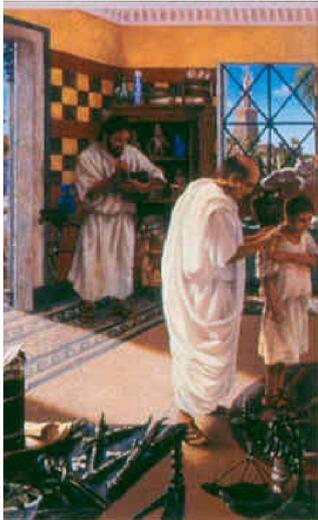


Roots & Fruits of Neoplatonism

*From the roots in the ancient Egyptian heritage
To Alexandria
then to the fruits in Islamic philosophy*

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**D. 1
Alexandria, Egypt**



**A.D. 1000
Córdoba, Spain**



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New York City**

Was there philosophy before classical Greece?

This was assured by Martin Bernal in the three volumes of his book “Black Athena” issued in 1987, 1991 and 2006.



He detailed the Egyptian roots of the Greek Civilization.

Many Greek Philosophers visited Egypt before the formulations of their theories and doctrines.

The eminent example is Pythagoras who lived in Egypt for ten years (535 to 525 B.C.) and studied in one of its Universities (Per Ankh Oon),

Many of his thoughts were influenced by Egyptian thoughts. Eg. the duality of numbers and harmony, right angle, number 4,.. Etc.

Many Greek philosophies were influenced by Egyptian cosmic vision, especially Pythagorean, Gnosticism and later on Neoplatonism.

The concept of Hermes Trimegistus: representation of the syncretic combination of the Greek God Hermes and the Egyptian Thoth (symbol of science and wisdom).

Both were equivalent in Hellenistic Alexandria.... In the temple of Khemun (Hermopolis)

THOT

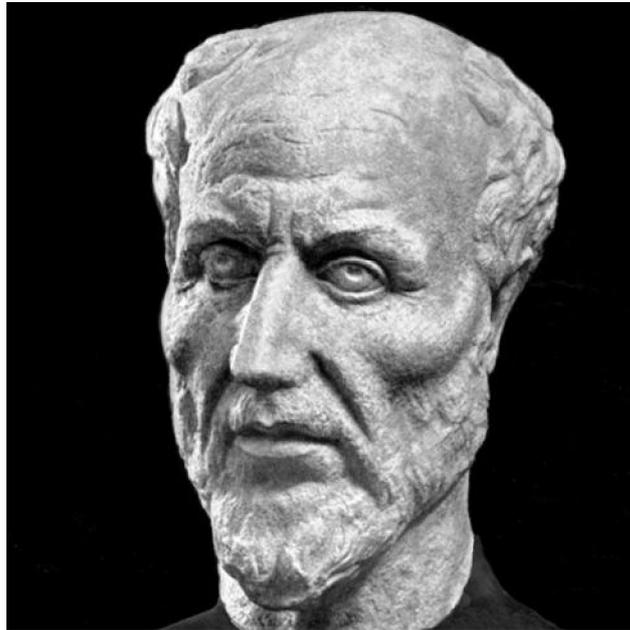


Hermetic literatures in Egypt: personal ASCENSION from constraint of physical being (==> Gnostism)

Clement of Alexandria described 42 Hermetic Egyptian scrolls in Ancient Bibliotheca Alexandrina

In temple of Isna: Thoth great great great (= ? Hermes trimegistus)

Hermetic thoughts (together with Platonic philosophy) helped in the formulation of Neoplatonism which was heralded by the great Alexandrian philosopher Ammonius Saccas and then his glorious student Plotinus.



The philosophy in Alexandria school.

As in the Hellenistic world.

Epicurean and stoic schools.

BUT

"After the third century BC, there is nothing really new in philosophy until the Neoplatonism in the third century AD"

Bertrand Russell

In philosophy, the achievement of Alexandria was its ability to assimilate the wisdom of the Hellenistic and Egyptian thoughts and synthesize them into new ideas

And so, Pythagorean, Platonic and Egyptian Hermetic doctrines were inspired in the synthesis of Neoplatonism and religious philosophies (Clement & Origenes)

Ammonius Saccas:

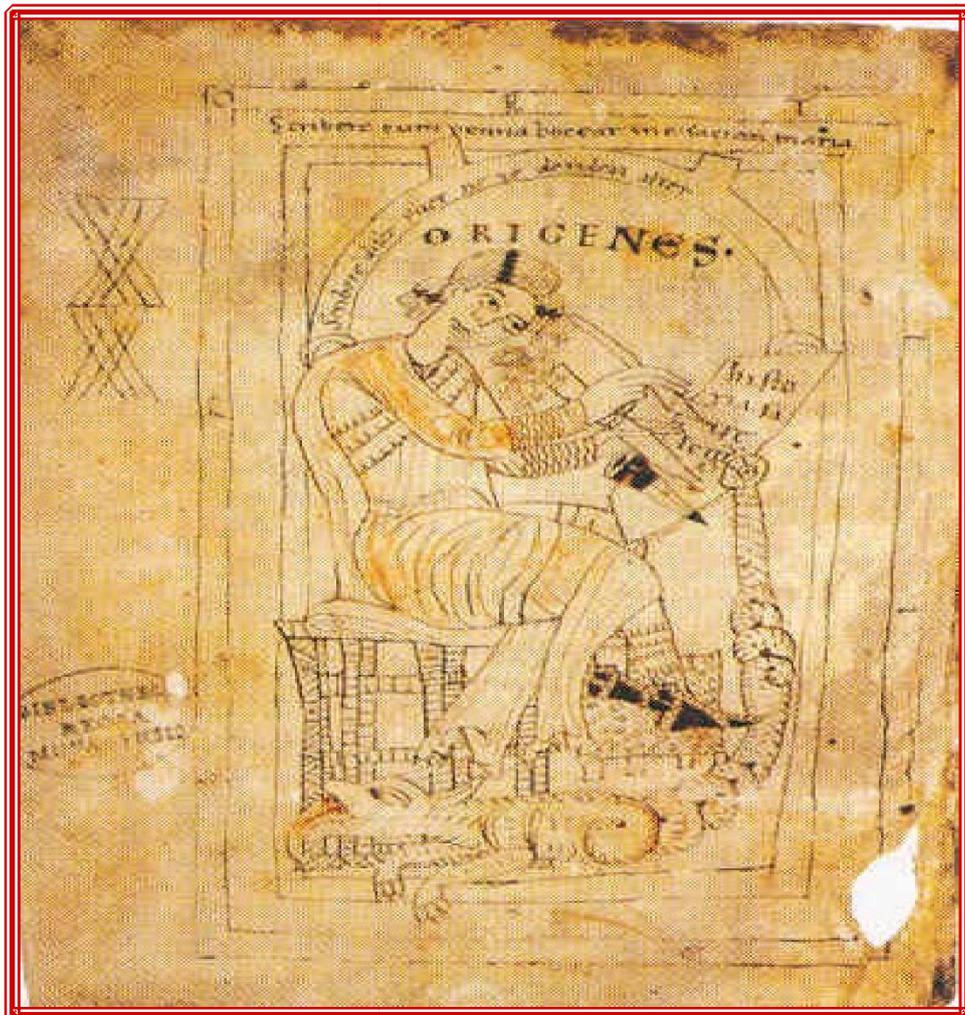
Taught philosophy in Alexandria for 50 years till his death in 242 A.D, his students were christians , pagans and seculars , but all of them were formidable thinkers :

Origenes (the priest), Longinus & Plotinus

The writings of these three were conditioned by stoic reasoning and platonic ideas .

In Ammonius Saccus philosophy , god is thought as being threefold in Essence, Intellect (Nous) and power.

The two later are emanations of the primal unity.



An Alexandrian in Rome

PLOTINUS (AD 204-70)

"Iflotin"

Born in Assiut (upper Egypt), studied in Alexandria and worked in its university till 243 AD "His teacher was Ammonius Saccas", Then moved to Rome.

He turned aside from the spectacle of ruin and misery in the actual world, to contemplate eternal world of goodness and beauty.

Beloved by early Christian theologians

Trinity

- 1- The "ONE" god, good.
- 2- The "NOUS" the spirit, the mindintellectual principle.
- 3- The "SOUL" the author of all living things

The visible world is beautiful, and is the abode of blessed spirits, it is only less good than the intellectual world

Alexandria played a great role in the formulation of Jewish & Christian theological philosophies (Philon, Clement & Origenes.....).

BUT

Later on conflict happened between religious scholars and philosophers.

This conflict led to the eclipse of the mousseon and Alexandria school after the tragic assassination of the scientist , philosopher Hypatia, daughter of Theon in 415 A.D., She was a mathematicist, astronomer and eminent neoplatonic philosopher, a charismatic teacher and one of the martyrs for human rights and free thinking .

Neoplatonism (and to a lesser degree Aristotle) influenced the Islamic philosophy to a great extend.

This influence began in the early ninth century A.D. during the Abbasid Caliphate (chiefly Al-Mansour, Al-Rashid and Al-Maamoun) because there was a milieu of stability and eagerness to learn, so translation was encouraged and House of Wisdom was established in Baghdad



The great influence came from Alexandria, cradle of Neoplatonism, where there were two legendary teaching books:

- Theology of Aristotle
- Liber de causis

Both of them contained a lot of Enneades, the classical book of Neoplatonism, authored by Plotinus, collected and narrated by Porphyry together with some work of Proclus and Iamblichus.



Neoplatonism (and concept of emanation) reached the Islamic thought through two other cities swarmed by Neoplatonists (originally from Alexandria, Athens and Antioch)

These two cities were:

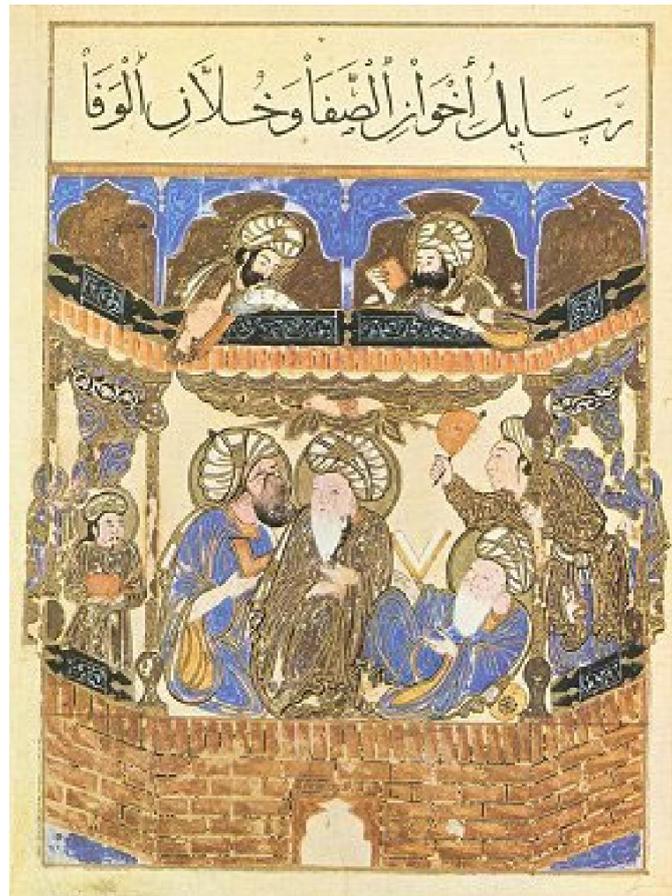
- Gondishapur in Persia
- Harran in northern Syria

In Gondishapur was the school of Nestorians of medicine and philosophy, from which the first Arab translator Hunayn ibn Ishaq al-Ibadi (حنين بن إسحاق العبادي) and also the Bakhtayshoue family جرجيوس بن بختيشوع who were the custodians, directors of House of Wisdom دار الحكمة in Baghdad.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) ابن سينا the greatest Islamic Neoplatonic philosopher (and glorious physician, musician,..) elaborated a complex scheme of emanation, ten intellects emanating from the necessary being.



The glorious intellectual syncretism between philosophy and theology happened in the thoughts of Ikhwan Al-Safa إخوان الصفا وخلان الوفا in their Rasail رسائل they explored science (mathematics, physics, astronomy) philosophy and theology in a very beautiful Neoplatonic display.



Neoplatonic emanation concept prevailed in the Ismaili thinking (till now) and was propagated in the philosophical and theological teaching all over the domain of Fatimide state in northern Africa, Egypt, Syria and east Mediterranean islands, and was the official philosophy taught in Al-Azhar for two centuries (989 A.D. to 1171 A.D.)

It was then banned by the Ayyubid and the following ruling dynasties



Neoplatonism flourished in most Sofi sects الطرق الصوفية mainly in two terms, illumination and Unity of Being.

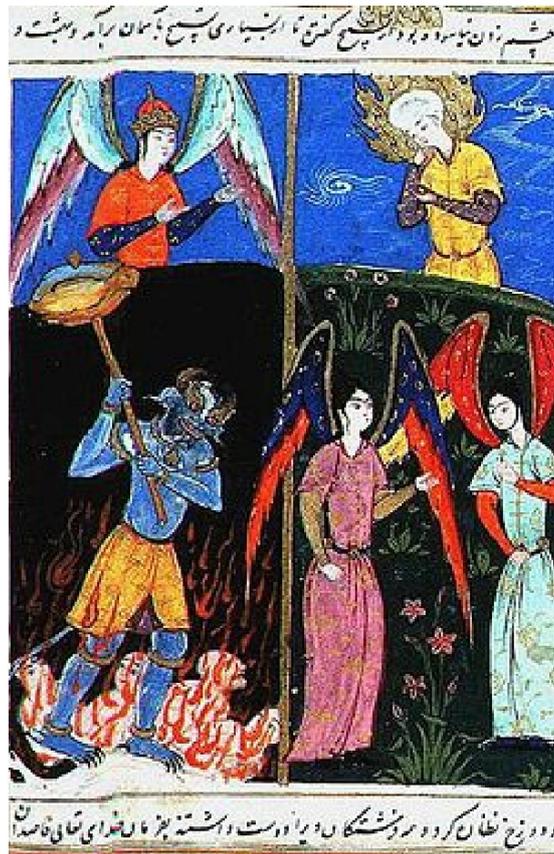
Illumination: emanation of light from the (Nour Al-Anwar) to a series of intellects (lights), this concept was adopted by Shihab Aldin Al-Suhrawardi شهاب الدين السهروردي



B- Unity of Being وحدة الوجود by mohy El din Ibn Arabi محيي الدين بن عربي elaborating a classical system of emanation following Plutinus (or Avicenna) line



Some Arab scholars referred to Hermes-Thot as Enoch (Idris)
Ibn Arabi in “Fetuhât Makkeya” فتوحات مكية described the Ascension
of Hermes to acquire knowledge from other heavenly lands (??Idris)



The word “emanation” was metamorphosed in Sufi nomenclature into an appealing word: manifestation (Tajalliyat - تجلیات) which is widely adopted in the Sufi literature

