotiniana Arabica* in general, see, among many, Cristina D'Ancona, "Plotinus, Arabic," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 1030–38; Rotraud Hansberger, "Die *Theologie des Aristoteles*," in *Islamische Philosophie im Mittelalter: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Heidrun Eichner, Matthias Perkams, and Christian Schäfer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013), 162–85; Cristina D'Ancona, "The *Theology* Attributed to Aristotle: Sources, Structure, Influence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 8–29; and, most recently, Peter Adamson, "Plotin in arabischer Übersetzung," in *Plotin-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Christian Tornau (Heidelberg: Metzler, 2024), 495–505.

5 See Geoffrey L. Lewis, "*Aflūṭīn ʿinda l-ʿArab* by ʿAbdurraḥmān Badawī," *Oriens* 10 (1957): 395–99.

6 So far two volumes have been published: *Plotino. La discesa dell'anima nei corpi* (*Enn. IV 8*[6]. *Plotiniana Arabica* (*pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele, capitoli 1 e 7; "Detti del Sapiente Greco"*), ed. and trans. Cristina D'Ancona (Padua: Poligrafo, 2003); and *Plotino. L'immortalità dell'anima IV 7*[2]. *Plotiniana Arabica* (*pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele, capitoli I, III, IX*). *Introduzione, testo greco, traduzione e commento, testo arabo, traduzione e commento*, ed. and trans. ead. (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2017). Although D'Ancona's edition is only partial and not yet critical (see *La discesa*, 222 and *L'immortalità*, 403), it greatly improves on all previous editions. Accordingly, wherever possible D'Ancona's edition of the *Plotiniana Arabica* is used in this study, although for the *Dicta Sapientis Graeci* this paper relies on *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh*, ed. and trans. Elvira Wakelnig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Otherwise, references are made to the edition by Badawī (with occasional consultation of Dieterici). On the formidable challenges of preparing a critical edition of the Arabic Plotinus, see Dimitri Gutas, "The Text of the Arabic Plotinus: Prolegomena to a Critical Edition," in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. Cristina D'Ancona (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 371–84.

adaptations produced under the auspices of the Philosopher of the Arabs.[7] For example, one of these was the tendency to condense the Plotinian hierarchy and subordinate the conflated hypostases to God. Such modifications reveal not only that the then approach to the task of translation was worlds apart from our modern standards, but also that this creative activity of paraphrastic and interpretative translation became a major force in the development of Arabic philosophy. Consequently, examining the alterations and revisions introduced into the target text *vis-à-vis* the source is of vital importance because it allows us to fully appreciate the philosophical novelty of the resulting translation-cum-adaptation.[8] In what follows, the innovativeness

7 Gerhard Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy," in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences Dedicated to H.J. Drossaart Lulofs on His Ninetieth Birthday*, ed. Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1997), 43–76.

8 Fritz W. Zimmermann, "The Origins of the So-Called *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, ed. Jill Kraye, William F. Ryan, and Charles B. Schmitt (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), 133, seems to have been one of the first to recommend that what those around al-Kindī did to Plotinus (as well as to Proclus and Alexander) be seriously treated as reflecting "their own philosophy." Since then several scholars have fruitfully pursued this line of inquiry and successfully unraveled the paraphrast's original philosophical views. Particularly prominent among these is Cristina D'Ancona, whose pioneering research on the *Plotiniana Arabica* spans over three decades. See, for example, Cristina D'Ancona Costa, "Per un profilo filosofico dell'autore della *Teologia di Aristotele*," *Medioevo* 17 (1991): 83–134; ead., "Il tema della *docta ignorantia* nel neoplatonismo arabo: un contributo all'analisi delle fonti di *Teologia di Aristotele*, *mīmar* II," in *Concordia Discors: Studi su Niccolò Cusano e l'umanesimo europeo offerti a Giovanni Santinello*, ed. Giorgio Piaia (Padua: Antenore, 1993), 3–22; ead., "Divine and Human Knowledge in the *Plotiniana Arabica*," in *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, ed. John J. Cleary (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 419–42; ead., "Pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, Chapter I: Structure and Composition," *Oriens* 36 (2001): 78–112; ead., "Le traité de Plotin *Sur les trois substances qui sont des principes* dans le corpus néoplatonicien arabe," *Studia graeco-arabica* 2 (2012): 281–302; ead., "Hellenistic Philosophy in Baghdad: Plotinus' anti-Stoic Argumentations and their Arabic Survival," *Studia graeco-arabica* 5 (2015): 165–204; and ead., "God and Intellect at the Dawn of Arabic Philosophical Thought: Plotinus' Treatise V 4[7], Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *De anima* in the Age of al-Kindī," *Studia graeco-arabica* 8 (2018): 133–52. While there is also the classic paper by Richard C. Taylor, "Aquinas, the *Plotiniana Arabica*, and the Metaphysics of Being and Actuality," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998): 217–39, very important research on the original philosophy contained in the *Plotiniana Arabica* has also been done by Peter Adamson. See his first monograph devoted to the topic: *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the Theology of Aristotle* (London: Duckworth, 2002) as well as the following articles: Peter Adamson, "Aristotelianism and the Soul in the Arabic Plotinus," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (2001): 211–32; id., "Correcting Plotinus: Soul's Relationship to Body in Avicenna's Commentary on the *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, vol. II, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen, and Martin William

of the *Plotiniana Arabica* will be illustrated with the fascinating example of "Presocratic" eschatology: the ensuing comparative analysis of two different "doxographies on the soul" in the Greek and in the Arabic Plotinus will shed interesting light on how archaic Hellenic thought has been recast in order to fit the requirements of Islamic Neoplatonism.[9]

However, the adroit reworking of Plotinus' reinterpretation of Presocratic views that is to be found in the *Plotiniana Arabica* will also be contrasted with the related doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius, which has been edited, translated into German and commented upon by Ulrich Rudolph.[10] While the full title of this work is *Kitāb Amūnīyūs fī ārāʾ al-falāsifa bi-ḥtilāf al-aqāwīl fī l-mabādiʾ* [*wa-*]*fī l-bāriʾ* (*Ammonius' Book on the Opinions of the Philosophers Regarding the Different Doctrines on the Principles and the Creator*), it draws primarily on the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (*Refutation of All Heresies*), which is customarily attributed to the bishop Hippolytus of Rome (third century CE).[11] This remarkable "Schein-Doxographie" also imposes Islamized Neoplatonic teachings onto ancient philosophers, as it systematically turns various Presocratic and later Greek thinkers into pious Muslims. Crucially, though, this text is not only contemporaneous with the *Plotiniana Arabica* (both can be

Francis Stone (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2004), 59–75; and id., "Non-Discursive Thought in Avicenna's Commentary on the *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, ed. Jon Mcginnis and David C. Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 87–111. Notwithstanding all this, a great deal of research still remains to be done in this area, as stressed by the scholar in his recent study: see Peter Adamson, "Plotinus Arabus and Proclus Arabus in the *Harmony of the Two Philosophers* Ascribed to al-Fārābī," in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. II: *Translations and Acculturations*, ed. Dragos Calma (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 182.

9 While the "doxographical" section appears both in the Greek and in the Arabic Plotinus, the presence of an Aristotelian-like survey of the views of earlier philosophers might have contributed to the successful presentation of the *Theology* as a work by the Stagirite, on which see especially Peter Adamson, "Two Early Arabic Doxographies on the Soul: al-Kindī and the *Theology of Aristotle*," *The Modern Schoolman* 77 (2000): 110, but also D'Ancona, "Pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*," 99.

10 Ulrich Rudolph, *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios: Ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam* (Stuttgart: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner Wiesbaden GMBH, 1989). On Arabic doxographies in general, see Hans Daiber, "Doxographie und Geschichtsschreibung über griechische Philosophen in islamischer Zeit," *Medioevo* 16 (1990): 1–21; id. "Hellenistisch-kaiserzeitliche Doxographie und philosophischer Synkretismus in islamischer Zeit," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, part 2: *Principat*, vol. 36.7: *Philosophie, Wissenschaften, Technik. Philosophie* (*Systematische Themen; indirekte Überlieferungen; Allgemeines; Nachträge*), ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 4974–92; and Dimitri Gutas, "Pre-Plotinian Philosophy in Arabic (Other than Platonism and Aristotelianism): A Review of the Sources," in ibid., 4939–73.

11 But see below n. 39.

dated to the ninth century), but also closely connected to it in terms of language and content.[12] Since Pseudo-Ammonius' doxography likewise originated in the Kindian circle, the work will provide us with a useful basis for investigating the philosophical changes that were introduced into the Arabic adaptation of Plotinus.

As will be seen, the two Arabic texts are strongly affiliated ideologically because they were produced by the translation movement, whose motivation – as Dimitri Gutas has convincingly argued – could not have been purely epistemic but must also have been social and political: we may surmise that the newly ascended ʿAbbāsid dynasty in Baghdad promoted Greek philosophy not merely out of scholarly zest or intellectual curiosity, since at least equally important must have been the desire to exploit Hellenic thought with a view to combating the rivalling powers of Persia and Byzantium.[13] Yet, to successfully impugn the Zoroastrian and Byzantine traditions, one would want to present Greek philosophy as utterly coherent and fully homogenous. Assuming that one of the goals of the translation movement was to oppose mighty intellectual forces from non-Muslim cultures allows us to better understand why all the disputes and divisions among Greek philosophers were so fervently downplayed or even denied: this strategy made it possible to sell Hellenic thought as a monolithic, consistent and therefore attractive alternative. Moreover, the appeal of ancient foreign theories would further have to be secured by showing their immediate relevance for the questions that were of paramount importance for those who commissioned and carried out the translations. This means that foreign authorities of the past would be made not only unanimous on key philosophical points but also germane to the theological issues raised in the ninth-century Islamic world: the problems of monotheism and creationism in particular. Unsurprisingly, the texts to be discussed below will illustrate this abundantly.

12 As demonstrated persuasively by Endress and Rudolph. See *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, ed. Gerhard Endress (Beirut-Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1973), 71; 105–6; 211; 231–32; Rudolph, *Doxographie*, 14; 209–10; and Gerhard Endress, "Building the Library of Arabic Philosophy: Platonism and Aristotelianism in the Sources of al-Kindī," in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. Cristina D'Ancona (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 337.

13 Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), esp. 28–104.

2 Presocratic eschatology in *Enneads* IV and *Aristotle's Theology* I

In his treatise *On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies* (*Enn.* IV 8[6]), Plotinus does not engage in elaborate mythical speculations about the soul's celestial peregrinations, but rather suggests that any investigation into the soul's destiny ought to be reflexive in nature. The tract begins with the celebrated "autobiographical" depiction of the philosopher's personal experience of union with Intellect (1.1–11), upon which the testimony of three Presocratic thinkers is invoked with a view to probing (i) the possibility of one's direct encounter with the divine in the sublunary world and (ii) the necessity of the soul's recurring descent into a terrestrial body (1.11–23).[14] The two problems are closely intertwined. If the eternal soul belongs to the higher intelligible realm, then why should it ever fall into a lesser state of being imprisoned in a lump of perishable flesh? And once the soul has donned these earthly garments which weigh it down so heavily, how can it ever doff this corporeal burden and ascend to the divine in the reality of here below? When searching for answers to these thorny questions, Plotinus adduces the theories of Heraclitus, Empedocles, the Pythagoreans and, finally, Plato.[15] The present paper will focus on the Presocratic accounts, which are subjected to a particularly daring reinterpretation: Plotinus takes the physicists' words out of their original context as pertaining to the study of nature and exploits them for his own philosophical purposes so that, for example, Heraclitus' cosmological theories metamorphose into eschatological ones. It goes without saying, then, that Plotinus' reliability as a "doxographer" or "historian of philosophy" must be approached here with a great deal of caution because his goal is not to offer a faithful and unbiased report of any thinker's views but rather to present his own metaphysical doctrines as a legitimate (if improved) continuation of the venerable Greek philosophical tradition. This is even more true for the Arabic Plotinus, whose ideological

14 All references to Plotinus are to *Plotini Opera*, vols. I–III, ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer (Paris: de Brouwer, 1951–73). This critical edition also contains an English translation of the *Plotiniana Arabica* by Geoffrey L. Lewis (vol. II). For English translations of Plotinus, on the other hand, this paper relies primarily on *Plotinus*, vol. IV, trans. Arthur H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) and secondarily on *Plotinus: The Enneads*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson; trans. George Boys-Stones, John M. Dillon, Lloyd P. Gerson, Richard A.H. King, Andrew Smith, and James Wilberding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

15 On the emergence of this interpretive scheme, see Walter Burkert, "Plotin, Plutarch und die platonisierende Interpretation von Heraklit und Empedokles," in *Kephalaion: Studies in Greek Philosophy and its Continuation offered to Prof. C. J. de Vogel*, ed. Jaap Mansfeld and Lambertus Marie de Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 137–46.

agenda conspicuously overlaps with that of Pseudo-Ammonius. Let us first look at the use of ancient authorities in the Greek and in the Arabic Plotinus.

	Enneades IV 8[6], 1.11–23 (eds. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer)	*Theologia Aristotelis* I 231.1–232.3 (ed. C. D'Ancona)
1.	Ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ἡράκλειτος, ὃς ἡμῖν παρακελεύεται ζητεῖν τοῦτο, ἀμοιβάς τε ἀναγκαίας τιθέμενος ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων, ὁδόν τε ἄνω κάτω εἰπὼν καὶ μεταβάλλον ἀναπαύεται καὶ κάματός ἐστι τοῖς αὐτοῖς μοχθεῖν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι εἰκάζειν ἔδωκεν ἀμελήσας σαφῆ ἡμῖν ποιῆσαι τὸν λόγον, ὡς δέον ἴσως παρ' αὐτῷ ζητεῖν, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτὸς ζητήσας εὗρεν.	غير أنّي لمّا أطلتُ الفكرة وأجلتُ الرأي فصرتُ كالمبهوت، وتذكّرت عند ذلك إرقليطوس فإنّه أمر بالطلب والبحث عن جوهر النفس الشريفة والحرص على الصعود إلى ذلك العالم الشريف الأعلى، وقال إنّ مَن حرص على ذلك وارتقى إلى العالم الأعلى جُوزي بأحسن الجزاء اضطرارًا. فلا ينبغي لأحدٍ أن يفتر عن الطلب والحرص في الارتفاع إلى ذلك العالم، وإن تعب ونصب، فإنّ أمامه الراحة التي لا تعب بعدها ولا نَصَبَ. وإنّما أراد بقوله هذا تحريضًا على طلب الأشياء العقلية لتجدها كما وجد وتدركها كما أدرك.
2.	Ἐμπεδοκλῆς τε εἰπὼν ἁμαρτανούσαις νόμον εἶναι ταῖς ψυχαῖς πεσεῖν ἐνταῦθα καὶ αὐτὸς φυγὰς θεόθεν γενόμενος ἥκειν πίσυνος μαινομένῳ νείκει τοσοῦτον παρεγύμνου, ὅσον καὶ Πυθαγόρας, οἶμαι, καὶ οἱ ἀπ' ἐκείνου ᾐνίττοντο περί τε τούτου περί τε πολλῶν ἄλλων. Τῷ δὲ παρῆν καὶ διὰ ποίησιν οὐ σαφεῖ εἶναι.	وأمّا أنبادوقليس فقال إنّ الأنفس إنّما كانت في المكان العالي الشريف، فلمّا أخطأت سقطت إلى هذا العالم،[16] وإنّما صار هو أيضًا إلى هذا العالم فرّارًا من سُخْط الله تعالى، لأنّه لمّا انحدر إلى هذا العالم صار غياثًا للأنفس التي قد اختلطت عقولها، فصار كالإنسان

16 D'Ancona, *La discesa*, 231.11 has العلم but the text should read العالم (thus, Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 23.7 and Dieterici, *Theologie*, 9.10).

المجنون نادى الناس بأعلى صوته
وأمرهم أن يرفضوا هذا العالم وما فيه
ويصيروا إلى عالمهم الأوّل الأعلى
الشريف، وأمرهم أن يستغفروا الاله – عزّ
وجلّ – لينالوا بذلك الراحة والنعمة التي
كانوا فيها أولاً. قد وافق هذا الفيلسوف
فيثاغورس في دعائه الناس إلى ما دعا،
غير أنّه إنّما كلّم الناس بالأمثال والأوابد،
فأمر بترك هذا العالم ورفضه والرجوع
إلى العالم الأوّل الحقّ.

In conformity with the practice adopted by Geoffrey L. Lewis and Cristina D'Ancona, the italics in the Arabic translation below indicate the words and phrases that (more or less) correspond to the Greek original, whereas the normal typescript marks the Arabic departures from the source text.

Enneads IV 8[6], 1.11–23
(tr. A.H. Armstrong modified)

1. Heraclitus, who exhorts us to examine this, positing "necessary changes" from opposites, saying "the way up and down" and "what changes is at rest," and "it is weary to toil at and be subjected to the same things," has left us guessing, since he has neglected to make clear his argument to us, perhaps because one must seek by oneself, as he himself sought and found.

Aristotle's Theology I §§ 27–33
(tr. G.L. Lewis modified)

But when I dwell on *the thought* and ponder *the idea*, I become all but astonished, and then I remember *Heraclitus, for he ordered that one should seek and inquire* about the substance of the noble soul and [that one should] strive for ascent to that noble and higher world. He said: "He who strives for that and *rises* to the *higher* world is *necessarily* rewarded with the best reward. And so no one must neglect the seeking and striving to rise to that world, though he may suffer *fatigue and toil*, for before him there is that *rest* after which there is no fatigue and no toil."

		What he meant with *his statement* was to incite the *seeking* of the intelligible things *so that one could find them as he found them and attain them as he attained them*.
2.	And Empedocles, when he said that it is the law for sinful souls to fall down here, and that he himself has come [to this world], after becoming "an exile from the gods," "trusting in maddened strife," has, I think, revealed as much as has Pythagoras and his followers, who have hinted enigmatically at this and many other things. Besides, he is not clear because he writes poetry.	*Empedocles*, on the other hand, *says that the souls* were in the high and noble place, but, *having sinned, they fell down into this world*; *and that he too came to this world as a fugitive from* the wrath of *God* the Sublime, because when he descended to this world he became succor to the souls whose intellects had become contaminated, and so he became like a *madman*: he called men at the top of his voice and ordered them to reject this world and what is in it and to turn to their original, higher and noble world. And he ordered them to ask forgiveness of the Great and Mighty God so that they could thereby obtain the rest and grace that they originally were in. *With this* philosopher *Pythagoras agreed* in his summons to men, except that he spoke to men *through images and wonders*; and so he ordered them to abandon this world, reject it and return to the original true world.

Passage no. 1 adduces four apothegms from Heraclitus which are amalgamated into a "doxographical" exposition of Neoplatonic eschatology. The Greek original comprises 51 words, whereas its Arabic translation consists of 83 words.[17] In both cases, a reference is made to the previously mentioned dilemma: how is it possible that the soul can achieve assimilation to the divine

17 Here and elsewhere, the connective conjunctions (*wa-*, *fa-*, etc.) and suffix pronouns (*-nī*, *-hu*, etc.) have not been counted separately.

in the sublunary realm and yet must also continually descend into an earthly body (*touto/al-fikra … al-raʾy*). The Ephesian sage is hailed as urging us to conduct philosophical inquiry (*parakeleuetai zētein/amara bi-l-ṭalab wa-l-baḥṯ*) into this puzzle.[18] Essentially, this is where the full correspondences between the two texts end, but prior to undertaking any deeper analysis, it will be prudent to reiterate that Plotinus *reinterprets* Heraclitus through the prism of the Platonic account of the cycle of reincarnations: this means that although the original scope of the Heraclitean aphorisms was quite different (elemental transformations, cosmic cycles and harmony of opposites), Plotinus construes them as pertaining to the aforementioned conundrum. Naturally, it is this (construal of) Heraclitus that made its way to the Arabic translation of the *Enneads*. Let us first go through the Greek original and then its Arabic rendition.

Scholars have been hotly debating the extent to which the phrase "necessary changes from opposites" preserves fr. B 90 DK.[19] While Plutarch reports (*De E* 8.388d–e) Heraclitus to have said that "all things are an exchange (*antamoibē*) for fire,"[20] Plotinus credits the Ephesian thinker with postulating inexorable

18 It is worth noting that the Arabic translation of the *Enneads* displays the tendency to frequently render one Greek term (e.g. *zētein*) with a couplet (e.g. *al-ṭalab wa-l-baḥṯ*). This feature of the *Plotiniana Arabica* has already been stressed by Kraus, "Plotin chez les Arabes," 289–90: "le paraphraste a une prédilection pour les traductions doubles, rendant un terme grec par deux expressions arabes." However, the scholar also espoused "l'hypothèse d'une version intermédiaire en langue syriaque" (ibid., 290), which has been powerfully challenged by Zimmermann, "Origins," 113–18; 134; 151–52. The call to search for "die unmittelbare Grundlage des arabischen Textes" goes back to Anton Baumstark, "Zur Vorgeschichte der arabischen *Theologie des Aristoteles*," *Oriens Christianus* 2 (1902): 188. For recent discussions of this vexed issue, see Sebastian P. Brock, "A Syriac Intermediary for the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*? In Search of a Chimera," in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. Cristina D'Ancona (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 293–306; and Alexander Treiger, "Palestinian Origenism and the Early History of the Maronites: In Search of the Origins of the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*." In *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond: Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries*, ed. Damien Janos (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 44–80.

19 See the discussions by D'Ancona, *La discesa*, 137–38; Giannis Stamatellos, *Plotinus and the Presocratics: A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus' Enneads* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 159 with n. 99; Barrie Fleet, *Plotinus: Ennead IV.8. On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies. Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2012), 79; and Paul Kalligas, *The Enneads of Plotinus: A Commentary*, vol. II, trans. Nickolaos Koutras (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 200, with further references. Unsurprisingly, there is no consensus on the exact meaning that Plotinus extracts from the apophthegm, on which compare e.g. *Plotin. Traités 1–6*, trans. Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 252–53 n. 3, with Giulia Guidara, *Prima di Platone: Plotino e gli inizi della filosofia greca* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2020), 110 n. 12.

20 Where no English reference is provided, the translation is my own.

"alternations" (*amoibai*) from unspecified contraries. The very circumstance that Plotinus employs a different term for "change" reveals that what we have here is actually a Plotinian reinterpretation. This is further corroborated by the fact that Plotinus evidently abstracts from the cosmological context of Heraclitus' saying ("the interchange of elements in which fire prevails") so as to have the Ephesian sage transmogrify into a proponent of the ineluctable cycle of the soul's recurring ascents and descents. This creative reworking of fr. B 90 DK builds on the famous "way up and down" image (fr. B 60 DK), which is invoked immediately after the "necessary changes" phrase for the purpose of ventriloquizing Platonic eschatology through an ancient authority: the adverbs *anō* and *katō* dovetail nicely with the conception of the soul's inevitable upward and downward journeys, which is clearly why Plotinus regularly employs this imagery in the *Enneads*. For instance, towards the end of this treatise, Plotinus elucidates (IV 8[6], 8.11–13) that every soul has something of what is "below in the direction of the body" (*katō pros sōma*) and of what is "above in the direction of Intellect" (*anō pros noun*). Hence, one could say that the "Heraclitean" imagery of the soul's inclining now downwards towards the lower sphere of the material and now upwards towards the higher sphere of the spiritual lies at the heart of Plotinus' reflections on the soul's twofold nature.

These two paraphrastic citations of Heraclitus ("who exhorts …") are then followed by a juxtaposition of two allegedly verbatim quotations from the Ephesian thinker ("saying …"). While the present passage of Plotinus is our only source for the two Heraclitean quotations (frs. B 84a and 84b DK), they appear here as closely connected: the soul can find repose and relief in its transformations ("what changes is at rest"), even though this constant toing and froing between ascents and descents inescapably brings about fatigue and ennui ("it is weary to toil at and be subjected to the same things"). Subsequently, Plotinus frowns upon Heraclitus' proverbial obscurity but also suggests that it could be an intentional strategy on his part meant to jolt us into exploring the self: drawing on such frs. as B 101 DK ("I searched out myself.") and B 116 DK ("It belongs to all men to know themselves… ."), Plotinus hammers home the point that through his deliberate lack of clarity the Ephesian sage encourages one to engage in introspective investigation of the soul's nature and destiny. Given the profound impact of the *Enneads*, it is no wonder that Plotinus' reinterpretation of Heraclitus cemented the latter's fame as a revered ancient authority on various issues of eschatology. While the Plotinian account of the Ephesian thinker became canonized by such Neoplatonic authors as Iamblichus (*De an.* ap. Stob. *Ecl.* I 49.39, 378.21–25) and Aeneas of Gaza (*Theophr.* 9), it was this highly anachronistic portrayal of Heraclitus that made its way into the Arabic translation, where it became adapted with still greater boldness.

Even a cursory comparison with the original passage immediately shows that the Arabic adaptation is more verbose than the source text.[21] To begin with, the paraphrase opens with a lengthy sentence whose first part only faintly echoes the Greek: the phrases "dwell on the thought" (*aṭāla l-fikra*) and "ponder the idea" (*aǧǧala l-raʾy*) render the demonstrative pronoun "this" (*touto*), which – as has been noted – refers to the possibility of the soul's being united with the divine already in this world and the necessity of its being repeatedly imprisoned in a terrestrial body. Then, the Arabic philosopher stresses his being "astonished" (*mabhūt*) at the soul's peculiar predicament, upon which "Iraqlīṭūs" is finally recalled. In the Arabic version the Ephesian sage also "enjoins the investigation" (*amara bi-l-ṭalab wa-l-baḥṯ/parakeleuetai zētein*), but the object of the recommended investigation is different: if in the source text Plotinus has Heraclitus adjure us to meditate on the fated cycle of the soul's recurring ascents and descents, then the Arabic paraphrase has Heraclitus command us to examine "the substance of the noble soul" (*ǧawhar al-nafs al-šarīfa*) and to seek "ascent" (*ṣuʿūd*) to "the noble and higher world" (*al-ʿālam al-šarīf al-aʿlā*). This is naturally an exhortation to concern oneself solely about the rational part of our soul, which, being a vestige of Intellect, must follow the intellectual virtues, surmount the bodily desires and return to the superior reality of its noetic home: this *nostos* begins with the individual's soul assimilation to the universal soul and then proceeds to Intellect, although in the *Plotiniana Arabica* the two hypostases at times coalesce.[22] Still, the upshot is that the adaptor offers a Heraclitus that is different from the Plotinian original, since the source text is turned into a sort of edifying sermon in which

21 While this asymmetry in length reflects the general character of the paraphrase, this trait of the *Plotiniana Arabica* has been highlighted by, for example, Paul B. Fenton, "The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, ed. Jill Kraye, William F. Ryan, and Charles B. Schmitt (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), 244.

22 It is worth recollecting here that the adaptor is prepared to compress the Plotinian hierarchy and subordinate the conflated hypostases to God. Thus, for instance, in the tenth chapter of the *Theology* (Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 163.11), the paraphrast has the Creator originate things through the medium of a form which is characterized as "the higher world, that is, the intellects and souls" (*al-ʿālam al-aʿlā aʿnī l-ʿuqūl wa-l-anfus*). For other passages which likewise collapse the Soul and Intellect together into an effect of God, see especially Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*, 78; 140, but also Endress, "Circle," 59 and Hansberger, "Die *Theologie des Aristoteles*," 176 n. 48. Relatedly, there has been some debate whether this merging of the hypostases reveals Porphyry's contribution to the *Plotiniana Arabica*, on which compare Cristina D'Ancona Costa, "Porphyry, Universal Soul and the Arabic Plotinus," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999): 78–80; 87–88, with Michael Chase, "Porphyry and the *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, vol. 11: *Translations and Acculturations*, ed. Dragos Calma (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 164–65.

the Ephesian thinker metamorphoses into a promulgator of an unabated struggle for the celestial reward rather than a champion of metempsychosis (unpalatable to the orthodox Muslims).[23] Thus, instead of reincarnation, the paraphrast focuses on the moral debacle that inevitably occurs when the soul ill-advisedly turns away from the intelligible realm: the soul's descent into a perishable body is a punishment (see also below), but its ascent brings the beatific prize. Accordingly, the adaptor strikes a – *sit venia verbo* – homiletic tone when he strenuously urges that "no one must" (*fa-lā yanbaġī li-aḥad an*) neglect the seeking and striving to rise to the higher world.

The Arabic quotation from the Ephesian sage freely utilizes several concepts from Plotinus' account, however, with the result that the four Heraclitean apothegms can only be vaguely discerned in the Arabic Plotinus. Arguably, the clearest reference is to the "way up and down" image, which in the paraphrase is partially captured as "rising to the higher world" (*irtaqā ilā l-ʿālam al-aʿlā*), albeit no mention is made of any descent, which would reflect the Greek *katō*. The word "changes" is likewise absent from the Arabic translation, but the adverb "necessarily" (*iḍṭirāran*) is supposed to correspond to the Greek *anankaiai*, as the Arabic Heraclitus assures those who strive for the intelligible realm that they will certainly be requited "with the best reward" (*bi-aḥsan al-ǧazāʾ*). The remaining two aphorisms have been reduced to barely recognizable phrases, which have been deftly woven into a passionate exhortation to ascend to true reality. Thus, the phrase "it is weary to toil" (*kamatos esti … mochthein*) has been rendered with the verbs to "toil" (*taʿiba*) and "fatigue" (*naṣaba*), whereas the verb to "be at rest" (*anapauesthai*) has been rendered with the noun "rest" (*rāḥa*). Yet, although the connection between repose and ennui has been generally preserved, "Iraqlīṭūs" uses it only to reinforce his promise of the heavenly award and eternal peace for those who exert themselves in their searches.[24]

23 The paraphrast opts here for the strategy of translation by omission, but another approach would be to take statements about metempsychosis as figurative references to the soul's plight. This is what Avicenna does in his commentary on the *Theology of Aristotle*, on which see Adamson, "Correcting Plotinus," 72. On Avicenna's explanation of this particular passage, see id., "The Arabic Plotinus: A Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle' and Related Texts" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2000), 331; and Bethany Somma, *Models of Desire in Graeco-Arabic Philosophy: From Plotinus to Ibn Ṭufayl* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 103. On Avicenna's vigorous engagement with the *Theology* in general, see e.g. Adamson, "Non-Discursive Thought," 87–111; Cristina D'Ancona, "Degrees of Abstraction in Avicenna: How to Combine Aristotle's *De anima* and the *Enneads*," in *Theories of Perception in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Simo Knuuttila and Pekka Kärkkäinen (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 47–71; and Somma, *Models*, 99–109.

24 D'Ancona aptly stresses the obvious "estraneità dell'autore rispetto alle citazioni eraclitee" (*La discesa*, 290).

Crucially, no reference whatsoever is made to the cycle of rebirth and reincarnation, which may be the focus of Plotinus' attention, but which – as has been observed – comes off as unappealing to Muslim readers. Furthermore, Plotinus' complaint about the Ephesian thinker's obfuscation of his argument has likewise been left out, but otherwise the explication of the sage's words has been reproduced fairly faithfully, inasmuch as Heraclitus' "saying" (*qawl*) is also taken to be an incentive to conduct introspective exploration. Once again, however, the object of the advocated exploration is different: in the Greek original the search is for the self, whereas in the Arabic adaptation it is for "the intelligible things" (*al-ašyāʾ al-ʿaqliyya*). While this is consistent with the paraphrast's glorification of the benefits of Platonic philosophy and asceticism for the soul's salvation, the "Heraclitean" assurance of the celestial reward sits well with the eschatology that the related doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius ascribes to the Ephesian sage.

Thus, Pseudo-Ammonius reports (69.3–4) "Hiraql" to have taught that every soul that is "sullied" (*danisa*) and "evil" (*šarīra*) remains on the "earth" (*arḍ*), whereas the "pure" (*zakiyya*) and "clean" (*ṭāhira*) souls come to "heaven" (*samāʾ*), as they ascend to their "world" (*ʿālam*) proper. Moreover, Pseudo-Ammonius relates (69.6–7) that Heraclitus described this celestial abode as, among others, created without any "toil" (*taʿab*) or "fatigue" (*naṣab*). Hence, the Neoplatonic depiction of the heavenly award that "Iraqlīṭūs" offers in *Theology* I agrees nicely with the one that "Hiraql" puts forward in Pseudo-Ammonius: in both cases the Ephesian thinker speaks of the soul's ascent to a higher and nobler realm (which the Qurʾān also promises), no mention is made of the cycle of successive embodiments (which the Qurʾān also repudiates), while "toil" (*t-ʿ-b*) and "fatigue" (*n-ṣ-b*) are valued negatively and associated with the lower order.[25] One might, then, be tempted to think that these doctrinal and textual parallels indicate a common ideological agenda.[26] However, as will be seen shortly,

25 Let us emphasize here that the couplet *t-ʿ-b* and *n-ṣ-b* is precisely one of the key terminological correspondences between Pseudo-Ammonius' doxography and the *Plotiniana Arabica* which warrant the conclusion that both texts originated in the Kindian circle (see Rudolph, *Doxographie*, 210).

26 Also, in light of the fact that the Arabs knew Heraclitus primarily to be the author of a "cyclical ontological system," as pointed out by Carmela Baffioni, "Presocratics in the Arab World," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 1074. Indeed, in the Arabic doxographies the Ephesian philosopher is associated mainly with various physical and cosmological doctrines. Aetius Arabus is a case in point. See *Aetius Arabus: Die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung*, ed. Hans Daiber (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1980), 102.18–25; 126.5–6; 132.9–11; 134.12–13; 134.21–23; 150.6–9; 152.22–23; 156.23–24; 158.4–5; 158.18–20; 160.16–17; 162.7–13; 162.19–20; 166.4–5; 192.2–4; 238.14–19. Thus, the resemblance between

the two Arabic texts exhibit more similarities in the "Presocratic" ideas and nomenclature, which makes their complete independence from each other virtually impossible.

Passage no. 2 features a verbatim quotation from Empedocles' description of the descent of a *daimōn*, upon which the Empedoclean doctrine of the transmigration of the souls is interpreted as deriving from the enigmatic teachings of Pythagoras. The Greek original contains 46 words, whereas its Arabic translation comprises 104 words. The quotation is drawn from fr. B 115.13–14 DK. The extant excerpt consists of fourteen hexameter verses in which the philosopher of Acragas depicts (115.1–8) an "oracle of Necessity" (*Anankēs chrēma*) condemning the *daimones* that have sinned to a thirty-thousand-year cycle of reincarnations. Empedocles concludes his account of this "ancient decree of the gods" (*theōn psēphisma palaion*) by declaring (115.13–14) that he himself is now one of those miscreant spirits: "an exile from the gods and a wanderer, having trusted in maddened Strife" (*phugas theothen kai alētēs | neikei mainomenōi pisunos*). Thus, while the philosopher presents himself as a banished soul that nevertheless belongs to a higher order, Plotinus gladly utilizes the conception that the soul's departure to earth does not sever completely its connection with the intelligible realm. For both philosophers, the soul's fall from grace is governed by the necessary law of nature, but Plotinus stresses that this expulsion is indispensable for the soul to realize and reach the perfection of the noetic world. According to him, the sin arises from the soul's inherent attraction to the corporeal and not from the sensible cosmos, which, being a work of providence, must necessarily be the best possible imitation of the intelligible model.

When exploiting the idea of a divine law which, as a punishment for the transgression, ordains a series of painful rebirths in the bodies of diverse living creatures, Plotinus follows the well-established tradition of Platonist exegesis to identify the Empedoclean *daimones* with embodied souls (see Plut. *De exil.* 17.607c–e) and makes slight modifications to the quotation: he leaves out the noun "wanderer" (*alētēs*), but inserts the somewhat problematic verb "come" (*hēkein*) to this world.[27] Furthermore, Plotinus makes the Empedoclean Strife responsible for the incarnation of souls into bodies, as he has it drive the soul away from the intelligible, succumb to the craving for the corporeal, and become

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the "Heraclitean" eschatology of the Arabic Plotinus and the one of Pseudo-Ammonius further corroborates the thesis that the two texts are closely related ideologically.

27 Paul Kalligas has suggested that *hēkein* be emended to *neikei*. See his "Some New Plotinian Emendations," *Emerita* 56 (1988): 99–100; and *Enneads*, 201. Yet D'Ancona has cogently – in my opinion – argued against this emendation (*La discesa*, 141).

filled with guilt and fear of punishment. Otherwise, however, Plotinus accurately preserves the Empedoclean notion of an enduring cycle of successive embodiments, during which the guilty soul descends into the material world but maintains its identity despite manifold mortal incarnations. Obviously, though, Plotinus provides a different explanation of the soul's fault, which for him consists in the soul's individuation and results from its misguided desire to stand apart from the original unity. Needless to say, this concept of a sinful longing for otherness is a Neoplatonic addition to the Empedoclean teachings, which, as has been noted, Plotinus attributes to the soul's ingrained inclination toward the body and not to the material world (as the Gnostics would have it).

Crucially, Plotinus also traces this conception back to Pythagoras and "his followers" (*hoi ap' ekeinou*), who are all said to have "hinted enigmatically" (*ēinittonto*) at the problems examined in *Enneads* IV 8[6]. While the tradition connecting Empedocles with Pythagoras is attested already by Alcidamas (ap. Diog. Laert. 8.56) and Timaeus (ap. Diog. Laert. 8.54), Plotinus states that Empedocles has revealed "just as much as" (*tosouton … hoson*) Pythagoras. Interestingly, he suggests that the affinity between the two thinkers extends beyond content alone (the teaching of metempsychosis) to include form as well (the riddling manner of exposition). Nevertheless, the two doctrines are recondite and arcane for different reason: Pythagoras and his acolytes deliberately obfuscate their messages through the use of cryptic symbols, whereas Empedocles is abstruse due to the very medium of his genre. Yet although Plotinus associates all poetic style with obscurity and vagueness, he plainly prefers the Empedoclean mode of exposition over the Pythagorean one: this is why he is rather dismissive of the latter, makes no particular reference to any specific Pythagorean fragment and devotes much more attention to the Empedoclean account of the soul's descent. Still, irrespective of which strategy for providing oracular authority is ultimately embraced, Plotinus firmly believes in the indispensability of a philosophical elucidation.

Again, the Arabic adaptation is wordier than the Greek original and displays the pastoral and hortatory tone that is characteristic of the entire paraphrase. However, apart from the distinctly monotheistic and personalist apprehension of God (on which see below), this part of the translation is more faithful to the source text than the previous one, since the gist of the Greek original concerning Empedocles has been left intact. Thus, "Anbādūqlīs" also speaks of the "souls" (*anfus/psuchai*) that have "sinned" (*aḫṭa'a/hamartanō*) and, therefore, "fell down" (*saqaṭa/piptō*) into this world, although the Arabic paraphrase omits the reference to the "law" (*nomos*) and specifies that before their transgression the souls dwelt in "the high and noble place" (*al-makān al-ʿālī al-šarīf*), this being naturally the hypostatic Soul, which governs the whole of

cosmos and includes the individual souls (see also below). Subsequently, the Arabic Empedocles likewise states that he "came" (*ṣāra/hēkō*) to this world as an "exile" or "fugitive" (*farrār/phugas*), albeit the adaptation has the philosopher flee from the "wrath" (*suḫṭ*) of God. At this point, the paraphrast inserts a sentence that has no counterpart in the source text, for he has the "descending" (*inḥadara*) philosopher become "succor" (*ġiyāṯ*) to the souls whose "intellects" (*ʿuqūl*) had "become contaminated" (*iḫtalaṭa*), that is, blended with the material and earthy as a result of their separation from the hypostatic Soul and entombment in the terrestrial body of flesh.

Thus, the soteriological dimension is clearly amplified in the Arabic translation. In the Greek original, Empedocles descends to the sublunary realm to fulfill the divine law of retribution: according to Plotinus' interpretation, the sage of Acragas was banished for the fault of becoming allured by the dividing principle of multiplicity (i.e. "having put his trust in maddened Strife"). In the Arabic paraphrase, on the other hand, the exiled philosopher assumes the role of the savior and purifier of the fallen souls: those who have foolishly succumbed to carnal desires can nevertheless be rescued, since God mercifully sends a philosopher-prophet to salvage mankind. That the adaptor now emphasizes the sacerdotal role of philosophy and preaches asceticism more forcefully than the Greek original can also be seen in how he weaves the word "mad" (*maǧnūn/mainomenos*) into the translation: in the Arabic translation the term refers to Empedocles rather than his Strife.[28] Thus, in the course of his divine mission, the frenzied philosopher "at the top of his voice" (*bi-aʿlā ṣawtihi*) summons people to "reject" (*rafaḍa*) this world, "turn to" (*ṣāra ilā*) the intelligible realm and "ask forgiveness" (*istaǧfara*) of God so that the converts could regain the "rest" (*rāḥa*) and "grace" (*niʿma*) which they had enjoyed before they fell into a body on earth. Hence, although both texts admonish the reader to repent and atone for the misdeed, the Arabic adaptation does so more vehemently, as it deplores the abominable state of the descended soul. Furthermore, the paraphrast espouses a decisively personal conception of the

28 D'Ancona notes that the Greek *mainomenōi* refers here "erroneamente" not to the Empedoclean *neikos* but to the philosopher himself (*La discesa*, 291). It is worth pointing out, however, that this may have been an intentional change on the part of the paraphrast, who thereby manages to further dramatize his portrayal of the philosopher. After all, as D'Ancona herself rightly observes (ibid.), this presentation of Empedocles' "tratti taumaturgici" is perfectly reconcilable with the Greek and the Arabic doxographical traditions, on which see Daniel De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus: une lecture néoplatonicienne tardive* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1998), 143–48.

divine: God can be vengeful or merciful, that is, distributing punishments and rewards, depending on the soul's conduct and choices.[29]

One more time, Pseudo-Ammonius offers a portrayal of the philosopher of Acragas that dovetails nicely with what we encounter in *Theology* I. First, both texts present a very similar account of the descent. Thus, Pseudo-Ammonius asserts (71.5–6) that "Empedocles and everyone before him up to Heraclitus" (*anbāduqlis wa-man kāna qablahu ilā hiraql*) have taught that the "sullied" (*danisa*) souls remain in this world, "firmly attached" (*mutašabbiṯa*) to it, until they "call for help" (*istaġāṯa*) from the "universal soul" (*nafs kulliyya*), which encompasses them all.[30] This emphasis on the need to receive assistance in order to be saved is highly reminiscent of the adaptor's interpolation that Empedocles became "succor" (*ġiyāṯ*) to the fallen souls, since the verb *istaġāṯa* (to "call for help," "seek the aid") and the noun *ġiyāṯ* ("succor," "aid") have the same root (*ġ-w-ṯ*). Second, both texts share a thoroughly personal conception of the divine, which obviously deviates from Plotinus' account. According to Pseudo-Ammonius (71.6–8), Empedocles would have the "particular" (*ǧuz'iyya*) souls call for help the universal soul, which would then "supplicate" (*taḍarraʿa*) the second hypostasis, "Intellect" (*ʿaql*), which would in turn supplicate "the Creator" (*al-bāriʾ*) Himself. Now, the verb *taḍarraʿa* (to "humiliate/abase oneself," "beg/beseech") conveys here that one must humble oneself before God and implore Him submissively to avoid His wrath. Consequently, the whole of

29 While Adamson astutely observes that this passage shows particularly clearly how the adaptor sought to "produce a text that would fit into the context of a monotheistic religion with the notion of sin and forgiveness" (*Arabic Plotinus*, 75), De Smet offers an extensive discussion of "Anbaduqlīs monothéiste" (*Empedocles Arabus*, 62–85). This paper proposes that the portrayal of Empedocles in the *Plotiniana Arabica* agrees nicely with that of Pseudo-Ammonius, inasmuch as both are consistent with the Qurʾān (see below in the main text). For further support of the contention that the paraphrast's ethics is here shaped by the Islamic context, see Somma, *Models*, 97–98. However, one could make the case that the Empedoclean passage of the Arabic Plotinus carries certain Christian overtones as well. For example, Adamson speaks also of "a rather Christ-like description of Empedocles' being sent to our world to save us from sin" (*Arabic Plotinus*, 176; see also ibid., 224 n. 12, where the scholar credits Richard Taylor with this suggestion). This point has recently been developed by Cristina Bucur and Bogdan G. Bucur, "'The Place of Splendor and Light': Observations on the Paraphrasing of *Enn* 4.8.1 in the *Theology of Aristotle*," *Le Muséon* 119 (2006): 271–92. Thus, the scholars argue that the adaptor must have been a Christian who had in mind "the pre-Christian philosophers and the Old Testament prophets, culminating with John the Baptist" (ibid., 286).

30 These sullied souls are mentioned earlier in connection with Anaximenes (71.3). Let us recall here that Pseudo-Ammonius (69.3–9) ascribes to Heraclitus the same doctrine about the sullied souls which have to repent for their sins in the earthly prison until "the Creator" (*al-bāriʾ*) reveals His "pure light" (*nūr maḥḍ*) to them.

creation, including the two hypostases, Soul and Intellect, must meekly and deferentially entreat the Maker so that He – as Pseudo-Ammonius further reports (71.8–72.1) – would let His "light" (*nūr*) flow through them to this world, where all the individual souls and the entire sublunary realm "are illuminated" (*istaḍā'a*), which, "after many eons" (*ba'da duhūr kaṯīra*), enables the particular souls to reunite with their world proper.

Hence, the depiction of the descent that "Anbādūqlīs" offers in *Theology* I bears again a great resemblance to the one that "Anbāduqlis" puts forward in Pseudo-Ammonius, since both align with the teachings of the Prophet. First, in both texts the sage of Acragas stresses the indispensability of divine aid in the soul's salvation, although in the former work God's help comes through a philosopher-prophet, whereas in the latter it comes through the procession of hypostases. Second, both texts adopt a strongly personal conception of the divine: the Creator can be angry because He is not indifferent to the soul's sin, He must be approached with humility because He is the Almighty Lord of the whole of creation, and so on.[31] One more time, then, one is inclined to think that the accord between the two "Empedoclean" accounts points to a common ideological background for the two texts. The same applies to the Arabic Pythagoras, whose portrayal in the *Plotiniana Arabica* is, yet again, congruent with what we find in Pseudo-Ammonius.

As we have seen, the Arabic paraphrase of Plotinus presents Empedocles' exhortation to concern oneself with the salvation of one's soul in strongly religious terms. Pythagoras is similarly transformed into a philosopher-prophet who preaches and admonishes men to choose "the original true world" (*al-'ālam al-awwal al-ḥaqq*). Interestingly, though, these calls for ascetic renunciation of this world lead now to a significant departure from the source text. Plotinus is, obviously, perfectly aware that Pythagoras lived and taught before Empedocles: he explicitly suggests that the latter confirmed the teachings of the former (although he did so in a more riddling manner). In the Arabic translation, on the other hand, we encounter – as scholars examining the passage have acutely observed – a chronological "imbroglio"[32] or "capovolgimento,"[33] since the adaptor has Pythagoras corroborate Empedocles' revelation. Indeed, the phrase "with this philosopher Pythagoras agreed" (*qad wāfaqa hāḍā*

31 It is worth stressing here that the verb *taḍarra'a* appears in the *Theology* too (e.g. 228.11). Hence, this is yet another similarity in nomenclature between Pseudo-Ammonius' doxography and the *Plotiniana Arabica* which supports the hypothesis that both texts originated in the Kindian circle (see Rudolph, *Doxographie*, 197; 210).

32 De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 51.

33 D'Ancona, *La discesa*, 292.

l-faylasūf fīṯāġūras) entails that Pythagoras was a disciple of Empedocles: he concurred with his predecessor's "plea" (*duʿāʾ*) to "abandon" (*tark*) and "reject" (*rafḍ*) this world, although he opted to instruct people "through images and wonders" (*bi-l-amṯāl wa-l-awābid*). This difficult phrase has been rendered in various ways.[34] Most importantly, though, it is evidently meant to capture Plotinus' reference to the proverbial Pythagorean enigmacity. Still, curiously enough, the paraphrast reserves the mode of riddling expression for Pythagoras alone and mentions here neither Empedocles nor the problem of poetry's ambiguity. Instead, he has Pythagoras repeat Empedocles' vociferous entreaty to renounce the earthly in favor of the heavenly. Hence, in the Arabic paraphrase, Pythagoras staunchly echoes Empedocles' appeal, albeit in a more "thaumaturgical" cloak. Tellingly, the Pythagoras of Pseudo-Ammonius fits well into this picture.

First, there is a comparable chronological reversal, since contrary to the established Greek and Latin tradition, which frequently would have the sage from Samos learn either from Zoroaster himself,[35] or from the Magi in general,[36] Pseudo-Ammonius presents (52.14–53.2 and 54.8–12) "Pythagoras" (*fīṯāġūras*) as the teacher of "the Magi" (*al-maǧūs*), who, however, miserably failed to grasp the master's profound wisdom and sadly strayed from the right path of his monotheistic teaching.[37] Thus, Pseudo-Ammonius fundamentally

34 Thus, for example, "mit Gleichnissen und Aphorismen," Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles aus dem Arabischen übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen*, 10; "in parables and enigmas," Lewis, *Plotiniana Arabica*, 227; "con alegorías y cosas extraordinarias," Luciano Rubio, *Pseudo-Aristoteles: Teología. Traducción del árabe, introducción y notas* (Madrid: Ediciones Paulinas, 1978), 71; "en paraboles et mystères," De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 157; "per immagini e prodigi," D'Ancona, *La discesa*, 232; "par images et prodiges," Angela Guidi, "L'obscurité intentionnelle du philosophe: thèmes néoplatoniciens et farabiens chez Maïmonide," *Revue des études juives* 166 (2007): 142. While the word *amṯāl* could be the plural of either *miṯl* (i.a. "image," "equivalent") or *maṯal* (i.a. "simile," "parable"), it corresponds to the Greek *eikones*, which can be translated into Arabic as both (i.e. *eikōn/miṯl* and *maṯal*). The word *awābid*, on the other hand, signifies "unusual things" or "prodigious events," but it denotes neither "aphorisms" (*pace* Dieterici) nor "enigmas" (*pace* Lewis). A recent discussion of the *topos* of esoteric language in the *Theology of Aristotle* as well as in al-Fārābī and Maimonides is offered by Guidi, "L'obscurité," 129–45. The paper helpfully covers the relevant terms (*alġāz*, *amṯāl*, *rumūz*, etc.) and the textual relations between such admittedly similar couplets as *al-rumūz wa-l-alġāz*, *al-amṯāl wa-l-awābid*, and so on.

35 See e.g. Plut. *De an. procr.* 2.1012e; Apul. *Flor.* 15, *Apol.* 31; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.15.69; Hippol. *Ref.* 1.2.12; Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* 12.

36 See e.g. Cic. *Fin.* 5.29.87; Diog. Laert. 8.3; Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* 41; Iambl. *Vit. Pyth.* 4, 28; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 10.4.4–15.

37 Rudolph aptly characterizes Pseudo-Ammonius' reinterpretation as "eine völlige singuläre und wohl auch 'un-antike' Erscheinung" (*Doxographie*, 171). For an insightful

transforms the Greek source text in accord with his ideological agenda of denigrating Zoroastrian dualism.[38] Let us examine this part of his corrective translation more closely. When recounting Pythagoras' theory of number, [Hippolytus] relates (*Ref. omn. haer.* 1.2.6) that the sage from Samos considered the principle of numbers to be "the first monad" (*prōtē monas*), which, being "male" (*arsēn*), generates all the other numbers "in the manner of a father" (*patrikōs*), whereas the second number was, for him, the "dyad" (*duas*), which, being "female" (*thēlus*), is generated by the primal monad.[39] Since Pseudo-Ammonius is determined to disparage Zoroastrianism, he inserts an incriminating interpolation, supplementing his paraphrastic translation of the passage with the claim (54.8) that the Magi "confounded" (*ḫalaṭa*) the "created" (*mubtadaʿ*) dyad with a "creating" (*mubtadiʿ*) one, thereby introducing the notion of two creators. We can see, then, that Pseudo-Ammonius ingeniously remolds [Hippolytus'] account in order to harshly denounce the Persian deviation from monotheism as a misguided distortion of valuable Pythagorean insights: not only is Pythagoras' theory of number recast in the spirit of religious monism but the aforementioned chronological reversal also clearly serves the purpose of promoting the venerable truth of Hellenic philosophy over its later Persian perversion. While the upshot is that Zoroastrian dualism is exposed as the result of a grave historical misapprehension, the ideological motivation behind this doxographical fabrication is similar to the one that underlies our passage from *Theology* 1: to excavate Abrahamic monotheism from underneath various archaic formulations and to discredit all forms of polytheism (whether Greek, Persian or otherwise).

Yet subsequently Pseudo-Ammonius offers another doxographical concoction that is of interest for our analyses: in the sixteenth chapter, Pythagoras is associated with "India" (*al-hind*), as Pseudo-Ammonius reports (55.5–8) how

discussion of this un-Hellenistic and thoroughly Islamized Pythagoras in various Arabic doxographies, see Daniel De Smet, "Pythagoras' Philosophy of Unity as a Precursor of Islamic Monotheism: Pseudo-Ammonius and Related Sources," in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Irene Caiazzo, Constantinos Macris, and Robert Aurélien (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 277–95 (the account of Pseudo-Ammonius' being dealt with on 277–80).

38 In his excellent commentary, Rudolph rightly speaks of "das ideologische Konzept" to which the entire fifteenth chapter has been tailored (*Doxographie*, 172). See also De Smet, "Pythagoras' Philosophy of Unity," 279–80.

39 The text along with translation (at times modified) is that of *Refutation of All Heresies*, ed. and trans. M. David Litwa (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016). The attribution of this treatise to Hippolytus is problematic, on which see the scholar's preface (xxxii–xl).

another disciple of Pythagoras, "Kalanos of Italy" (*qalānūs min ahl īṭāliyā*), journeyed to an Indian city to promulgate his teacher's doctrine, took on an Indian student, "Brahman" (*braḥman*), who went on to "magnify" (*ǧassama*) his master's teachings.[40] As Pseudo-Ammonius one more time reverses the orthodox relationship between Pythagorean philosophy and its Indian source,[41] the resulting "Pythagorean" eschatology transpires to be as Neoplatonic as the one that the Arabic Plotinus puts forward. Suffice it to mention here the Brahman's promise (56.14–57.4) that every man who "purifies" (*haḏḏaba*) his soul and hastens to leave this "sullied" (*danis*) world will, among many other things, "feel no weariness" (*lā yamallu*) in "the higher world" (*al-ʿālam al-aʿlā*), nor will he ever "become tired" (*yakillu*) of its "delightful things" (*al-ašyāʾ al-muliḏḏa*), for neither "fatigue" (*naṣab*) nor "tiredness" (*kalāl*) will trouble him there. While Pythagoras' pupil assures further (57.6–7) that "abandoning" (*tark*) the pleasures of this world will bring union with the superior realm, the "Pythagorean" doctrine of Pseudo-Ammonius, one more time, sits well with the "Presocratic" teachings of the *Plotiniana Arabica* not only in content but also in form. Regarding the terminological correspondences between the two texts, we may point to the "fatigue" (*n-ṣ-b*) that is mentioned by Heraclitus in *Theology* I and Pythagoras' Indian disciple in Pseudo-Ammonius, or to the "abandoning" (*t-r-k*) of this world that both "Pythagorean" accounts recommend.[42] Obviously, this radical asceticism is hardly "Zoroastrian," "Brahmanic" or "Presocratic" but rather Neoplatonic, whereas the ideological appropriation of non-Islamic elements serves, again, the purpose of promoting the virtue of Muslim piety.

40 The verb *ǧassama* primarily means to "make corporeal" or "invest with a body," the corresponding noun *ǧism* denoting "body." Accordingly, Rudolph translates the phrase *ǧassama qawlahu* (55.8) as "er gab nämlich dessen Lehre eine körperliche Ausrichtung" (*Doxographie*, 94). However, as the scholar himself observes, Pseudo-Ammonius' purpose with this account is not to denigrate the Indian sages, but rather to extol them as "recht getreue, ja fast übereifrige Adepten der pythagoreischen Lehre" (ibid., 173). Thus, it seems more appropriate to follow Elizabeth G. Price, *The Barāhima's Dilemma: Ibn al-Rāwandī's Kitāb al-Zumurrud and the Epistemological Turn in the Debate on Prophecy* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), 99 with n. 129, who, in her recent discussion of this passage, renders *ǧassama* as to "extend and exaggerate."

41 See e.g. Apul. *Flor*. 15; Clem. Al. *Strom*. 1.15.70; Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* 8.7.4; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 10.4.15.

42 Rudolph, *Doxographie*, 178, also draws attention to the "weariness" (*m-l-l*) which appears in the above-cited passage of Pseudo-Ammonius and in chapter IX of the *Theology* (Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 132.20).

3 Presocratic eschatology in *Enneads* IV and *Sayings of the Greek Sage* I

Having discussed the Presocratic thinkers, Plotinus turns to Plato.[43] Most generally, he painstakingly demonstrates the doctrinal consistency of his master, upon which he shows that the ancient authorities are also congruent with the Platonic account. When reconciling all these diverse explanations for the soul's entry into the cycle of reincarnation, Plotinus seeks to strike a happy medium between deterministic and indeterministic views of the soul's descent. Let us quote from a passage where the aforementioned Presocratic thinkers resurface in Plotinus' argument.

Enneades IV 8[6], 5.5–8 and 13 (eds. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer)

3. οὐδ' ἡ Ἐμπεδοκλέους φυγὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πλάνη οὐδ' ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἐφ' ᾗ ἡ δίκη, οὐδ' ἡ Ἡρακλείτου ἀνάπαυλα ἐν τῇ φυγῇ, οὐδ' ὅλως τὸ ἑκούσιον τῆς καθόδου καὶ τὸ ἀκούσιον αὖ. […] θεὸν εἴ τις λέγοι καταπέμψαι, […].

Dicta Sapientis Graeci I 114.1–12 (ed. E. Wakelnig)

وكذلك إذا سمعت اختلاف أقاويل
الأوّلين في هبوط النفس إلى هذا العالم
فلا تتوهّمنّ علته الاختلاف في علّة
هبوط الأنفس إلى هذا العالم ولا أنّهم
إنّما اختلفوا لأنّهم جهلوها ولكن ينبغي
أن ينسب أقاويلهم كلّها إلى معنى واحد.
وقال امبذوقليس إنّي إنّما صرت في
هذا العالم فرّارًا من سخط لله تعالى لأنّي
أخطأت فخفت العقوبة، وقد صرت
إلى الشيء الذي كنت أخافه أي العقوبة
وذلك أنّ هذا العالم إنّما هو حبس

43 In this discussion, Plotinus also briefly invokes Empedocles' fr. B 120 DK, as he clarifies (*Enn.* IV 8[6], 1.33–34) that Plato's "cave" (*spēlaion*) in *Republic* VII is like Empedocles' "cavern" (*antron*), since it refers to "this universe" (*tode to pan*), that is, the material world. The identification of the sensible cosmos with the cave dates back to Numenius, on which see Mikolaj Domaradzki, "Of Nymphs and Sea: Numenius on Souls and Matter in Homer's *Odyssey*," *Greece and Rome* 67 (2020): 148–49. The Arabic paraphrase (233.1–3) likewise explains the symbol as meaning "this world in its entirety" (*hāḏā l-ʿālam bi-asrihi*), that is, the sensible cosmos. Yet, the Arabic rendering of the two synonymous Greek terms *spēlaion* (*maġār*) and *antron* (*ṣadaf*) is textually problematic, on which see De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus*, 139–40 and D'Ancona, *La discesa*, 296–97 (the latter's edition follows the conjecture proposed by the former: *ṣadaf*).

النفس وعقوبة لها . وقال ارقليطوس إنّي
لما أخطأت هويت إلى هذا العالم لأستريح
فصرت منه إلى التعب الأكثر والنصب.
فهذه الأقاويل كلّها إنّما تجرّ إلى معنى
واحد وهو الهبوط إلى هذا العالم طوعًا
وكرهًا، طوعًا من أجل ذاتها لأنّها اشتاقت
إلى أن تكون مع أفاعيلها وكرهًا لأنّها
أرسلت من العلّة الأولى وهو بارئها
ومبدعها.

Again, the italics in the Arabic translation below mark the expressions that (more or less) correlate with the source text.

Enneads IV 8[6], 5.5–8 and 13 (tr. A.H. Armstrong modified)

3. Nor [is there any discordance in] Empedocles' flight from god and roaming, nor the sin, upon which the judgement [comes], nor Heraclitus' rest in the flight, nor, in general, the voluntariness and the involuntariness of the descent. […] if anyone said that a god sent [the soul] down […].

Sayings of the Sage I §§ 87–91 (tr. G.L. Lewis modified)

Likewise when you hear the ancients' disagreeing statements about the soul's descent to this world, do not imagine that they are caused by a disagreement about the cause of the souls' descent to this world, nor that they only disagreed because they were ignorant of it, but all their statements must be referred to one meaning. *Empedocles* said: "I came to this world as a *fugitive* from the wrath of *God* the Sublime, because I *sinned* and feared *punishment*, and [still] I came to that which I had been fearing," namely, punishment, for this world is nothing but a prison of the soul and punishment for it. *Heraclitus* said: "When I sinned, I fell into this world to find *rest*, and through it I came into greater

> fatigue and toil." All these statements come down to one meaning which is that *the descent* to this world is *voluntary and involuntary*; voluntary on account of the essence [of the soul] because it has desired to be with its actions, and involuntary because *it has been sent by the First Cause*, which is its Creator and Originator.

Passage no. 3 comes from a lengthy discussion about the rationale for the soul's fall into the sensible cosmos: the question is whether the cause of the descent should be regarded as free or necessary. As has been noted, Plotinus bends over backwards to prove that Plato's teachings on the matter are perfectly coherent and that there is no contradiction between his seemingly mutually exclusive claims that the souls come to this world now willingly and now unwillingly.[44] The Presocratic doctrines are integrated into the Plotinian interpretation of Platonic eschatology: the accounts of Empedocles and Heraclitus are recalled, as Plotinus harmonizes the deterministic and indeterministic views of the soul's descent. The Greek passage is made up of 38 words, whereas its Arabic translation of 125 words. However, the Arabic adaptation is not only more verbose than the original but also highly selective and, ultimately, constitutes an excursus that is largely independent of the source text.

When arguing for the consistency of both voluntary and involuntary nature of the soul's descent, Plotinus stresses that even the views of the most ancient philosophers do not conflict with Plato's account. He, therefore, looks back on the four phrases from the Presocratic thinkers he has already adduced at

44 Thus, for example, in the *Timaeus* the arrival of the soul in the body is suggested to be *necessary* for perfection of the cosmos (e.g. 41b7–c2), but in the celebrated *Phaedrus* myth (esp. 246a3–e4), the image of the soul as a winged chariot implies certain amount of *indeterminism* involved in the descent: the bad horse (i.e. the desires) *can* overpower the charioteer (i.e. the reason), which results in that the chariot is weighed down (i.e. the soul loses its divine wings) and falls to the earth (i.e. takes on a mortal body). Generally, Plotinus interprets Heraclitus as consonant with the Timaean account of incarnation and Empedocles as consonant with the account of the *Phaedrus* and other dialogues: in the former case the descent of the soul into the body is a necessary development (essential for the cosmic order), whereas in the latter case incarnation is a consequence of a voluntary but punishable act, which, therefore, results in the feeling of guilt. For a compelling analysis of this reconstruction, see Guidara, *Prima di Platone*, 109–12.

the opening of his treatise: three from Empedocles and one from Heraclitus. Thus, the former's "flight from god" (*phugē apo tou theou*), "roaming" (*planē*) and "the sin (*hamartia*) followed by the judgement (*dikē*)" freely allude to the aforementioned fr. B 115 DK. It is worth noting, though, that the word *phugē* ("flight," "escape") also points to Plato's use of the term in *Theaetetus* 176a8–b2, where Socrates famously recommends that we seek to "flee" (*pheugein*) from this world and explains this "flight" (*phugē*) as "assimilation to god as far as possible" (*homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton*). Thus, this word clearly differs from the Empedoclean *phugas* ("exile," "fugitive"), which Plotinus employs at 1.19, as he quotes fr. B 115.13 DK (see above). And while Plotinus does speak of a flight from the sensible in the Platonic sense of an ascent (e.g. *Enn.* I 2[19], 1.1–4), here the flight is again from the unity of the intelligible: it becomes triggered by the soul's craving to give in to multiplicity and to break away from its First Principle (i.e. the "Empedoclean" God). Additionally, the original adverb "from the divine" (*theothen*) is now replaced with the phrase "from god" (*apo tou theou*), which creates a good opportunity for a monotheistic interpretation of Plotinus' account (see below). The word *planē* ("roaming," "wandering") apparently alludes to the Empedoclean *alētēs* ("wanderer"),[45] and conveys that the soul deserts the path of the original unity, whereas the phrase "the sin (*hamartia*) accompanied by the judgement (*dikē*)" refers to the Empedoclean "sinning" (*hamartanō*) and "decree" (*psēphisma*). Subsequently, Plotinus also mentions Heraclitus' "rest in the flight" (*anapaula en tēi phugēi*), as he elaborates on the willingness and unwillingness of the descent: the noun *anapaula* ("rest," "repose") reproduces the verb *anapauesthai* (to "be at rest," "take a repose") from the aforementioned fr. B 84a, although in none of his apothegms does the Ephesian sage speak of any "flight" (*phugē*). In general, then, the Presocratic thinkers are invoked to strengthen the argument about the voluntariness and the involuntariness of the descent: the soul slides into a worse state because of its inner movement towards evil, on the one hand, and because of the divine design necessary for the perfection of the cosmos, on the other. Importantly, Plotinus strongly insists that there is a teleological purpose in the soul's cycle of successive embodiments (which is decreed by the demiurge), but only one incomplete sentence ("if anyone said that a god sent down …") makes it to the Arabic adaptation, to which we now turn.

First of all, the paraphrase forcefully highlights the consensus among Greek philosophers on the nature and purpose of the soul's descent: although one

45 In his excellent commentary, Fleet, *Plotinus*, 151, also draws attention to fr. B 121 DK, where the *daimones* "wander (*ēlaskousi*) in darkness over the meadow of Doom (*Atē*)."

may initially be taken aback by the apparent "difference" (*iḫtilāf*) of opinions among "the ancients" (*al-awwalūn*) regarding the issue, one should refrain from overemphasizing the controversy or attributing it to their lack of knowledge, since all their "statements" (*aqāwīl*) must be ascribed to "one meaning" (*maʿnan wāḥid*). Next, Plotinus' brief mention of Empedocles is elaborated into an extensive first-person quotation, which utilizes the material from *Theology* I that renders *Enneads* IV 8[6], 1.11–23 (see above). Thus, "Imbiḍūqlīs," while differently transliterated, one more time narrates how he "came" (*ṣāra*) to this world as a "fugitive" (*farrār*) from the "wrath" (*suḫṭ*) of God. Naturally, this is supposed to reproduce the original "flight from god" (*phugē apo tou theou*), although the adaptor has amplified the potentially monotheistic character of the Plotinian phrasing. Then, Plotinus' reference to the Empedoclean "roaming" (*planē*) has been omitted, but his remark about the philosopher's "sin" has been preserved, as the noun *hamartia* has been rendered with the verb *aḫṭaʾa*. Lastly, the original "judgement" (*dikē*) has been translated as "punishment" (*ʿuqūba*), albeit the paraphrast has expanded and embellished the source text. Thus, he has Empedocles "fear" (*ḫāfa*) the punishment that nevertheless becomes the philosopher's lot: the punishment consists in being ensepulchered in flesh and descending to the sensible world, which is accordingly characterized as the soul's terrestrial "prison" (*ḥabs*). Plotinus' reference to Heraclitus' "rest in the flight" (*anapaula en tēi phugēi*) is also elaborated and likewise transformed into a first-person quotation: the Ephesian thinker narrates how, having "sinned" (*aḫṭaʾa*), he "fell" (*hawā*) into this world to "find rest" (*istarāḥa*). While the verb referring to "rest" is the only recognizable trace of the original Heraclitean aphorism, the adaptor associates this attainment of repose with "toil" (*taʿab*) and "fatigue" (*naṣab*), which is absent from the source passage, but evidently alludes to the reworking of *Enn.* IV 8[6], 1.14–16 (see above).

Finally, the paraphrast reiterates his point about the unity of Greek philosophy: all the aforementioned "statements" (*aqāwīl*) amount to "one meaning" (*maʿnan wāḥid*), which – in line with the source text – is that "the descent" (*hubūṭ/kathodos*) to this world is both "willing and unwilling" (*ṭawʿan wa-karhan/to hekousion … kai to akousion*). The voluntariness arises from the soul's "essence" (*ḏāt*), which makes it "desire" (*ištāqa*) to be with its "actions" (*afāʿīl*). The involuntariness, on the other hand, is due to the fact that the soul has been "sent" (*arsala/katapempō*) by "the First Cause" (*al-ʿilla al-ūlā*), that is, the soul's "Creator" (*bāriʾ*) and "Originator" (*mubdiʿ*). While this last explanation freely incorporates line 13 from the Greek original (*theon … katapempsai …*), it has been removed from its context and – as D'Ancona helpfully points

out – transformed into a "conclusione generale dell'argomento."[46] Hence, the adaptor drives home the point that the soul's descent into the body is an action undertaken of the soul's own accord, but also remains necessary to fulfill the demiurge's design: this means that the causality is both spontaneous (springs from the soul's freedom of will) and natural (controlled and determined by God).

This passage of the *Dicta Sapientis Graeci* has no obvious counterpart in Pseudo-Ammonius, but the *topos* of the harmony among Greek philosophers is also pervasive in the work. As a matter of fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the very purpose of this "Schein-Doxographie" is to demonstrate that although the greatest philosophers of antiquity frequently disagreed on minor issues, they were unanimous on the most important questions. In particular, all Greek philosophers saw eye to eye on the "oneness" (*tawḥīd*) of God and His "creation" (*ibdāʿ*) of the world *ex nihilo*.[47] Thus, for example, the first report on Empedocles' account concludes with the assertion (39.7–8) that regarding the Creator ancient philosophers were all "agreed" (*muttafiqūn*), upon which their agreement on monotheism and creationism is repeatedly emphasized in the text (e.g. 40.14–41.1). As has been noted, we may conjecture that at least one of the aims of this strained harmonization was the desire to promote Greek philosophy as a uniform, coherent and thereby enticing alternative to the vying intellectual currents from non-Muslim cultures. While this can be discerned in such portrayals as that of the Magi perverting and betraying Pythagoras' monotheism (see above), Pseudo-Ammonius' treatment of Zoroastrian dualism is indicative of the broader agenda intimated already in the prefaces to the works under analysis.

Thus, for instance, at the very outset of his treatise, Pseudo-Ammonius states in no uncertain terms (33.13–34.2) that his purpose with reviewing "the opinions of the most ancient sages" (*ārāʾ al-ḥukamāʾ al-aqdamīn*) is not merely to examine their views on creation but also to demonstrate that this creation must have been "from nothing" (*min lā šayʾ*). It is through this lens that the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* is rendered into Arabic, as Pseudo-Ammonius

46 D'Ancona, *La discesa*, 338.

47 For a recent and illuminating discussion of Pseudo-Ammonius' perspective, see Daniel De Smet, "Les philosophes grecs, tous monothéistes! Une relecture néoplatonicienne islamisée de l'histoire de la philosophie (Pseudo-Ammonius)," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 4 (2019): 821–46. A useful survey of various positions on the issue of *tawḥīd* is also provided by Elvira Wakelnig, "Greek Sages on the *Tawḥīd*: Ancient Philosophy in Accord with the Islamic Doctrine of the Oneness of God," *Studia graeco-arabica* 5 (2015): 205–45 (Pseudo-Ammonius' doxography being dealt with on 229–30).

anachronistically ventriloquizes the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* through various Greek thinkers and fiercely battles against the rivalling ideologies from non-Muslim cultures. Naturally, the same applies to the *Plotiniana Arabica*. It is well known that the prologue to this Arabic translation of Plotinus is imbued with Aristotelian concepts and terminology. Thus, for example, the adaptor cites "the agreement of the most excellent philosophers" (*ittifāq afāḍil al-falāsifa*) when he invokes the Stagirite's theory of four causes only to immediately inquire which of these is "most worthy of priority and mastery" (*aḥaqq bi-l-taqdīm wa-l-riʾāsa*).[48] Obviously, such use of Aristotle reflects the paraphrast's conviction about the tremendous utility of marrying Platonic and Peripatetic doctrines in the defense of monotheism and creationism. This is precisely why Plotinus' *Enneads* transmogrify into the crowning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, as the *Theology* expounds the highest of the causes identified by the Stagirite (cf. the *rubūbiyya* mentioned in the title). While this – *sit venia verbo* – philosophically ecumenical approach is the hallmark of the Kindian circle, it seems heuristically useful to assume that in its background there was always a general wish to fend off such competing ideologies as Zoroastrianism which could jeopardize the position of the caliphs and other patrons who sponsored the translations.

4 Conclusion

Let us briefly recapitulate. The foregoing analyses have shown that if Plotinus boldly reinterprets the archaic views of Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Pythagoras through the prism of Platonic eschatology, then the Arabic paraphrase remolds the Greek source text even more daringly, as it renders the "Presocratic" doctrines compatible with the teachings of the Qurʾān. Thus, we have seen that the Plotinian references to Presocratic theories of metempsychosis are jettisoned, the *Enneads*' conception of the divine is replaced with a distinctly personalistic and monotheistic apprehension of God, and Plotinus' "doxographical" exposition metamorphoses into a sort of edifying sermon, in which the adaptor forcefully admonishes the reader to strive for the intellectual virtues, surmount the bodily passions and seek the return to the superior

48 Badawī, *Aflūṭīn*, 4.10–5.1. On the omnipresence of Aristotle's thought in the preface to the *Plotiniana Arabica*, see e.g. Zimmermann, "Origins," 121–24; 137–38; Cristina D'Ancona, "Al-Kindī on the Subject-Matter of the First Philosophy: Direct and Indirect Sources of Falsafa al-ūlā, Chapter One," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 843–47; and Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*, 30–34.

reality of the soul's noetic home. As has been suggested, these audacious changes, revisions, and substitutions not only reveal the original philosophy underlying the *Plotiniana Arabica* but also point to the likely ideological motivation behind this corrective translation. This is strongly confirmed by the fact that the "Presocratic" eschatology of the *Plotiniana Arabica* significantly overlaps with that of the related doxography of Pseudo-Ammonius. The above analyses have demonstrated that the agreement between the two texts is evident both in specific details and in more general themes. With regard to the former, we should note that both treatises affirm the celestial promise through Heraclitus, emphasize the necessity of divine assistance through Empedocles, and exhort the renunciation of this world through Pythagoras. Furthermore, both tracts employ common "Presocratic" nomenclature. Suffice it to mention here the Heraclitean "toil" (*t-ʿ-b*) and "fatigue" (*n-ṣ-b*) of the lower realm, the Empedoclean "aid" (*ġ-w-ṯ*) of God in the soul's salvation and the Pythagorean "abandoning" (*t-r-k*) of the earthly delights. With regard to the general substance, we need to observe that both these texts resolutely unearth Abrahamic monotheism from beneath various archaic formulations, ardently disparage all forms of polytheism (whether Greek, Persian or otherwise), and relentlessly present Hellenic philosophy as not only monolithic and homogenous but also consistent with the teachings of the Prophet. It is tantalizing to think that this tenacious insistence on the Greeks' consensus on such issues as monotheism and creationism was, at least to some extent, prompted by the desire to successfully challenge the Zoroastrian and Byzantine traditions, which in ninth-century Baghdad would have been perceived as intellectual threats to the newly established ʿAbbāsid dynasty.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank *Oriens*' anonymous reviewer for their useful comments and helpful suggestions.

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