“OMNE CORPUS FUGIENDUM?” AUGUSTINE AND PORPHYRY ON THE BODY AND THE POST-MORTEM DESTINY OF THE SOUL

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Over the past decade or so, a number of important studies have focused on the complex question of the religious philosophy of Porphyry of Tyre, as set forth in his lost work *On the return of the soul* (*De regressu animae*), the fragments of which are transmitted almost exclusively by Augustine. Following in their wake, the present article seeks to contribute a few supplementary considerations to this topic. In particular, I shall concentrate on the Porphyrian dictum “all bodies must be fled,” which is the object of Augustine’s polemical attention in the *De civitate Dei*. I shall attempt to discover the meaning of this phrase within the context of Porphyry’s eschatology, as influenced by the *Chaldaean Oracles* and attested by, among others, Synesius of Cyrene.

In a study published in 1994, Michele Cutino scrutinized the early dialogues of Augustine, and found in them many traces of polemics against Porphyry and his followers. By comparing the findings of previous scholarship with allusions in Augustine’s *Dialogues*, Cutino believes he can reconstruct many features of the original tone and content of Porphyry’s *De

1. This paper is the result of work carried out with the CNRS UPR 76 (Villejuif/Paris), under the direction of Michel Narcy, on Porphyry’s psychological fragments.

2. The Greek title of this work may have been περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπανάδου; Augustine will have known the work in the Latin translation by Marius Victorinus. I cite the fragments of this work according to the edition of J. Bidez, although I have also consulted the more recent edition by A. Smith.

3. See Bibliography.
Porphyry presented in the style of oracular revelations a philosophy whose goal was the perception of the intelligible world, of God (\textit{parens universitatis}) and of a providential order, which, although imperceptible at first glance, rules and arranges all events in the world for the best.\textsuperscript{4} This philosophical ascent was to be facilitated or made possible by the encyclopedic study of the liberal arts\textsuperscript{5} and of philosophy, in the form of a tripartite division into logic or dialectic, ethics, and physics or metaphysics. Throughout the \textit{De regressu}, Cutino argues, the philosophical attitude of Porphyry and his followers was characterized by skepticism and elitism: skepticism in so far as he remained unconvinced that the goal of complete knowledge could be achieved in this life;\textsuperscript{6} elitism in that he believed such philosophical knowledge was reserved for the few.\textsuperscript{7} Porphyry sought to integrate theurgy and philosophy, in a last-ditch attempt to preserve and defend the traditional Greek religion he held so dear.\textsuperscript{8}

Augustine's overall response to Porphyry's \textit{De regressu} was ambiguous. On the one hand, he adopted some of its essential elements, such as the important role of oracular pronouncements and the call for the study of the liberal arts; on the other, he faulted Porphyry for failing to admit that the true oracles are not Chaldaean but Christian, and that the true mystery is Christ's Incarnation. He also rebelled against Porphyry's elitism, arguing

\textsuperscript{4} Cf. especially Augustine, \textit{C. acad.}, 1, 1, 1: “nihil seu commodi seu incommodi contingit in parte, quod non conveniat et congruat universo. Quam sententiam uberrimam doctrinarum oraculis editam remotamque longissime ab intellectu profanorum, se demonstratum veris amatoribus suis, ad quam te invito philosophia pollicetur.”

\textsuperscript{5} Here the author takes up and develops a discovery of Ilsetraut Hadot; \textit{cf}. I. Hadot, 1984, pp. 101-136.

\textsuperscript{6} This skepticism is what N. Cipriani (1997) refers to as Porphyry's “pessimism.” According to this author, Augustine combated Porphyry's “pessimism” in his early works, maintaining the possibility of divine vision and perfect happiness in this life on earth. In his later works, however, Augustine evolved to a position closer to that of Porphyry: only a few spiritual people will succeed in achieving true wisdom in this life, but for the majority their knowledge and therefore happiness will be perfected after this life (“post hanc autem vitam et cognitio perficietur,” \textit{V. rel.}, 53, 103).

\textsuperscript{7} Cf. H. Lewy, 1978, pp. 452-453: “...he [sc. Porphyry] is aware that philosophical purification is accessible only to a small group of privileged people... he thus concludes on a note of perplexity which constitutes the dominant tone of his entire religious philosophy...”

\textsuperscript{8} More recently, C. van Liefferinge (1999) has argued that it was Iamblichus whose thought was characterized by the attempt to revive pagan religion in the guise of what his opponents called theurgy. Many of C. van Liefferinge's methods and results seem to me to be questionable, but this is not the place to enter into this debate.
that in the Christian era salvation and felicity have been made available to all, regardless of their intellectual accomplishments and capacities.\textsuperscript{9}

In a paper first read in 1996 but not published until 1999, Jeannie Carlier (1999) surveys the primary and secondary evidence for Porphyry's views on the topic of reincarnation, views which, today as well as in Antiquity, have been the subject of conflicting interpretations. She cautiously concludes that, as Augustine reports, Porphyry did indeed reject the Platonic and Plotinian doctrine that the human soul may be reincarnated in the body of an animal, and that, through ethical purification by means of the virtues, an abstemious lifestyle, and the practice of philosophy, it is possible for human beings to reach the stage where they are freed from the cycle of rebirth. Reunited with the Intelligible world from which they came, these souls of the righteous are thus no longer reincarnated,\textsuperscript{10} but spend eternity in blissful contemplation.

Still more recently, M.B. Simmons (2001) gave another important contribution to the study of Porphyrian eschatology. Starting from the conviction – which I believe to be correct and important – that Porphyry's eschatological and soteriological thought is fundamentally Chaldaean, Simmons re-examines the testimonies from Augustine's \textit{De civitate Dei}, concerning Porphyry's eschatological doctrine as set forth in the \textit{De regressu}. He concludes that Porphyry believed in a threefold path to salvation. As Carlier had pointed out, the pursuit of rationality and philosophy can, according to Porphyry, lead to ultimate beatitude, in the form of union with the Father, never again to be interrupted by incarnation and the woeful experiences of human life and contact with matter. Yet this path is not for everyone: only a select few are able to live according to the intellect in the requisite way. For the rest of humanity – who constitute the vast majority – there remains a choice between two paths, both of which may enable the soul, after death, to rise up only to the highest regions of the elemental world, and not, like the first option, to the intelligible: either one may lead a life of ascetic moderation, or else one may have recourse to the purificatory rituals of theurgy, which purify the \textit{anima spiritualis}.\textsuperscript{11} This explains Porphyry's

\textsuperscript{9} This point is emphasized repeatedly in N. Cipriani, 1997, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{10} On this doctrine, which Carlier holds to be unique to Porphyry, \textit{cf.} A. Smith, 1974, pp. 56 ff.

\textsuperscript{11} As we shall see below, in Porphyry's psychology this part or faculty of the soul corresponds to the irrational soul and/or the faculty of imagination, often referred to as the \textit{pneuma} or pneumatic soul, which, among many other functions, preserves the traces of our \textit{pneuma}, and acts as the medium through which we are contacted and influenced by demons and other non-human agents.
attitude to Christ, as evinced in the *Contra Christianos* and in an oracle of Hecate:12 Jesus was a pious man, not unlike the Essenes whom Porphyry praises in the *De abstinentia*;13 but after his death he was able to ascend only to the sphere of the astral deities.

Augustine's attitude to the Porphyrian doctrines he reports in the *Civ. Dei*, and uses tacitly elsewhere, has emerged with renewed clarity as a result of these and other recent studies.14 Augustine congratulates Porphyry for correcting his masters Plato and Plotinus on several points, while fustigating him for not having had the courage to take his objections against them to their logical conclusion, and embracing the only true doctrine: that of Christ and the Church.15 According to the Bishop of Hippo, Porphyry did well to refuse the possibility that human souls may be reincarnated in animals. He rightly saw that they can return only to human bodies; but it is a shame, says Augustine, that Porphyry failed, or did not dare, to accept that the souls will return to *their own* bodies, *viz.* at the Resurrection. Porphyry was right to reject the claim that theurgy cannot bring about the salvation of the intellectual soul, but was culpably negligent in recommending its criminal techniques to the non-philosophical masses.16 Even Porphyry's metaphysics is basically acceptable to Augustine: the Tyrian is right to preach the (Chaldaean) Father and the Paternal Intellect, which Augustine has no trouble assimilating to the Son of the Christians; yet he accuses Porphyry of deliberate evasiveness in failing to mention the Holy Spirit, unless this is what he means by the mysterious "third entity"17 he postulates between the Father and the Paternal Intellect. The same holds true for Porphyry's epistemology: as we shall see, his distinction between the intellectual part of the soul, by which intelligible realities are perceived, and the phantastic or spiritual part of the soul, on which images are printed, is wholly taken over by Augustine, at least in the later work *De Genesi ad litteram*. Other accusations are more tendentious and less probable: Porphyry is, claims Augustine,

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15. Thus, for Augustine, the "universal way of salvation," which Porphyry admitted he had been unable to find, is in fact Christianity; *cf.* *Civ. Dei*, 10, 32, 1, quoted by N. Cipriani, 1997, p. 125 & n. 38.
17. Porphyry, *De regr.*, fr. 8, pp. 36*, 14-37*, 6 Bidez. This intermediary entity may have been Hecate, assimilated by the Oracles to the World Soul; *cf.* W. Theiler, 1966, pp. 266-267.
ashamed of polytheism, although he dares not denounce it openly; and he is ashamed of his own use of the theurgical doctrines of the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

There is, however, one point of Porphyrian doctrine as expressed in the *De regressu* for which the Bishop of Hippo has nothing but scorn. This is his view that to obtain salvation, it is necessary to flee all bodies: "omne corpus fugiendum est," according to the formula Augustine repeatedly attributes to the Tyrian.

Augustine certainly believes, or at least wants his readers to believe, that Porphyry quite literally means that *all* kinds of bodies are to be avoided; thus he attributes to Porphyry the belief that souls of philosophers will dwell forever with the father *without any bodies whatsoever*, and seeks to

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18. M. Cutino, 1994, pp. 43-44. It is true, however, that Porphyry, like most Platonic philosophers, tended towards a monotheistic view that demoted the gods of the traditional Greek pantheon to the status of demons or mere planetary gods, as we find in Porphyry's *Περὶ Συναγωγής*. S. Montero (1999) emphasizes Porphyry's opposition to traditional popular religion in this regard; for this author, Porphyry's monotheism may explain his contempt for sacrifice and divination, an attitude he shares with the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

19. Cutino, *loc.cit.*, citing Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, 10, 9; 13, 19; *Sermo*, 241, 7, 7. One probable reason for Porphyry's ambiguity towards theurgical practices is that they were probably considered illegal. As early as 16 AD, when Tiberius expelled magicians from Rome, a *senatusconsultum* forbade private divination. This law, strengthened by a rescript of Antoninus Pius in 141, became the basis of subsequent imperial legislation, in which Chaldaean theurgists may well have been lumped together with astrologists, fortune-tellers, private *haruspices*, and others who were liable to speculate about such forbidden topics as the death of the Emperor. See Ulpianus, *De officio proconsulis sub titulo de mathematicis et uaticinatoribus*, Book VII, titulus 14: "De mathematicis, maleficis, et manichaeis": "utecus haec prohibitor est. Denique exat senatus consultum Pomponio et Rufo consulibus factum, quo cauetur, ut mathematicis Chaldaei harioli et ceteris, qui simile inceptum fecerunt, aqua et igni interdicatur omniaque bona corum applicentur... saeipissime denique interdictum fere ab omnibus principibus, ne quis omnino huiusmodi ineptiis se immiscerit, et uarie puniti sunt uel qua alia poena grauiore adfecti; enimuro si qui de suorumque, leuius. Nam qui de principis salute, capite puniti sunt uel qua alia poena grauiore adfecti; enimuro si qui de suorumque, leuius." Cf. Paul, *Sent.*, V, 21, 3, and on the proximity in meaning of such terms as *magi*, *mathematici*, *Chaldaei*, *harioli*, cf. A. Baumstark, art. "Chaldaeoi," *RE* III/2 (1899), col. 2060, and in general Br. Rochette, "Néron et la magie," *Latomus* 62.4 (2003), pp. 835-843, here p. 843 notes 1-2.


catch him in self-contradiction by pointing to the Neoplatonic belief that even the World Soul has a body, which is not particularly bad or evil in itself. Following Augustine’s presentation, several recent historians have asserted that Augustine’s belief in the resurrection of the body is what most distinguishes him from the Neoplatonists like Porphyry by whom he was influenced.22 It is sometimes held that Augustine’s “acceptance” of the body makes his doctrine superior to that of the Neoplatonists, who, by conceiving of a bodiless personal immortality, thereby condemn human beings to the post-mortem loss of their personal identity.23 Yet did Porphyry really believe that literally all kinds of bodies must always be avoided? In other words, did he believe that no kind of body plays a role in human post-mortem existence? This seems questionable, especially in view of the number of meanings the Greek word σῶμα could bear.24 Besides the body of flesh and blood, this word could designate any of the four elemental bodies of Greek physics: earth, water, air, and fire; in the context of psychology and eschatology, it could also refer to the semi-material pneumatic body, either innate or acquired from outside, which surrounded the immaterial soul and enabled it to interact with the material body of flesh and blood.25 Finally, in later Neoplatonists, the term σῶμα may also designate the innate, imperishable luminous vehicle of the soul, which Hierocles calls the “immaterial body.”26 In what follows, I will adduce evidence which,

corporibus eas <sc. animas> adseruit in sempiturnum esse victuras;” cf. Augustine, Civ. Dei, 10, 24-32; 22, 26. This doctrine derives ultimately from Plato’s Phaedrus.

22. Cf. M.B. Simmons, 2001, pp. 202-203, citing such earlier scholars as P. de Labriolle and P. Courcelle. For M.E. Korger (1962), Augustine’s thought is characterized by its emphasis on “the positivity of the Ontic” (“...der Anerkennung der Positivität des Ontischen,” 1962, p. 36 n. 4), by which I presume he means that for Augustine, matter, bodies and the physical world in general are fundamentally positive. Cf. ibid., p. 37: “...er anerkennt die relative Positivität der Sinnsenerkenntnis.” Korger also qualifies Augustine’s attitude as one of “Biblical realism” (“biblischen Realismus,” p. 42), indicated inter alia by his belief that the soul cannot find true happiness until it is reunited with its body at the Resurrection.

23. This is the view of E. Dubreucq, 1997.

24. The polysemy of the Greek σῶμα also led to confusion in the Arabic alchemical tradition. This term could be translated either by the Arabic جسد or by جسم, both of which could in turn be used to designate either “metal” or “mineral,” sometimes in the same author; cf. P. Kraus, 1942/1986, p. 19 n. 1. In 19th-century Iran, Shaykh Ahmad Asa’î (Sharh al-ziyarat, Tabriz, 1276, II, p. 369) similarly distinguishes between the organic, organized body (جسد), and the body as mass or corporeal volume (جسم).

25. On this subject, see the recent dissertation by St. Toulouse (2001).

I believe, tends to suggest that Porphyry's doctrines concerning "the body" were less unambiguous than Augustine seems to wish us to believe.

Before proceeding, I will own up to some of my methodological principles. As I said above, I believe, with M.B. Simmons, that Porphyry's thought is basically Chaldaean in many important respects. There appear to be few aspects of Chaldaean thought that Porphyry could not accept. Thus I believe it is legitimate to use Chaldaean doctrines attested from elsewhere to help reconstruct Porphyry's thought. Secondly, I believe Synesius of Cyrene, especially in his De insomniis but also in other works, is influenced primarily by Porphyry and may likewise be used to reconstruct the Tyrian's lost writings. The utilization of these sources, together with the careful study of such fragmentarily preserved Porphyrian works as the Περὶ Συνεχίνης, may enable us to piece together a different picture of Porphyry's eschatology from the one at which scholars have arrived primarily on the basis of Augustine's testimony in the City of God.

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Augustine's testimony with regard to Porphyry's eschatological doctrines as expressed in the De regressu must be used with caution. In the first place, it is likely that the Bishop of Hippo knew this work only in the Latin translation by Marius Victorinus, which, in turn, may or may not have been complete. More importantly, Augustine was not concerned with practicing the history of philosophy, but with refuting his pagan interlocutors, many

27. It was P. Hadot (1968) who first realized that one main point differentiating Porphyry from Plotinus was the Tyrian's concern to reconcile Neoplatonic with Chaldaean doctrines.

28. This view, first advanced by W. Lang (1926, pp. 57 ff.); and utilized extensively by e.g. Theiler (e.g. "Die chaldäischen Orakel," in 1966, p. 255 n. 11; "Porphyrios und Augustin," ibid., pp. 205 f.), Hadot, and Smith, was questioned by W. Deuse (1983), for whom Synesius is dependent upon Iamblichus. I do not consider Deuse's arguments to be conclusive; cf. M. Chase, "What does Porphyry mean by ἔσων παθήρ;?" Dionysius, XXII (Dec. 2004), pp. 77-94.

29. This question is, of course, linked with the controversial question of the nature and content of the libri Platonici Augustine mentions he read in the translation of Marius Victorinus. It has been held that these consisted a) only of works by Plotinus; b) only of works by Porphyry; and c) of a mixture of the two. Following M. Curtino and P. Hadot (1971, pp. 201-210), I believe this last possibility to be the most likely. The attempt of P. Beatrice (1989) to show that the libri Platoniciorum consisted exclusively in Porphyry's Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda, of which many of what are usually considered his other "works" were only parts, is unconvincing.
of whom, as he himself concedes, were followers of Porphyry. With this goal in mind, Augustine does not hesitate to use rhetorical ploys, and there is no reason to believe he always stopped short of distorting the pagan doctrines he reports.

What, then, are we to make of Augustine’s repeated assertion that Porphyry advised his followers that *all* bodies must be avoided? Clearly, for Augustine’s arguments to be effective, Porphyry must have said something similar to this.30 Yet in the original context of the *De regressu*, he may have gone on to qualify or explain his assertion in ways of which Augustine may have been unaware, or which he may simply not have seen fit to transmit.

In order to decide what Porphyry’s assertion may have meant within its original context, we must try to situate it within the overall structure of the Tyrian’s philosophical thought.

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For Porphyry, the question of the *post-mortem* destiny of the soul was intimately linked with that of the nature and destiny of the *pneuma* or *okhêma*, the quasi-material spiritual vehicle which enveloped the soul and, among many other functions, allowed the immaterial to interact with the material body. According to a Chaldaean belief,31 the soul gathers this spiritual body from the celestial spheres during its initial descent from the intelligible to the sensible world.32 Once the individual soul is incarnated in a human body, the *pneuma/okhêma* becomes closely associated with the lower, irrational soul in general and the imagination in particular. Throughout the individual’s lifetime, it fulfills the function of a medium: our passions (*παθή*) are imprinted upon it, and it preserves their traces; through it we receive the visions of dreams and prophetic or demonic trances.33 Because of its link with the passions, the *pneuma* is affected by our moral

30. As indeed he does in some passages of his preserved writings; cf. *Ad Marc.*, 10, where he speaks of his wife Marcella as one “intending to flee the body” (τὴν μελετῶσιν φεύγειν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος).


32. An ancient and widespread belief, perhaps arising in the context of Babylonian astronomy, and attested in Gnosticism and Hermetism (CH, VI, 2-3; X, 16-18); cf. P. Hadot (1968), I, pp. 180-182; 340 & n. 5; J. Pépin, 1987, pp. 141-142 n. 9 bis; E.R. Dodds 1963, pp. 313-321. These authors provide abundant references to further literature.

behavior. A life of subservience to the passions, characterized by overindulgence in rich food, sleep, wine, sex, an excessive concern for wealth, glory, fame and the vicissitudes of the sensible world in general, causes the pneuma to become moist, thick, and heavy, a phenomenon Porphyry assimilates to the condensation of rain-clouds. By contrast, a life devoted to asceticism and philosophy dries out the pneuma, causing it to become airy and light. This material quality of the pneuma proves to be of fundamental importance to the post-mortem existence of the soul: if, at the moment of death, the pneumalokhêma is light and dry, its natural upward inclination will not hinder the soul as it rises back up to the intelligible world. If, however, the soul’s pneuma is moist and heavy, its downward inclination will drag the soul underground. Indeed, the soul’s “descent to Hades,” as described in myth and religion, is nothing other than this downward tendency of the pneuma, and the dark, subterranean existence it subsequently leads.

It is likely that Porphyry’s eschatology remained essentially faithful to the constellation of beliefs surrounding the central Chaldaean ritual of the soul’s elevation (ἀναστάσις). This seems to have consisted in a two-stage process: first, theurgical purifications for the soul’s pneuma or the irrational soul led to union with the lesser, planetary gods and/or angels, in the realm of the Ether. Secondly, the small fraction of mankind who were capable thereof would use philosophy and contemplation to purify their intellectual soul, which would lead to union with the Chaldaean Father, and substantial identification with the Paternal Intellect. Porphyry apparently thought that

34. Synesius, ibid., 6, 18-19: ἐπαίει γὰρ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς διαθέσεως καὶ οὐκ ἄσυμπτωτὸς ἐστι...
37. Synesius, ibid., 7, 23-30; Porphyry, Sentence 29; De ant. nymph., §§ 11-12.
38. Cf. the references in the preceding note. More precisely, since the soul, being incorporeal, is not situated within space or time, for the soul to be in Hades just means for it to preside over an image (ὀταν προεστήκη εἰδῶλον), Sent. 29, p. 18, 1-2 Lamberz), which, since it possesses a murky existence, is naturally at home in the underworld. The transformation of the soul’s pneuma into an εἰδώλον characterized by dark vapors, is, in turn, the result of its yielding to passions and concern for the sensible world; cf. Synesius, De insomniis, 7, with the comments of D. Susanetti, 1992, pp. 126-127.
this process of moral and contemplative ascent *via* purification rarely or never met with complete success in the course of one human lifetime. Yet this did not represent a serious objection, for he believed the process could be completed, through the agencies of grace and divine providence, after the individual’s death.\(^{40}\) This may be confirmed by an overlooked passage from Porphyry’s *Sentence* 32, in which he gives canonical formulation to the Neoplatonic doctrine of the virtues. After having distinguished the political, purificatory, theoretical, and paradigmatic virtues,\(^{41}\) Porphyry notes that we should concentrate on the purificatory virtues, “because they can be obtained *during this very life*” (ὅτι τούτων μὲν ἡ τεῦξις ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ, p. 31, 10 Lamberz). This clearly implies that the two higher stages of virtue – the theoretical and the paradigmatic virtues – *cannot* be obtained during this life; a conclusion reinforced by the appellations given to the person who successively achieves each stage of virtue. He who is active in accordance with the political or practical virtues, writes Porphyry, is a sage (σπουδαίος); he who instantiates the purificatory virtues is a demonic man or a good demon (δαιμόνιος ἀνθρώπος ἢ καὶ δαίμων ἀγαθός). Now, σπουδαίος is an epithet clearly applicable to living human beings; it is the Stoic technical term for the sage. It was also possible, and common since Homer, to apply the epithet δαιμόνιος to living persons. It is, however, unusual if not unheard-of to speak of a living person as a δαιμῶν; and when one reads that the person having acquired the theoretical or noetic virtues is a god (θεός), and that he who acts according to the paradigmatic virtues is a father of the gods (θεῶν πατήρ), we are forced to assume that

\(^{40}\) Porphyry, *De regr.*, p. 37*, 17-21 Bidez: “...Platonis sententiam sequens nec ipse dubitas in hac vita hominem nullo modo ad perfectionem sapientiae pervenire, secundum intellectum tamen viventibus omne quod deest providentia Dei et gratia post hanc vitam posse compleri.” Cf., with N. Cipriani, 1997, pp. 117-188, Augustine, *C. acad.*, 3, 9, 20: “Audi, amice, philosophia non est ipsa sapientia, sed studium sapientiae vocatur, ad quam te si contuleris, *non quidem dum hic vivis sapiens eris* (est enim apud Deum sapientia, nec proveirem humani potest) se cum te tali studio satis exercueris atque mundaveris, animus tuus *ea post hanc vitam*, id est, cum homo esse desieris, facile perfruetur.” The idea that philosophy is not wisdom, but the love and consequent pursuit of wisdom, derives ultimately from Plato’s *Symposium.*

these stages can be achieved only in the afterlife, since it is inconceivable that Porphyry could call a living human being ἡθεός, or *a fortiori* ἡθέων πατὴρ.42 I believe, therefore, that these expressions are to be taken quite literally, and refer to the *post-mortem* ontological status of the individual. The person whose political virtues enable him to live in an exemplary way within terrestrial human society is a sage; the purified person is “demonic” while he lives, and, presumably, a good daimôn when he dies. After physical death, the process of ethical progress may continue; the practitioner of theoretical virtues, who lives according to the intellect and has eliminated the passions, becomes a god. Finally, he who has assimilated and actualized the paradigmatic virtues becomes “father of the gods,” whatever the precise meaning of this enigmatic formula may be.43

Some historians have suggested that Augustine, despite his opposition to some aspects of Porphyrian soteriology, may even have derived his own views on the nature of the resurrection body from none other than the Tyrian philosopher. This possibility, first hinted at by W. Theiler, was set forth with new arguments by G. Watson in 1982-1983. Watson points to Augustine’s concept of *visio spiritualis* in his *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII. As for Porphyry, so here for Augustine, the *spiritus*, as distinct from the intellect (*mens*), is that in which images of corporeal things are produced and contained (ch. 7); and Augustine, following Paul (1 Cor. 14, 44), speaks of the resurrection body as a *corpus spiritale*. At the resurrection, Augustine writes that heavier bodies shall take the lower place, and the sadder, body-like souls shall go below. Perhaps most significantly, for the Augustine of *De Gen. ad litt.*, the *spiritus* is the locus of the afterlife: the places of punishment where the guilty souls are transported after death are not, he says, physical places but *loca poenalia similia corporibus*, and the sorrows or joys one experiences in the post-mortem state are *facta de substantia spirituali*. These views are hinted at in the Porphyrian passages we have referred to above; whereas in the Περὶ Στυγὸς Porphyry states, while discussing Homer’s description of the post-mortem punishments in Hades:

> The places of punishment for the unjust are on the other side of the river, for it is through reasoning and the memory of what they have experienced that they have their punishment; they receive the impressions (φαντασίαι) of the evil they have done, and they are punished as their misdeeds are presented to them in their reasoning, and it wreaks vengeance on them by the punishments attributed for the various misdeeds.

42. The word ἡθεόπατωρ exists in Greek, but is used only by Christian writers, to designate David as the ancestor of Jesus.
Thus, we may apply to Porphyry’s conception what G. Watson has written of that of Augustine:

*it is not right to speak of these as false rewards or punishments: they are rather true joy or sorrow experienced in the imagination (facta de substantia spiritali...) the after life, then, is a reality, but one that belongs to the realm of the imagination, spiritalis, rather than to that of the body.*

It is unlikely to be a coincidence that that same concept of the πνευματικής φαντασία as the organ of post-mortem punishments is also to be found in Synesius:

*Now, this psychic pneuma, which the blessed ancients called the pneumatic soul, becomes both a god and a multifarious demon, and an image (εἴδωλον), and it is in it that the soul expiates its punishments.*

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That Augustine was familiar with at least some features of Porphyry’s doctrine of the pneuma seems certain, as we can see from the following passage:

*Porphyry says that theurgy is useful for purifying a part of the soul: the intellectual part, whereby the truth of intellectual things is perceived, but the spiritual part, by which the images of corporeal things are grasped.*

Thus, Augustine knows that Porphyry taught that theurgy is useful for the purification of the spiritalis pars animae, which preserves images of corporeal things. There can be little doubt that “spiritalis” here translates the Greek πνευματικός, and refers to the lower or irrational soul, which

45. Synesius, De insomn., 7, 17-20: τὸ γε τοι πνεῦμα τοῦτο τὸ ψυχικόν, δα κἀ πνευματικήν ψυχήν προσηγόρευταν ὅι εἰδαίμονες, καὶ ἑδὸς καὶ δαίμων παντοδαπὸς καὶ εἶδωλον γίνεται, καὶ τὰ ποινα ἐν τούτῳ τίνει ψυχῆς.
46. Porphyry, De regr., fr. 2, p. *28, 3-6 Bidez: “<Porphyrius> dicit <theurgian> esse mundandae parti animae, non quidem intellectuali, qua rerum intellegibilium percepitur veritas... sed spiritali, qua corporalium rerum capiuntur imagines.”
47. Elsewhere, Augustine equates this “spiritual part of the soul” with that part of the soul which is inferior to the intellect (“ipsam spiritalem, id est nostrae animae partem mente inferiorem”), fr. 3, p. 32*, 1-2; cf. Synesius, De insomn., 4, 18: αὕτη [sc. ἡ φαντασία] ζωῆς τίς εἶναι μικρὸν ὑποβασα...
Porphyry held to be closely linked to the imagination, either as its substrate, or else as identical therewith. Elsewhere in his quotations and paraphrases from the De regressu, Augustine attests Porphyry’s beliefs that the Chaldaean purifications of the pneuma do not render this lower part of the soul immortal, nor do they lead the soul to return after death to the Father, but only enable it to be elevated as far as the realm of the aether, where it will dwell in the company of gods and angels. Only the intellectual part of the soul may, by the grace of God and providence, become consubstantial with the πατρικὸς νους which Augustine identifies with Christ, the son of God. In this case, as we saw above, the soul may remain with God forever, eternally exempt from further reincarnations and contact with the evils of the material world.

Augustine is thus familiar with the Chaldaean idea of purification of the pneuma. Yet in what precisely might this purification have consisted? To attempt to answer this question, we must examine Porphyry’s conception of the post-mortem fate of the okhêma-pneuma and the irrational soul which is so closely linked to it.

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Doxographical sources provide apparently conflicting testimony with regard to Porphyry’s beliefs on the post-mortem destiny of the irrational soul and/or the okhêma-pneuma. From one passage on Iamblichus’ On the soul,
we learn that according to Porphyry the forms of life\textsuperscript{55} which the soul projects are released, so that they no longer exist. However, a bit further on we read\textsuperscript{56} that Porphyry held that each irrational power or faculty of the soul is released into the overall life of the All, where it remains unchanged in so far as it is possible. Yet a third testimony, this time from Proclus,\textsuperscript{57} seems to resolve the apparent contradiction of these two reports. After describing the views of the “older commentators,” such as Atticus and Albinus, who decreed that all irrational life, including the soul’s vehicle, is destroyed after death, Proclus writes as follows:

Those who were more moderate and more gentle, like Porphyry, refuse to spread the so-called destruction of the \textit{okhêma} and the irrational soul, but they say they are resolved into their elements and dissolved, in some way, into the same spheres from which they obtained their composition; they say they are mixtures (\textit{phuramata}) from the celestial spheres, and that when it descends, the soul collects them, so that they exist and do not exist, but they no longer exist as such, nor does their distinguishing characteristic persevere.

It appears, then, that what Porphyry means by saying that after death the irrational soul/\textit{okhêma}/\textit{pneuma} both “exists and does not exist” is that the soul, as we saw above, gathers up elements from the various celestial spheres as it descends, and restores them to the same spheres as it re-ascends after death, where they continue to exist with a minimum of further transformation. Thus the elements that make up the vehicle, \textit{pneuma}, or irrational soul do continue to exist, but not \textit{as such}; not, that is, as the vehicle, \textit{pneuma}, or irrational part of an individual incarnate soul, but as elements of the whole.

Andrew Smith is surely right to add, however, the following caveat:

\textsuperscript{55} That is, the powers of the soul. Cf. I. \textit{Hadot}, 2004, p. 3 n. 12.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Loc.cit.}, I, 49, 43, vol. I, p. 384, 19-385, 10: “Each irrational power is dissolved into the overall life of the All, from which it was partitioned off, whereby, as Porphyry considers, it remains as unchanged as possible” (\textit{λύται ἔκαστη δύναμις ἄλογος ἐς τὴν ὅλην ὑγίην τοῦ παντός ἄρχις ἀπεμερίσθη, ἃ καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μένει ἁμεταβλήτος, ὥσπερ ἤγεται Πορφύριος).

\textsuperscript{57} Proclus, \textit{In Timaeum}, vol. III, p. 234, 8-30 Diels: οἱ δὲ τούτων μετριώτεροι, ὥσπερ οἱ περὶ Πορφύριον, καὶ πραότεροι παραιτοῦνται μὲν τὴν καλουμένην φθοράν κατασκευασσάντων τοῦ τε ὄχήματος καὶ τῆς ἀλόγου ψυχῆς, ἀναστοιχειοῦσάν δὲ αὐτὰ φασὶ καὶ ἀναλύεσθαί τινα τρόπον εἰς τὰς σφαίρας, ἄφι ὅν τὴν συνθέσιν ἔλαχη, φυσάματα δὲ εἶναι ταῦτα ἐκ τῶν ὁμολογίων σφαιρῶν καὶ κατιόυσαν αὐτὰ συλλέγειν τὴν ψυχήν, ὡστε καὶ εἶναι ταῦτα καὶ μὴ εἶναι, αὐτὰ δὲ ἔκαστα μηκέτ' εἶναι μηδὲ διαμένειν τὴν ἰδιότητα αὐτῶν.
...it is surely not the case that... Porphyry thought that the irrational or lower soul of every man would be dissolved after death. The dissolution of the lower soul is the reward of the philosopher alone and is, no doubt, a rare phenomenon.\textsuperscript{58}

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Some pieces of evidence – none of them perhaps conclusive by itself, but which when taken together are nevertheless suggestive – suggest that Porphyry may have held some positive views about the role of “bodies” in post-mortem existence. Like many features of his eschatology, Porphyry may have derived this doctrine from the \textit{Chaldaean Oracles}. Although most allusions to the body in the \textit{Chaldaean Oracles} are negative, at least one Chaldaean oracle\textsuperscript{59} speaks of “saving the body:”

\begin{quote}
\textit{For if you extend a fiery intellect to the work of piety, you will save the flowing body too.}
\end{quote}

Other oracles seem to imply that at least some parts traces of the body are not to be abandoned in the process of spiritual ascent (\textit{ἀναγωγή}):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Nor will you abandon the dregs of matter at the cliff, but there is a share for the image, too, in the all-shining place.}\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

It thus seems possible that there was a Chaldaean tradition involving some kind of post-mortem survival of the body, and if there was, Porphyry may well have been influenced by it.

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It is always risky to attempt to reconstruct Porphyry’s doctrines on the basis of those of his successors. This procedure is relatively secure in the case of authors like Augustine and Synesius, in whom the influence of Greek Neoplatonists other than Porphyry is either non-existent\textsuperscript{61} or relatively limited.

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\textsuperscript{58.} Op.cit., p. 67. \\
\textsuperscript{59.} Or. chald., fr. 128 Des Places: \ldots ποιμόν νοῦν ἐργὸν ἐπ’ ἐυσεβίας ἤνωστόν καὶ σῶμα σωσίας. H. Lewy (1978, 215-216; 219), following Psellus, maintains that this oracle refers only to the preservation of physical health in this life, and not to any kind of resurrection of the body; but cf. the remarks of R. Majercik, 1989, 21-25; 30-46. \\
\textsuperscript{60.} Ibid., fr. 158: ὅπερ τὸ τῆς ὑλῆς σκόμμαλόν καρμυnią καταλείψεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ δόλῳ μερὶς ἐς τόπον ἀμφιφαύλετα. \\
\textsuperscript{61.} One of the bases on which C. Van Liefferinge bases her theories is her assumption that Augustine not only knew the work of Iamblichus, but in works like the \textit{De civ. Dei} was reacting primarily not to Porphyry but to Iamblichus. Yet there is no solid reason to believe that Augustine ever read Iamblichus; primarily because there is no reason to
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Yet it may be helpful to sketch the subsequent development of the doctrine of the *okhêma/pneuma* in Greek Neoplatonism, since many of these developments, if not taken over directly from Porphyry, may at least be elaborations of tendencies already to be found in the works of the Tyrian.  

Later Platonists such as Syrianus and Proclus distinguished two ὀχήματα: the higher one is immaterial, innate and imperishable; the lower vehicle is pneumatic, and consists in a combination of the four elements, acquired during the soul’s descent through the spheres. As the vehicle of the irrational soul, this lower pneumatic vehicle is eventually dissolved or purged away. Divine souls have only the luminous ὀχήμα, demons have both the pneumatic and luminous ὀχήμα, while human beings, in addition to these two ὀχήματα, possess in addition a body of flesh and blood.

It seems clear that this schema is not that of Porphyry, whose conception of the *okhêma/pneuma* seems to correspond to what the philosophers of the School of Athens call the lower vehicle. These Athenian thinkers would seem to have come up with the idea of the higher vehicle precisely to solve some of the philosophical difficulties implies by Porphyry’s doctrines.

Writing at the very end of pagan antiquity, the Syrian philosopher Damascius gives a different account of the *post-mortem* destiny of mankind. Of people who have lived in a holy and sinless way, he writes, those believe his works were ever translated into Latin. Augustine’s Greek was never good enough to enable him to read and understand a philosophical treatise in that language, without the aid of a Latin translation.

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62. For what follows, see the masterly exposition by I. Hadot, 2004, ch. 6.

63. Hierocles and Hermias refer to the psycho-spiritual body both as pneumatic and as luminous; it is both eternal and immaterial. See I. Hadot, *loc.cit.*

64. It is formed not of the elements, but of light, as is indicated by its epithet αὐγοειδές.


67. *In Phaed.*, 1, § 551, Westerink.
who are completely bereft of philosophy, dwell on the extremities of the earth,68 and have extremely fine pneumatic bodies. Those who have philosophized politically – i.e., who have achieved the first stage of the Porphyrian virtues, and have become σπουδαίοι – dwell in the heavens (οὐρανός)69 with luminous bodies. Finally, those who have been completely purified return to the supracelestial place – presumably the intelligible world – where they dwell without bodies.70 Here we note that, contrary to the view of Proclus, the luminous body is not innate, immortal, and ever-present, but may be shed as a result of complete purification.

As we have seen, Porphyry seems not to have gone so far as to allow for the existence of a separate luminous soul-vehicle. Yet his own views may have been tending in this direction, as we can see from the testimony of Synesius.

* * *

For Synesius,61 the soul clothes itself during its descent through the spheres with a pneumatic body made of ether. Just before it enters the body, the soul emits into the pneuma particles taken from the summits of fire and of air.72 Thus, the divine body mentioned by the Oracles can be identified with the pure substance of the ether, and after the individual’s death, in the optimal scenario, the elements of air and fire in the pneumatic body are transformed back into ether, in which state they accompany the soul in its return voyage to its celestial fatherland. The pneuma, which acts during terrestrial life as an intermediary between the rational and the irrational

69. As P. Hadot points out (1968, vol. I, pp. 180-181 & n. 1), the meaning of the term οὐρανός varies in Greco-Chaldaean thought: sometimes it designates the planetary spheres as far as the sphere of fixed stars; sometimes it includes the sphere of fixed stars.
70. ἄνευ σωμάτων; cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 114c3-4: ἄνευ τε σωμάτων ὣσι τὸ παραπάν εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον.
72. This accords with the interpretation of Porphyry’s Sentence 29 given by W. Deuse, 1983, pp. 219-222, as cited by I. Hadot, *Hierocles*, ch. 6: the pneuma consists of various elemental bodies, which the soul acquire during its descent through the celestial spheres. The first component of the pneuma, the αἱ ἡλιοειδεῖς σῶμα, comes from the totality of the first five spheres; while the second and third components, the σῶμα ἠλιοειδεῖς and the σῶμα στροφειδεῖς, come from the spheres of the sun and the moon. The fourth component, which renders the pneuma heavy and moist, derives from the sublunary sphere.
soul, conserves the traces of the individual's passions and imaginings. Therefore, if the *pneuma*, purified from its passions back to its original ethereal state, still preserves some traces of individual memories even when it returns to the region of the ether, we may have a doctrine which allows for the survival, at least to some degree, of a form of the individual personality.

If Synesius' doctrine does indeed reflect that of Porphyry, might we not have the key to understanding Augustine's apparent confusion with regard to Porphyry's dictum that "omne corpus fugiendum est?" Perhaps what Porphyry really affirmed, in the original context of the *De regressu*, was that only certain kinds of bodies must be avoided. Or rather, perhaps Porphyry's primary concern was not so much with the avoidance of bodies as with their transformation. He may have held that the goal of spiritual and philosophical progress was to transform the individual's *okhêma/pneuma*. This concept is at least partially attested as Porphyrian: avoiding moist *pneuma* and maintaining the vehicle of one's soul dry, airy, and light, is, as we have seen, a prerequisite for even beginning the post-mortem ascent back to our spiritual home, and it is likely such purification or de-humidification was the goal of the Chaldaean theurgical rites Porphyry recommended for the non-philosophical. Thus, Porphyry maintained that moist, dark and heavy bodies must be avoided at all costs. Yet he may well have added that dry, light psycho-spiritual bodies consisting of fire and air are not so much to be avoided as transformed, back into the ethereal state from which they originated.

In conclusion, I should like to propose a reconstruction of Porphyrian eschatology which, although it conflicts to some extent with Augustine's testimony concerning the *De regressu*, seems better able to explain some other accounts of Porphyrian doctrine.

The loss of so many of Porphyry's works makes it impossible to verify, but we may perhaps hazard the guess that Porphyry distinguished different groups of human beings in a manner in which the level of philosophical aptitude one achieves is linked to the elemental composition of the psycho-spiritual vehicle, which in turn determines the nature and status of the individual's post-mortem existence. Thus, all those who wish to avoid the descent into Hades after death must ensure that the dank, moist elements of their *pneuma* have been rendered light and dry. From this point on, the non-philosophical majority, with their soul-vehicles consisting in fire and in

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73. I do not consider this a fatal objection. As noted above, Augustine, unconcerned with the finer points of Porphyrian doctrine, may well have had access only to a Latin translation of the *De regressu*, which in turn may only have reproduced fragments of the Tyrian's work.
air, may rise, through the use of theurgy or a life of ascetic virtue, only so far as the sublunary elemental spheres of air and of fire. For Porphyry, as for late Antiquity in general, aer is the dwelling-place of demons. Might he have believed that such non-philosophical souls simply became demons? Proclus (In Tim., I, p. 77, 7-13) reports that Porphyry, combining the views of Origen the pagan and Numenius, divided the class of demons into divine, “by relation” (κατὰ σχέσιν), and evil. Demons “by relation” are “individual souls which have been allotted a demonic portion.” For Olympiodorus (In Alc., p. 15, 5 – 16, 6) demons by relation are “the souls of those who have lived well;” cf. Proclus, In Alc., 74, vol. I, p. 60, 12-17 Segonds. Elsewhere (In Remp., vol. II, p. 310, 15 ff.), Proclus reports that

it is clear that our soul is present within us as in coordination (ἐν κατάταξε), as is the soul of animals within them. Yet when the soul within us comes to be in relation (ἐν σχέσει) with the soul in them, it animates the irrational, standing over it from without, in the mode of relation (σχετικῶς). After all, it comes to be within demons and gods, and it is a demon by relation (δαιμόνιον κατὰ σχέσιν) and a god, but it is not essentially a demon or a god, since its existence is not appropriate to demons and gods.

It is illuminating to compare this passage with the passage from Synesius we have mentioned above:

for this psychic pneuma, which the blessed ancients called “pneumatic soul,” becomes a god and a multiform demon and an image...

The identity in terminology here implies a common source, and the additional evidence cited above concerning “demons by relation” allows us to identify this source as Porphyry. Indeed, the Proclan passage looks for all

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74. The fragments of the De regressu seem to allow only for two options; either souls may be elevated to the realm of the ether, or else to the Intelligible world; cf. Porphyry, De regr., fr. 6, p. 34*, 24-25 Bidez; M.B. Simmons, 2001, passim.
76. De Insomn., 7, 16-19: τὸ γέ τοι πνεῦμα τοῦτο τὸ ψυχικόν, ὁ καὶ πνευματικὴν ψυχὴν προσηγόρευαν οἱ εὐδαιμόνες καὶ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες παντοδαποί καὶ ἐκδιώκον γίνεται.
78. This has escaped the notice of Festugière in his translation of Proclus’ Commentary on the Timaeus, vol. III, p. 268. Yet it is likely that much of the surrounding context (Proclus, In Remp., vol. II, p. 309, 3 ff.), in which the Platonic doctrine of transmigration of human souls into animal bodies is explained as designating humans who choose to live in an animalistic way (οὐ σωμάτων λέγοντες ἐκδύσαν ἀλόγος ὄψις προσηγότων, ἀλλὰ ὄψις προχειρίστην ἐκείνος ὀικείας, p. 309, 6-7), is also Porphyrian; cf. J. Carlier, 1999, passim.
the world like an explanatory amplification of the phrase of Synesius, which clarifies how it is that the human soul or the *pneuma* can become a god or a demon: it does so by relation (σχετικῶς, κατά σχέσιν). Finally, we recall that according to Porphyry’s *Sentence 32*, the person who has acquired the purificatory virtues is a demonic man or a good demon: the former, presumably, during his terrestrial lifetime, and the latter *post mortem*.

Thus, according to our hypothetical reconstruction of Porphyrian eschatology, non-philosophers who have led moral lives become, at least temporarily, demons “by relation,” endowed with psycho-spiritual vehicles of air or fire. We might then suppose that those who, through practicing the political virtues, have been able to transform their vehicle back to its original ethereal state, may rise as far as the heavens, or the ether.

Finally, the tiny number of philosophers who achieve the last two stages of Porphyry’s scale of virtues – theoretical and paradigmatic – may eventually rid themselves of all kinds of bodies and re-enter the intelligible world, whence, henceforth consubstantial with the hypostasis of the Intellect, they will enjoy eternal contemplation, never again subject to reincarnation within a human body, and the contaminating contact with matter such reincarnation entails. However, it seems likely that for Porphyry these last two stages of virtue, and of transformation, cannot be attained during earthly existence, but only after death.

Whether or not it is justifiable to speak of Porphyrian “pessimism” in this regard, it does seem likely that subsequent Neoplatonists found Porphyry’s doctrine, with its demand for a moral and philosophical *askēsis* that extends not only throughout this lifetime, but also into the next, to be too demanding. As a result, Neoplatonism from Iamblichus on generally accepted the possibility of achieving the highest spiritual goals during one’s life on earth. Casting aside Porphyry’s reservations with regard to the theurgy of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Iamblichus, almost contemporaneously with Porphyry, accepted it wholeheartedly. The later Neoplatonists added a level of hieratic virtues to the four levels made canonical by Porphyry, a doctrine which allowed ultimate spiritual beatitude to be obtained not so much through the rational procedures of philosophy, as through the supra-rational techniques of theurgy.

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