

Numenius' *Fragment 13* (E. des Places)

-a response to M.J. Edwards-

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Usually, the smaller a fragment is, the more discussion it provokes.¹ When one faces Numenius' extant works (as with the Presocratic Philosophers), one tries to get as much as one can out of two or three lines of Greek text. Moreover, since this kind of work very often involves overloading the text, scholars are frequently in a sort of race to say as much they can, keeping the shield of the intrinsic testimonies of the fragment.

The short fragment I would like to discuss in this paper, which, in Édouard des Places' edition² bears the number 13, has just such a history. It runs as follows:

[ὁ Νουμήμιος ἐπάκουσον οἶα περὶ τοῦ δευτέρου αἰτίου θεολογεῖ·]

“Ὡσπερ δὲ πάλιν λόγος ἐστὶ γεωργῶ πρὸς τὸν φυτεύοντα,
ἀνά τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον μάλιστα ἐστὶν ὁ πρῶτος θεὸς πρὸς
τὸν δημιουργόν. Ὁ μὲν γε ὦν σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς

¹ The fragment was discussed more or less extensively by **W. Scott** in *Hermetica*, vol. II, Oxford, **1925**, p.79; **A.J. Festugière**, *La Revelation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, t. III (Les Doctrines de l'Âme), Paris, **1953**, p.44; **E.R. Dodds**, 'Numenius and Ammonius', in *Les sources de Plotin, (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 5)* Vandoeuvres – Geneve **1960**, p.15; **H.J. Krämer**, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, Amsterdam **1964**, p.72, n.181; p.83, 213; **J.H. Waszink**, 'Porphyrios und Numenius', in *Porphyre, (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 12)* Vandoeuvres – Geneve **1966**, p.35 ff., p.51, n.4; **J. Whittaker**, 'Moses Atticizing', in *Phoenix*, vol. 21, **1967**; **E. des Places**, Numénios, *Fragments*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris **1973**, p.55 and p.108-109; **J.M. Dillon**, *The Middle Platonists*, London **1977**, p.368; **J. Whittaker**, 'Numenius and Alcinoos on the First Principle', in *Phoenix*, vol. 32, **1978**, 2; **M.J. Edwards**, 'Numenius, Fr. 13 (des Places): a note on interpretation', in *Mnemosyne*, vol. XLII, fasc. 3-4, **1989**, p.478-482; **R.T. Wallis**, 'Soul and Nous in Plotinus, Numenius and Gnosticism' in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, ed. R.T. Wallis and J. Bregman, New York **1992**, p.461-482 (p.479, n.57, 70, 71).

² Numénios, *Fragments*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1973.

5 σπείρει εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ χρήματα σύμ-
παντα· ὁ νομοθέτης δὲ φυτεύει καὶ διανέμει καὶ μεταφυ-
τεύει εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐκάστους τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα.

Fr. 13 des Places = Fr. 22 Leemans = ION	Eusebius, <i>Praep. Evang.</i>
I = Marcianus graecus 341 sec. XV	XI 18. 13. 2 - 14. 5 (Mras)
O = Bononiensis Bibl. Univ. 3643 sec. XIII	
N = Neapolitanus II A 16 sec. XV	

2 τὸν Viger, Scott, Leemans, des Places: τὰ I || 3 ἀνὰ O : ἀναφερόμενος
IN (Mras), Scott μάλιστά ἐστιν ION, Scott, Leemans, des Places :
μάλιστα ἔχει Viger || 4 γε ὦν ION, Scott, Festugière, des Places, Whittaker,
Edwards : γὰρ ἐν ?? [ΓΔΡΕΝ] dub. Scott; γε α' ὦν (= πρῶτος ὦν) cj.
Dodds; γεννῶν cj. Thillet (coll. *Tim.* 41 a 6); γεωργῶν cj. Dillon || 5
αὐτοῦ ION, Scott, Leemans, des Places : αὐτῆς ?? [ΔΥΤΗC] dub. Scott ||
σύμπαντα Scott, des Places : ξύμπαντα Mras, Leemans || 6 νομοθέτης
ION, Scott, Leemans, des Places : ποιητής ?? dub. Scott

*And also there is a rapport between the farmer and the planter, the same that relates the First God to the Demiurge. The one who is sows the seed of all souls into all the things together which partake of it. The Lawgiver plants and distributes and transplants into each one of us what has been thrown initially, from there.*³

In essence, all the commentators are agreed on its subject. It is about the relation between the First and Second God facing creation (here of the souls and embodied souls). The author uses an analogy to prove his case and compares the First

³ Although clumsy this translation tries to follow the original as closely as possible. A more elegant translation would look like this: 'And also there is a rapport between the farmer and the planter, the same that relates the First God to the Demiurge. The one who is sows the seed of every soul into all the things which partake of it. While the Lawgiver plants and distributes and transplants what has been sown from that source into each one of us.' (Translation J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p.368 with modifications.)

God with a farmer and the Second God with a labourer. Scott in his *Hermetica*⁴ is the first who tells the story, revealing what is hidden under the metaphors: ‘I suppose the γεωργός is the owner of the garden, or head-gardener, and the φυτεύων⁵ is the labourer who works under his direction. The head-gardener sows a single sowing (of some kind of vegetable) in the seed-bed, once for all; the labourer plants out the seedlings, and attends to them one by one. This extract is obscure; but perhaps it may be taken to mean that the first God emits from himself, in the νοητὸς κόσμος, by one timeless operation, one undivided world-soul (one mass of soul-stuff, as it were); and the second God, working in the αἰσθητὸς κόσμος, implants portions of this one soul in all individual organisms, and transfers portions of it from one organism to another.’

E. des Places quotes Scott in his edition⁶ only as far as ‘attends to them one by one’. He then quotes another extract but this time from Festugière: ‘toute âme sort ... du Premier Dieu, et c’est au Second qu’il appartient de distribuer les âmes dans les corps humains (car seuls les hommes ont participation à Dieu), de les y planter à la première naissance, de les y transplanter quand l’âme, non encore purifiée, doit passer dans un nouveau corps.’⁷ None of the subsequent interpreters (Dodds, Krämer, Whittaker, E. des Places and Dillon) disagree with this basic reading of the fragment, except M.J. Edwards and R.T. Wallis. One might say that the fragment does not pose major hermeneutic problems. However, this is not true. The story that our fragment tells apparently meets with an almost general approval, but the riddle stays behind the narration itself.

This small fragment involves two textual problems; the solutions to these rely upon both placing of this text in the general frame of Numenius’ thought and placing Numenius in respect of the tradition.

The first one appears in line 4, where we read: ‘Ο μὲν γε ὄν ... If we accept this reading we must accept also the fact that we are dealing here with a *biblistism*⁸, that

⁴ Scott, p.79 n.1-5. The text is quite different from E. des Places’ s text. Cf. esp. his n.3, n.4 and n.5.

⁵ In Scott: φυτεύον.

⁶ p.109.

⁷ Festugière, p.44.

⁸ And not a Hebraism, following here the suggestion of Whittaker (1967, p.196, n.4; 1978, p.144).

could be found certainly and comfortably in Philo of Alexandria⁹, but may seem quite odd in Numenius. To call his God *The One Who Is*, is very natural for a Jew, but we may seriously doubt that Numenius was himself a Jew¹⁰. Dodds, Whittaker and Dillon are right to distrust this hypothesis¹¹; Numenius always seems to use the 3rd person plural when he refers to Jews.¹²

In the light of this, it may seem reasonable to want to amend the reading of the manuscripts, and Scott, Dodds, Thillet and Dillon try this with some degree of success. Scott's solution, not incorporated in the body of the text but suggested in a footnote, is by far the most unsatisfactory: 'One might conjecture ὁ μὲν ΓΔΡΕΝ [γὰρ ἐν] σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα ΔΥΤΗC [αὐτῆς] χρήματα σύμπαντα. The first God sows one seed (or one sowing) of all soul (or life), to serve for all things together that partake of soul. (εἰς is not entirely satisfactory; but perhaps a word or two that would have made the meaning clearer may have been lost before εἰς.)...' ¹³ The solution proposed here avoids the problem of fitting the biblism into the text by simply reviewing the words. Scott does not consider the challenge of ὁ ὄν; merely emends it tacitly. The solution proposed here is coherent at the level of the sentence but does not look convincing to me from a palaeographical point of view. In addition, instead of changing only the 'problematic' passage, he must change two. Eventually he is more concerned with how to explain the presence of εἰς which may seem troublesome only if we accept

⁹ Cf. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p.155 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. H.-C. Puech, *Numenius d'Apamée et les théologies orientales au second siècle*, in *Mélanges Bidez* II, Bruxelles 1934, p.745 ff.

¹¹ 'I have some difficulty in accepting the tentative suggestion of Bigg and Puech that Numenius was himself a Jew. His acquaintance with the first chapter of *Genesis* does not prove it. (...); and we can see from Tacitus, Pliny and Juvenal that by the beginning of the second century Gentiles took quite considerable interest in Jewish customs and doctrines.' Dodds, p.6; 'Let it be stated at the outset that the question of Numenius' supposed Jewish origin is not really pertinent to this issue. It is perhaps not impossible that Numenius' forefathers were Jews, but that he himself grew up in the Jewish faith seems hardly conceivable.' Whittaker (1967), p.197 and: 'Efforts to prove Numenius a Jew are surely also misguided. One did not have to be a Jew in the Syria of the second century A.D. to be acquainted with either Jewish or Christian writings.' Dillon, p.378.

¹² e.g. Fr. 1a and Fr. 9 (E. des Places).

¹³ Scott, p.79.

his emendations. It is strange that the *Mss.* themselves do not appear to be corrupted at that point. Only an ideological matter may seem to demand a revision of the text.

However, Dodds seems to be more interested in this challenge, since he suggests the following emendation: ‘... ὦν must have some predicate: ὁ ὦν, “He that is, κατ’ ἐξοχήν” cannot be convincingly defended as a Hebraism. I suggest reading ὁ μὲν γε α’ ὦν (= πρῶτος ὦν).’¹⁴ The explanation he gives is interesting¹⁵ but Dodds does not make it clear why this expression here ‘cannot be convincingly defended as a Hebraism’.¹⁶ In addition, his very accurate defence of the correction α’ ὦν hardly seems acceptable as relevant to this fragment, which does not imply a hierarchy based upon ranks (first, second, etc.) but upon activity (owner / labourer).¹⁷ J. Whittaker’s 1967 and 1978 articles are mainly concerned with refuting Dodds’ conjecture, proving that the biblism is perfectly acceptable in Numenius (1967)¹⁸ and that, though the emendation proposed is ‘palaeographically speaking far from impossible’,¹⁹ it is not the case that this can be assumed here (1978). His view of the matter is convincingly defended in the two articles and do not, therefore, require repetition here. I will simply assume its validity.

¹⁴ Dodds, p.15.

¹⁵ ‘just as Galen found τετάρτη written Δ’ in his oldest texts of Hippocrates (CMGV, 10, 2,1, p.156); and as a scribe of about 900 writes τοῦτο β’ for τοῦτο τὸ δεύτερον (Olymp. *In. Alc.* 197, 16)’ Dodds, p.15, n.2.

¹⁶ Dillon also evaluates this emendation as unsatisfactory: ‘There is a nasty textual problem here. (...) Thillet suggests *gennon*; Dodds (less felicitously than in his emendation of *epeita* in Fr. 16) *a* (= *protos*) *on*.’, Dillon, p.368.

¹⁷ J. Whittaker also brings another argument forward in his article from 1978: ‘That Numenius made frequent use of the terms πρῶτος, δεύτερος, and even τρίτος to refer to the various levels of divinity is abundantly attested and also in keeping with the hierarchical conceptions of his age. But nowhere in the surviving testimony has Numenius used any of these numerals in conjunction with the present participle of εἶμι in a manner comparable to that which Dodds has proposed to introduce into the disputed fragment.’ Whittaker (1978), p.149

¹⁸ ‘The purpose of this paper is to show that Dodds’ emendation is unnecessary since the phrase ὁ μὲν γε ὦν can in fact be convincingly defended as a reminiscence of the *Septuagint* designation.’ Whittaker (1967), p.196.

¹⁹ Whittaker (1978), p.145

P. Thillet offers $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\omega\hat{\nu}$ as an alternative, but this one is erroneous too since it is in disagreement with the hierarchy present in our text, substituting an unclear rapport father / lawgiver to the one owner / labourer presented by our text. Moreover assuming his reading, even if it may seem to agree with *Timaeus* 41 b, actually imposes upon the reader the idea that the ‘First God is the father or parent ($\delta\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\omega\hat{\nu}$) of the soul whose seed he sows’, and this emendation ‘brings into the fragment a new element which is contradicted rather than supported by the ancient evidence.’²⁰

Nevertheless, Dillon offers the most seductive suggestion: ‘I read, with hesitation, *georgon* for the *ge on* of the *Mss.* (...) I agree that Numenius is probably not using *ho on* here in the Philonic sense of He Who Is.’²¹, and the justification comes a few pages later, on 378: ‘Whether Numenius knew Philo must remain less than clear, but he was certainly acquainted with the results of allegorical exegesis of the Pentateuch (Fr. 1) ... Further, to take Numenius as a mediator between Philo and Plotinus, as has been done by some, is to accord to Philo too much originality. Philo himself, was, as we have seen, greatly influenced by contemporary Platonism and Neopythagoreanism. It is only our imperfect vision that can make him seem an original contributor to Platonism.’ This is in my view the first serious attempt to solve the problem and also the only challenging argument adduced for amending this text.²²

²⁰ Whittaker (1978), p.151; see the discussion of this conjecture in p.145, 150-152

²¹ Dillon, p.368.

²² Whittaker (1978), p.154, sweeps Dillon’s conjecture virtually under the carpet: ‘Easier to deal with is Dillon’s proposal that we read $\delta\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \gamma\epsilon\omega\rho\gamma\omega\hat{\nu}$ in place of $\delta\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \gamma\epsilon\ \omega\hat{\nu}$ in that the suggested emendation introduces no new conception to the text but serves the sole objective of eliminating the formulation $\delta\ \omega\hat{\nu}$.’ But what else should the subject of an emendation be if not to eliminate the problem by trying to modify the text as little as possible. In contrast to Scott’s emendation which is rather muddled, Dodds’ which is too presumptuous and Thillet’s which is anarchic, Dillon’s emendation seem to me the most plausible since it is credible palaeographically speaking and uses only the implicit data of the very text. Nevertheless, the weakness of Dillon’s conjecture is to be found elsewhere. On his part, Edwards is keener to get rid of it than Whittaker is. His remark is more complaisant but equally unresponsive: ‘Dillon’s conjecture is interesting, but cannot be proved.’, p.479-480. What kind of proof did Edwards understand here? Palaeographically? In this respect it is as likely as Dodd’s or Thillet’s emendations, but far more likely according to the ‘words’ of the text.

For this reason, I will spend most of my time discussing the arguments Dillon produces.

Firstly, we have a proposed emendation for ὁ μὲν γε ὦν; namely: ὁ γεωργῶν. Now, if we are looking at the text, we see that the actors of the allegory are the farmer (γεωργός) and the labourer (φυτεύων).

Nothing should be more natural than amending it along the line of γεωργός: ὁ μὲν γεωργῶν σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ χρήματα σύμπαντα. We encounter here the same personage as in the first half of the fragment, and no subtlety relating to Jewish influences or shorthand occurrence needs to be looked for here.

However, I think that this reading is misleading because it obstructs the remaining part of the text. Eusebius must have chosen a self-contained fragment to prove his case, so we should suppose it independent enough to be readable out of its original context. However, even if we do not accept this, the evidence of the text is obvious. We should divide the fragment into two main parts: lines 2, 3 and 4 until τὸν δημιουργόν and the remaining part. In the first section, we have stated the problem: we need something to illustrate at the level of discourse the ineffable relation between the First and the Second God, and for this, we need analogy. This first sentence gives us the problem and the terms of analogy. The second section shows us how the analogy works, by attempting to transfer the relation between the farmer and labourer to the First and Second God. It seems to me that this fragment is quite independent and perfectly balanced in respect of its main parts. Furthermore, we have also a conceptual balance. We have always no more than two terms to compare, and always the same terms in the same pairs: the farmer related to the labourer and the First God to the Second God. The farmer explains the First God and the labourer, the Second God.²³

Now, if we read ὁ γεωργῶν this balance is destroyed. His place is no longer in the second section because it does not relate to anything there; there is no obvious relation between the *lawgiver* and the *farmer* that should be remarked upon at that

²³ For this, we should suppose that the *lawgiver* in the fragment is synonymous with *demiurgos* one line beforehand, but I see no reason not to do so. The term *lawgiver* seems problematic for Scott, but I will discuss its difficulties a little later.

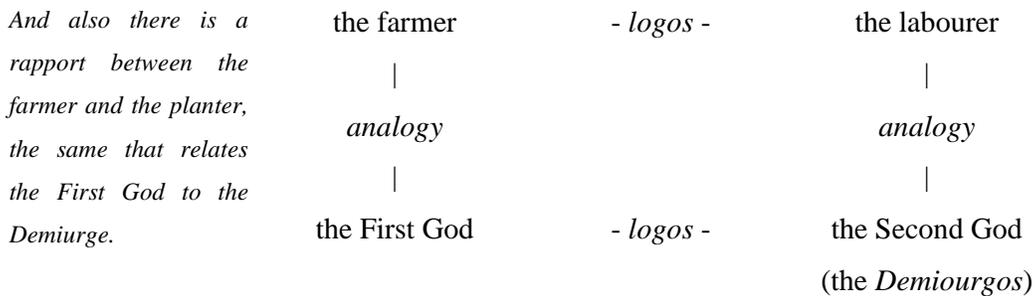
point. His role ended in the previous sentence, when he passed his attributes to the term with which he was compared. One might ask why we should be so pedantic. The answer lies in the presence of *logos* at the beginning of the fragment. The analogy asks for balance and particularly when the whole point relies on that specific *logos* (*ratio*, proportion). I shall examine shortly how ὁ ὄν stands on this issue.

Secondly, Dillon acknowledges in his analysis, the fact that the reading *The One Who Is* must be influenced by Philo, or at least by a Jewish source, but does not concede this influence here. Why, is not quite clear, but at least we have a sort of explanation we do not find in Dodds. The line of reasoning is that it is unlikely that Numenius had, at this point, received the influence of Philo, as long we are not quite sure how extended Philo's influence was. I do not find this a sufficient argument, since one could say, following the same reasoning: as long we do not know how extended the Philonic influence on Numenius was, why reject it here, and upon the basis of what proofs?

Finally, two things ought to be demonstrated by somebody who wants to support the reading of ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὄν: firstly, that the text here is not obstructed in its inner development by this reading, and, secondly, that this Philonic/Biblical influence here is not casual.²⁴ I will try to deal with these two aspects separately.

Looking again at the text of our fragment and keeping in mind the division I tried to find there, I think we may create a chart of it:

1st section



²⁴ I see no point in trying to prove, again, that Numenius was influenced by the *Septuagint*. J. Whittaker (1967) and (1978) does this fully, so I will assume his conclusions without repeating them. What I will try to prove is the Philonic influence on this text.

2nd section

<i>The one who is sows the seed of every soul into all the things which partake of it. While the Lawgiver plants and distributes and transplants what has been sown from that source into each one of us.</i>	function 1 <i>attribution</i> the First God (the <i>One Who Is</i>)	- <i>logos</i> - - <i>logos</i> -	function 2 <i>attribution</i> the Second God (the <i>Lawgiver</i>)
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In the first section we have two kinds of occupation compared and we find that between them there is a special rapport (*logos*). The text does not say explicitly what kind of *logos* this is, but it was assumed at the time the text was written, that it was the social relation between the farmer and his employee. The terms of an analogy should have been chosen as tending to the maximum of explicitness. Afterwards this rapport is translated to the second pair, The First God and the Second God (called here *demiourgos*).

In the second section we have, unfolded, the specific action pursued by the actors of the first part of the first section, as being compared, and then translated again to the same actors of the first section: The First and The Second God. Now we should assume that ὁ ὄν (or whatever should be read there) refers to ὁ πρῶτος θεός, as well as ὁ νομοθέτης to *the Second God*. On this matter, nobody disagrees.

We can observe that in the second section the Gods are addressed by different names. They are not named by virtue of analogy but by *their names* (as far as we can give names to the ineffable Gods). The First God is the pure existent; meanwhile the Second God is the ordering force. This is quite a reasonable position to hold for a Middle Platonist / Neopythagorean, and is also in the very spirit of *Timaeus*. *Farmer*, in this place (following the reading of Dillon), is misplaced, because it does not relate in any way to *Lawgiver* which is a name here and not a temporary analogy for the

Second God. On the other hand, *The One Who Is* makes perfect sense here, and should be maintained. It remains to demonstrate that this Philonic wording is not a casual presence in our fragment.

I do not wish to discuss the relevance of Philo for subsequent philosophers, since it is too broad a subject and, in any case, it is not the issue of this paper. Therefore, I would like to assume a relatively temperate stance, acknowledging that Philo was certainly known by Numenius but I cannot be sure whether the latter actually read Philo's works or was just in contact with the core of his doctrine in a more or less oral way. However, I do not doubt that Philo's teachings and possibly memorised passages were wide-spread in the Empire, among philosophers. I tend²⁵ to see him as an important philosopher, not only for us (since he is the major ancient Jewish philosopher writing in Greek, whose work we still have) but also because his influence upon the works of subsequent thinkers is undeniable, even if the channels through which it circulated are not always easy to trace. Also, for Numenius, living and teaching in Apamea, it was more than natural to meet Jewish or Christian scholars, since that region was, in the second century A.D., one of the few places in the Roman Empire where the Jews were not victims of pogroms, and so quite a safe environment.²⁶

Now it is time to discuss Philo in relation to our particular fragment. For this we should consider two passages:

ὁ μὲν τοίνυν τῶν φυτουργῶν It is the Lord of all things that is the
μέγιστος καὶ τὴν τέχνην greatest of planters (φυτουργῶν) and
τελειότατος ὁ τῶν ὅλων ἡγεμῶν most perfect Master of His art. It is this

²⁵ Following H. Chadwick, 'Philo and the beginnings of Christian thought' in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, Cambridge 1967, R. Radice, *Platonismo e creazionismo in Filone di Alessandria*, Milano, 1989, *et alii*.

²⁶ Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin authors about Jews and Judaism*, Jerusalem 1974 (vol.I) & 1980 (vol. II): 'Probably Numenius had learned much about Judaism in his native Apamea, which had a considerable Jewish population. Apamea was one of the three cities of Syria that in 66 C.E. had shown a sympathetic attitude to their Jewish inhabitants during the war against Rome (B.I. II, 479). Its citizens did the Jews no harm, while in other cities of Syria Jews were massacred. (...) It may also be suggested that the conditions then prevailing in Apamea could go far to explain Numenius' outlook.' (vol. II, p.207).

ἐστι, φυτὸν δὲ αὐτὸ περιέχον ἐν
 ἑαυτῷ τὰ ἐν μέρει φυτὰ ἅμα
 παμμυρία καθάπερ κληματίδας
 ἐκ μιᾶς ἀναβλαστάνοντα ῥίζης
 ὅδε ὁ κόσμος. ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὴν
 οὐσίαν ἄτακτον καὶ
 συγκεχυμένην οὖσαν ἐξ αὐτῆς εἰς
 τάξιν ἐξ ἀταξίας καὶ ἐκ
 συγχύσεως εἰς διάκρισιν ἄγων ὁ
 κοσμοπλάστης μορφοῦν ἤρξατο,
 γῆν μὲν καὶ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὸ μέσον
 ἐρρίζου, τὰ δὲ ἀέρος καὶ πυρὸς
 δένδρα πρὸς τὴν μετάρσιον
 ἀνεῖλκεν ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου χώραν,
 τὸν δὲ αἰθέριον ἐν κύκλῳ τόπον
 ὠχυροῦτο τῶν ἐντὸς ὄρον τε καὶ
 φυλακτῆριον αὐτὸν τιθεῖς.²⁷

World that is a plant containing in itself
 the particular plants all at once in their
 myriads, like shoots springing from a
 single root. For, when the Framer of the
 World, finding all that existed confused
 and disordered of itself, began to give it
 form, by bringing it out of disorder into
 order, out of confusion into distinction of
 parts, He caused earth and water to
 occupy the position of roots at its centre;
 the trees, that are air and fire, He drew up
 from the centre to the space on high; the
 encircling region of ether He firmly
 established, and set it to be at once a
 boundary and guard of all that is within.²⁸

The second passage runs as follows:

οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὰς
 φύσεις τῶν πραγμάτων οὐκ
 εἰδότες καὶ περὶ τὴν τῶν

Most men, not knowing the nature of
 things, necessarily go wrong also in
 giving them names. (...) Would not
 anyone who answers questions offhand

²⁷ *De plantatione* 2-3, ed. *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. II, P. Wendland, Berlin 1962².

²⁸ Translation G. H. Whitaker, *Philo, Works*, Loeb Classical Library vol. III, London – Cambridge, 1929 – 1962.

ὀνομάτων θέσιν ἔξ ἀνάγκης think that husbandry (γεωργία) and
ἀμαρτάνουσι· (...) τίτι γὰρ τῶν working on the soil (γῆς ἔργασία)
προχειροτέρων οὐκ ἂν δόξειε τὰ were the same things, but are ideas utterly
αὐτὰ εἶναι γεωργία τε καὶ γῆς at variance with each other and mutually
ἐργασία, καίτοι πρὸς ἀλήθειαν οὐ repugnant? For a man is able even
μόνον οὐκ ὄντα τὰ αὐτά, ἀλλὰ without knowledge to labour at the care
καὶ λίαν ἀπηρητημένα, ὡς of the soil, but a husbandman is
ἀντιστατεῖν καὶ διαμάχεσθαι; guaranteed to be no unprofessional, but a
δύναται μὲν γὰρ τις καὶ ἄνευ skilled worker by his very name, which
ἐπιστήμης περὶ τὴν γῆς he has gained from the science of
ἐπιμέλειαν πονεῖσθαι, γεωργὸς δὲ husbandry, the science whose title he
τὸ μὴ ἰδιώτης ἀλλ' ἔμπειρος εἶναι bears.³⁰
καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι πεπίστωται, ὅπερ
ἐκ τῆς γεωργικῆς τέχνης, ἧς
φερώνυμός ἐστιν, εὐρηται.²⁹

It is obvious that we face the same analogy of God as husbandman (farmer). Even if Philo did not invent this analogy and Numenius is not his faithful follower, the emphasising of the activity of the husbandman is sufficiently distinctive in these

²⁹ *De Agricultura* 1-5, ed. *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. II, P. Wendland, Berlin 1962².

³⁰ Translation G. H. Whitaker, *Philo, Works*, Loeb Classical Library vol. III, London – Cambridge, 1929 – 1962. On this text and the garden as symbol of the subject matter of philosophy cf. J. Dillon, *The pleasures and perils of soul-gardening*, in *Festschrift for David Winston*, in *The Studia Philonica Annual* 9 (1997) p.190-197.

two cases to be worth discussing.³¹ Nevertheless, more interesting than the similarities are the contrasts. We have on the one hand a Jew who is professing a Platonic philosophy. He combines the *Book of Genesis* with the Platonic *Timaeus* without sacrificing the basics of the biblical suppositions: both *Genesis* and *Timaeus* are dealing with a personal God understood as *demiourgos*, superior and transcendent to its creation which he brings from disorder to order.³²

By contrast, in Numenius we find two Gods³³ with different attributes, but which can be seen as founded on the one God of Philo. What is actually happening in Numenius Fr. 13, I suppose, is a sort of division of responsibilities between two Gods: the First God will take the attributes of majesty and will be more interested in ruling; the Second, will take the *demiurgic* activities, being thus closer to Plato's *Timaeus* where the *Demiourgos* is not the supreme God. But this splitting of duties should not

³¹ 'The term γεωργός is lacking in the *Timaeus*, but it, too, (though this has not been noted by students of Numenius) was a common divine appellation of the imperial age, as evidence by *inter alia* the cult of Ζεὺς γεωργός celebrated at Athens in the month of Maimakterion (the season of plowing and sowing) and by the appearance of the appellation γεωργός in magical ἐπικλήσεις and elsewhere. (...) But the agricultural imagery of this fragment of Numenius would also have suggested to his contemporaries obvious associations from the realm of popular Stoicism. *Deus ad homines venit*, says Seneca (*Ep.* 73.16), *immo quod est propius, in homines venit; nulla sine deo mens bona est. Semina in corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt, quae si bonus cultor excipit, similia origini prodeunt et paria iis, ex quibus orta sunt, surgunt; etc.* Thus, though it may be partly influenced by Jewish conceptions there is from the popular Graeco-Roman viewpoint nothing startlingly new in the following passage from a Hermetic writing (C.H. 14.9 f): (...) We may conclude that our fragment of Numenius, curious as it may seem, builds upon a combination of what must have been to the Hellenistic mind, familiar conceptions.' Whittaker (1978) p.150-151.

³² For a broader analysis of the issue especially on the question of harmonising *The Book of Genesis* and *Timaeus* as happens in *De Opificio Mundi*, cf. R. Radice, *Platonismo e creazionismo in Filone di Alessandria*, Milano, 1989 and D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, Leiden, 1986.

³³ Or maybe three? According to Proclus' account 'Numenius proclaims three gods, calling the first "Father", the second "Creator" (*poietes*) and the third "Creation" (*poiema*); for the cosmos, according to him, is the third god. So, according to him, the Demiurge is double, being both the first god and the second, and the third god is the object of his demiurgic activity – it is better to use this terminology than to use the sort of dramatic bombast that he employs, naming them respectively Grandfather, Son and Grandson.' (*In Tim.* I 303, 27 ff.), Numenius Fr. 21, translation J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p.366.

make the Second God appear a worthless personage, nor allowed to be identified with a simple worker on the soil (γῆς ἐργασία). Numenius must have in mind the Philonic distinction and decides to make a sharper one, using for two Gods (which appear undifferentiated in Philo, as a single one) two words: the farmer (husbandman) and the labourer.

I would not consider this a simple coincidence; it is very likely that Numenius adjusted to his system everything he thought worthwhile in the great religious traditions (Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Jewish), trying to make this adjustment without clashing with those traditions where the details were not alike. Moreover, I think that we are facing this kind of situation in this fragment. The dealing with the same symbols as in Philo can explain the ‘arbitrary’ presence of the biblism: *He Who Is*, in this fragment, which I dare to suppose, is influenced by the philosophical imagery of the Alexandrine philosopher.

So far, assuming that the text makes sense as it is, and accepting the biblism in line 4, I have tried to prove that that particular Jewish influence on Numenius (in respect of this fragment) may be seen as Philo, not so much for the denomination of the God but for the entire analogy presented here. Nevertheless, two more problems bedevil this fragment, and I will try to deal with them separately. They are the status of σπέρμα in line 4, and the problem of νομοθέτης in line 6. Tackling the first of them will require a second reconsideration of the entire text, but this time from a different perspective.

The most recent comprehensive discussion of fragment 13 is by M.J. Edwards, who, in an article from 1989³⁴, argues for maintaining the text in the format it is, without any textual emendation, but, and here is the ‘novelty’, in doing this we must not see, in line 4, any biblical influence. In his article, Edwards is very unhappy about two aspects; aspects which the modern interpretation of Fr. 13 seems to make a great

³⁴ *Numenius, Fr. 13 (des Places): a note on interpretation*, Mnemosyne, vol. XLII, fasc. 3-4 (1989), p.478-482.

deal of: 1) the place of σπέρμα in rapport with ὄν³⁵, and 2) the biblical origin of νομοθέτης.³⁶ The text is coherent as it stands, argues Edwards, but we ought to read: ‘the one who is the seed ...’ instead of ‘The One Who Is’. Now this is more or less a return to the reading of the text proposed by Mullach and refuted by Scott,³⁷ the latter of whose opinion has been embraced by all subsequent commentators.

In the following pages I will try to show that the original concern about the place of σπέρμα in rapport with ὄν is legitimate and that the revival of Mullach’s proposal finds no proofs in the extant fragments of Numenius.

In respect of the first problem, Edwards tries to prove that ‘both language and philosophy protest against our taking the words ὁ ὄν as a Philonizing epithet of God.’ His argument focuses on proving that the Jewish influence in Numenius is somewhat scanty, and, moreover, that to assume such an influence is to load the text with harmful suppositions.³⁸ Numenius could not have used ὁ ὄν as an appellation for God because his pagan audience would not have understood anything from such a reference, not being accustomed to the peculiar Jewish denomination of God.³⁹ The proof adduced is: ‘that he (i.e. Numenius) did not do so, (i.e. accustomed his audience to the meaning of the syntagma ὁ ὄν), at least in the earlier parts of his work *On the Good*, is sufficiently plain.’⁴⁰ Now this argument is rather jejune. As I have already

³⁵ Edwards, p.478-479: ‘... the brusque rejoinder of Scott, that “a sower *cannot* sow himself” has been cordially endorsed, not only by Dodds and Dillon, but by Festugière, John Whittaker and the editor of the Fragments, Édouard des Places.’ (the correct quotation from Scott is: ‘a sower *does not* sow himself’, p.79, n.3).

³⁶ Edwards, p.481: ‘What of the word νομοθέτης, so redolent again, in modern opinion, of the *Septuagint* and Philo...’

³⁷ Scott, p.79, n.3.

³⁸ Edwards, p.482: ‘... speculations which do not always create fewer problems than they remove.’

³⁹ Edwards, p.479.

⁴⁰ Edwards, p.479.

had the chance to mention,⁴¹ Apamea was not a ‘pure’ city (from an ethnic and religious point of view). The ‘pagan’ audience may not have been so pagan after all, but even if it were, it is rather improbable that ‘neighbours’ with intellectual aspirations (because we can suppose that Numenius’ audience was not necessarily (perforce) a crowd of shepherds who simply happened to be around) would not have been accustomed to each other’s religious beliefs. A special quick introduction in the history of religion must not, after all, have been necessary.⁴² To call God ‘the One Who Is’ is not inevitably the prerogative of the ‘Jewish apologists’⁴³. As long as it appears in *Exodus* 3.14, it is a common good of both Jewish and Christian religions, and besides, of any other cult which pays respect to the Jewish tradition and also recognises God as the source and the most pure expression of Being. Numenius seems to fit into this latter category. The argument brought by Edwards that we cannot find any ‘prolegomena’ to the use of the *Septuagint* originated name in the earlier parts of *On the Good* is unconvincing and misleading at the same time. From a work consisting of at least six books⁴⁴ in which our fragment must have been placed

⁴¹ i.e. in the first half of this article. Cf. also: Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin authors about Jews and Judaism*, Jerusalem 1974 (vol.I) & 1980 (vol. II); Dodds, p.6: ‘in his native Apamea Numenius would have ample opportunity of getting to know both Jews and Gnostics.’; Dillon, p.378: ‘One did not have to be a Jew in the Syria of the second century A.D. to be acquainted with either Jewish or Christian writings.’; Whittaker (1978) p.151: ‘... our fragment of Numenius, curious as it may seem, builds upon a combination of what must have been to the Hellenistic mind familiar conceptions.’

⁴² A problem may arise from the fragment 57 (E. des Places) which calls Numenius: ὁ Ῥωμαῖος, but it is unlikely that the capital of the world at that time was filled with ignorance concerning the texts shared by both Jewish and Christian communities. (see com. ad loc. Dodds, p.6).

⁴³ Edwards, p.479.

⁴⁴ Cf. E. des Places’ introduction to the edition of the Fragments; Dillon, p.363.

somewhere in the middle, we have not more than a few pages.⁴⁵ Now if we credit as a success the work of the last editor, E. des Places, who, following the same editorial principle as the previous one, Leemans⁴⁶, tried to arrange the fragments in the order of the books, we do not have more than 12 fragments ahead of/before the one which concerns us. This seems a rather too small collection from which to draw so generalising a conclusion as Edwards' does. Even so, however, from these 12 fragments, we can conclude that the presence of a Jewish / Christian name for God has not fallen from the sky. From what we have, we can see in Fr. 1b (E. des Places), which apparently comes from the first book, that Numenius used 'λόγοις προφητικοῖς'⁴⁷ From Eusebius⁴⁸ we learn that in the third book of *On the Good*, right before our fragment, 'ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὁ Νουμήμιος, ὁμοῦ τὰ Πλάτωνος καὶ πολὺ πρότερον τὰ Μωσέως ἐπὶ τὸ σαφὲς διερμηνεύων. Εἰκότως

⁴⁵ What is meant by book here is more to be guessed at than known. That it was not about chapters is clear as long as they are not introduced as κεφάλαιον. 'Although the authors themselves may not originally have divided their writings into separate portions to suit the ordinary length of a conveniently sized roll, yet the practice of the scribe would eventually react on the author. (...) From twenty to thirty feet was probably the normal length of a roll, the higher limit being rarely, if ever exceeded.' E.M. Thompson, *An introduction to Greek and Latin palaeography*, Oxford 1912, p.45-46. Also 'neither this term (i.e. *roll*) nor βιβλίον, nor *liber* nor *libellus*, could be applied in the singular number to more than a single roll or volume. A work consisting of many volumes, or several divisions must be described by the plural forms βιβλία, τόμοι, *libri*, etc. On the other hand, the several books of a work, if written on one roll, counted only for one βιβλίον or *liber*.' *ibidem* p.44-45. 'It was the custom of the Greek and Romans to compute the length of their literary works by measurement lines. (...); in prose works an artificial unit had to be found, for no two scribes would naturally write lines of the same length. On the authority of Galen (*De Placit. Hipp. et Plat.* VII. 1) we learn that the unit of measurement among the Greeks was the average Homeric line consisting of about sixteen syllables. Such a standard line was called by the earlier writers ἔπος, afterwards στίχος (lit. a row).' *ibidem* p.67.

⁴⁶ *Numenius van Apamea: Testimonia et fragmenta*, Bruxelles 1937.

⁴⁷ I would rather see here a more precise denomination, and I would read 'prophetic writings' for λόγοις προφητικοῖς instead of 'des paroles des prophètes' (E. des Places). As long as the term is fairly ambiguous it could refer to all types of prophetic writings, including the *Septuagint*. However, if whether is to include the *Chaldaean Oracles* here, is quite obscure and depends on the rapport between Numenius and the Oracles. See the discussion in Dodds, p.10-11; For the interpretation of the Fr. 1b see Dodds, p.5 .

⁴⁸ *Praep. Evang.* XI 10. 14.1- 4 [F. 8 (E. des Places)].

δη̄τα εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνο τὸ λόγιον περιφέρεται, δι' οὗ φάναι μνημονεύεται·' he said: 'Τί γάρ ἐστι Πλάτων ἢ Μωσῆς ἀττικίζων;'.⁴⁹ Also, further on, as Eusebius informs us⁵⁰, 'καὶ ἐν τῇ τρίτῃ δὲ βίβλῳ Μωσέως ὁ αὐτὸς (i.e. Νουμήμιος) τάδε λέγων μνημονεύει· κτλ' and ends with a conclusion which alludes to the presence of a longer story: 'Διὰ δὴ τούτων ὁ Νουμήμιος καὶ τοῖς ὑπὸ Μωσέως ἐπιτελεσθεῖσι παραδόξοις θαύμασι καὶ αὐτῷ δὲ ὡς θεοφιλεῖ γενομένῳ μαρτυρεῖ.'⁵¹ It seems quite improbable to tell the story of Moses' 'awesome acts' and how he 'became loved by God' without mentioning, even accidentally the 'dialogue' which he had with God in the front of the burning bush, the opportunity which God had of introducing Himself.⁵² And if still some doubts haunt one who is worried about a proper introduction of the Jewish process of naming God in the first three books of Numenius' *On the Good*, Fr. 10a (E. des Places) (this time an extract from Origen⁵³) may bring him tranquillity, since it states plainly that Numenius, 'ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ περὶ τὰγαθοῦ ἐκτίθεται καὶ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἱστορίαν τινά, τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ οὐ λέγων, καὶ τροπολογεῖ αὐτήν· πότερον δ' ἐπιτετευγμένως ἢ ἀποτετευγμένως, ἄλλου καιροῦ ἐστιν εἰπεῖν.' Ἐκτίθεται καὶ τὴν περὶ Μωϋσέως καὶ Ἰαννοῦ καὶ Ἰαμβροῦ ἱστορίαν.'

The objection which Edwards brings against the interpretation of Fr. 13 in the light of the *Septuagint*, is that 'Numenius, like any of his predecessors, is able to speak indifferently of his first principle as ὁ θεός or as τὸ ἀγαθόν; if he chooses to revive another commonplace, and refer to the sovereign God as the source of being, he reaches for the conventional τὸ ὄν.' Fair enough, but only if we consider the circumstances in which these terms are introduced. All the fragments that Edwards refers to⁵⁴ for τὸ ὄν, discuss the particular problem of being as a metaphysical

⁴⁹ Fr. 8 (E. des Places).

⁵⁰ *Praep. Evang.* IX 8. 1.1 - 3.2.

⁵¹ Fr. 9 (E. des Places).

⁵² *Exodus* 3-4.

⁵³ *Contra Celsum* IV. 51. 20-24.

⁵⁴ frs. 2.23; 3.1; 4a.9, 5 *passim*, 6.15, 7 *passim*, 8.2 (Edwards' note 8, p.482).

concept. In Fr. 2 being is introduced, in a very Aristotelian way, as the ‘object of the supreme science.’⁵⁵ In Fr. 3 being is the subject of an enquiry from a physical point of view, namely the relation between being (τὸ ὄν), the elements and the totality of beings (τὰ ὄντα)⁵⁶ in, again, a very Aristotelian manner of raising the problem. Fr. 4a states that ‘it would be reckless⁵⁷ (ἀθέμιστον)’ to affirm that being is irrational, chaotic and unstable. All these attributes perfectly match matter, but matter is contrasted with being and is affirmed as not being *the being*.⁵⁸ Fragments 5, 6 and 8 discuss the problem of being from a very ‘technical’ point of view, very close to Plato’s style from the *Sophist* or *Parmenides*. Being is described as out of time, eternal⁵⁹ and incorporeal.⁶⁰ The 7th fragment is, almost entirely, a quotation from *Timaeus* (27 d 6 – 28 a 4) where the question raised does not concern the character of ‘the sovereign God as the source of being’⁶¹, but the character of the intelligible world, i.e. the forms. As a matter of fact none of these fragments relates God with being, or at least not in the categorical way in which this happens in Fr. 13, and definitely not as unequivocally as Edwards thinks.

⁵⁵ Fr. 2. 22-23: ‘οὕτως ἐκμελετήσαι μάθημα, τί ἐστι τὸ ὄν.’

⁵⁶ Fr. 3. 1-4: ‘Ἀλλὰ τί δὴ ἐστι τὸ ὄν; ἄρα ταυτὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα τὰ τέσσαρα, ἡ γῆ καὶ τὸ πῦρ καὶ αἱ ἄλλαι δύο μεταξὺ φύσεις; ἄρα οὖν δὴ τὰ ὄντα ταῦτά ἐστιν, ἦτοι συλλήβδην ἢ καθ’ ἕν γέ τι αὐτῶν;’

⁵⁷ And not necessary ‘impious’ as E. de Places translates; for that we should have ἀσέβεια.

⁵⁸ Fr. 4a. 7-12: ‘τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ὅπερ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ὠμολογησάμεθα ἐν τοῖς ἐμπροσθεν, ταυτὶ πάντα συνενεχθῆναι τῷ ὄντι ἀθέμιστον εἶναι. Δοξάτω μάλιστα μὲν πᾶσιν, εἰ δὲ μή, ἀλλ’ ἐμοί. Οὐκοῦν φημι τὴν ὕλην οὔτε αὐτὴν οὔτε τὰ σώματα εἶναι ὄν.’

⁵⁹ Fr. 5. 5-7: ‘Φέρε οὖν ὅση δύναμις ἐγγύτατα πρὸς τὸ ὄν ἀναγώμεθα καὶ λέγωμεν· τὸ ὄν οὔτε ποτὲ ἦν οὔτε ποτὲ μὴ γένηται, ἀλλ’ ἐστὶν αἰεὶ ἐν χρόνῳ ὠρισμένῳ, τῷ ἐνεστώτι μόνῳ.’ and 5. 19-20: ‘τὸ ἄρα ἂν αἰδιδόν τε βεβαίον τε ἐστὶν αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτον καὶ αὐτόν.’ also Fr. 8. 2-5: ‘Εἰ μὲν δὴ τὸ ὄν πάντως πάντη αἰδιδόν τέ ἐστι καὶ ἄτρεπτον καὶ οὐδαμῶς οὐδαμῆ ἐξιστάμενον ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, μένει δὲ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὠσάυτως ἔστηκε, τοῦτο δήπου ἂν εἴη τὸ τῆ νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν.’

⁶⁰ Fr. 6. 6-7: ‘ἀλλὰ μὴ γελασάτω τις, ἐὰν φῶ τοῦ ἀσωμάτου εἶναι ὄνομα οὐσίαν καὶ ὄν.’

⁶¹ As Edwards wants: p.479.

Nevertheless, there is another difference, highlighted in the first part of this paper, which unquestionably differentiates Fr. 13 from any other approach to the concept of being in the extant fragments of Numenius' *On the Good*. In Fr. 13 being is introduced, as I tried to prove, as a *name* of the First God and a part of an analogy where the Second God is named too. Being is more than an attribute in Fr. 13. It is The Name of the First God, just as the name of the Second God is Demiurge. In *Exodus* 3.14 it is introduced as a name for the one without a name (description). In its simplicity, Numenius' First God is as ineffable as the God of the *Septuagint*, and both are understood as Father⁶² and King. He simply finds it convenient here to name the First God, who is 'at rest' (ἔστωζ) as 'The One Who Is' as opposed to the Second God who is 'in motion' (κινούμενος) and is called the 'Demiurge'.⁶³

The following objection of Edwards is based on the assumption that: 'ὁ ὄν is a Hellenistic Jewish title for the Lawgiver and Creator of the world'⁶⁴ and he reiterates the same retort as described earlier that the use of it would confuse the unprepared audience which will find denied here 'to the absolute Being those attributes which belong to the God of Philo, of the *Septuagint* and of any believing Jew.'⁶⁵ But how on earth would an 'unprepared audience' recognise the difference if it is unprepared and does not have a clue what ὁ ὄν refers to? And if it does recognise the difference then this implies that it is not so unprepared after all and that it probably does not expect Numenius to talk like a rabbi, but rather as a man who acknowledges the virtues of the Jewish religion without being anything other than a Gentile? Edwards argues that perverting the 'original' meaning of ὁ ὄν, Numenius 'would have had to avow the use of it – an admission to which the Christians, whose writings are our chief source, for the fragments would hardly have failed to allude'⁶⁶. Fair enough, but the objection has no grounds in the texts. Numenius was not a Jew and still less a Christian. The spectre of heresy was not looming over him, or at least not from a Christian perspective. He is, however, praised by Origen⁶⁷ for interpreting

⁶² *Exodus* 4. 22 ff., *Deuteronomy* 1. 31 and 8. 5; for Numenius Fr. 21.

⁶³ Fr. 15 (E. des Places).

⁶⁴ Edwards, p.479.

⁶⁵ *ibidem* p.479.

⁶⁶ Edwards, p.479

⁶⁷ *Contra Celsum* IV. 51.

Moses and the prophets ‘not unconvincingly’ (οὐκ ἀπιθάνως),⁶⁸ though this does not make him a father of the Christian church (we must not forget that Origen too was not a champion of orthodoxy) only acknowledges his interest and aptitude in persuasively penetrating the Bible, without tending towards either orthodoxy or faulty interpretation. By Eusebius he is called ‘τοῦ Πυθαγορείου’⁶⁹ an appellation which puts him in the right place, namely outside the orthodox tradition, so nobody would expect him to be otherwise. As Whittaker proves,⁷⁰ the Church Fathers derived the Platonic conception of Being from *Exodus* 3.14 in a similar way to Numenius. It is very likely that they acknowledged the similarities and closed their eyes to the contrasts, as long as the Gentile was approaching the truth of the Bible but still not partaking of it.

The second half of Edwards’ attack against translating ‘Ὁ μὲν γε ὦν σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ χρέματα σύμπαντα’ as: ‘The one who is sows the seed of all souls into all the things together which partake of it.’ is based on linguistic grounds.⁷¹ ‘Mullach translates “Nam primus quidem, quum omnis animae semen sit”, &c.; that is, he makes σπέρμα nominative, and takes ὦν σπέρμα to mean “being seed”. But that is impossible; a sower does not sow himself, and is not the seed which he sows. σπέρμα must be accusative, and object of σπείρει.’⁷² In Scott the question of God being the seed of souls which he sows seems to be closed. All the following interpreters find it very natural to question all aspects of this fragment, but to agree that σπέρμα must be accusative, and object of σπείρει. For Festugière ‘si σπέρμα était attribut de ὦν, il devrait précéder le participe, non le suivre, conformément à la règle ordinaire et à

⁶⁸ Cf. Fr. 1c.

⁶⁹ Fr. 5. 2.

⁷⁰ Whittaker (1967), p.198-199. Essentially, this article of Whittaker can be regarded as a full answer to Edwards’ objection on the issue of the reception of Numenius in the Christian environment.

⁷¹ Edwards, p.479.

⁷² Scott, p.79, n.3; Dodds agrees: ‘The obscurity is increased by a textual corruption, which makes Numenius appear to say that the First God is the seed of soul which he sows (ὁ μὲν ...). This can hardly be right: as Scott said, *a sower does not sow himself*; if we make σπέρμα the predicate of ὦν we make nonsense.’ op. cit. p.15, as well as E. des Places in his endnotes in the Budé edition.

l'usage même de Numenius.⁷³ For Edwards, however, the discussion does not seem to be closed at all. He argues that 'if Numenius meant us to read ὁ μὲν ... ὅν as a single phrase, he ought also to have written ὁ δὲ νομοθέτης. In fact, it is evident from the received text that the article alone does duty for the subject of the first clause, as ὁ νομοθέτης is the subject of the second.'⁷⁴

I have to admit that I cannot see, in respect of this aspect, a final argument stemming from the language of the text itself.⁷⁵ However, I am more inclined to accept Festugière's explanation as being the most natural when approaching the text, while in Edwards' option I see a somewhat uncomfortable understanding of the word order. Plus, ὁ μὲν in line 4 does not necessarily require ὁ δὲ in line 6 (cf. J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, Oxford 1954). Since I do not see a final decision about this fragment as coming from a definitive choice for one or other of these two variants, I cannot accept the premature conclusion of Edwards: 'Thus we see that both language and philosophy protest against our taking the words ὁ ὅν as a Philonizing epithet of God.'⁷⁶ So far philosophy seems to me to agree with such a thesis, while language is undecided upon the matter, leaving us without hope of solving the problem through solely philological arguments.

Most troublesome seem to be Numenius' doctrine of the soul. Edwards might be right after all, if he could only manage to prove that Numenius' doctrine of the soul permits a reading of our fragment in terms of the consubstantiality of the soul with the First God.

Obviously, he thinks he can prove that⁷⁷, and at first glance, his arguments seem persuasive. He adduces in discussion three aspects intended to prove his point:

⁷³ Festugière, p.44, n.2.

⁷⁴ Edwards, p.479.

⁷⁵ I am indebted to Professor Jonathan Powell and Dr. Lene Rubinstein for discussing with me the perils of this sentence from a philological perspective.

⁷⁶ Edwards, p.479.

⁷⁷ 'There is therefore no philosophical objection to a translation of Fragment 13 which makes Numenius style his First God the "seed of every soul"'. Edwards, p.480.

- 1) Heraclitus apparently, according to Aetius, conceived God as the seed and the Demiurge of the universe.
- 2) Plutarch, maintained a theory according to which, since the progeny is consubstantial with the progenitor, the soul being the ‘son’ of God, must be consubstantial with the latter.
- 3) Numenius (a) uses a parental pattern when he refers to gods (Fr. 21) and (b) he is alleged to ‘maintain an indissoluble identity of the soul with its own causes’⁷⁸ (Fr. 42).

Are these arguments strong enough to prove to us that Numenius indeed understood God as being the seed of souls; a seed which sows itself in all the beings who participate in it (ie. The First God)? My belief is that they are not. Let us consider each of the arguments firstly on its own merit and then in relation to the others.

What does the invocation of such a peculiar doctrine in Heraclitus prove? Alcinous, Numenius’ contemporary, does mention Heraclitus when, in his *Didaskalikos* XIV, he comments upon the theory of the creation of souls from Plato’s *Timaeus*. But what he says about it is this: ‘Declaring that there exists an intelligible essence which is indivisible, and another which is divisible about bodies, he (i.e. the Demiurge) constructed from these a single essence, explaining that thus it can grasp in thought each of the aforesaid two essences; and seeing that sameness and difference occur both on the level of intelligible and of divisible things, he put the soul together out of all these things. For either like is known by like, as is the view of the Pythagoreans, or unlike by unlike, as is held by Heraclitus, the philosopher of nature.’⁷⁹

The first thing that strikes the reader is that Heraclitus is mentioned here to contrast with the Pythagoreans on the matter of the construction of souls. It would be reasonable to suppose that Numenius ‘the Pythagorean’⁸⁰ would follow the latter ‘school’ rather than Heraclitus. However, Heraclitus is mentioned here more as a source of a little detail than as a piece of real doctrinal evidence on the matter of soul

⁷⁸ Translation M. J. Edwards, *ibidem* p.480.

⁷⁹ Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* XIII, 169. 22-31. Translation J. Dillon in Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, Oxford 1995, p.23.

⁸⁰ ‘ὁ Πυθαγόρειος Νομῆνιος’ (Fr. 1b); ‘Νομηνίου τοῦ Πυθαγορικοῦ...’ (Fr. 4b), etc.

as the commentary of Dillon *ad loc.*⁸¹ and the notes of Whittaker⁸² indicate. What is the relevance of this issue, one might ask? Almost none, one might reply, since he is more of a historic character than a viable doctrinal source for both Middle and Neoplatonists. Proving that he maintained a certain doctrine of the soul would not lead us to immediately infer that Numenius would have been influenced by it. As his relation to sources influenced by Heraclitus is a total mystery to us, the occurrence of the name of the Ephesian philosopher here is irrelevant. On the other hand, to prove that a theory like this is not improbable on the scene of Greek thought is somewhat out of place, since this is surely not the issue here.⁸³ In an article published in 1992⁸⁴ R.T. Wallis is ready to accept the interpretation of Fr. 13 as implying that the First God is the seed of all souls, on a Gnostic basis.⁸⁵ However, the text he adduces, the *Nag Hammadi's Tripartite Tractate*, does not imply the same use of the metaphor of sowing. While in Numenius the verb is taken in an 'agricultural' sense, when it refers to the First God and what is below him, the *Tripartite Tractate* uses the metaphor of sowing with a sexual connotation.

One may think, also, to invoke Clement as a possible key to solve the meaning of the metaphor of the husbandman in Numenius' text, as long as the Church Father was acquainted with both Jewish and Greek spirituality and knew the works of both Philo and Numenius. However he uses the metaphor of farmer to illustrate very different types of realities. The most common use of the image of a farmer who sows or cultivates is related to the process of education or to the process of procreation, but

⁸¹ Alcinoos, *The Handbook of Platonism*, Oxford 1995, p.123.

⁸² Alcinoos, *Enseignement des doctrines de Platon*, Paris 1990, p.113, n.263.

⁸³ 'but it is not so clear that this character is incompatible with another relation which, according to Greek assumptions, would make the seed identical, or at least consubstantial, with its source.' Edwards, p.480.

⁸⁴ R.T. Wallis, *Soul and Nous in Plotinus, Numenius and Gnosticism in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, ed. R.T. Wallis and J. Bregman, New York 1992, p.461-482 (n.57, 70, 71, p.479).

⁸⁵ 'The *Tripartite Tractate* may also support an interpretation of Numenius, Fr. 13 E. des Places, which has been thought indefensible, that the God is himself the seed which he sows. Commentators have either taken *Ho ðn* as a Hebraism (e.g. E. des Places; also Festugière,...) or amended the text (e.g. Dodds, ... and Dillon, ...). Since, however, *Trip.Tract.* I.5.65.13 describes God as sowing himself, the natural interpretation of the Numenius text may after all be correct.' Wallis, p.479, n.57.

most commonly to both as similar activities.⁸⁶ Therefore, the contribution of Clement is of no help in this case.

The second argument of Edwards relies on Plutarch. It seems reasonable that a ‘near contemporary of Numenius’ might have held similar convictions. However, I think that this is not the case here. Unfortunately we know more about Plutarch than we know about Numenius, so any assertion must not be taken as a resolution but as a likely reconstruction of the jigsaw.

Edwards points out in Plutarch a doctrine about the relationship between the soul and the supreme God which is supposed to make us believe that Numenius was likely to adopt or to develop a similar one. It seems reasonable enough to hold such premises but they seem false in Numenius’ case. The theology of these two philosophers is too different to allow for such a common doctrine. For Plutarch, a dualist like Numenius, the First God is opposed to Matter. He assumes the Pythagorean opposition between Monad and Dyad but this is not all. The relationship between the Monad and the Dyad is one of opposition and not one of subordination. This belief was shared by Numenius too, who is angry at the fact that ‘sed non nullos Pythagoreos vim sententiae non recte assecutos putasse dici etiam illam indeterminatam et immensam duitatem ab unica singularitate et institutam recedente a natura sua singularitate et in duitatis habitum migrante – non recte, ut quae erat singularitas esse desineret, quae non erat duitas subsisterent, atque ex deo silva et ex singularitate immensa et indeterminata duitas converteretur; quae opinio ne mediocriter quidem institutis hominibus competit;’⁸⁷ So, according to Calcidius,

⁸⁶ ‘If appeals to metaphors *for* procreation offer Clement a primary vehicle for naturalizing Christian sexual and social norms, how do metaphors *of* procreation function in his writings? Clement uses metaphors of procreation and filiation to model the relationship between Christian teachers and students and to authorise his own position as a Christian author. In proposing an analogy between fathers and teachers or between sons and learners or texts, Clement would not have surprised his contemporaries. Sowing seed into soil was not only a widely available model for procreation in Clement’ s day, but procreation was also firmly established as a metaphor for the transmission, acquisition, and production of knowledge. (...) The radical asymmetry of seed and soil imagery permits Clement to emphasise the linear transmission of tradition: the teacher as sower plays the active, penetrating role, implanting seeds of Christian tradition into the passively receptive learner.’ Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians. Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy*, Princeton 1999, p.50.

⁸⁷ Fr. 52. 15-24 (Calcidius, *In Tim.* c. CCXCV).

Numenius seemed to maintain a similar doctrine to Plutarch regarding the relation between the Monad and the Dyad. Nevertheless, the similarity stops here. For Plutarch the Monad is the Supreme God: ‘Of the supreme Principles, by which I mean the One (τοῦ ἑνός) and the Indefinite Dyad (τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος), the latter, being the element underlying all formlessness and disorder, has been called Limitlessness; but the nature of the One limits and contains what is void and irrational and indeterminate in Limitlessness, gives it shape, and renders it in some way tolerant and receptive of definition.’⁸⁸ This is a trace of the traditional Pythagoreanism of which Sextus Empiricus testifies: ‘ἀνέκυψαν ἄρα ἀρχαὶ πάντων κατὰ τὸ ἀνωτάτω ἢ τε πρώτη μονὰς καὶ ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς· [...] ὅθεν φασὶν ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ταύταις τὸν μὲν τοῦ δρῶντος αἰτίου λόγον ἐπέχειν τὴν μονάδα, τὸν δὲ τῆς πασχούσης ὕλης τὴν δυάδα.’⁸⁹

Nevertheless, in the Ist century AD we have already more than this simple architecture. We find in Eudorus a structure in which, above the couple Monad/Dyad, reigns a ‘Super One’⁹⁰, called the ‘Supreme God’⁹¹, while the second one is called the

⁸⁸ Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 428.E. 11 - F. 5; translation John Dillon in *The Middle Platonists*, p.199; ‘ὅτι τῶν ἀνωτάτων ἀρχῶν, λέγω δὲ τοῦ ἑνός καὶ τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος, ἡ μὲν ἀμορφίας πάσης στοιχεῖον οὖσα καὶ ἀταξίας ἀπειρία κέκληται· ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἑνός φύσις ὀρίζουσα καὶ καταλαμβάνουσα τῆς ἀπειρίας τὸ κενὸν καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἀόριστον ἔμμορφον παρέχεται καὶ τὴν ἐπομένην.’

⁸⁹ Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* X. 276.1 - 277.7.

⁹⁰ Simplicius, *In Phys.* IX. 181.10 – 17: ‘γράφει δὲ περὶ τούτων ὁ Εὐδώρος τάδε· "κατὰ τὸν ἀνωτάτω λόγον φατέον τοὺς Πυθαγορικοὺς τὸ ἐν ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων λέγειν, κατὰ δὲ τὸν δεύτερον λόγον δύο ἀρχὰς τῶν ἀποτελουμένων εἶναι, τὸ τε ἐν καὶ τὴν ἐναντίαν τούτῳ φύσιν. ὑποτάσσεσθαι δὲ πάντων τῶν κατὰ ἐναντίωσιν ἐπινοουμένων τὸ μὲν ἀστεῖον τῷ ἐνί, τὸ δὲ φαῦλον τῇ πρὸς τούτο ἐναντιομένη φύσει. διὸ μηδὲ εἶναι τὸ σύνολον ταύτας ἀρχὰς κατὰ τοὺς ἀνδρας. εἰ γὰρ ἡ μὲν τῶνδε ἡ δὲ τῶνδε ἐστὶν ἀρχή, οὐκ εἰσὶ κοινὰ πάντων ἀρχαὶ ὡσπερ τὸ ἐν."

⁹¹ Simplicius, *In Phys.* IX. 181.17 – 19: ‘καὶ πάλιν "διό, φησί, καὶ κατ’ ἄλλον τρόπον ἀρχὴν ἔφασαν εἶναι τῶν πάντων τὸ ἐν, ὡς ἂν καὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων. τοῦτο δὲ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ὑπεράνω θεόν."

‘Monad’.⁹² Numenius is the inheritor of such an alteration of traditional Pythagoreanism, and although he polemicizes against [probably] Moderatus because he subordinates the Dyad to the Monad, he still maintains the same distinction between the First Principle and the Second One. In Fr. 11 the distinction is made clear: ‘The First God, existing in himself alone, can never be divisible. The Second and Third God, however, are in fact one; but in the process of coming into contact with Matter, which is the Dyad, he gives unity to it, but is himself divided by it (...).’⁹³ This is the same ‘One’ which is opposed to the Dyad in the fragment from Calcidius (Fr. 52 E. des Places)⁹⁴ and the same ‘One’ which in other fragments will receive the name of Demiurge.

Now, Numenius adopts a distinction between God and Demiurge which is not adopted by Plutarch. This distinction makes me consider any fragment from Plutarch which speaks about the relationship of God with the soul as irrelevant for Numenius. Which God appears in Numenius’ architecture? If it refers to the Second God, then the parallel does not strengthen Edwards’ position but rather acts against it. If it refers to the First God, then the First God of Numenius must be a Demiurge too, but this goes against the fragments we possess. For these reasons I would prefer to consider

⁹² Simplicius, *In Phys.* IX. 181.22 – 30: ‘λέγει γάρ· "φημι τοίνυν τοὺς περὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν τὸ μὲν ἐν πάντων ἀρχὴν ἀπολιπεῖν, κατ’ ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον δύο τὰ ἀνωτάτω στοιχεῖα παρεισάγειν. καλεῖν δὲ τὰ δύο ταῦτα στοιχεῖα πολλαῖς προσηγορίαις· τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ὀνομάζεσθαι τεταγμένον ὠρισμένον γνωστὸν ἄρρεν περιττὸν δεξιὸν φῶς, τὸ δὲ ἐναντίον τούτῳ ἄτακτον ἀόριστον ἀγνωστον θῆλυ ἀριστερὸν ἄρτιον σκότος, ὥστε ὡς μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ ἐν, ὡς δὲ στοιχεῖα τὸ ἐν καὶ ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς, ἀρχαὶ ἄμφω ἐν ὄντα πάλιν. καὶ δῆλον ὅτι ἄλλο μὲν ἐστὶν ἐν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῶν πάντων, ἄλλο δὲ ἐν τῷ τῆ δυάδι ἀντικείμενον, ὃ καὶ μονάδα καλοῦσιν”.’

⁹³ Translation John Dillon in *The Middle Platonists*, p.367; ‘ὁ θεὸς ὁ μὲν πρῶτος ἐν ἑαυτοῦ ὦν ἐστὶν ἀπλοῦς, διὰ τὸ ἑαυτῷ συγγιγνόμενος διόλου μὴ ποτε εἶναι διαιρετός· ὁ θεὸς μέντοι ὁ δεῦτερος καὶ τρίτος ἐστὶν εἷς· συμφερόμενος δὲ τῇ ὕλῃ δυάδι οὐσῆ ἐνοῖ μὲν αὐτήν, σχίζεται δὲ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς,’

⁹⁴ ‘ait Pythagoram deum quidem singularitatis nomine nominasse, silvam vero duitatis’ (Fr. 52. 5-6) The God invoked here is the second god, the Demiurge and not the first God. This becomes obvious a few lines lower: ‘... exornatam vero atque illustratam a *digestore deo* esse generatam, ...’ (Fr. 52. 10-12).

this argument of Edwards as irrelevant in our case, just like the one regarding Heraclitus.

The third argument of Edwards relies both on drawing conclusions from the former two and on the very testimony of Numenius; both of which aspects, at first sight, seem to bring closure to the discussion. What I tried to prove so far was that Edwards' conclusions drawn from the first and second premises are irrelevant because the texts invoked by him are irrelevant in the given context. What I will try to prove now is that he misinterprets the fragments from Numenius and he does not consider the whole picture of Numenius' doctrine of the soul.

Numenius in applying to his supreme triad parental epithets, was indeed 'faithful to a living Platonic tradition'⁹⁵. This faithfulness is one of the reasons for which Proclus, who is the source of this information,⁹⁶ seems not to like him very much, although he prefers Numenius to the mischievous Plutarch.⁹⁷ However, the simple fact of attaching paternal epithets to the divine triad does not prove in itself, as Edwards would like us to believe, a closeness between Plutarch's and Numenius' theologies. To the contrary, as I showed above, the difference is what matters for the issue under discussion, and this difference denies us the right to assume a doctrine in Numenius on the basis of the analogy with Plutarch. The 'living Platonic tradition' is too heterogeneous to allow us conclusions with a general character.

The second aspect pointed out by Edwards is that we find in Numenius, namely in Fr. 42, a clear and undeniable theory of the soul as identified with its own causes. The fragment runs as follows:

Ἐνωσιν μὲν οὖν καὶ ταύττητα ἀδιάκριτον τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὰς ἑαυτῆς ἀρχὰς πρεσβεύειν φαίνεται Νομήμιος,⁹⁸ Numenius appears to maintain that there is unification and identity without distinction of the soul with its principles,⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Edwards, p.480.

⁹⁶ Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 303.27 - 304.7.

⁹⁷ See J. Whittaker's article *Proclus and the Middle Platonists*, in *Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des Anciens*, Paris 1987, p.277-291.

⁹⁸ Fr. 42 (E. des Places).

Because this is an extract from another work, i.e. Stobaeus' *Anthology* I think it would be useful if we consider also the end of the passage quoted above:

σύμφυσιν δὲ καθ' ἑτέραν οὐσίαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι διασώζουσι. Καὶ ἀναλύσει μὲν ἐκεῖνοι, συντάξει δὲ οὗτοι προσεοίκασι· καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀδιορίστῳ συναφῇ, οἱ δὲ διωρισμένη χρῶνται.¹⁰⁰ but the Ancients maintain that the soul is united while remaining distinct as substance. Numenius compares it to a release¹⁰¹ but the Ancients to an ordering and while the former used the terms indistinct assembly, the others say it is a distinctive assembly.¹⁰²

This fragment is alleged to be Iamblichus' account of his predecessors' doctrine of the embodied soul, comprised in his *De anima*. But what did Iamblichus actually refer to here? If we isolate the bit taken in Fr. 42 (E. des Places) we might suppose that a paraphrase of it would sound like this: Numenius maintained the theory that the soul is identical with its principles. This is what Edwards reads in it. Fair enough, but I am sceptical about converting this into the assertion: Numenius maintained the theory that the soul is identical with the First God.

Now there are a few problems with this text, problems that are the cause of my scepticism. Firstly, that if we isolate the lines referring to Numenius we lose the context that is revelatory for the meaning of the entire fragment quoted from Stobaeus. This is placed at the end of the surviving bits from the *De anima* treatise of Iamblichus. The character of the treatise is a theoretical one with a strong Aristotelian

⁹⁹ Translation G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, Pennsylvania 1995, p.114.

¹⁰⁰ Stobaeus, *Antholog.* I. 49. 67.24-27.

¹⁰¹ I would rather see ἀνάλυσις here as a *return* than as a *resolution* as Festugière and Shaw do.

¹⁰² Translation G. Shaw, *ibidem* p.114-115 modified.

methodological imprint.¹⁰³ The doxographical aspect is very important too, though it sometimes seems to be treated in an Aristotelian way, i.e. interpretative and not as verbatim reproduction.¹⁰⁴ Throughout the treatise the reader will encounter various instances in which, in the case of authors whose works survived, we are not always able to match Iamblichus' account with the actual texts. The closest passages to our fragment in which we meet such difficulties refer to Plotinus: 457.1ff (Wachsmuth). In addition, Iamblichus himself signals¹⁰⁵ that we will here face *his*¹⁰⁶ interpretation of what Numenius said and not the exact words.

The theme of this last 'chapter' of Iamblichus' *De Anima*, where the text of Fr. 42 is to be found, is the question of the rewards given to purified souls after their retreat from the sensible world.¹⁰⁷ It is by no means about the generation of souls but, on the contrary about their *epistrophe*. The introduction that precedes our fragments already quoted above runs as follows:¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Cf. Bent D. Larsen, *Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et philosophe.*, Aarhus 1972, p.197 ff. 'Nous retrouvons ici un trait connu d'Aristote... Ce trait est pourtant d'être le seul. Nous remarquons en divers domaines que la méthode de travail employée par Jamblique a une affinité évidente avec la méthode aristotélicienne ...' *ibidem* p.205

¹⁰⁴ 'En ce qui concerne l'utilisation des sources chez Jamblique dans le *De Anima*, il est caractéristique que dans les cas où nous pouvons en contrôler l'emploi, il s'agit tout d'abord d'extraits. Les citations directes sont courtes et non pas nécessairement littérales ; c'est la tendance que nous connaissons dans *Synag. Pyth.* de rendre sources en conservant des mots centraux, tandis que la phraséologie elle-même est le propre de Jamblique. (...) Il ne peut y avoir aucun doute sur le fait que Jamblique a travaillé d'après des sources écrites, mais nous voyons en même temps que nous sommes loin d'un extrait mécanique.' B.D. Larsen, *ibidem* p.205-206

¹⁰⁵ 'Numenius *appears to maintain*...'

¹⁰⁶ But introducing the statement with: 'appears to maintain', may lead us to think that he is reproducing a sort of general opinion or at least someone else's opinion. This may induce the idea that he did not have the original texts of Numenius he is referring to, but second hand sources. Whatever the right interpretation of this passage is, one can be certain that one does not find here the words of Numenius, but merely an interpretation of what Numenius might have thought.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. also G. Shaw, *ibidem* p.114 ff.

¹⁰⁸ Iamblichus, *De An.* in Stobaeus, *Antholog.* I. 49. 67.2-21. The text of this fragment is corrupted in most of its parts. Though I followed Wachsmuth's edition, I adopted as well, the conjectures of A.J. Festugière, *La Revelation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, t. III (Les Doctrines de l'Ame), Paris, 1953, p.245 ff. I am indebted to Dr. A. Sheppard for assistance in the translation of this fragment.

Περὶ τῆς ἐπικαρπίας τῶν ψυχῶν, ἦν κομίζονται εἰσαῦθις, ἐπειδὴν ἐξέλθωσι τοῦ σώματος <οἱ μὲν πρεσβύτεροι λέγουσι πορεύεσθαι αὐτὰς εἰς θεοὺς μὲν καὶ θείας ψυχᾶς>,¹⁰⁹ εἰς ἀγγέλους¹¹⁰ δὲ καὶ ἀγγελικὰς ψυχᾶς, τὸ ὅλον δὴ τοῦτο οἱ πρεσβύτεροι. || Ὁ δὲ παρὰ Πλάτωνι Τίμαιος ἤπερ ἐσπάρησαν διαφερόντως ὑπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ, ἄλλαι μὲν εἰς ἥλιον, ἄλλαι δὲ εἰς γῆν, ταύτη καὶ τὴν ἀνοδὸν αὐτὰς ἀνάγει, μὴ ὑπερβαινούσας τὸν ὅρον τῆς οἰκείας ἐκάστην πρόσθεν δημιουργικῆς καταβολῆς. ||¹¹¹ Καὶ τηροῦσι μὲν αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκείας τάξεως Πλούταρχος καὶ Πορφύριος καὶ οἱ παλαιότεροι. Πλωτῖνος δὲ πάντων τούτων αὐτὴν ἀφίστησιν. Οἱ δ' ἀρχαιότεροι παραπλησίαν τοῖς θεοῖς κατὰ νοῦν διάθεσιν

About the reward which the souls obtain whenever they leave the body, <the Ancients say that they go to the gods and divine souls>, to the angels and the angelic souls; so much for the Ancients. || Timaeus in Plato makes them ascend by the way by which they have been sown by the Demiurge, some into the sun, some into the earth, not overstepping the limits, previously set for each one by the throwing¹¹² of the Demiurge. || Plutarch and Porphyry and the Ancients keep it in its proper rank; while Plotinus removes it from all that. The Ancients rightly assign to it a disposition of intellect, which has the form of goodness, very close to that of the gods and the superintendence of things here;¹¹³ Porphyry removes even these. Some of the Ancients maintain that it is superior to reason¹¹⁴, and defined its actions as so precise that the most pure and accomplished reasoning could not find them out. Porphyry removes them altogether from independent life, as being inborn in generation and given to composite living beings as an aid.

¹⁰⁹ Supplemented by Festugière.

¹¹⁰ Conj. Garder adopted by Festugière.

¹¹¹ Transposition proposed by Festugière. Cf. com. ad. loc., op.cit. p. 245.

¹¹² i.e. sowing.

¹¹³ i.e. in this world.

¹¹⁴ As part of the soul.

ἀγαθοειδῆ καὶ προστασίαν τῶν
τῆδε αὐτῆ ἀπονέμουσι καλῶς,
Πορφύριος δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἀπ' αὐτῆς
ἀφαιρεῖ. Τῶν δὲ πρεσβυτέρων
τινὲς ὑπερέχειν μὲν αὐτὴν
λογισμοῦ φασι, τὰ δὲ ἔργα αὐτῆς
οὕτω διηκριβωμένα ἀφορίζονται,
ὡς οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροι τῶν λογισμῶν ὁ
καθαρὸς καὶ τελειότατος.
Πορφύριος δὲ αὐτὰς ἀφαιρεῖ
παντάπασιν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδεσπότητος
ζωῆς, ὡς οὐσας συμφυεῖς τῇ
γενέσει καὶ πρὸς ἐπικουρίαν
δοθείσας τοῖς συνθέτοις ζώοις.

What is all this about in this text? As I understand it, with regard to what concerns us, Iamblichus says that Numenius said that the soul, after the death of the body, returns to the intelligible realm (since it is an intelligible essence) and there gets 'melted' somehow with the divine. The Ancients¹¹⁵ maintained a theory according to which the soul although it reaches the intelligible realm, dwells there as a separate entity. The dispute centres on whether the individual soul holds the same rank as the realities beyond it i.e. the intelligible world, the gods, the *daimones*, God... Numenius' Fr. 41 (E. des Places), which is again seen in an extract from Iamblichus' *de Anima*, posits this clearly:

Εἰσὶ δὴ τινες, οἱ πᾶσαν τὴν There are some who maintain that all

¹¹⁵ *scil.* Iamblichus. For the identity of these 'Ancients' see Festugière's complementary note no. VII at p.262-264 of his *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. III *Les doctrines de l'Âme*, Paris 1953.

τοιαύτην οὐσίαν ὁμοιομερῆ καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ μίαν ἀποφαίνονται, ὡς καὶ ἐν ὄψωσιν αὐτῆς μέρει εἶναι τὰ ὅλα· οἵτινες καὶ ἐν τῇ μεριστῇ ψυχῇ τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον καὶ θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας καὶ τὰγαθὸν καὶ πάντα τὰ πρεσβύτερα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνιδρύουσι καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ὠθεύουσιν πάντα εἶναι ἀποφαίνονται, οἰκείως μέντοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ἐν ἑκάστοις. Καὶ ταύτης τῆς δόξης ἀναμφισβητήτως μὲν ἔστι Νουμήμιος, οὐ πάντη δὲ ὁμολογουμένως Πλωτῖνος, ἀστάτως δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ φέρεται Ἄμελιος· Πορφύριος δὲ ἐνδοιάζει περὶ αὐτήν, πῆ μὲν διατεταμένως αὐτῆς ἀφιστάμενος, πῆ δὲ συνακολουθῶν αὐτῇ, ὡς παραδοθείση ἄνωθεν. Κατὰ δὲ ταύτην νοῦ καὶ θεῶν καὶ τῶν κρειττόνων γενῶν οὐδὲν ἢ ψυχῇ διενήνοχε κατὰ γε τὴν ὅλην οὐσίαν.¹¹⁶

parts of this incorporeal substance are alike and one and the same, so that the whole exists in any part of it. They even place in the individual soul the Intelligible World, the Gods, the *Daimones*, the Good, and all the races superior to the soul; and in each soul they contend that all these exist in the same way, though for each in a manner appropriate to its essence. Holding this opinion without question (is) Numenius, and Plotinus agree(s) with it, though not entirely, Amelius vacillates towards it, and Porphyry is in doubt about it, sometimes he earnestly rejects it and sometimes he follows it completely as having been handed down from on high. According to this view, the soul, considering its entire essence, is in no way different from the *Nous*, the Gods, or the superior Races.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Fr. 41 (E. des Places); Stobaeus, *Antholog.* I. 49. 32.61-77

¹¹⁷ Translation G. Shaw, *ibidem* p.70-71

Iamblichus who is reporting this is unhappy about the fact that all the philosophers mentioned, of whom Numenius seems to be the most wicked, fail to recognise a distinction within the Intelligible realm. Iamblichus' theory would be based on the assumption that we must 'make the soul a separate entity, inasmuch as it is generated second after Intellect as a different hypostasis...'¹¹⁸

Is the doctrine presented here and envisaged in Numenius' Fr. 42 hinting that God is the 'seed of every soul'? I do not think so. The only doctrine which I see alluded to here is the one which is known as monopsychism: the identity of individual souls to the world soul, once they have been removed from the sensible world, and a vague relation between intellect (intelligible world) and soul. To this particular theory, after Numenius, Plotinus also subscribes with slight reserves, and Amelius and Porphyry are not too far from it. If this doctrine implies that the Supreme God is identical with individual souls (and, implicitly in this scheme, with the universal soul) this should be true of Plotinus too.

Also, in the list of the things present in the soul, God (invoked as the <Supreme> Good, τὰγαθὸν) is present at the end, after the intelligible world, the other gods, after the *daimones* and before the superior races. Following the logic that makes us see God as the 'seed of every soul', according to this passage we are entitled

¹¹⁸ Stobaeus, *Antholog.* I. 365. 22 – 366. 11. Translation John Dillon in *Iamblichi Chalcidiensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, Leiden 1972, p.42. See also Dillon's comments *ad loc.*

to see, as the seed of every soul, not only God but also the other gods, *Nous*, the *daimones* etc.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, beside the question of the character of the fragment adduced by Edwards to support his interpretation, stands the fact that the soul is said to be identical with its principles (τὰς ἑαυτῆς ἀρχάς), a plural and not a singular aspect which cannot refer only to the First God. Whatever one would like to read here, we

¹¹⁹ The extracts from Iamblichus' *De Anima* are supported by the account given by Proclus in his *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. Whether Proclus bases his report on the actual writings of Numenius or other Middle Platonist or simply uses Iamblichus as source material, we cannot know for certain, although it is very probable he relied only on Iamblichus and Porphyry. For the attitude of Proclus towards Middle Platonic texts cf. J. Whittaker, *Proclus and the Middle Platonists*, in *Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des Anciens*, Paris 1987, p.277-291. What we have in *In Tim.* are two fragments referring to a group of Platonists invoked as the 'recent ones': νεώτεροι. Since the fact that they are introduced right before Plotinus would exclude that this appellation refers to the immediate predecessors of Proclus and since the philosophers from the Old Academy would not exactly fit the description of 'recent', I presume that this appellation refers to the Middle Platonists, without distinction, as opposed to their invocation by name. The two fragments run as follows: 'Ἐκ δὲ τούτων ὁρμώμενοι παρρησιασόμεθα πρὸς τοὺς Πλατωνικούς, ὅσοι τὴν ἡμετέραν ψυχὴν ἰσοστάσιόν τε ἀποφαίνουσι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ὁμοούσιον ταῖς θείαις ψυχαῖς καὶ ὅσοι φασὶν αὐτὴν αὐτὸν γίνεσθαι τὸν νοῦν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ νοητὸν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν, ἀπολείπουσαν πάντα καὶ σταῖσαν κατὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν· πολλοῦ γὰρ δεῖ τοιοῦτόν τι περὶ αὐτῆς λέγειν ὁ Πλάτων, ὅς γε ὁμωνύμως ἀθάνατον αὐτὴν ἀποκαλεῖ ταῖς θείαις ψυχαῖς, καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦτο ὑπομένειν, ἀλλὰ ταύτην εἰληχέναι τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τάξιν, καὶ λέγεσθαι θείαν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἀπλῶς εἶναι θείαν· τὸ γὰρ θεῖον προσήκει ταῖς ἀχράντοις καὶ ἀεὶ νοούσαις καὶ τὸ ἀθάνατον ταῖς πόρρω τῶν θνητῶν ἰδρυμέναις. τὸ δὲ πίπτον εἰς γένεσιν καὶ τὸ τοιαύτην οὐσίαν ἔχον καὶ δυνατὸν συμμίγυσθαι τοῖς θνητοῖς οὔτε θεῖον ἐστὶν ἀπλῶς οὔτε ἀθάνατον.', *In Tim.* III. 231.5-19 and 'οὐκ ἄρα ἀποδεξόμεθα τῶν νεωτέρων ὅσοι τὴν ἡμετέραν ψυχὴν ἰσάξιον ἀποφαίνουσι τῆς θείας ἢ ὁμοούσιον ἢ οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως βούλονται λέγειν· ἀκουέτωσαν γὰρ τοῦ Πλάτωνος δεύτερα καὶ τρίτα λέγοντος καὶ χωρίζοντος ἀπὸ τοῦ κρατῆρος τὰς μερικὰς ψυχὰς καὶ κατὰ δευτέραν νόησιν, ὃ δὴ ταῦτόν τῳ μερικωτέρων, ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ παράγοντος αὐτάς· ὃ γὰρ ταῦτα λέγων οὐσιώδεις διαφορὰς τῶν ψυχῶν, ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ τὰς ἐνεργείας μόνον ὡσπερ ὁ θεῖος ἐνδείκνυται Πλωτίνος;', *In Tim.* III. 245.19-27.

must accept that in this case, God, if he is the seed of every soul, is not the only seed of every soul...

So what is this referring to? We saw that Numenius, apparently, maintained the theory of the 'melting' of the individual soul in the intelligible realm and a conversion to its principles. Which would these be? We find the answer in Fr. 39 (E. des Places):

Τῶν δὲ πρὸ ἡμῶν οἱ μὲν μαθηματικὴν ποιοῦντες τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς μέσῃν τῶν τε φυσικῶν καὶ τῶν ὑπερφῶν, οἱ μὲν ἀριθμὸν αὐτὴν εἰπόντες ἐκ μονάδος ποιοῦσιν, ὡς ἀμερίστου, καὶ τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος, ὡς μεριστῆς, οἱ δὲ ὡς γεωμετρικὴν ὑπόστασιν οὖσαν ἐκ σημείου καὶ διαστάσεως, τοῦ μὲν ἀμερούς, τῆς δὲ μεριστῆς· καὶ τῆς μὲν προτέρας εἰσὶ δόξης οἱ περὶ Ἀρίστανδρον καὶ Νουμήμιον καὶ ἄλλοι πλεῖστοι τῶν ἐξηγητῶν, τῆς δὲ δευτέρας Σευήρος.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Fr. 39 (E. des Places), Proclus, *In Tim.* II. 153.17-25. I am indebted to Dr. A. Sheppard for assistance in the translation of this fragment. Supporting the same issue, Fr. 40 (E. des Places), also an extract from Proclus: 'Θεόδωρος δὲ ὁ ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίνης φιλόσοφος, τῶν Νουμηνείων λόγων ἐμφορηθεὶς, καινοπρεπέστερον τοὺς περὶ τῆς ψυχογονίας διέθηκε λόγους, ἀπὸ τῶν γραμμάτων καὶ τῶν χαρακτήρων καὶ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ποιούμενος τὰς ἐπιβολάς.' Proclus, *In Tim.* II. 274.10-14.

In face of the question what did Plato intend when he talked about making the soul from elements, several answers were given. The Pythagorean-inspired explanations (though coming from the core of the Old Academy) follow two patterns: an arithmetical one, first introduced by Xenocrates¹²¹, and a geometrical one, the proposal of Speusippus.¹²² A third explanation, physical, is given by Crantor.¹²³ Among Neopythagoreans, Numenius along with Aristander shared the arithmetical explanation, while Severus subscribed to the geometrical one.¹²⁴ Iamblichus' testimony follows the same idea: some Platonists and Pythagoreans maintain a theory according to which the soul is a combination, or a harmony or simply a mixture between the monad and the dyad, securing for it in this way the role of mediator between the intelligible and sensible realms.¹²⁵ The only conclusion I can draw from this here is that the term 'principle of the soul' in this context can receive only an arithmetical explanation, if any, i.e. the monad and the dyad.¹²⁶

Edwards' analysis turns again now to the textual problems of our fragment. Implying the existence of a symmetry inside the text which asks us to 'read, first εἰς τὰ μεταλαγγάνοντα αὐτοῦ, then χρήματα σύμπαντα, the latter denoting the combination of elements or qualities which is the object of the verb'¹²⁷, he proposes a parallel between our fragment and the text of *Timaeus*. I shall deal with these two aspects separately.

¹²¹ According to Plutarch, *De An. Procr.* 1012 e; Iamblichus, *De Anima* 364.10; Aetios IV. 2.3. Cf. Leonardo Tarán, *Proclus and the Old Academy in Proclus. Lector et interprète des Anciens*, Paris 1987, p.227-276 (for Xenocrates in our context, esp. p.250-251).

¹²² Iamblichus, *De Anima* 364.5; Plutarch, *De An. Procr.* 1023 b, where the definition is attributed to ὁ περὶ Ποσειδώνιον.

¹²³ Plutarch, *De An. Procr.* 1012 d and 1012 f. ff.

¹²⁴ See the discussion of the issue and its relation to Iamblichus' commentary on *Timaeus* in John Dillon's *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, Leiden 1972, p.329-331.

¹²⁵ Cf. Stobaeus, *Anthol.* I. 49. 32.31-60.

¹²⁶ 'Numenius taught in dependence upon the *Timaeus* that souls were not born of the First God but compounded ἐκ μονάδος ... ὡς ἀμερίστου, καὶ τῆς ἀορίστου δυάδος, ὡς μεριστῆς (Test. 31 L. = Fr. 39 des Places)' Whittaker (1978), p.151. Cf. also J. Dillon, *The concept of two intellects: a footnote to the history of Platonism*, Phronesis XVIII, Assen 1973.

¹²⁷ Edwards, p.480.

Firstly, the issue of how to understand the text. The translation of lines 4-6, which I proposed at the beginning of this article, runs as follows:

The one who is [ὁ μὲν γε ὄν] sows the seed of all souls [σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει] into all the things together [εἰς τὰ ... χρήματα σύμπαντα] which partake of it [... μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ ...].'

The First God, which bears here a name analogous to his essence,¹²⁸ sows the primary seed of all souls into the reality which participates in it. This seems to me the most natural way of reading the text. But Edwards finds the following reading preferable:

The one who is the seed of all souls [ὁ μὲν γε ὄν σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς] sows [σπείρει] into those who partake of it [εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ] all things together [χρήματα σύμπαντα].'

What do we get from this rendering? Firstly, that the First God is presented as the seed of all souls. What this first God does is sow into those which partake of it, all the things together. This would make sense if we would be able, either to replace 'all things together' with 'himself', or to explain satisfactorily what 'all things together' actually means. Since the only option which would really make sense (the God who is the seed of all souls, sows himself into the things which partake of it¹²⁹) is impossible, Edwards chooses to explain what 'all things together' means. For this he adduces a fragment from Iamblichus' *De Anima* (Fr. 41 E. des Places) which he quotes partially. The whole relevant passage (the text in italics is omitted by Edwards) is:

Εἰσὶ δὴ τινες, οἱ πᾶσαν τὴν *There are some who maintain that all*

¹²⁸ 'In Fr. 16 we find an elaborate parallelism set up between the Demiurge and the First God, or the Good. The Demiurge is the god of Generation (*genesis*), while the Good is the first principle of Being.' J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1977, p.369.

¹²⁹ Beside the fact that this alteration of the text is grammatically impossible, it would also transform the agricultural analogy into a sexual analogy. (cf. the objection against R.T. Wallis and against the use of Clement, *supra*.)

τοιαύτην ούσίαν ὁμοιομερῆ καὶ parts of this incorporeal substance are
 τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ μίαν ἀποφαίνονται, alike and one and the same, so that the
 ὡς καὶ ἐν ὀτωοῦν αὐτῆς μέρει whole exists in any part of it. They even
 εἶναι τὰ ὅλα· οἵτινες καὶ ἐν τῇ place in the individual soul the
 μεριστῇ ψυχῇ τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον Intelligible World, the Gods, the
 καὶ θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας καὶ Daimones, the Good, and all the races
 τὰγαθὸν καὶ πάντα τὰ superior to the soul; and in each soul
 πρεσβύτερα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνιδρύουσι they contend that all these exist in the
 καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ὡσαύτως πάντα same way, though for each in a manner
 εἶναι ἀποφαίνονται, οἰκείως appropriate to its essence. Holding this
 μέντοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ούσίαν ἐν opinion without question is Numenius,
 ἐκάστοις. Καὶ ταύτης τῆς δόξης (...) According to this view, the soul,
 ἀναμφισβητήτως μὲν ἐστι considering its entire essence, is in no
 Νουμήμιος, (...) Κατὰ δὴ ταύτην way different from the Nous, the Gods, or
 νοῦ καὶ θεῶν καὶ τῶν κρειττόνων the superior Races.¹³¹
 γενῶν οὐδὲν ἢ ψυχῇ διενήνοχε
 κατὰ γε τὴν ὅλην ούσίαν.¹³⁰

Χρήματα σύμπαντα in Fr. 13 (E. des Places) would be, as a consequence,
 ‘the Intelligible World, the Gods, the *Daimones*, the Good, and all the races superior
 to the soul.’ Now, that the theory presented here refers to the doctrine of
monopsychism (similar to the one we find in Plotinus) and not to the actual
 composition of the soul, I tried to prove a few pages earlier. But even if we were to
 accept the interpretation that the soul is inseminated by the First God with ‘all things
 together’ (i.e. the intelligible realm, the gods, the *daimones* etc.) still we will face
 nonsense, since in the fragment quoted from Iamblichus, the *soul* is the one which
 ‘contains’¹³² these realities, while in Fr. 13 these things (if we accept Edwards’

¹³⁰ Fr. 41 (E. des Places); Stobaeus, *Antholog.* I. 49. 32.61-77

¹³¹ Translation G. Shaw, *ibidem* p.70-71

¹³² I use the term with reservation.

interpretation) are said to be contained in ‘those <realities> who partake of it (i.e. the First God).’ Now, as not only the soul participates in God, Edwards’ tentative in seeing here an insemination of souls with the intelligible realm as prior to a latter insemination of these ‘pre-cooked’ souls in sensible individuals, is misguided.

As for the lines 6-7 of Fr. 13, I proposed this translation:

The Lawgiver [ὁ νομοθέτης] plants [δὲ φυτεύει] and distributes [καὶ διανέμει] and transplants [καὶ μεταφυτεύει] into each one of us [εἰς ἡμᾶς ἑκάστους] what has been thrown initially, from there [τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα].

Edwards wants to see in τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα the symmetrical phrase for χρήματα σύμπαντα, and for εἰς ἡμᾶς ἑκάστους the symmetrical phrase for εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ. The problem would be that εἰς ἡμᾶς ἑκάστους is a *species* in rapport with εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ which is the *genus*, so his interpretation which assumes that the First God sows the celestial bodies, has no echo in this fragment. Explicitly, it is said that the First God sows something into those who participate in him (i.e. everything), and after that, the Second God transplants that into each one of us. The sowed thing and the transplanted thing would not be the soul(s) in this case. The transplanted thing would be, according to Edwards’ translation, χρήματα σύμπαντα, since this is what, again according to him, is τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα. And as he interprets χρήματα σύμπαντα, this would be the intelligible world, the gods, etc.

The opposite translation to that of Edwards is the only one which maintains both the syntactical symmetry and the logic of the text. The First God sows ‘the seed of all souls’ in τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα αὐτοῦ χρήματα σύμπαντα, and the Second God plants, distributes and transplants εἰς ἡμᾶς ἑκάστους τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα. In this understanding of the text, the correspondences would be like this:

ὁ μὲν γε ὦν

ὁ νομοθέτης

σπείρει

δὲ φυτεύει καὶ διανέμει καὶ
μεταφυτεύει

σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς

τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα

εἰς τὰ μεταλαγχάνοντα

εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐκάστους

αὐτοῦ χρήματα σύμπαντα

‘Τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα’ can mean only ‘σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς’. Scott is right in assuming that ‘perhaps τὰ ἐκεῖ προκαταβεβλημένον, viz. the σπέρμα spoken above. (καταβεβλημένον is equivalent to ἔσπαρμένον.)’¹³³ Sowing means throwing seeds. In the first moment, the First God sows (throws) the seed of all souls in χρήματα σύμπαντα. Now what does χρήματα σύμπαντα mean? It is by no means one of Numenius’ eccentricities, for we find the expression in a very orthodox source: Plato.

In *Phaedo*, Plato invokes Anaxagoras: ‘Again, if everything were to be combined and nothing separated, we should soon have that condition of “all things together” which Anaxagoras describes.’¹³⁴ This is the state before the actual creation. Other occurrences of the formula in Plato either refer to Anaxagoras¹³⁵ or have no relation to him,¹³⁶ but always denote a compact and undifferentiated state of affairs, whether it is referring to the world before the creation or whether it refers to dreary things.

¹³³ Scott, p.79, n.5.

¹³⁴ *Phaed.* 72 c.3-5 ‘κἄν εἰ συγκρίνοιτο μὲν πάντα, διακρίνοιτο δὲ μή, ταχὺ ἂν τὸ τοῦ Ἀναξαγόρου γεγονὸς εἴη, “Ὅμοῦ πάντα χρήματα.” Cf. DK. 59 B.1. Translation R. Hackforth in *Plato’s Phaedo*, Cambridge 1972.

¹³⁵ *Gorgias*, 465 d.5.

¹³⁶ *Protag.* 361 b.1.

So, as I understand it, Numenius make his First God responsible for the sowing of the initial soul/seed which later will germinate in all the beings endowed with soul under the caring of the Second God, responsible for ‘gardening’ in both intelligible and sensible realms.¹³⁷ That this initial sowing happens in ‘all things together’ should make us think that it refers to the initial state before the creation or simply to the intelligible realm¹³⁸ I cannot argue for one in particular. What is, however, clear to me is that Numenius uses this expression in order not to involve the First God directly in the process of creation. He is supposed to give the initial impulse, the first seed, thrown more for the convenience of the Second God than into a specific place, though Scott’s solution seems to me the most reasonable.

Edwards continues his interpretation by tracing a parallel between Fr. 13 and Plato’s *Timaeus*, but because of his assumptions he will end by identifying the First God of Numenius with Plato’s Demiurge and Numenius’ Demiurge with Plato’s Younger Gods. Whether Proclus (*In Tim.* I. 303.27 ff.; Fr. 21 (E. des Places)) was mistaken in his account of how Numenius treated the characters of *Timaeus*, or not, can be considered an open question. Certainly, his account can be counterbalanced by the testimonies given in Fr. 11.¹³⁹ The fact that he might have divided the demiurgic activity between the First and Second God (Proclus) or the Second and the Third God (Dillon) seems reasonable enough. But to assume with Edwards that Numenius’ First God is Plato’s Demiurge and that the Second God can be equated with Plato’s Younger Gods, has no grounds according to either fragments or testimonies. The First God is not a Demiurge, even if he is an Intellect and has no characteristics in common with Plato’s Demiurge. Also, not even an inventive character like Numenius would choose to mess things up so badly as to call a class of gods Demiurge, using for what Plato calls Demiurge another name, all within a context in which Platonic philosophy was supposed to form the base of any philosophical development, and also from an author who accused the Old Academy of perverting the true Platonic doctrine. Therefore Edwards’ scheme¹⁴⁰ is based exclusively on his assumptions regarding the translation of Fr. 13 and has no legitimate grounds in the actual doctrine of Numenius.

¹³⁷ Cf Fr.13 (E. des Places).

¹³⁸ As Scott thinks: ‘the First God emits from himself, in the νοητὸς κόσμος, by one timeless operation, one undivided world-soul (one mass of soul-stuff, as it were);’ *ibidem* p.79, n.5

¹³⁹ See the discussion in J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1977, p.366-367.

¹⁴⁰ Edwards, p.481.

Also, his conclusion on page 481, that ‘Numenius finds the contrast between a farmer and a planter not quite adequate to his notion of the difference between the First and the Second God’ seems to me erroneous. As I have tried to prove in the first part of this paper, the symmetry between the analogy of the farmer and labourer and the one which implies the ‘divine names’, is intentional. Also it is in perfect agreement with the testimony of the extant fragments and, as I hope I managed to prove, the possible sources in which it can be traced.

Scott’s objection on the issue of ὁ νομοθέτης does not seem as well thought out as the one against Mullach’s translation: ‘Numenius cannot have called the second God “the lawgiver.” The sense wanted could be got by striking out νομοθέτης; but how did the word get in? Perhaps we ought to read ποιητής.’¹⁴¹ There are no grounds to reject νομοθέτης, and E. des Places adduces a few passages to support such a reading that are persuasive enough. The term appears in perfect Platonic spirit, and whether it was or was not influenced by the *Septuagint*, does not threaten to modify the understanding of the fragment in any way.

Nevertheless there are enough testimonies scattered through Numenius’ extant fragments to prove his debt to Jewish spirituality. Why spirituality and not merely sources? Firstly, because I agree with keeping a reserved attitude towards the finding of unmediated Jewish influences; not because it is improbable that this would happen, but because, for the majority of his work, it is difficult to prove *verbatim*. A second reason is that as long as he mentions the Jews along with Mages, more than philosophy is involved here. For Plato, being a ‘Moses who speaks Attic’ would imply more about Plato than we are inclined to accept.

Dillon’s remark that: ‘if certain passages of Calcidius’ *Commentary on the Timaeus* where “Hebraei” are mentioned as giving such exegeses (e.g. chs. 250-6, on dreams; or ch. 219, on the composition of the soul) could be securely attributed to him (i.e. Numenius), it would bring the connexion with Philo much closer¹⁴². But this

¹⁴¹ Scott, p.79, n.4.

¹⁴² Dillon’s note: ‘See in this connexion the article of J. H. Waszink, *Die sogenannte Fünfteilung der Träume bei Calcidius und ihre Quellen in Mnemosyne* ser. III 9 (1940), pp.65-85’

suggestion is too speculative to be discussed in a work of this sort.’¹⁴³ is half true. As I see the situation, I believe that following some unquestionable Jewish traces in Numenius,¹⁴⁴ we might discover a certain Philonic influence (taken in directly or through intermediary sources) and I do not find this option ‘too speculative’ at all. As long as the direct followers of Plato, the Academy, are proved ‘unfaithful’ in Numenius’ eyes, the only other ‘tradition’ of interpreting Plato is to be found in the East, where, in Alexandria, Philo must have been and must be regarded as one of the most prominent personages.

I hope that, in taking upon myself the challenge thrown by Whittaker in his article from 1978, ‘that Numenius was familiar with the writings of Philo has not been proven’,¹⁴⁵ I have managed to adduce a plausible testimony in favour of an influence of Philo upon Numenius, at least with regard to this fragment. I also hope that, through this discussion, I have gone some way towards answering another challenge set by the Canadian scholar that: ‘we should rather strive to discover how Numenius incorporated it (i.e. the *Septuagint* appellation of God) into his theologico-metaphysical system.’¹⁴⁶

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[Words: 17, 105]

¹⁴³ Dillon, p.378.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Whittaker (1978), p.145 ff.

¹⁴⁵ Whittaker (1978), p.145; the text continues: ‘... but his sympathy with the syncretistic approach practised by the Alexandrian Jew is not in doubt.’

¹⁴⁶ Whittaker (1967), p.200.

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