

The Nous of the Greeks

A little collection of Grecian thoughts

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'Tis mind that all things sees and hears;
What else exists is deaf and blind.

— Iamblichus¹

That light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which, through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The Fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley²

Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the life blood
of real civilisation.

— George Macaulay Trevelyan³

Anaxagoras

Anaxagoras (*Gr.*). A famous Ionian philosopher who lived 500 B.C., studied philosophy under Anaximenes of Millets, and settled in the days of Pericles at Athens. Socrates, Euripides, Archelaus and other distinguished men and philosophers were among his disciples and pupils. He was a most learned astronomer and was one of the first to explain openly that which was taught by Pythagoras secretly, namely, the movements of the planets, the eclipses of the sun and moon, etc. It was he who taught the theory of Chaos, on the principle that “nothing comes from nothing”; and of atoms, as the underlying essence and substance of all bodies, “of the same nature as the bodies which they formed.” These atoms, he taught, were primarily put in motion by *Nous* (Universal Intelligence, the Mahat of the Hindus), which *Nous* is an immaterial, eternal, spiritual entity; by this combination the world was formed, the material gross bodies sinking down, and the ethereal atoms (or fiery ether) rising and spreading in the upper celestial regions. Antedating modern science by over 2000 years, he taught that the stars were of the same material as our earth, and the sun a glowing mass; that the moon was a dark, uninhabitable body, receiving its light from the sun; the comets, wandering stars or bodies; and over and above the said science, he confessed himself thoroughly convinced that *the real existence of things*, perceived by our senses, could not be demonstrably proved. He died in exile at Lampsacus at the age of seventy-two.⁴

The Greek philosophers are alike made misty instead of mystic by their too learned translators. The Egyptians revered the Divine Spirit, the One-Only One, as NOUT. It is most evident that it is from that word that Anaxagoras borrowed his denominative

¹ Taylor T. (*Tr. & Annot.*). *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians and Life of Pythagoras*. (Vol. XVII of The Thomas Taylor Series) Sturminster Newton: The Prometheus Trust, 2004; [*Life of Pythagoras* XXII, p. 280.]

² Shelley: *Adonais*

³ G.M. Trevelyan: *English Social History*, intr.

⁴ *Theosophical Glossary*



nous, or, as he calls it, Νοῦς αυτοκρατῆς — the Mind or Spirit self-potent, the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως. “All things,” says he, “were in chaos; then came Νοῦς and introduced order.”⁵ He also denominated this Νοῦς the One that ruled the many. In his idea Νοῦς was God; and the Logos was man, the emanation of the former. The external powers perceived *phenomena*; the *nous* alone [283] recognized *noumena* or subjective things. This is purely Buddhistic and esoteric.⁶

Ancient Greeks

With the ancient Greeks, *Kurios* was the god-Mind (*Nous*). “Now Koros [Kurios] signifies the pure and unmixed nature of intellect — wisdom,” says Plato.⁷ *Kurios* is Mercury, the Divine Wisdom, and “Mercury is the Sol” (Sun),⁸ from whom Thoth-Hermes received this divine wisdom, which, in his turn, he imparted to the world in his books. Hercules is also the Sun — the celestial storehouse of the universal magnetism;⁹ or rather Hercules is the magnetic light which, when having made its way through the “opened eye of heaven,” enters into the regions of our planet and thus becomes the Creator. Hercules passes through the twelve labors, the valiant Titan! He is called “Father of All” and [132] (autophuēs).¹⁰

Aristotle

. . . in Aristotle we find that he calls one the reasoning soul, *νοῦς*, and the other, the animal soul, *ψυχή*. According to these philosophers, the reasoning soul comes from *within* the universal soul, and the other from *without*.¹¹

Democritus

By the word *soul*, neither Democritus nor the other philosophers understood the *nous* or *pneuma*, the divine *immaterial* soul, but the *psychè*, or astral body; that which Plato always terms the second *mortal* soul.¹²

⁵ [Diogenes Laertius: *Lives* II, 6, “Anaxagoras.”]

⁶ *Isis Unveiled*, II pp. 282-83

⁷ *Cratylus* 396

⁸ Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes* VI, 12

⁹ As we will show in subsequent chapters, the sun was not considered by the ancients as the direct cause of the light and heat, but only as an agent of the former, through which the light passes on its way to our sphere. Thus it was always called by the Egyptians “the eye of Osiris,” who was himself the *Logos*, the First-begotten, or light made manifest to the world “which is the mind and divine intellect of the Concealed.” It is only that light of which we are cognizant that is the Demiurge, the *creator* of our planet and everything pertaining to it; with the invisible and unknown universes disseminated through space, none of the sun-gods had anything to do. The idea is expressed very clearly in the “Books of Hermes.”

¹⁰ *Isis Unveiled*, I pp. 131-32; [quoting *Orphic Hymn*, xii; Hermann; Dunlap, *Sōd, the Mysteries of Adoni*, p. 91.]

¹¹ *Ibid.* I p. 317

¹² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE EXTREME LIMITS OF NATURE) XII p. 401 *fn.*



Diogenes Laërtius

Though antiquity (like esoteric philosophy) seems to divide soul into the divine and the animal, *anima divina* and *anima bruta*, the former being called *nous* and *phren*, yet the two were but the double aspect of a unity. Diogenes Laërtius (*De clarorum philosophorum vitis*, Bk. VIII, 30) gives the common belief that the animal soul, *phren* — *φρήν*, generally the diaphragm — resided in the stomach, Diogenes calling the *anima bruta* *θυμός*.¹³ Pythagoras and Plato also make the same division, calling the divine or rational soul *λόγουν*, and the irrational *άλογουν*. Empedocles gives to men and animals a dual soul, not two souls as is believed. The Theosophists and Occultists divide man into seven principles and speak of a divine and animal soul; but they add that Spirit being one and indivisible, all these “souls” and principles are only its aspects. Spirit alone is immortal, infinite, and the one reality — the rest is all evanescent and temporary, illusion and delusion.¹⁴

Ireanaeus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, et alii

Later, in the Pythagorean speculations, Zeus became the metaphysical trinity; the monad evolving from its invisible SELF the *active* cause, effect, and intelligent will, the whole forming the *Tetractys*. Still later we find the earlier Neoplatonists leaving the primal monad aside, on the ground of its utter incomprehensibility to human intellect, speculating merely on the *demiurgic triad* of this deity as visible and intelligible in its effects; and thus the metaphysical continuation by Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, and other philosophers of this view of Zeus the father, *Zeus-Poseidon*, or *dynamis*, the son and power, and the spirit or *nous*. This triad was also accepted as a whole by the Irenæic school of the second century; the more substantial difference between the doctrines of the Neo-Platonists and the Christians being merely the forcible amalgamation by the latter of the incomprehensible monad with its actualized creative trinity.¹⁵

Logos and Dianoia are one and the same

. . . there is a great difference between the LOGOS and the *Demiurgos*, for one is *Spirit* and the other is *Soul*; or as Dr. Wilder has it: “*Dianoia* and *Logos* are synonymous, *Nous* being superior and closely in affinity with *το αγαθόν*, one being the superior apprehending, the other the comprehending — one noetic and the other phrenic.”¹⁶

¹³ [⁵ Boris de Zirkoff has provided the following note:

The translation in the Loeb Classical Series does not seem to convey this meaning, however. It runs as follows:

“The Soul of man, he says, is divided into three parts, intelligence (*nous*), reason (*phren*), and passion (*thumos*). Intelligence and passion are possessed by other animals as well, but reason by man alone. The seat of the soul extends from the heart to the brain; the part of it which is in the heart is passion, while the parts located in the brain are reason and intelligence. The senses are distillations from these.”
v.s. p. 211.]

¹⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (CHINESE SPIRITS) VII p. 205 *fn. et seq.* [“There is but *one* real Ego in each man and it must necessarily be either in one place or in another, in bliss or in grief.”]

¹⁵ *Isis Unveiled*, I p. 262

¹⁶ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 25



Manas a better word than Nous

The Sanskrit word *Manas* (Mind) is used by us in preference to the Greek *Nous* (noëtic) because the latter word having been so imperfectly understood in philosophy, suggests no definite meaning.¹⁷

Man is semi-divine: dual aspects of One Reality

The dual soul, on the contrary, is only semidivine. Being a direct emanation from the *nous*, everything it has of immortal essence, once its earthly cycle is accomplished, must necessarily return to its mother-source, and as pure as when it was detached; it is that purely spiritual essence which the primitive church, as faithful as it was rebellious to the Neo-Platonic traditions, thought it recognized in the good *daimon* and made into a guardian angel; at the same time justly blighting the “irrational” and fallible soul, the real human *Ego* (from which we get the word Egoism), she called it the angel of darkness, and afterwards made it into a personal devil. The only error was in anthropomorphizing it and in making it a monster with tail and horns. Otherwise, abstraction as it may be, this devil is truly personal because it is identical with our *Ego*. It is this, the elusive and inaccessible personality, that ascetics of every country think they chastise by mortifying the flesh. The *Ego* then, to which we concede only a conditional immortality, is the purely human individuality.¹⁸

Manu, Menes, Minos, Mannus

A good proof that all the gods, and religious beliefs, and myths have come from the north, which was also the cradle of *physical* man, lies in several suggestive words which have originated and remain to this day among the northern tribes in their primeval significance; but although there was as a time when all the nations were “of one lip,” these words have received a different meaning with the Greeks and Latins. One such word is *Manu*, *Man*, a living being, and *Manes*, dead men. The Laplanders call their corpses to this day *manes*, (J.-F. Regnard, *Voyage de Laponie*). Mannus is the ancestor of the German race: the Hindu *Manu*, the thinking being, from *man*; the Egyptian *Menes*; and *Minōs*, the King of Crete, judge of the infernal regions after his death — all proceed from the same root or word.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PSYCHIC AND NOETIC ACTION) XII p. 353 *fn.*; [contrasting the dual nature of human mind.]

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (ERRONEOUS IDEAS CONCERNING THE DOCTRINES OF THE THEOSOPHISTS) II p. 18

¹⁹ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 774 *fn.*



Plato and Pythagoras

With Plato, the Primal Being is an emanation of the Demiurgic Mind (*Nous*), which contains from the eternity the “*idea*” of the “to be created world” within itself, and which idea he produces out of himself.²⁰

Plato is quoted to us and, at the same time, what Plato taught is forgotten. According to the “divine” philosopher the soul is dual; it is composed of two primitive constituent parts: one — mortal, the other eternal; the former, fashioned by the *created gods* (the creative and intelligent forces in nature), the other, an emanation from the supreme Spirit. He tells us that the mortal soul, in taking possession of its body, becomes “irrational”; but between irrationality and unconsciousness there is a profound difference. Plato, finally, never confused the *périsprit* with the soul or the spirit. In common with every other philosopher, he called it neither the *nous* nor *ψυχή*, but gave it the name *εἰδωλον*, sometimes that of *imago* or *simulacrum*.²¹

Plotinus on the Good or the One

[Selections]

. . . the perception of the highest God is not effected by science, nor by intelligence, like other intelligibles, but by the presence of him, which is a mode of knowledge superior to that of science. But the soul suffers an apostasy from *The One*, and is not entirely one when it receives scientific knowledge. For science is reason, and reason is multitudinous. The soul, therefore, in this case, deviates from *The One*, and falls into number and multitude. Hence it is necessary to run above science, and in no respect to depart from a subsistence which is profoundly one, but it is requisite to abandon science, the objects of science, every other thing, and every beautiful spectacle: For every thing beautiful is posterior to the supreme, and is derived from him, in the same manner as all diurnal light is derived from the sun. Hence Plato says, he is neither effable, nor to be described by writing. We speak however, and write about him, extending ourselves to him, and exciting others by a reasoning process to the vision of him; pointing out, as it were, the way to him who wishes to behold something [of his ineffable nature]. For doctrine extends as far as to the way and the progression to him. But the vision of him is now the work of one who is solicitous to perceive him. He, however, will not arrive at the vision of him, and will not be affected by the survey, nor will have in himself as it were an amatory passion from the view, (which passion causes the lover to rest in the object of his love) nor receive from it a true light, which surrounds the whole soul with its splendour, in consequence of becoming nearer to it; he, I say, will not behold this light, who attempts to ascend to the vision of the supreme while he is drawn downwards by those things which are an impediment to the vision. He will likewise not ascend by himself alone, but will be accompanied by that which will divulse him from *The One*, or rather he will not be himself collected into one. For *The One* is not absent from any thing, and yet is separated from all things; so that it is present, and yet not present with them. But it is

²⁰ *Isis Unveiled*, I p. 55

²¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ERRONEOUS IDEAS CONCERNING THE DOCTRINES OF THE THEOSOPHISTS) II p. 17



present with those things that are able, and are prepared to receive it, so that they become congruous, and as it were pass into contact with it, through similitude and a certain inherent power allied to that which is imparted by *The One*.²²

The nature also of *The One* is such, that it is the fountain of the most excellent things, and a power generating beings, abiding in itself without diminution, and not subsisting in its progeny. But we denominate it *The One* from necessity, in order that we may signify it to each other by a name, and may be led to an impartible conception, being anxious that our soul may be one.²³

Hence to *The One* nothing is good, and, therefore, neither is the wish for any thing good to it. But it is *super-good*. And it is not good to itself, but to other things, which are able to participate of it. Nor does *The One* possess intelligence, lest it should also possess difference; nor motion. For it is prior to motion, and prior to intelligence. For what is there which it will intellectually perceive? Shall we say itself? Prior to intellection, therefore, it will be ignorant, and will be in want of intelligence in order that it may know itself, though it is sufficient to itself. It does not follow, however, that because *The One* does not know itself, and does not intellectually perceive itself, there will be ignorance in it. For ignorance takes place where there is diversity, and when one thing is ignorant of another. That, however, which is *alone* neither knows any thing, nor has any thing of which it is ignorant. But being one, and associating with itself, it does not require the intellectual perception of itself; since neither is it necessary, in order that you may preserve *The One*, to adapt to it an association with itself. But it is requisite to take away intellectual perception, an association with itself, and the knowledge of itself, and of other things. For it is not proper to arrange it according to the act of perceiving intellectually, but rather according to intelligence. For intelligence does not perceive intellectually, but is the cause of intellectual perception to another thing. Cause, however, is not the same with the thing caused. But the cause of all things is not any one of them. Hence neither must it be denominated that good which it imparts to others; but it is after another manner *The Good*, in a way transcending other goods.²⁴

For, as it is said, God is not external to any one, but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that he is so. For they fly from him, or rather from themselves. They are unable, therefore, to apprehend that from which they fly. And having destroyed themselves, they are incapable of seeking after another. For neither will a child, when through insanity he becomes out of himself, recognize his father. But he who knows himself, will also know from whence he was derived.²⁵

If, therefore, a certain soul has known itself at another time, it will also know that its motion is not rectilinear, but that its natural motion is as it were in a circle about a certain thing, not externally, but about a centre. The centre, however, is that from which the circle proceeds; and therefore such a soul will be moved about the source

²² Taylor T. (Tr. & Annot.). *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. (Vol. III of The Thomas Taylor Series) Frome: The Prometheus Trust, 2000; [*Ennead VI*, ix ¶ 4, pp. 401-2.]

²³ *Ibid.* [*Ennead VI*, ix ¶ 5, p. 404.]

²⁴ *Ibid.* [*Ennead VI*, ix ¶ 6, p. 406.]

²⁵ *Ibid.* [*Ennead VI*, ix ¶ 7, p. 407.]



of its existence. It will also be suspended from this, eagerly urging itself towards that to which all souls ought to hasten. But the souls of the Gods always tend thither; and by tending to this they are Gods. For whatever is conjoined to this is a God. But that which is very distant from it, is a multitudinous man and a brute.²⁶

The principle of all things, therefore, not having any difference, is always present; but we are present with it when we have no difference. And it indeed does not aspire after us, in order that it may be conversant with us; but we aspire after it, in order that we may revolve about it. We indeed perpetually revolve about it, but we do not always behold it. As a band of singers, however, though it moves about the coryphæus, may be diverted to the survey of something foreign to the choir [and thus become discordant], but when it converts itself to him, sings well, and truly subsists about him; — thus also we perpetually revolve about the principle of all things, even when we are perfectly loosened from it, and have no longer a knowledge of it. Nor do we always look to it; but when we behold it, then we obtain the end of our wishes, and rest [from our search after felicity]. Then also we are no longer discordant, by form a truly divine dance about it.

IX. In this dance, however, the soul beholds the fountain of life, the fountain of intellect, the principle of being, the cause of good, and the root of soul. And these are not poured forth from this fountain, so as to produce in it any diminution. For it is not a corporeal mass; since if it were, its progeny would be corruptible. But now they are perpetual, because the principle of them abides with invariable sameness; not being distributed into them, but remaining whole and entire. Hence, they likewise remain, just as if the sun being permanent, light also should be permanent. For we are not cut off from this fountain, nor are we separated from it, though the nature of body intervening, draws us to itself. But we are animated and preserved by an infusion from thence, this principle not imparting, and afterwards withdrawing itself from us; since it always supplies us with being, and always will as long as it continues to be that which it is. Or rather, we are what we are by verging to it. Our well-being also consists in this tendency. And to be distant from it is nothing else than a diminution of existence. Here, likewise, the soul rests, and becomes out of the reach of evils, running back to that place which is free from ill. And here also, she energizes intellectually, is liberated from perturbations, and lives in reality. For the present life, and which is without God, is a vestige of life, and an imitation of that life which is real. But the life in the intelligible world consists in the energy of intellect. Energy also generates Gods, through a tranquil and quiet contact with the principle of all things. It likewise generates beauty, justice, and virtue. For the soul being filled with deity, brings forth these. And this is both the beginning and end to the soul. It is the beginning indeed, because she originates from thence; but it is the end, because *The Good* is there, and because when the soul is situated there, she becomes what she was before. For the good which is here, and in sensible concerns, is a lapse, a flight, and a defluxion of the wings of the soul. But that *The Good* is there, is indicated by the love which is connascent with the soul; conformably to which Love is conjoined

²⁶ Taylor T. (*Tr. & Annot.*). *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. (Vol. III of The Thomas Taylor Series) From: The Prometheus Trust, 2000; [*Ennead* VI, ix ¶ 8, pp. 407-8.]



in marriage with souls, both in writings and in fables.²⁷ For since the soul is different from God, but is derived from him, she necessarily loves him, and when she is there she has a celestial love; but the love which she here possesses is common and vulgar. For in the intelligible world the celestial Venus reigns; but here the popular Venus,²⁸ who is as it were meretricious.²⁹ Every soul also is a Venus. And this the nativity of Venus, and Love who was born at the same time with her, obscurely signify.³⁰ The soul, therefore, when in, a condition conformable to nature, loves God, wishing to be united to him, being as it were the desire of a beautiful virgin to be conjoined with a beautiful Love. When, however, the soul descends into generation, then being as it were deceived by [spurious] nuptials, and associating herself with another and a mortal Love, she becomes petulant and insolent through being absent from her father. But when she again hates terrene wantonness and injustice, and becomes purified from the defilements which are here, and again returns to her father, then she is affected in the most felicitous manner. And those indeed who are ignorant of this affection, may from terrene love form some conjecture of divine love, by considering how great a felicity the possession of a most beloved object is conceived to be; and also by considering that these earthly objects of love are mortal and noxious, that the love of them is nothing more than the love of images, and that they lose their attractive power because they are not truly desirable, nor our real good, nor that which we investigate. In the intelligible world, however, the true object of love is to be found, with which we may be conjoined, which we may participate, and truly possess, and which is not externally enveloped with flesh. *He however who knows this, will know what I say*, and will be convinced that the soul has then another life. The soul also proceeding to, and having now arrived at the desired end, and participating of deity, will know that the supplier of true life is then present. She will likewise then require nothing farther; for on the contrary, it will be requisite to lay aside other things, to stop in this alone, and to become this alone, amputating every thing else with which she is surrounded. Hence, it is necessary to hasten our departure from hence, and to be indignant that we are bound in one part of our nature, in order that with the whole of our [true] selves, we may fold ourselves about divinity, and have no part void of contact with him. When this takes place therefore, the soul will both see divinity and herself, as far as it is lawful for her to see him. And she will see herself indeed illuminated, and full of intelligible light; or rather, she will perceive herself to be a pure light, unburthened, agile, and becoming to be a

²⁷ See my translations of the fable of Cupid and Psyche; for to this fable Plotinus now evidently alludes. [TTS Vol. XIV, pp. 78-110 and notes pp. 222-27.]

²⁸ The celestial Venus, says Proclus [*Schol. Crat.* 183; TTS Vol. XIII, p. 612], is super-mundane, leads upwards to intelligible beauty, is the supplier of an unpolluted life, and separates from generation. But the Venus that proceeds from Dione governs all the co-ordinations in the celestial world and the earth, binds them to each other, and perfects their generative progressions, through a kindred conjunction. He likewise informs us, that this goddess proceeds from foam, according to Orpheus, as well as the more ancient [or celestial] Venus; and that both proceed from generative powers; one from that of Heaven, but the other from that of Jupiter the Demiurgus. He adds, that by the sea (from which they rose) we must understand an expanded and circumscribed life; by its profundity, the universally-extended progression of such a life; and by the foam, the greatest purity of nature, that which is full of prolific light and power, that which swims upon all life, and is as it were its highest flower.

²⁹ Plotinus says this, looking to the illegitimate participations of this Venus by mankind.

³⁰ See the speech of Diotima in the *Banquet* of Plato. [201e ff, TTS Vol. XI.]



God, or rather being a God, and then shining forth as such to the view.³¹ But if she again becomes heavy, she then as it were wastes away.

X. How does it happen, therefore, that the soul does not abide there? Is it not because she has not yet wholly migrated from hence? But she will then, when her vision of deity possesses an uninterrupted continuity, and she is no longer impeded or disturbed in her intuition by the body. That however which sees divinity, is not the thing which is disturbed, but something else; when that which perceives him is at rest from the vision. But it is not then at rest according to a scientific energy, which consists in demonstrations, in credibilities, and a discursive process of the soul: For here vision, and that which sees, are no longer reason, but greater than and prior to reason. And in reason, indeed, they are as that is which is perceived.

He therefore who sees himself, will then, when he sees, behold himself to be such a thing as this, or rather he will be present with himself thus disposed, and becoming simple, will perceive himself to be a thing of this kind. Perhaps, however, neither must it be said that he sees, but that he is the thing seen; if it is necessary to call these two things, *i.e.* the perceiver and the thing perceived. But both are one; though it is bold to assert this. Then, indeed, the soul neither sees, nor distinguishes by seeing, nor imagines that there are two things; but becomes as it were another thing, and not itself. Nor does that which pertains to itself contribute any thing there. But becoming wholly absorbed in deity, she is one, conjoining as it were centre with centre. For here concurring, they are one; but they are then two when they are separate. For thus also we now denominate that which is another. Hence this spectacle is a thing difficult to explain by words. For how can any one narrate that as something different from himself, which when he sees he does not behold as different, but as one with himself?³²

Intellectual perception is like a third eye to the blind.

Intellectual perception, indeed, appears to have been imparted as an auxiliary to more divine natures, but yet which are less divine and less excellent [than *The Good*]. This, also, is, as it were, an eye to them being blind.³³ What, however, would the eye want in order to perception of being, if it were itself light? But he who is in want sight, possessing in himself darkness, seeks for light through the eye. If, therefore, intellectual perception searches for light, but light does search for light, that

³¹ Hence Aristotle in his *Politics* also says, that he who surpasses beyond all comparison the rest of his fellow-citizens in virtue, ought to be considered as a God among men. He also observes, that such a one is no longer a part of the city, that law is not for him, since he is a law to himself, and that it would be ridiculous in any one to subject him to the laws. Let no one, however, who is not thus transcendently virtuous, fancy that law also is not for him; for this fancy in such a one is not only idle, but if not suppressed may lead to sedition, and the destruction of himself and others. In short, the man who has not completely subdued his passions, is so far from being above law, that, as Proclus well observes, "the universe uses him as a brute." Observe, too, that when Plotinus calls the man who is able in this life to see divinity a God, he means that he is a God only according to the *similitude*; for in this way, men transcendently wise and good are called by Plato, Gods and divine.

³² Taylor T. (Tr. & Annot.). *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. (Vol. III of The Thomas Taylor Series) Frome: The Prometheus Trust, 2000; [*Ennead* VI, ix ¶ 8-10, pp. 408-12.]

³³ *I.e.* Being intelligible; for this is beyond intellect. Hence, Orpheus says of Phanes, who subsists at the extremity of the *intelligible* triad, that "he feeds in his heart, *i.e.* his mind, swift *eyeless* Love," *ανομματου ακυνη Ερωτα*.



supreme nature *The Good*, since it does not seek for light, will not endeavour to obtain intellectual perception.³⁴

Neo-Platonists and Gnostics

With the Neo-Platonists it was the *Nous*, the *Augoeides*;³⁵

Yāho . . . as explained by some Gnostics and Neo-Platonists, it was the highest conceivable deity *enthroned above the seven heavens* and representing *Spiritual Light* (Ātman, the universal), whose ray was *Nous*, standing both for the intelligent Demiurge of the Universe of Matter and the *Divine Manas* in man, both being Spirit.³⁶

Plutarch and St James

Our pagan authority is — Plutarch; our Christian authority is no more and no less than Saint James, “the brother of the Lord.” In treating of the soul Plutarch tells us that while *ψυχή* is imprisoned in the body, the *nous* or the divine intelligence soars above mortal man, shedding upon him a ray that is more or less luminous according to the personal merit of the man; he adds that the *nous* never descends but remains stationary. Saint James is still more explicit. Speaking of the wisdom from below (*vide* the Greek text, *General Epistle*, iii, 15) he treats it as “terrestrial, sensual, *psychic*,” this last adjective being translated in the English text by the word “diabolical,” and (iii, 17) he adds that it is only the wisdom from above that is divine and “*noetic*” (adj. of the sub. *nous*).³⁷ So the psychic element never seems to have been in the odor of sanctity, either with the Saints of Christianity or with the Philosophers of Paganism. Since Saint James treats *ψυχή* as diabolical and Plato makes something irrational of it, can it be immortal *per se*?³⁸

Simon Magus

Finally, after detaining the Epinoia prisoner amongst them and having subjected the Divine Thought to every kind of insult and desecration, they ended by shutting it into the already defiled body of man. After this, as interpreted by the enemies of Simon, she passed from one female body into another through the ages and races, until Simon found and recognized her in the form of Helena, the “prostitute,” the “lost sheep” of the parable. Simon is made to represent himself as the Saviour descended to earth to rescue this “lamb” and those men in whom Epinoia is still under the dominion of the lower angels. The greatest magical feats are thus attributed to Simon through his sexual union with Helena, hence Black Magic. Indeed, the chief rites of

³⁴ Taylor T. (Tr. & Annot.). *Collected Writings of Plotinus*. (Vol. III of The Thomas Taylor Series) Frome: The Prometheus Trust, 2000; [*Ennead* VI, vii ¶ 41, comment by Taylor, p. 479.]

³⁵ *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 495; [on the “eternal being.”]

³⁶ *Theosophical Glossary: Heb. Yaho or Gr. Iao*

³⁷ [This sentence and explanation are somewhat confused. King James’ version gives the following text for chapter iii, verse 15: “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” The Greek text shows the words: *epigeios*, *psychikē*, and *daimoniōdēs*, which are translated as “earthly, soulical, demoniacal” in a literal translation of the Greek text. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

³⁸ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ERRONEOUS IDEAS CONCERNING THE DOCTRINES OF THE THEOSOPHISTS) II p. 17



this kind of magic are based on such disgusting literal interpretation of noble myths, one of the noblest of which was thus invented by Simon as a symbolical mark of his own teaching. Those who understood it correctly knew was meant by “Helena.” It was the marriage of Nous (Ātma-Buddhi) with Manas, the union which Will and Thought become one and are endowed with divine powers. For Ātman in man, being of an unalloyed essence, the primordial divine Fire (or the eternal and universal “that which has stood, stands and will stand”), is of all the planes; and Buddhi is its vehicle or Thought, generated by and generating the “Father” in her turn, and also Will. She is “that which has stood, stands and will stand,” thus becoming in conjunction with Manas, male-female, in this sphere only. Hence, when Simon spoke of himself as the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and of Helena as his Epinoia, Divine Thought, he meant the marriage of his Buddhi with Manas. Helena was the Śakti of the inner man, the female potency.³⁹

Theosophical constitution of Man

That *physical* nature, the great combination of physical correlations of forces ever creeping on toward perfection, has to avail herself of the material at hand; she models and remodels as she proceeds, and finishing her crowning work in man, presents him alone as a fit tabernacle for the overshadowing of the Divine spirit. But the latter circumstance does not give man the right of life and death over the animals lower than himself in the scale of *nature*, or the right to torture them. Quite the reverse. Besides being endowed with a soul — of which every animal, and even plant, is more or less possessed — man has his immortal *rational* soul, or *nous*, which ought to make him at least equal in magnanimity to the elephant, who treads so carefully, lest he should crush weaker creatures than himself. It is this feeling which prompts Brahman and Buddhist alike to construct hospitals for sick animals, and even insects, and to prepare refuges wherein they may finish their days. It is this same feeling, again, which causes the Jaina sectarian to sacrifice one-half of his life-time to brushing away from his path the helpless, crawling insects, rather than recklessly deprive the smallest of life; and it is again from this sense of highest benevolence and charity toward the weaker, however abject the creature may be, that they honor one of the natural modifications of their own dual nature, and that later the popular belief in metempsychosis arose.⁴⁰

Now, since the metaphysics of Occult physiology and psychology postulate within mortal man an immortal entity, “divine Mind,” or *Nous*, whose pale and too often distorted reflection is that which we call “Mind” and intellect in men — virtually an entity apart from the former during the period of every incarnation — we say that the *two* sources of “memory” are in these two “principles.” These two we distinguish as the Higher *Manas* (Mind or Ego), and the *Kama-Manas*, *i.e.*, the rational, but earthly or physical intellect of man, incased in, and bound by, matter, therefore subject to the influence of the latter: the all-conscious SELF, that which reincarnates periodically — verily the WORD made flesh! — and which is always the same, while its re-

³⁹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. II) XII pp. 558-69

⁴⁰ *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 279



flected “Double,” changing with every new incarnation and personality, is, therefore, conscious but for a life period. The latter “principle” is the *Lower Self*, or that, which manifesting through our *organic* system, acting on this plane of illusion, imagines itself the *Ego Sum*, and thus falls into what Buddhist philosophy brands as the “heresy of separateness.” The former, we term INDIVIDUALITY, the latter *Personality*. From the first proceeds all the *noëtic* element, from the second, the *psychic*, *i.e.*, “terrestrial wisdom” at best, as it is influenced by all the chaotic stimuli of the human or rather *animal passions* of the living body.⁴¹

Vaishnavas, Vishnu-Purana, Virgil

Mahat (or Mahā-Buddhi) is, with the Vaishnavas, however, divine mind *in active operation*, or, as Anaxagoras has it, “an ordering and disposing mind, which is the cause of all things,” — *Νοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ διακοσμῶν τε καὶ πάντων αἴτιος*.⁴²

Wilson saw at a glance the suggestive connection between *Mahat* and the Phœnician Mōt, or *Mut*, who was female with the Egyptians — the Goddess Mut, the “Mother.” . .

“The supreme Soul, the *all permeant* (sarvaga) substance of the world . . . having entered [*been drawn*] into matter [prakriti] and spirit [purusha], *agitated the mutable and the immutable principles*, the season of creation [manvantara] having arrived . . .”⁴³

Esoteric doctrine teaches that the Dhyān Chohans are the collective aggregate of divine Intelligence or primordial *mind*, and that the first Manus — the seven “mind-born” Spiritual Intelligences — are identical with the former. Hence the “Kuan-shih-yin” — “the golden Dragon in whom are the seven,” of Stanza III — is the primordial Logos, or Brahmā, the first manifested creative Power; and the Dhyāni-Energies are the Manus, or *Manu-Svāyambhuva collectively*. The direct connection, moreover, be-

⁴¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PSYCHIC AND NOETIC ACTION) XII p. 366

⁴² [Plato, *Phædon*, 97 Cor § 46.]

⁴³ [*Vishnu-Purana*, Bk. I, ch. ii; Wilson, Vol. I, p. 27.] The *nous* of the Greeks, which is (spiritual or divine) mind, or *mens*, “Mahat,” operates upon matter in the same way; it “enters into” and *agitates* it:

“Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus,
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.”

[Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 726 *et seq.*]

In the Phœnician Cosmogony, “Spirit mixing with its own principles gives rise to creation” also; (*Brücker*, I., 240); the Orphic triad shows an identical doctrine: for there *Phanēs* (or Erōs), *Chaos*, containing crude *undifferentiated* Cosmic matter, and *Chronos* (time), are the three co-operating principles, emanating from the Unknowable and concealed *point*, which produce the work of “Creation.” And they are the Hindu *Purusha* (*Phanēs*), *Pradhāna* (chaos), and *Kāla* (*Chronos*) or *time*. The good Professor Wilson does not like the idea, as no Christian clergyman, however liberal, would. He remarks that “as presently explained, the *mixture* [of the *Supreme Spirit* or Soul] is *not mechanical*; it is *an influence or effect exerted upon intermediate agents* which produce effects.” The sentence in *Vishnu Purāna* Bk. I, ch. ii: “As fragrance affects the mind from its proximity merely, and *not from any immediate operation upon mind itself*, so the Supreme influenced the elements of creation,” the reverend and erudite Sanskritist correctly explains: “As perfumes do not delight the mind by actual contact, but by the impression they make upon the sense of smelling, which communicates it to the mind,” adding: “The entrance of the *Supreme Vishnu* into spirit, as well as matter, is *less intelligible* than the view elsewhere taken of it, as the *infusion* of spirit, identified with the supreme, into Prakriti or matter alone.” He prefers the verse in *Padma Purāna*: “He who is called the *male* (spirit) of Prakriti . . . that same divine Vishnu entered into Prakriti.” (*Wilson*, Vol. I, pp. 27-28 *fn.*) This “view” is certainly more akin to the plastic character of certain verses in the Bible concerning the Patriarchs, such as Lot (*Gen.* xix., 34-38) and even Adam (iv, I), and others of a still more anthropomorphic nature. But it is just that which led Humanity to *Phallicism*, Christian religion being honey-combed with it, from the first chapter of *Genesis* down to the *Revelation*.



tween the “Manus” and “Mahat” is easy to see. *Manu* is from the root *man*, “to think”; and thinking proceeds from the mind. It is, in Cosmogony, the pre-nebular period.⁴⁴

Valentinian geometry

First the \cdot (Point), the *Monad*, Bythus (the Deep), the unknown and unknowable Father. Then the \triangle (Triangle), Bythus and the first emanated pair or *Duad*, Nous (Mind) and its syzygy Aletheia (Truth). Then the \square (Square), the dual *Duad Tetraktys* or *Quaternary*, two males \parallel , the Logos (Word) and Anthrōpos (Man), two females, their syzygies, = Zōē (Life) and Ekklēsia (the Church or Assembly), *Seven in all*. The Triangle, the *Potentiality* of Spirit; the Square, the *Potentiality* of matter; the Vertical Straight Line, the *Potency* of Spirit, and the Horizontal, the *Potency* of matter.⁴⁵



The Forge of Vulcan (1630) Velazquez

⁴⁴ *Secret Doctrine*, I pp. 451-52 & fn.

⁴⁵ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS SOPHIA) XIII p. 16; [on the geometrical symbolism of the Valentinian pleroma.]



Compendium of concepts

	Higher and Highest Nous	Lower Nous
Anaxagoras	<p>Atoms [the underlying essence and substance of all bodies] were primarily put in motion by Nous (Universal Intelligence), which is immaterial, eternal, spiritual entity.</p> <p>Nous is “an ordering and disposing mind, which is the cause of all things,” <i>Νοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ διακοσμῶν τε καὶ πάντων αἴτιος.</i></p>	<p>By this combination the world was formed, the material gross bodies sinking down, and the ethereal atoms (or fiery ether) rising and spreading in the upper celestial regions.</p>
Aristotle	<p>Reasoning soul, <i>νοῦς</i>, or reasoning soul comes from within the universal soul, . . .</p>	<p>and the other, the animal soul, <i>ψυχή</i> comes from without.</p>
Democritus	<p>Nous or pneuma, is the divine immaterial soul,</p>	<p>Psychè, or astral body, the material.</p>
Diogenes Laërtius	<p>Nous is divine soul (<i>νοῦς</i>, anima divina).</p>	<p>The animal soul (anima bruta, <i>θυμός</i>) or phren (<i>φρήν</i>), generally the diaphragm, — resided in the stomach.</p>
Greeks, Ancient	<p>Kurios was the god-Mind (Nous). Kurios is Mercury, the Divine Wisdom, and “Mercury is the Sol” (Sun), from whom Thoth-Hermes received the wisdom which, in his turn, he imparted to the world in his books. [Manu – Menes – Minos]</p>	
Ireanaeus Plotinus Porphyry Proclus, et alia	<p>Together with Zeus the father, Zeus-Poseidon, or dynamis, son, and power, Nous or Spirit is the Demiurgic Triad.</p>	



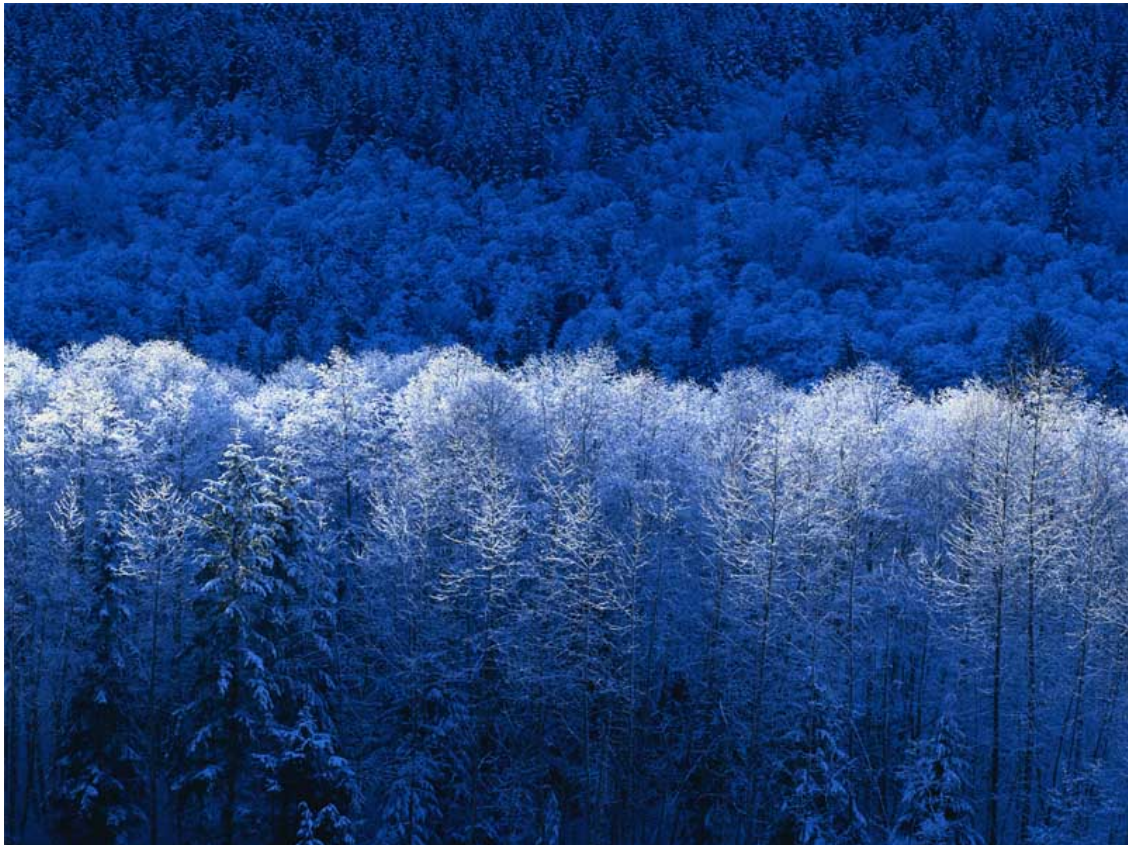
Plato	Demiurgic Mind (Nous) contains from eternity the “idea” of the “to be created world” within itself . . .	and which idea he produces out of himself.
	“Koros [Kurios] signifies the pure and unmixed nature of intellect — wisdom.”	The “second mortal soul” or psyche.
Plato and Pythagoras	Divine or rational soul, <i>λόγος</i> .	Irrational soul, <i>άλογος</i> . (But between irrationality and unconsciousness there is a profound difference.)
Neo-Platonists and Gnostics	Augoeides. [Agra, Atma-Buddhi, Feroher]	
	Nous was a ray of Spiritual Light (<i>Ātman</i> , the universal), the highest conceivable deity enthroned above the seven heavens, standing both for the intelligent Demiurge of the Universe of Matter and the Divine Manas in man, both being Spirit.	
Plutarch	Nous or the divine intelligence soars above mortal man, shedding upon him a ray that is more or less luminous according to the personal merit of the man; the nous never descends but remains stationary,	while <i>ψυχή</i> is imprisoned in the body.
St James	Defines only the wisdom from above as divine and “noetic”	and worldly wisdom as “terrestrial, sensual, psychic,” this last adjective being translated in the English text of the Bible by the word “diabolical.”



Theosophical Constitution of Man	Man has his immortal rational soul, or nous,	besides being endowed with a soul — of which every animal, and even plant, is more or less possessed.
	“Divine Mind,” or Nous, an immortal entity within mortal man, whose pale and too often distorted reflection is . . .	that which we call “Mind” and intellect in men. The two are apart during incarnation.
	Higher Manas (Mind or Ego), the all-conscious SELF, which reincarnates periodically — verily the WORD made flesh! — and which is always the same.	Lower Self or Kama-Manas, <i>i.e.</i> , the “rational,” but earthly or physical intellect of man, incased in, and bound by, matter, therefore, subject to the influence of its higher counterpart. It is a reflected “Double,” changing with every new incarnation and personality, and, therefore, conscious but for a life period.
True and False Individuality	The True Individuality is the source of noetic or inner wisdom.	The False Individuality or Personality, as it is commonly known, is the source or psychic, or worldly “wisdom.”
Vaishnava	Mahat (or Maha-Buddhi) Divine mind in active operation.	
Mahat and Manus differ	Manus are the Dhyani-Energies or Manus-Svayambhuva collectively. Manu is from the root man, “to think”; and thinking proceeds from the mind. It is, in Cosmogony, the pre-nebular period.	
Valentinian geometry	Nous (Mind) is the first emanated syzygy,	Aletheia (Truth), its counterpart.



Virgil	(Spiritual or divine) mind, or mens, is “Mahat.”	It “enters into” matter and agitates it: “Spiritus intus alit, totamque infusa per artus, Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.” ⁴⁶
Vishnu-Purana	“The supreme Soul, the all permeant (sarvaga) substance of the world . . .	having entered into matter and spirit, agitated the mutable and the immutable principles, the season of creation having arrived.
Wilder: Dianoia and Logos are synonymous	Nous being superior and closely in affinity with <i>το αγαθόν</i> , one being the superior apprehending, One noetic, . . .	the other the comprehending. the other phrenic.



⁴⁶ Cf. “Unknown and Unknowable” in our Secret Doctrine’s Proposition 2 Series.

