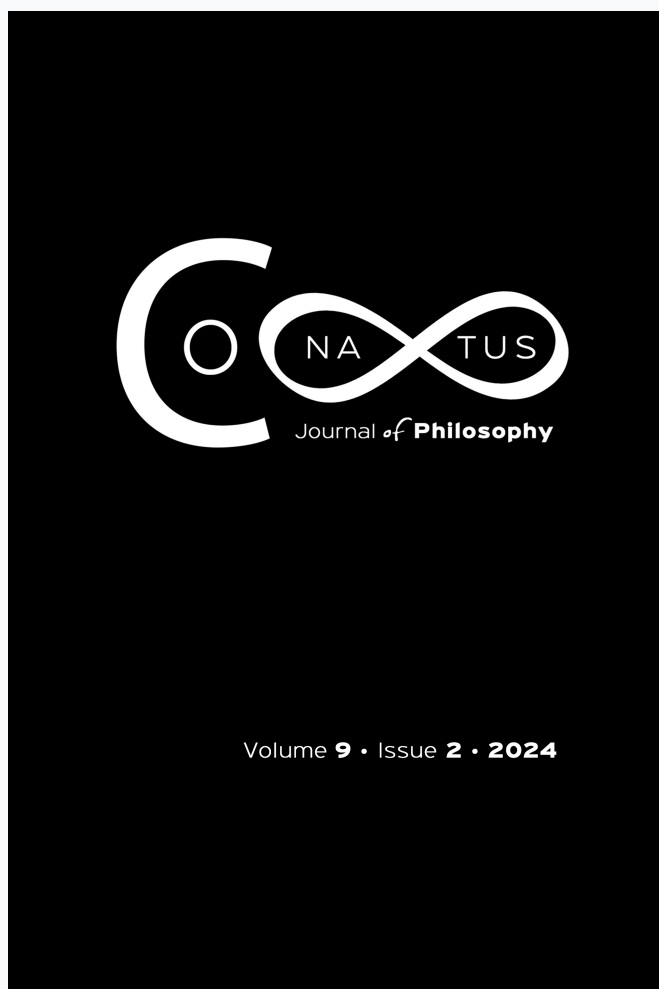


Conatus - Journal of Philosophy

Vol 9, No 2 (2024)

Conatus - Journal of Philosophy



Is Numenius' Doctrine of the World Souls Identical with Calcidius' Relevant Doctrine?

Aikaterini Leontitsi

doi: [10.12681/cjp.36057](https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.36057)

Copyright © 2024, Aikaterini Leontitsi



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Leontitsi, A. (2024). Is Numenius' Doctrine of the World Souls Identical with Calcidius' Relevant Doctrine?. *Conatus - Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.36057>

Is Numenius' Doctrine of the World Souls Identical with Calcidius' Relevant Doctrine?

Aikaterini Leontitsi

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

E-mail address: leontitsi.aikaterini@gmail.com

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6660-3005>

Abstract

The present article deals with the subject of the doctrine of the Middle Platonist philosopher Numenius about the world souls, according to the testimony of Calcidius. At first, it is being investigated whether the theory presented by Calcidius is an exact reproduction of Numenius' view or whether some elements have intruded into it, which reveal Calcidius' view of the soul. Subsequently, the interpretations of the divisible and the indivisible essences of Timaeus – from which the world soul is created – which have been given by Calcidius, Proclus and Numenius are compared. In addition, it is examined whether the source of Calcidius' interpretation of Timaeus' psychogony is Numenius or Plotinus. At the same time, the world souls are outlined more clearly according to the theory of Numenius. Finally, what was analyzed above is summarized and some conclusions are drawn, regarding the relationship between the views of Calcidius, Numenius and Plotinus on the universal and human soul, as well as the general character of the system of the last two philosophers.

Keywords: *beneficent world soul; evil world soul; indivisible essence; divisible essence; Numenius; Calcidius; Plotinus*

I. Introduction

The subject of this study is Numenius' theory of the *world souls*, as presented by Calcidius in chapter 297¹ of his work *In Timaeum*. The question of the creation of the *world soul* and the existence of two *world souls*, one beneficent and one evil,

¹ The chapter in question is part of Fr. 52 of Numenius in his edition of Des Places; see Numénus. *Fragments*, ed. Édouard Des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), 96-97.

is introduced by Plato in *Timaeus* and in *Laws* respectively. Some later Platonic philosophers, such as the Middle Platonists Numenius of Apamea and Plutarch, as well as the Neoplatonists Plotinus, Calcidius and Proclus are based on this Platonic theory and have given different interpretations. The present article will mainly analyze the theories of Numenius and Calcidius, while references will be made and correlations will be identified with the other interpretations.

According to Numenius, as referred in paragraph 297 of Calcidius, there are two souls of the world, the beneficent and the evil.² The beneficent *world soul* is associated with reason and God,³ while the evil *world soul* is identified with Matter⁴ or soul of Matter⁵ or *Necessity*.⁶ It is evident that regarding this issue Numenius agrees with Plato, who in *Laws* X 897c7-d1 distinguishes two souls of the world, the excellent soul and the bad one. According to Plato, the perfect soul (“ἀρίστη ψυχή”) is the one that is beneficent (“εὐεργέτις”), acting under the guidance of the intellect (“νοῦν μὲν προσλαβοῦσα”), i.e., it takes care of the whole world and leads it towards the path of reason, while the bad soul, “ἀνοία δὲ συγγενομένη” (that is related to folly, i.e., bereft of the guidance of the intellect), directs the world towards fury and disorder.⁷ So, the evil soul of the *Laws* seems to have the same meaning as the *Necessity* of the *Timaeus*⁸ and the “Necessitas” or

² Fr. 52.66: “beneficentissimam” and “malignam,” respectively. cf. Calcidius, *In Timaeum* c. 300. See Jan Hendrik Waszink, *Timaeus: A Calcidio Translatum Commentarioque Instructum* (Londini: Instituti Warburgiani, 1962), 301-302.

³ c. (caput or capitulum, i.e., chapter) 297.31: “ratione ac deo.”

⁴ c. 297.24: “silva.”

⁵ c. 298.17: “silvae anima.” Because the movement of Matter is inherent in it (Fr. 52, c. 297.24-27), Matter itself is a soul. See John Phillips, “Numenian Psychology in Calcidius?” *Phronesis* 48, no. 2 (2003), 147.

⁶ c. 296.10; c. 299.24: “necessitate.” See Jacobus Cornelius Maria Van Winden, *Calcidius on Matter: His Doctrine and Sources. A Chapter in the History of Platonism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 113-114. Van Winden’s view that, according to Calcidius and possibly Numenius, the “beneficentissima mundi anima” is identified with reason and God (i.e., the Demiurge/Creator), based on c. 297.30-31 (“rationabilis animae pars auctore utitur ratione ac deo”), does not seem entirely correct as regards Numenius, since the *world soul* constitutes the third God of Numenius, produced by the second God-Demiurge, when the latter comes to contact with Matter.

⁷ *Laws* X 896c9-897d1. See Edwin Bourdieu England, ed., *The Laws of Plato*, t. II (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 27, 159-160; Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1961), 1452-1453.

⁸ Reginald Hackforth, ed., *Plato’s Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71.

“Silva” (*Necessity* or *Matter*) of Numenius, which is persuaded and dominated by the *Intellect*, and constitutes the principle of cosmic imperfection or evil.⁹

II. Does Calcidius accurately reproduce Numenius’ theory of the soul?

Calcidius in chapter 297 of *In Timaeum*, in the context of the exposition of the Numenian theory, states that the evil *world soul* creates and rules the passive part of the human soul (“patibilis animae pars”), in which there is a material, mortal and corporeal element, while the rational part of the soul (“rationabilis animae pars”) has reason and God as creators.¹⁰ The passive part, i.e., that which is subject to passions and is the source of “ira” and “cupiditas” (of the “vitiosae partes animi”),¹¹ according to Plato,¹² was created by the lower gods and added to the logical part.

However, it is known that Numenius did not mention that there are two parts of the soul, but two souls both in the world and in man, a rational and an irrational one;¹³ the correspondence between the two souls of the macrocosm and the microcosm is obvious. Therefore, Van Winden’s conjecture that Calcidius modified the theory of Numenius

⁹ However, Plutarch in *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* 1014d2-1015a5 [see, Plutarchus, *Moralia*, ed. Curt Hubert and Hans Drexler (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubner, 1959), 149-150] expresses his disagreement with those who attribute the *necessity* (“ἀνάγκη”) of the *Timaeus* (48a, 56c, 68e) and the *Philebus*’ “περὶ τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἧττον ἐλλείψεως καὶ ὑπερβολῆς ἀμετρίαν καὶ ἀπειρίαν” [measurelessness and infinitude in the varying degrees of deficiency and excess; see, Plutarch, *Moralia*, ed. Harold Cherniss (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 188-189] to matter and not to the soul. He explains that this is not consistent with what is mentioned in *Timaeus* (50e-51b) about matter as “ἄμορφον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον [...] καὶ πάσης ποιότητος καὶ δυνάμεως οἰκείας ἔρημον” (amorphous and shapeless and devoid of all quality and potency of its own), which “is likened to odorless oils which makers of perfume take for their infusions” (see *ibid.*). In addition, he argues that it is not possible for Plato to assume that “τὸ ἄποιον καὶ ἄργον ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἄρρεπές” (what is without quality and of itself inert and without propensity, see *ibid.*, 190-191), i.e., matter, is “αἰτίαν κακοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴν [...] ἀπειρίαν αἰσχροῦ καὶ κακοποιόν” (the cause of evil and [...] ugly and maleficent infinitude, see *op. cit.*), as well as “ἀνάγκην πολλὰ τῷ θεῷ δυσμαχοῦσαν καὶ ἀφηνιάζουσαν” (*Necessity* which is largely refractory and recalcitrant to God, see *op. cit.*). Therefore, Plutarch does not accept the identification of Matter with the “disorderly and indeterminate but self-moved and motive principle” (“ἄτακτον καὶ ἀόριστον αὐτοκίνητον δὲ καὶ κινητικὴν ἀρχήν;” see *ibid.*, 186-187), which Plato in the *Timaeus* calls *Necessity* and in the *Laws* (896d ff) the disorderly and maleficent soul (“ψυχὴν ἄτακτον [...] καὶ κακοποιόν;” see Plutarch, *op. cit.*).

¹⁰ c. 297.27-31.

¹¹ See cc. (*capita* or *capitula*, i.e., chapters) 186-187.

¹² *Timaeus* 69c-e, 42d-e.

¹³ Fr. 44 Des Places (= Test. 36 Leemans): “[...] δύο ψυχὰς ἔχειν ἡμᾶς οἴονται, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄλλα, τὴν μὲν λογικὴν, τὴν δ’ ἄλογον.”

to conform with his own conception of the human soul, which he considered as a unity, seems correct.¹⁴

Waszink disagrees with this view,¹⁵ pointing out that Fr. 52 is a translation of a passage of Numenius from Calcidius. He assumes that in this passage, Numenius' interpretation of Plato and his own view were not clearly separated or were somehow coordinated. In my opinion, Van Winden's explanation is more correct, as it is possible that Calcidius is not translating literally Numenius' specific period of speech¹⁶ but freely, attempting to interpret it at the same time. Thus, based on his own theory of the unity of the soul, he might have introduced the phrase "patibilis animae pars" instead of "anima maligna," and the phrase "rationabilis animae pars" instead of "anima beneficentissima." Besides, Calcidius' introduction of his own words, and the combination of translation and interpretation are also observed in several places in the *Timaeus* translation.¹⁷

In contrast to Numenius, Calcidius characterized the whole soul as rational. This is evident from c. 261.11, where he speaks of a "patibilem partem rationabilis animae," as well as from c. 54.1, where he refers to "rationabilis mundi anima." He considered the latter to consist of a purely rational and a material part, the "anima stirpea."¹⁸

III. The divisible and the indivisible substance according to Calcidius, Proclus and Numenius

In chapter 53 Calcidius mentions that the *world soul* has been created by the fusion of two substances ("essentia sive substantia [...] duplex"), the indivisible ("individua") and the divisible ("dividua") essence, and therefore its nature is appropriate to the nature of numbers, whose principles are Unity ("singularitas") and Dyad ("duitas").¹⁹

¹⁴ Jacobus Cornelius Maria Van Winden, *Calcidius on Matter: his Doctrine and Sources. A Chapter in the History of Platonism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 114.

¹⁵ Jan Hendrik Waszink, "Porphyrios und Numenios," in *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique, Tome XII: Porphyre*, eds. Heinrich Dörrie, Jan Hendrik Waszink, and Willy Theiler, 33-83 (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1966), 76-77.

¹⁶ c. 297.27-31.

¹⁷ For example, in Calcidius' translation of *Timaeus* 37a2-c5. See Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *Calcidius on Plato's Timaeus: Greek Philosophy, Latin Reception and Christian Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 65-67.

¹⁸ c. 31. See Van Winden, 114; Jan Hendrik Waszink, *Timaeus: A Calcidio Translatatus Commentarioque Instructus* (Londini: Instituti Warburgiani, 1962), 80, 102.

¹⁹ Waszink, 101-102.

These agree to some extent with the theory of Numenius, Aristander and most other commentators,²⁰ who, according to Proclus, considered the essence of the soul to be mathematical, in between the physical and the supersensible beings (“ὡς μέσῃ τῶν τε φυσικῶν καὶ τῶν ὑπερφυσικῶν”), and specifically as a number produced by the Monad, as indivisible, and from the indefinite Dyad, as divisible (“οἱ μὲν ἀριθμὸν αὐτὴν εἰπόντες ἐκ μονάδος ποιοῦσιν, ὡς ἀμερίστου, καὶ τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος, ὡς μεριστῆς”). As Waszink observes, there can be no doubt that in this passage the indivisible Monad (“μονὰς ἀμέριστος”) is identified with God, and the divisible indefinite Dyad (“ἀόριστος δυὰς μεριστή”) with Matter.²¹

In chapters 29-31, Calcidius presents two interpretations of the Platonic words “ἀμέριστος” and “μεριστὴ οὐσία” (i.e., the indivisible and the divisible essence).²² According to the first, the indivisible essence is the species or *Idea* (“species”) of the intelligible world, while the divisible essence is matter. According to the second interpretation, with which Calcidius agrees, the “individua substantia” is the “eminentior anima” (higher soul), while the “dividua substantia” is the “stirpea anima” (vegetative soul); the fusion of these two substances results in the “tertium animae genus rationabile.”²³ Also, in chapters 53-54, as mentioned above, it is argued that “rationabilis mundi anima” comes from two substances, and in c. 31 it is stated that it was created from two souls, the incorporeal and the vegetative soul. So, according to Calcidius, the two souls should be understood as the indivisible and the divisible substance.

However, the explanation of Proclus regarding the creation of the *world soul* in the Platonic *Timaeus* is different. In more detail, in *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* II 147-156,²⁴ Proclus mentions that the soul is in between the indivisible and the divisible essence, which means that the “indivisible” (“ἀμέριστον”) of the soul is inferior to the “indivisible” par excellence, and its “divisible” (“μεριστόν”) is superior to the “divisible” par excellence.²⁵ The being of the soul (το “εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς”), therefore, was created through the union of the middle kind of “identity,” the middle kind of “otherness” and the corresponding kind of “essence.”²⁶ This explanation is considered correct

²⁰ Fr. 39 Des Places (= Test. 31 L.).

²¹ Numenius, 89; Waszink, XLIV-XLV.

²² See *Timaeus* 35a1-4.

²³ c. 29.

²⁴ Proclus. *Commentaire sur le Timée*, t. III, ed. and trans. André-Jean Festugière (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967), 188-200.

²⁵ II 148-149.

²⁶ II 156.

by Cornford,²⁷ pointing out that the different interpretation given by other commentators, in which the soul comes from the fusion of the indivisible and the divisible essence, is wrong, as they argue that “τοῦ τε ἀμεροῦς αὐτῶν καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ”²⁸ denotes the indivisible and the divisible kind of essence, and not the indivisible and the divisible kind of “identity” and “otherness.” According to Cornford, this interpretation is to be rejected, because it leads to the identification of the “identity” (“αὐτόν”) and the “otherness” (“ἕτερον”) with the indivisible and the divisible essence, respectively, and for this reason it is inconsistent with the Platonic *Sophist*.

It is obvious that the explanation adopted by Calcidius coincides with the latter interpretation, and therefore differs from that of Proclus. It is not clear exactly what Numenius' view on this matter was, based on the remaining fragments. But, as it has already been pointed out in *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* II 153.17-25,²⁹ it is mentioned that Numenius is among those who considered the essence of the soul to be mathematical, in between the sensible and the suprasensible beings (“ὡς μέσσην τῶν τε φυσικῶν καὶ τῶν ὑπερφυσικῶν”), and indeed as a number produced from the indivisible Monad and the divisible indefinite Dyad (“ἐκ μονάδος [...], ὡς ἀμερίστου, καὶ τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος, ὡς μεριστῆς”). In conjunction with what is mentioned in Fr. 52, as well as in Fr. 11 and 18 (Des Places), we conclude that the excellent *world soul*, i.e., the third God of Numenius, is produced by the Demiurge by the ‘mixing’ of the indivisible and the divisible essence, i.e., when the indivisible essence of the first God-Monad, from which the second God-Demiurge derives,³⁰ comes into contact with the divisible essence of the Matter-Dyad,³¹ which the Demiurge unites, but it is divided from it.³²

²⁷ Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology. The "Timaeus" of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner; New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937), 60-61.

²⁸ *Timaeus* 35a5-6.

²⁹ Fr. 39 Des Places.

³⁰ Joshua Lee Langseth, *Knowing God: A Study of the Argument of Numenius of Apameia's on the Good* (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2013), 134-135.

³¹ The interpretation given by Waszink (“Porphyrios und Numenios,” 75) to Fr. 39 is different. Specifically, he considers that the Numenian definition of the soul as a number produced by the Monad (the indivisible essence, and the indefinite Dyad), i.e., the divisible essence, proves that the *world soul*, according to the Apamean, is unified and consists of a divine and a material component. However, based on Proclus' explanation of the creation of the soul in *Timaeus* (*In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* II 147-156), which has been mentioned above, as well as the previous analysis regarding the souls of the world in the theory of Numenius (based on Fr. 52, 11, 18 and 44), it is concluded that Waszink's view is not correct; the soul of the world (third God), according to Numenius, is not produced through the union of a divine and a material part (the indivisible and the divisible essence), but through the “contact” of the Demiurge (second God) with Matter.

³² Fr. 11.13-15 Des Places: “ὁ θεὸς μέντοι ὁ δεύτερος καὶ τρίτος ἐστὶν εἷς· συμφερόμενος δὲ τῇ

Proclus disagrees with the above view of Numenius which he cites in *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* II 153.17-25, emphasizing that Plato had not yet considered the soul as a number, therefore it is inappropriate to look for its numerical principles.³³ Nevertheless, we notice that both Numenius and Proclus present the soul in between sensible and suprasensible beings. Their positions, therefore, seem to be closer to the first than to the second interpretation of the divisible and the indivisible essence presented by Calcidius.

IV. The source of Calcidius' interpretation of *Timaeus*, and the world souls according to Numenius

As to the source of Calcidius' interpretation of the *Timaeus*, various opinions have been expressed by scholars. In particular, Phillips³⁴ argues that two fundamental components of Plotinus' psychology are evident in Calcidius' interpretation of the *Timaeus*, namely the theories of the unity of the soul and the undescended higher soul. According to Phillips, these theories of Plotinus have been drawn to a large extent from aspects of Numenius' interpretation of Platonic *psychogony*. Therefore, he tries to prove that Numenius was the direct and unique source of Calcidius, and that the explanation given by Plotinus to *Timaeus* 35a ff. as well as his aforementioned theories came directly from the theory of Numenius, which Calcidius maintained.

First, he states that the correct interpretation of *Timaeus's psychogony* is the second of those expounded by Calcidius, according to which the indivisible soul is the *Intellect* that remains undescended in the intelligible world, while the lower or vegetative soul is divisible into bodies; it rules and cares for the physical world, turning her gaze in two directions, both toward the divine nature and toward the sensible. According to Waszink and Van Winden, the vegetative soul is identified with the evil soul of the Numenian Matter. However, as Deuse aptly points out,³⁵ the vegetative soul in cc. 29-31 of Calcidius cannot

ὅλη δύαδι οὕση ἐνοῖ μὲν αὐτήν, σχίζεται δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῆς.”

³³ II 154.10-12.

³⁴ Phillips, 132-151.

³⁵ Werner Deuse, *Untersuchungen zur Mittelplatonischen und Neuplatonischen Seelenlehre* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983), 75-76. Reydam-Schils also agrees with Deuse's view [Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *Calcidius on Plato's Timaeus: Greek Philosophy, Latin Reception and Christian Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 168-169 and n. 22], underlining that Calcidius does not consider the lower soul, which is intertwined with bodies, as evil in itself, as he does not attribute this characterization to it, but he simply refers to the regularization of its disordered movements by the Demiurge.

be understood as an evil *world soul* that continues to function as the principle of evil in the entire universe after the creation of the world, as in cc. 295-300 – where it is certain that the theory of Numenius is set forth – but as a benevolent soul of life, i.e., a force that contributes to the preservation of the world.

Phillips attempts to counter this argument by summarizing the evidence of Waszink and Van Winden,³⁶ who hold that cc. 27-31 and 54-55 come directly from Numenius. A key argument of theirs is that in c. 31 the “*anima stirpea*” is described both as that which animates the sensible world and as a disorderly motion which God brings to order, equivalent to the “*animae motum*” of Numenius and the eternal, chaotic motion of *Timaeus* 30a, associated with the evil *world soul*. Therefore, according to Phillips, although the evilness of the lower soul is not expressed in cc. 29-31, it is clearly implied.

Another remark of Waszink³⁷ is that in the Calcidian chapters in question, the evilness of the material soul is omitted, as it is inherent in the *world soul*, which animates a perfect and immortal body and is, therefore, entirely free from passions,³⁸ as opposed to the human soul. However, if we accept the view that the rational *world soul* consists of the higher soul and the soul of Matter, which according to Numenius being the cause of evil opposes the salutary plans of Providence,³⁹ it is not possible to consider that this *world soul* is exempted from passions.

Another argument with which we could refute the claims of Waszink, Van Winden and Phillips is that Numenius, according to the testimony of Porphyry,⁴⁰ supported the existence of two souls, one rational and one irrational, and not the existence of one soul consisting of two or three parts. Although this passage refers mainly to the human soul, it is evident from Fr. 52.64-67⁴¹ that he believed the same about the souls of the world. Therefore, by merging the irrational soul of Matter and the higher soul-*intellect* into one rational soul, Calcidius deviates

³⁶ Waszink, *Timaeus*, XLVIII ff.; Van Winden, 256 ff.

³⁷ Waszink, *Timaeus*, XLIX.

³⁸ c. 187.

³⁹ cc. 296, 298.

⁴⁰ Fr. 44 Des Places (= Test. 36 L.), Porphyry, *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων*, in Ioannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium* I 49.25a. See Curt Wachsmuth, *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii Libri Duo Priores qui Inscribi Solent Eclogae Physicae et Ethicae*, t. I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1884), 350.25 -351.1; Des Places, 91.

⁴¹ “Platonemque idem Numenius laudat, quod duas mundi animas autemet, unam beneficentissimam, malignam alteram, scilicet silvam [...]”

greatly from the theory of Numenius, since the irrational or vegetative soul is presented not as separate but as the lower part of the rational soul.

Furthermore, according to Numenius, the “*anima mundi* beneficentissima” constitutes the third God,⁴² which is produced by the second God-Demiurge and is inseparably connected with him. The beneficent *world soul*, in fact, constitutes the second aspect of the Demiurge, which appears when he looks to Matter and is divided from it. Numenius explicitly mentions that the Demiurge is good,⁴³ while the soul of Matter is evil. Therefore, according to the theory of the Apamean, it is absurd to claim that within the excellent soul of the world there is an evil soul that is the cause of evil.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the Calcidian theory of the rational soul of the world (consisting of the higher and the vegetative soul of matter) contradicts the radical dualism of Numenius, who absolutely separated and considered the first principles as opposites, namely the (first) God as the cause of good, and Matter as the source of evil. Therefore, the third God, that is, the excellent soul of the world – produced by the second, originating from the first God – could not include the soul of Matter.

From all the above it is concluded that the opinion of Waszink, Van Winden and Phillips that Calcidius’ interpretation of Platonic *psychogony* derives from Numenius, is not correct.⁴⁴ We could, however, conjecture that this interpretation has derived mainly from Plotinus, who, like Calcidius, in the *Enneads* IV 2 [1] (*Περὶ οὐσίας ψυχῆς δεύτερον*)⁴⁵ and IV 9.3 follows the usual explanation of *Timaeus* 35a

⁴² Dodds is also in favor of this position, who mentions that the third God of Numenius is characterized only by *intellect* (“*διάνοιαν*,” based on Fr. 22 Des Places), so he does not correspond to the material world but to the *world soul* of Plotinus [Eric Robertson Dodds, “Numenius and Ammonius,” in *Les Sources de Plotin: Dix Exposés et Discussions*, ed. Eric Robertson Dodds, 3-61 (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1960), 14]. However, Waszink disagrees with Dodds, arguing that the good soul of the world is to be sought not in the third but in the second hypostasis, namely the Demiurge. He considers that, according to Numenius, the higher part of the *world soul* functions as the Demiurge. See Waszink, “Porphyrios und Numenios,” 73-74.

⁴³ Fr. 16 (= 25 L.): “ἀγαθός.”

⁴⁴ Regarding this issue, Reydam-Schils (170-171) – although she recognizes the significant influence Numenius exerted on Calcidius – points out that the latter does not follow him in all his views, but he makes independent use of the ideas he drew from him, which reveals the relative independence of his authorial voice.

⁴⁵ *Ennead* IV 2 [1].14-17: “Τὸ οὖν ἐκ τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστῆς ταῦτὸν τῷ ἐκ τῆς ἄνω [καὶ κάτω] οὐσης καὶ τῆς ἐκείθεν ἐξημμένης, ρύσεως δὲ μέχρι τῶνδε, οἷον γραμμῆς ἐκ κέντρου.” See Plotinus, *Ennead, Volume IV*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library 443 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) 20-21. See also Paul Kalligas, ed., *Plotinus’ Fourth Ennead* (Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Latin Literature, 2009), 34-35 [in

that the indivisible essence (“ἡ ἀμέριστος”) corresponds to the logical level of the soul, while “that which is divisible in the sphere of bodies” (“ἡ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστή”) corresponds to the irrational level, whose power, according to Plotinus, is the vegetative soul (“φυτική ψυχή”). Furthermore, he considers that the highest part of the soul, namely its undivided nature, does not undergo incorporation, but remains high, in the intelligible sphere.⁴⁶ Plotinus emphasizes that the soul is one, although its powers are many.⁴⁷ The similarities of the present Plotinian theory with the Calcidian interpretation are obvious.⁴⁸ Also, it is noteworthy that Plotinus uses the term “vegetative soul” (“φυτική ψυχή”), as does Calcidius (“anima stirpea”).⁴⁹

Phillips also finds other similarities between Calcidius' and Plotinus' theories mentioned above. One of these is that the soul after its fall and incorporation maintains its fundamental unity through its continuous contact with its undescended, undivided nature,⁵⁰ looking both to *Intellect* and to the sensible world.⁵¹ Phillips states, however, that according to Plotinus evil cannot be part of the soul's nature but is an external addition resulting from its contact with Matter after its fall. However, as already pointed out, the “anima stirpea” in cc. 29-31 is not presented as an evil soul, so contrary to Phillips' claim, there is no contradiction between Calcidius' theory and Plotinus' on this matter.

As a further presumption that Calcidius was influenced by Plotinus, one could cite the sentence of c. 176.9-11 “est autem intellegibilis essentia aemulae bonitatis propter indefessam ad summum deum conversionem,” which, according to Switalski, alludes to Plotinus' theory of the divine contemplation and the undescended soul.⁵² As Hadot ob-

Greek]. According to Kalligas, in the *Ennead* IV 1 [2] (which he numbers as IV 2) Plotinus gives a different explanation of *Timaeus* 35a, as he emphasizes on the intermediate nature of the soul – between the indivisible intelligible Essence and the divisible “essence” of the sensible bodies. Moreover, Kalligas points out that in IV 1[2] there are two intermediate ontological levels, i.e., soul (which is “ἀμερίστως μεριστή”) and enmattered forms (“ἔνυλα εἶδη,” which correspond to the “μεριστή περὶ τὰ σώματα” essence). See Kalligas, 316-319.

⁴⁶ *Enneas* IV 1 [2].1; IV 3.4; IV 3.19. See Plotinus, *Ennead, Volume IV*, 8-15, 44-47, 92-95. See also Kalligas, 24-29, 44-47, 76-79.

⁴⁷ *Enneas* IV 9.3.8-18. See Plotinus, *Ennead, Volume IV*, 434-435. See also Kalligas, 308-309.

⁴⁸ cc. 28, 31.

⁴⁹ See Phillips, 144-150.

⁵⁰ *Enneas* VI 2.22.28 ff.

⁵¹ cf. Calcidius, In *Timaeum* c. 31.

⁵² See Bronislaus Wladislaus Switalski, *Des Chalcidius Kommentar zu Plato's Timaeus. Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung* (Münster: Druck und Verlag der Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1902), 51, n. 1; Phillips, 146, n. 38. It is worth noting that Switalski (50-51 and n. 3)

serves,⁵³ in c. 176 of Calcidius the contemplation of the first principle and its likeness to it (in terms of goodness) are connected. Hadot does not agree with Switalski but with Waszink, who argues that this development reveals the influence by Numenius and the *Chaldean Oracles*. Waszink conjectures that the second God of Numenius, the Demiurge, is identified with the good cosmic soul, i.e., the higher part of it. It is argued, therefore, that the relevant theories by Plotinus and Porphyry were an evolution of the Numenian teaching, as both assume the division of the *world soul* into two parts. In my opinion, Waszink's interpretation is not correct, because as has been mentioned above, in the theory of Numenius, the Demiurge and the beneficent *world soul* are not identical but constitute respectively the second and the third God. Therefore, Switalski's point of view is correct, since the passage c. 176.9-11 directly refers to the Plotinian theory of the turning of the *Intellect* towards the Good, while at the same time the equation of the *Intellect* with the intelligible essence ("intellegibilis essentia") in c. 176 recalls the Plotinian complete identification of the *Intellect* with its intelligible objects,⁵⁴ in contrast to the distinction of the *Intellect* from the intelligible essence according to Numenius.⁵⁵

Beyond that, however, Phillips emphasizes that, according to Plotinus, the transition from disorder to order cannot be attributed to matter⁵⁶ and that it is wrong to believe that matter "before" the creation of the world was in a state of disorder, i.e., "ἀκόσμητος."⁵⁷ Regarding this, it is evident that Calcidius⁵⁸ does not agree with Plotinus' opinion but with Numenius', as he mentions that God arranged what was without order and measure.

From the previous analysis, it can be concluded that the interpretation given by Calcidius to the Platonic *psychogony* seems to have been

also refers to c. 252 of Calcidius ("Sunt qui nostrum intellectum pervolitare convexa putent, miscereque se divinae menti, quam Graeci νοῦν vocant [...]"), which, as he underlines, recalls Plotinus' theory of *ecstasy* (see the parallel passages he cites: V 3.4 .1-4; IV 8.1.1-9).

⁵³ Pierre Hadot, ed., *Porphyre et Victorinus*, t. I (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), 459-460, n. 2.

⁵⁴ *Enneas* V 4.2.44-49. See Plotinus, *Ennead, Volume V*, trans. A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 444 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 148-149. See Paul Kalligas, ed., *Plotinus' Fifth Ennead* (Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Latin Literature, 2013) 106-107, 331, 337 [in Greek].

⁵⁵ Fr. 16.14-17 Des Places.

⁵⁶ *Enneas* III 6.11.19 ff. See Plotinus, *Ennead, Volume III*, trans. A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 442 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 252-257. See also Paul Kalligas, ed., *Plotinus' Third Ennead* (Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Latin Literature, 2004), 174-177 [in Greek].

⁵⁷ *Enneas* IV 3.9.17 ff. See Armstrong, 62-63. See also Kalligas, *Plotinus' Fourth Ennead*, 56-57.

⁵⁸ c. 31.

greatly influenced by the corresponding theory of Plotinus.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, we can also discern certain influences from Numenius, such as the idea of God arranging what lacked order.

V. Epilogue – Conclusions

To recapitulate, Calcidius in c. 297 of *In Timaeum* does not reproduce precisely, but modifies in some points Numenius' theory, so that it is consistent with his own theory of the unity of the soul. In particular, he refers to the two parts of the human soul, the rational and the passive, while Numenius, according to Fr. 44, supports the existence of two human souls, the rational and the irrational. The difference of their theories is also evident regarding the macrocosm, as Numenius, according to c. 297 of Calcidius, advocates the existence of two radically opposed *world souls*, the beneficent and the evil, while Calcidius in cc. 29 and 31 argues that the higher and the vegetative *world soul* co-constitute the rational *world soul*.

Moreover, the interpretations given by the two philosophers to the indivisible and the divisible essence (“ἀμέριστος” and “μεριστή οὐσία”) of *Timaeus* 35a1-4 are different. More precisely, Calcidius mentions two possible interpretations, but adopts the second one, claiming that the indivisible substance (“individua substantia”) is the higher soul, while the divisible substance (“dividua substantia”) is the vegetative soul and from their fusion, the rational soul is created.⁶⁰ On the other hand, Numenius believes that the soul is a number produced by the indivisible Monad and the divisible indeterminate Dyad.⁶¹ So, based on Fr. 11 and 18, the beneficent soul of the world (third God), according to Numenius, is pro-

⁵⁹ This view is also supported by Switalski. On the contrary, Steinheimer in the interpretation of the Platonic *psychogony* of Calcidius identifies aspects of the thought of Plotinus' student, Porphyry. In particular, he claims that the passages in which Calcidius refers to Jewish wisdom (such as c. 55) were taken from Porphyry, who, in his opinion, enthusiastically accepted the teachings of the Jews as well as other Eastern religions. Waszink disagrees with Steinheimer, stressing that Porphyry, according to Eusebius [*Εὐαγγελικὴ προπαρασκευὴ* X 9.11; cf. Karl Mras and Édouard Des Places, *Eusebius Werke. Achter Band: Die Praeparatio Evangelica. Einleitung. Teil 1: Die Bücher I bis X* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982), 587], used to accuse not only the Christians but also the Jewish prophets, such as Moses. He claims, therefore, that the cc. 51-55 and 27-31 of Calcidius come from Numenius, pointing out that in c. 55, with the reference to the Jewish teaching, the interpretation of the Platonic theory of cc. 53-54 and 27-31 is validated. After all, both Numenius and Calcidius often mention the Hebrews and also Philo, while in Porphyry there is no trace of the Philonian theory. See Steinheimer, 47; Waszink, XLIII-XLIV and n. 2; Phillis, 136.

⁶⁰ c. 29.

⁶¹ Fr. 39.

duced when the Demiurge – originating from the undivided essence of the first God-Monad – comes into contact with the divided essence of the Matter-Dyad and unites it, but is divided from it. Proclus' interpretation differs from the previous two, as he considers that the being of the soul (“εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς”) was produced by the union of the middle kind of “identity,” the middle kind of “otherness” and the corresponding kind of “essence.”⁶² By presenting the soul in between sensible and supersensible beings, both Proclus and Numenius seem to be closer to the first interpretation cited by Calcidius, according to which the indivisible essence is the *Idea* (“species”), while the divisible essence is matter.

As regards the interpretation of *Timaeus* by Calcidius, it was found that its source is Plotinus' theory of the soul, and not the corresponding theory by Numenius. This is true because both Calcidius and Plotinus refer to a single bipartite soul, consisting of the higher-purely rational and the lower-irrational level. On the other hand, Numenius maintains that there are two opposing souls of the world, one beneficent, identifying with the third God, and one evil, belonging to the Matter-Dyad. So, the identification of Calcidius' vegetative soul – which is outlined as a beneficial force – with the evil soul of the Matter of Numenius is not correct. Additionally, the two opposing souls of Numenius could not possibly constitute the *world soul* (third God), since this constitutes the second aspect of the good Demiurge, so it could not contain an evil soul.

Other elements that prove Calcidius' influence by Plotinus are the reference to the tireless shift of the intelligible essence towards the supreme God⁶³ – which alludes to the corresponding Plotinian theory of the turning of the *Intellect* towards the Good – as well as the identification of the *Intellect* with the intelligible substance by Calcidius, reminiscent of Plotinus' equation of *Intellect*-intelligibles, but in contrast with Numenius' view. However, Calcidius has received the idea of God's arranging the things lacking order⁶⁴ from Numenius, and not from Plotinus who rejects it.

From all the above, it becomes clear that Calcidius' theory of the soul and the interpretation he gives to Platonic *psychogony* show more similarities with the corresponding theory by Plotinus than with Numenius'. In the latter's metaphysical theory, a radical dualism of Pythagorean origin⁶⁵ is observed, as he advocates the existence of two

⁶² II 156.

⁶³ c. 176.

⁶⁴ c. 31.

⁶⁵ According to Puech [Henri-Charles Puech, “Numénios d'Apamée et les Théologies Orientales au Second Siècle,” in *Mélanges Bidez* (“Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orien-

opposing first principles, God-Monad as the source of good, and Matter-Dyad as the cause of evil, as well as two opposing souls, the rational-excellent and the irrational-evil both in the world and in man. On the contrary, Calcidius does not consider matter inherently evil, adopting a minimal dualism in relation to Numenius' and the Pythagoreans'.⁶⁶ It is remarkable that, although Numenius is regarded as the father of Neoplatonism, the dualism of his system – like that of Gnosticism and Manichaeism – was rejected by many later Neoplatonic philosophers, such as Plotinus, Proclus and Simplicius.⁶⁷ Plotinus formulates a monistic theory, positing the One-Good as the cause of everything, thus deviating significantly from the Apamean philosopher, despite the strong influence he received from him.

References

Cornford, Francis MacDonald. *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner; New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937.

Deuse, Werner. *Untersuchungen zur Mittelplatonischen und Neuplatonischen Seelenlehre*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983.

Dodds, Eric Robertson. "Numenius and Ammonius." In *Les Sources de Plotin: Dix Exposés et Discussions*, edited by Eric Robertson Dodds, 3-61. Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1960.

England, Edwin Bourdieu, ed. *The Laws of Plato*, t. I-II. New York: Arno Press, 1976.

Hackforth, Reginald, ed. *Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Hadot, Pierre. *Porphyre et Victorinus*, t. I. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968.

Hamilton, Edith, and Huntington Cairns, eds. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*. New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1961.

Kalligas, Paul, ed. *Plotinus' Fifth Ennead*. Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Latin Literature, 2013 [in Greek].

tales," t. II), ed. Joseph Bidez, 745-778 (Bruxelles: Secrétariat de l'Institut, 1934), 776], the dualism of Numenius is of Gnostic origin.

⁶⁶ Reydamas-Schils, 168.

⁶⁷ See Henri-Charles Puech, *ibid.*

Kalligas, Paul, ed. *Plotinus' Fourth Ennead*. Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Latin Literature, 2009 [in Greek].

Kalligas, Paul, ed. *Plotinus' Third Ennead*. Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Latin Literature, 2004 [in Greek].

Langseth, Joshua Lee. *Knowing God: A Study of the Argument of Numenius of Apameia's on the Good*. PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2013.

Mras, Karl, and Édouard Des Places. *Eusebius Werke. Achter Band: Die Praeparatio Evangelica. Einleitung. Teil 1: Die Bücher I bis X*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982.

Numénios. *Fragments*. Edited by Édouard Des Places. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973.

Phillips, John. "Numenian Psychology in Calcidius?" *Phronesis* 48, no. 2 (2003): 132-151.

Plotinus. *Ennead, Volume III*. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 442. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Plotinus. *Ennead, Volume IV*. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 443. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Plotinus. *Ennead, Volume V*. Translated by A. H. Armstrong. Loeb Classical Library 444. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume XIII: Part 1: Platonic Essays*. Translated by Harold Cherniss. Loeb Classical Library 427. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Plutarchus. *Moralia*, t. VI.1. Edited by Curt Hubert and Hans Drexler. Lipsiae: B. G. Teubner, 1959.

Proclus, *Commentaire sur le Timée*, t. II-III. Translated and edited by André-Jean Festugière. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967.

Puech, Henri-Charles. "Numénios d'Apamée et les Théologies Orientales au Second Siècle." In *Mélanges Bidez* ("Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales," t. II), edited by Joseph Bidez, 745-778. Bruxelles: Secrétariat de l'Institut, 1934.

Reydams-Schils, Gretchen. *Calcidius on Plato's Timaeus: Greek Philosophy, Latin Reception and Christian Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Steinheimer, Eduard. *Untersuchungen über die Quellen des Calcidius*. Aschaffenburg: Werbrun, 1912.

Switalski, Bronislaus Wladislaus. *Des Chalcidius Kommentar zu Plato's Timaeus. Eine Historisch-kritische Untersuchung*. Münster: Druck und Verlag der Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1902.

Wachsmuth, Curt. *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii Libri Duo Priores qui Inscribi Solent Eclogae Physicae et Ethicae*, t. I-II. Berlin: Weidmann, 1884.

Waszink, Jan Hendrik. "Porphyrios und Numenios." In *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique, Tome XII: Porphyre*, edited by Heinrich Dörrie, Jan Hendrik Waszink, and Willy Theiler, 33-83. Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1966.

Waszink, Jan Hendrik. *Timaeus: A Calcidio Translatio Commentarioque Instructus*. Londini: Instituti Warburgiani, 1962.

Winden, Jacobus Cornelius Maria Van. *Calcidius on Matter: His Doctrine and Sources. A Chapter in the History of Platonism*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965.