

in pursuing this theme further. Neo-Platonism is the term used to indicate a philosophy after Plato, which used much of his metaphysics for its basis. It is particularly Plotinus, who died in 270 A.D., who was the main influence in its development, and who, in his work, "The Enneads", developed many ideas still found in Western mysticism and esoteric cosmology. Plotinus was a pagan, an anti-Christian ecstatic who believed that every person had the "divine spark" within and needed no mediator to attain salvation. There is indication that the Roman emperor, Gallienus, who vociferously called for the persecution of the Christians, changed his tactics around 260 AD. Before this time he and his father, Valerian, openly called for the persecution of this new religion. This, seemingly enough, only reinforced its proponents and galvanized new believers (like another religious sect which has been persecuted en masse). I use the term pagan not in a pejorative sense, but in an historical sense of Plotinus, and simply indicating that he was not a believer in revealed religion. He saw no need for a Mediator nor Prophet as Mediator since the divine spark within made us "like" the One.

The change of tactics involved the use of philosophy to undermine the developing Christian community. The neo-platonists were enlisted by Gallienus for this assault, and Plotinus, and his student Porphyry, were two main actors. This thrust was without the use of state force, it instead used the arguments of philosophy as its new mode of attack. As history indicates, Plotinus was incredibly successful in establishing the primacy of the individual in the mystical quest and union. There is no need for any intermediary in Plotinus' schema, something which stands diametrically opposed to revealed religion in the Semitic branch (Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Bahá'í). It was the conversion of Augustine which fortified the fusion of neo-platonism with Christianity, and from here the impact can be traced into Islam with the reintroduction of Aristotle and Plato. These main works had been somehow "lost" for a period of time, and was translated into Latin then Arabic and impacted Islamic philosophy ever since. This is a very, very brief history story!!

To understand, even casually, the ideas of neo-platonism, let me offer these concepts as a framework:

- 1) God/the One/Good, is transcendent to creation;
- 2) there are a series of intermediaries, non-personal, by which the One emanates Itself to the lower domains of creation;
- 3) each level of emanated creation contains within it a "spark" or "scintilla" of the divine, making it "like" the divine.
- 4) this spark imbues humanity with both the ability and the yearning for union with the divine within, and without. It is a doctrine of transcendence and immanence.
- 5) the doctrine is heirarchical, with each "higher" level being "more real" than the descendent level.

6) there is the One, the Nous/Divine Mind/Logos, and the World Soul, and descending levels of created beings.

Significant persons associated with neo-platonic thought include: Speusippus, the successor to Plato in the Academy; Philo Judaeus's ideas helped construe the doctrines, although he was not neo-platonic, as he preceeded its full development; Ammonius Saccas, the instructor of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, as well as Plotinus; Plotinus' students were Amelius, Porphyry, who's student was Iamblichus. Plutarch, Proclus, and others.... Hierocles, Hermias, Ammonius, Asclepius, etc. St. Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius (these ideas were attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, mentioned in the Book of Acts, and held sway until into the 13th century) In 832 A.D., the Baghdad School of Syrian thought began a program to translate the works of Plato and Aristotle into Arabic. The works of Plotinus were translated and misnamed as the Theology of Aristotle which was actually from the Enneads of Plotinus. This lead many of those who thought it was actually Aristotle's work into a neo-platonic hierarchical system of thought. Among those influenced were: Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averroes, all Muslim philosophers of the first rank. John Scotus Erigena, Meister Eckhart, Marsilius Ficino, and even Henry More was influenced by these ideas, as was Schelling and Hegel. This list is in no way exhaustive, but gives a general idea of those whose works and theorizing was influenced by this persuasive and pervasive doctrine. Much of the writings of these souls is powerfully evocative to those of us humans who are mystically-minded, and indeed, many are wonderful speculative works of ecstasies. Being one such soul, it has been apparent to me for many years that the experience of the soul is one phenomena, the interpretation of it into an understandable framework is another. I have wondered for many years how different the interpretations of these experiences would have been if neo-platonism had not been so dominant. But, like Aslan says in "The Chronicles of Narnia": one never knows what would have happened.

As we begin to explore further this notion which i am proposing, it is necessary that i indicate where I will take it, what threads will be woven together. This i do for a few reasons, one of which is to provide a frame in which to view these ideas; another is to indicate the levels we will be considering; and a third will be to indicate why this is being done anyhow. Much of this story will be brief, compared to how lengthy and detailed it may become, because of my time constraints, and because my books are packed away, waiting for the move. If there is enough interest, or if there are some of ya'all who think this is an approach which merits further investigation (or if i just want to continue no matter what!!), then it will be expanded later.

The Frame:

Mystic experience has been defined as ineffable, unexplainable, irrational (as opposed to rational), and many other words indicating its abstruse nature...some even call it fantasy, illusion, or absurd. But, to a soul which has tasted of its fruits, it is unequivocally real. No amount of debate or persuasion can alter the profundity of the experience. There are doubts which

follow a powerful dream about whether or not it could have been a vision, but the one who has a vision does never think it a dream!!

The experience....

For a soul who has such a vision/ecstatic rapture (and ecstasy comes from ex+stasis= to stand outside), there is the desire to understand it, to be able to articulate it to others, or just to oneself....the experience then begs for a framework for the grasping. This framework, if one seeks one, is derived from an historical source, be it a religion, or metaphysical doctrine, or psychological theory. We will examine parts of this frame below.

The levels:

As one considers mystic experiences, it becomes clear that we are not dealing with ordinary consciousness here, it is definitely an "altered state". How one defines consciousness, how one determines the "origin" of consciousness or its value, how one understands the experience of the soul/psyche, and the concept of "reality", how one views (if one does) the human's place in the "order of creation", how one views this order (ie. hierarchical, monistic), or how one views the soul's relation to the divine, all play a significant role in this endeavor. (Isn't it a good thing i chose some easy areas, and some clear conceptual tools?!) I will BRIEFLY here touch on these areas, and no way will it be all-encompassing! I am not proposing a definitive or even a tentative answer here, what i am doing is probing...i mean i have the rest of my life to hone these ideas, right??!!

The why:

The personal investment is always the best for a research project, but it means that one remain more objective in the presentation, no matter what the individual belief is. I value Carl Jung's rigor in his approach, not that i can emulate this, but i hope to be able to follow it. Jung's interest in the unconscious was generated by a dream he had in his youth, and his studies as a psychiatrist, of course. Mine is similar, but it was a visionary experience which has fed the depths of my soul since age 10, and which called for an explanation. There is also a "so what" factor i adhere to in my researches...so what if this is, what does it mean for my daily life? what does it mean for me talking with others, or making it such that we can "walk the mystic path with practical feet"? why does it matter what view we have of existence? why would/should we concern ourselves with these ideas?

Having given this brief introduction, i will offer my position here, then in the context which follows explain how i arrived at this position by using the guidelines above. It is my position that the philosophical underpinnings of neo-platonism is outdated, and even potentially hazardous to a valid understanding of esoteric cosmology. I realize this is very bold, and having read much of neo-platonism i know the challenges i am facing here, but it seems to me that this philosophical understanding of mystic experience was overlayed onto Semitic religious concepts and constructs because it was so convincing and

carried the heritage of "Plato", and "Aristotle", those most revered men of Greece. Many of us who have studied philosophy know that without these two men, our views and education would be far different...so it is this Western philosophical heritage which is being examined. BUT, and this i want to make clear, it is not their positions which are in question, but those positions which have been ATTRIBUTED to them falsely, by the understandable errors of history. Remembering the brief outline above of the men who have influenced and been influenced by neo-platonic thought, we have a vantage point unavailable to many generations before us...we know that the works of Plotinus, a pagan, was attributed to Aristotle, and that Plato's ideas were borrowed to explain why no mediator was necessary for humanity.

As a Bahá'í, i am bound by profession of faith to the reality and efficacy of the mediators, the Manifestations of God. As a believer, i am bound by the doctrine of the harmony of science and religion, and the use of logic and rational thought in any explorations of "reality". As a person of mystic persuasion and experience, i am bound by the dictates of my soul the insights of my heart, and the revelations gained thereby. As such, there has been a need for me to combine these "givens" (or "accepted") into a coherent framework, and not believe something simply because it has a heritage. It is independent investigation of truth which began this journey for me, and which has sustained it thus far. It is with these positions that i continue this exploration.....

The viewpoint of a non-believer, in the pluralism of religious thought, is valid in the proper sphere. It is improper to adhere to a viewpoint which is antithetical in its basis to the doctrine one is espousing. It appears that by continuing to adhere to a neo-platonic framework or view of reality, our ideas are limited thereby. New paradigms are demanded by new information and new discoveries of the nature of physical reality and psychic reality. It is psychic reality which concerns us here, and if Jung is correct, "psyche is reality," and is the only verifiable reality accessible to humanity. In the final term, if an experience is not expressed in the human psyche, it is not in our realm of experience. This tautology is apparent, yet there seems to be much which leads one to think that what has been expressed by mystics is "beyond the soul"...but, the undeniable fact remains that there is one area of reality and realization for us...the human psyche. Whatever makes itself known to us must do so by way of the psyche.

Scientifically and philosophically it has been ascertained that one's view of reality is relative. This is clear in physics, and has been termed Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Our observation of an event alters and influences the event, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT. Our perceptions of external phenomena are internal perceptions, that is, the eyes send an image to the brain, soul/psyche, and is interpreted as an object. But this image is inside the soul/mind/brain, not outside of it. We grasp a psychic image of the world and not the world as it is in itself. It is as it is; our viewing of it does not change that which it is, but changes our relation to it, and to the images created by the psyche/soul (i will henceforth use psyche to mean soul). In this psychic representation, our

world view is created, modified, and tested. This principle holds valid in psychology and philosophy. We cannot get beyond our souls to experience, so deep is the soul, so vast is its domain. It seems that this quote from Bahá'u'lláh indicates the depth of the soul, and it being the locus of such experience:

"To whatever heights the mind of the most exalted men may soar, however great the depths which the detached and understanding heart can penetrate, such mind and heart can never transcend that which is the creature of their own conceptions and the products of their own thoughts. The meditations of the profoundest thinkers, the devotions of the holiest of saints, the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of that which hath been created within themselves, through the revelation of the Lord, their God." (Tablet to Salman, GL., sec CXLVIII)

Let us glance briefly at this idea of reflecting, or the reflecting image, or the medium of reflection.

reflect: "1. to throw or bend back (heat, light, or sound for example) from a surface. 2. to form an image of (an object); to mirror. 3. to manifest as a result of one's actions: 'His work reflects intelligence.' (-intransitive) 1. to be bent back. 2. to give back a likeness; become mirrored. 3. to think or consider seriously. 4. to bring blame or reproach."

reflection: "1. the act or state of being reflected. 2. Something reflected, as light, radiant heat, sound or an image. 3.a. concentration of the mind; careful consideration. (b). the results of such consideration, communicated or not. 4. an imputation of censure or discredit."

There is no way i will dive into the philosophy of imagination, nor the psychology of it...but i will dip into these areas to express an understanding of these thoughts and their creations in my mind as it relates to neo-platonism, and archetypal psychology, and belief.

We will be exploring these images with the use of ideas (and here is a whole other issue dipped into), ideas which allow us to 'see', which reveal themselves as experiences of psyche. Our journey is a deepening, a 'seeing through', as James Hillman expresses it: "Let us now condense the process of psychological discovery into a series of steps.

First there is the psychological moment, a moment of reflection, wonder, puzzlement, initiated by the soul which intervenes and countervails what we are in the midst of doing, hearing, reading, watching. With slow suspicion or sudden insight we move through the apparent to the less apparent. We use metaphors of light--a little flicker, a slow dawning, a lightening flash--as things become clarified.Moving from outside in, it is a process of interiorizing; moving from the surface of visibilities to the less visible, it is a process of deepening; moving from the data of impersonal events to their personification, it is a process of subjectivizing.

Second, psychologizing justifies itself. As we penetrate or try to bring out, expose, or show why, we believe what lies behind or within is truer and more real, powerful, or valuable than what is evident. It is a justification in terms of depths; we justify the activity by appealing to an ultimate hidden value that can never come out but must remain concealed in the depths in order to justify the movement. This ultimate hidden value justifying the entire operation can also be called the hidden God (deus absconditus), who appears only in concealment.

Third, the present event, the phenomenon before us, is given a narrative. A tale is told of in in the metaphors of history, or physical causality. or logic....

Fourth are the tools with which the operations proceeds. Here we return once again to ideas, for ideas are the soul's tools. Without them we cannot see, let alone see through. Ideas as the eyes of the soul give the psyche its power of insight, its means of prying open, stripping bare, going through. Again, without ideas the soul is a victim of literal appearances and is satisfied with things just as they present themselves." (Hillman, Revisioning Psychology, 141)

A dilemma is how the ideas and images present themselves to the psyche. By using the ideas of psychology, we may be able to see through the notions and experiences of the soul ...and allowing the idea to give us sight. "The problem here is the ancient one of hypostasizing an idea into a literal thing. However, this is more than slipshod thinking, for it is inherent in the eidos, idea, itself. ...idea implies both the tool by which we see and the thing we see. Psychologizing is in danger when it forgets that literalism is inherent in the very motion of idea. Then we begin to see ideas rather than seeing by means of them." (ibid)

The method i am espousing is one of psychological discovery, of re- visioning the underpinnings of neo-platonism, and see if we can reconfigure them into a psychological framework, in accord with scientific methods.

As we weave these ideas, we glance at the idea of subtle embodiment. There is a propensity seemingly inherent in the nature of imagination which allows us experience, it is the process of embodying ideas, images, and reality. Embodying by giving them form, shape and texture of a non-material substance, a substance of psyche. This is the literalism we can avoid by seeing through, by realizing their created nature, and the psyche as their creative substance and creator. Imaginations embody.....

The other way to see this is that the soul also receives images... the reception and reflection of images of "higher " realms, or from the part of the soul which exists beyond the range of consciousness, in unconsciousness. As consciousness becomes aware of unconscious components and processes, the soul gleans its history. Theories exist which imply that consciousness was more concrete, that humans interpreted the images of soul as literal beings. It is the literalism which prevents us from seeing through them, as was the situation

with Origen, who castrated himself, following the "spirit of the age", which was thoroughly concretistic. Because of this spirit, the Gnostics took their visions as absolutely real, or at least as relating directly to reality, and for Tertullian the reality of his feeling was objectively valid. The Gnostics projected their subjective inner perception of the change of attitude into a cosmogonic system and believed in the reality of its psychological figures." (Jung, CW6, para 29)

Weaving this notion of concretistic thought, with that of the heart and mind creating, we glance at the capacity of soul to create reality, and find the thread which lead us back into a "metaphysical relativity" of what we perceive as real. If Jung's thesis is accurate, the history of human consciousness has developed from a more "literal and concrete" level to one of greater "metaphorical and subtle" depths. Philology, the study of language and its development, delineates many of these transformations words have been exposed to, and how it 'leads' human consciousness. It may be like the word unfolding its "spirit" through time....

The concept of the heart creating has a history, and one of its proponents was Ibn `al-Arabi. His position was that the heart is the organ of spiritual perception, and is creative. We will not delve into this topic, as there is much available for anyone interested.

Projecting psychic images and hypostasizing them into "things", it can be seen that once we become aware of this projecting of soul, we can work to withdraw these projections back into soul...the matrix of our life. So vast is the soul that we are unable to fathom its depth, yet it is that which we view, and that which we view with...like an idea.

One idea which dominates neo-platonic thought, and delineates its view, is that of the "Arc of Descent and Ascent". This arc shows how, in neo-platonic thought, the world came into being through a series of emanations from the Good. Each level "above" generates the next proceeding level in a descending hierarchy of ontological reality. As we contemplate these descending levels, we discern a psychological matrix; our "return" to the divine is an ascent:

DESCENDING ASCENDING The world of Divinity the subtle principle The world of Intelligences the secret/intellect The world of Angels the heart The world of Ideas the spirit The world of Form the soul The material world the body

These correspondences are articulated in an Islamic construct according to views of many authors. One point I would like to call attention to is the correlation given each column. The body is matter, the soul gives form, the spirit ponders ideas, the angels move the heart, the intellegences inform the intellect, and the subtle principle is moved by divinity. Now, we can assert that the descending scale precedes the ascending, likewise we can assert that the ascending scale preceeds the descending; the advantages of holding to the second perspective is its psychological basis, its basis in the soul. This allows us an approach which is scientific and philosophical; if we adhere to the first approach, our thoughts remain in realms of philosophy and meta-

physics.

The psychological matrix can be discerned if we ponder a few salient points: psyche needs images, Jung even asserts that fundamentally, "psyche is image"(CW 13, para75). Rumi likewise claims this fact of psyche. The propensity of imagination to embody is, like mentioned above, inherent in the nature of imagination, "And this in turn implies their quasi-corporealization, their imaginal embodiment as sensible concreta of soul. 'Imagination', as Shakespeare said unerringly, 'bodies forth the things of the unknown...and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.' Without body, albeit a subtle body, there is no fully particularized image." (Casey, "Spirit and Soul", p. 305) Before the concept of psychological projection was ascertained, the experiences of soul were framed according to the dominant world-view, and in a neo-platonic view, according to the delineations of philosophy.

Now, I am not implying that there are no higher ontological realms of being, what I am asserting is that we cannot know them if they exist!! (and to assert this is only tentative) If we follow the logic of 'Abdu'l-Bahá' and maintain that the lower realms cannot understand the higher realms, then we must face our limitations to have certitude in such a speculative philosophy as neo-platonism. Neo-platonism has as its basis three fundamental premises (at least these, although there are more): 1) the human soul has the capacity to know the divine since it has a "spark of the divine" within it, it is "like" the divine, and this likeness allows us to know it; 2) this knowledge is attainable without a mediator, without a Prophet; and 3) the higher levels of reality are in different conditions than the human reality. Yet, since all of existence is an emanation of the essence of the One, it all partakes in the divine nature.

Bahá'í belief seems to counter these fundamentals in many regards. It is a premise of Bahá'í theology that the knowledge of God is beyond the domain of humanity, beyond even the Divine Mind (Logos)/ Divine Will. It is also a premise that there is no "likeness" of creation with the creator, if there is any likeness it is with other created realities. "...the Essence of Divinity is absolutely unique and has no equal, no likeness, no equivalent." (SAQ p114) The differences of degrees, as asserted in neo-platonism seems to be an obstacle to comprehending them, yet it is never asserted this way by its proponents. "Difference of condition is an obstacle to knowledge; the inferior degree cannot comprehend the superior degree." (SAQ p221) Yet, to assert knowledge of higher emanations, those above the human, there must be knowledge of them which is experiential to the psyche of humanity.

A hierarchical world view has advantages for speculative philosophy, it is demonstrable through human logic. Yet, as Bahá'ís, we are not limited to human reason for investigating reality, the Bahá'í belief asserts that the Divine Mind/Will has embodied Its qualities in human form for our edification and education. This Manifestation has divine intellectual powers which the average human does not; "This divine intellectual power is a special attribute of the

Holy Manifestations and the Dawning-places of prophethood; a ray of this light falls upon the mirrors of the hearts of the righteous and a portion and a share of this power comes to them through the Holy Manifestation." (SAQ p.218) It is this "informing principle" which neo-platonism sought to undermine through the speculation of Plotinus and his philosophical progeny.

Had neo-platonic philosophy not held such a strong influence over the thoughts of humanity, we would likely have a radically different philosophy to view the Bahá'í epistemological constructs. Yet, the concreteness of human thought and consciousness mayhaps excluded this possibility. The direction of the imagination for embodiment, the propensity of the psyche to literalize and hypostasize, and the philosophy of Grecian men inevitably lead to the development we are inheritors of.

This short article has been offered to stimulate others in areas of thought which are often taken for granted and accepted because of the one philosophical heritage called Neo-platonism. This article has been abbreviated a lot due to time constraints, and will likely be thoroughly rewritten as research proceeds. The point of view of the author is a psychological inquiry into philosophical "territories", to see if we can, by applying the notion of "Ockham's razor": "What can be done with fewer is done in vain with more", "Multiplicity is not to be assumed without necessity", (Dict. of Phil. and Religion, p 628), re-vision neo-platonic philosophy in light of modern psychology and the Bahá'í

revelation. Archetypal realities necessitate the inclusion of non-physical "beings", what is fundamental to the philosophy of neo-platonism is not the existence of these beings. What is fundamental is a descending hierarchy from the One to the many....without the need for a Divine Manifestation as mediator, as Creator. The hierarchical structure may be valid, but the view of it may be dramatically different than that which the underpinnings of neo-platonism allows

us to conceive. The notion of intermediaries between the Prophet and humanity, which is what neo-platonism seems to espouse, seems contradictory to Bahá'í thought, as designed by the Master in the form of the "ringstone" symbol.

I agree fully that we must use the terminology of neo-platonism to articulate or debate these ideas, but by doing so we need not ascribe to them as part of our doctrine. It is, like mentioned in part one, the limits of words we must contend with, not the limitation of thought. The Bahá'í Revelation has proffered humanity new capacities and new thoughts. The radicalness of the Bahá'í view is that we must strive to re-vision not only the religious heritage

of humanity, but also the scientific and philosophical, as well as the social, economic, and psychological. If there is to truly be a rebirth of spirituality, and if Bahá'ís are to be part of it, then maybe we should strive to "walk the mystical path with practical feet" and to speak the mystic doctrine with modern language, however bold and audacious it may seem. Let us lead, or get out of the way; for to follow implies that we continue patterns and paradigms which

may not be suited for the "new race of men" which God and nature are designing.

Review of Nima Hazini's "Neoplatonism: Framework for a Bahá'í Metaphysics"

Your piece on Neoplatonism [by Nima Hazini, 1995, online at bahai-library.com/hazini_neoplatonism_framework_metaphysics] was well written, and a good introductory work with enough information to develop your thesis. The final section on the Faith was presented well enough to indicate the historical determinants of the Bahá'í aspects similar to Neoplatonism, and kept clear enough to highlight the reasons for the terminological similarities. By you asserting that it is not "merely a historical permutation", but "is a self-contained system in its own right," this leads me to thread it to your conclusion, and ask one question on this, would it be called Neoplatonism if it is not the Neoplatonism of Plotinus or the other Neo-Platonists? As the first paragraph defines it, the term denotes "the peculiar type of Platonic philosophy expounded by Plotinus and his successors and to distinguish it from that of the Old Academy of Plato's immediate successors and Middle Platonism." Now, i will grant that we could in some sense overlay this term on the philosophical underpinnings of the Faith, but i wonder if this is essential. My comments are meant to be challenging to you, not because i think there is anything wrong in your approach, because i don't, but to push some limits of our thinking as we get to develop these ideas in this dispensation. I think to use the notion of the "perennial philosophy" is preferable, this removes it from the a particular quirk which i will adduce, which is, for me, problematic of Neoplatonism. Because there is some investment in this for me, i will propose some specific notions, seeking your clarification.

Now then, we know that Plotinus was an inheritor of the Greek exultation of reason, and as such, this pervaded his world view. In fact, the Enneads, which were collected by Porphyry after his master's death, exalt the philosopher who, with the aid of pure reason, attains mystical insight. In this arena, it seems that history eludes us in pinning things down tightly, since there is such an interspersion of the old and new in the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, and the dynamics of Gallienus, the Roman Emperor, in this development are unclear to me at this time. The use of reason is unquestionable in this development, as well as Plotinus not being an adherent of a "mediator" between the human and the divine. This is, of course, understandable in light of the times he lived in, and the pervasiveness of the Mystery Schools, and the challenge of Christianity to these schools and reason. Does this impact his thought in a way that it undermines his assertions? No. But it does, i assert, imply that those who adhere to a mediatory construct (i.e. prophets as intermediaries to the Deus Absconditus), discern the subtle differences. Let me indicate why. There is a vast difference, i surmise, between one asserting epistemological or ontological positions from the standpoint of philosophical reason, with the hosts of deductive logical premises and propositions (which is, after all the

hallmark of Greek philosophy), and one asserting the same from a position of a "mediatory" stance, utilizing the tools of the same philosophy and logic. It seems like this is what you indicated in your article by referencing Juan's monograph, and the cultural context of this Revelation.

Taking as our point of departure the "standpoint epistemology" as it is developing, it may be seen that a Bahá'í epistemology must be integrally linked

to the notion of "gather together beneath the shadow of the sacred Standard which the Promised One will raise." (Gl. pg12) In such wise, are the notions and teachings of other ages weighed. In this case, the Standard of knowledge reveals for us, "All that the sages and mystics have said or written have never exceeded, nor can they ever hope to exceed, the limitations to which man's finite mind hath been strictly subjected. To whatever heights the mind of the most exalted of men may soar, however great the depths which the detached and understanding heart can penetrate, such mind and heart can never transcend that which is the creature of their own conceptions and the product of their own thoughts. (Gl. p.317)

The fact that the heart creates, and thoughts produce is not to be taken, i assert, merely metaphorically. The philosophy and psychology of imagination reveals it as a fundamental psychic act. It is, also, the first of the inner faculties listed in Scholastic philosophy, Islamic psychology, and the teachings of `Abdu'l Bahá'. As such, i feel there is great need to look clearly at

the underpinnings of Neoplatonism as if it were "the product of their own thoughts", and "the creature of their own conceptions", which is not at all saying anything small. All that we see in the outside world was conceived in the imagination. Conception is a mysterious phenomenon....a world run by the imagination of humanity is profound indeed. Creative imagination is such a profound soul reality that much has been written about it alone.

There is a point here that i was making in the second installment i had on this topic in Aug. which did not generate even one response!! As to your point about the perpetual creation, is this not what is meant in this passage, from the same Tablet you quote (although it is pg. 140, not 240...typo error??) "Every thing must needs have an origin and every building a builder. Verily, the Word of God is the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world - a world which is adorned with the splendours of the Ancient of Days, yet is being renewed and regenerated at all times." (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, page 141)

AS to your quoting the Master stating, "Reality is one and does not admit of multiplicity..." what is the reference here?? Many places He mentions this, it seems to be in the context of the "Reality" being equated with the Manifestations, and the religion. Is this the same as "haqq", the Sufis' assertion

that there is only Reality?? There is another context where it reads, "the world of existence is a single world, although its stations are various and distinct." (SWAB p.193) How is the fact that there have been deposited "signs"

(`ayat) within the human reality contrasted with the "like alone joins like" (Enneads, VI, 9, 11), which is an ontological premise underpinning Plotinus' ideas??? Is this why, in His commentary on the "I was a Hidden Treasure" tradition, the Master addresses the notion of "similarity and likeness" (in sec. D, ma`rifat)?? Well, gotta scoot...hope there is enough here to allow us to probe a bit in this arena. Still wondering why the second installment i did in August didn't even get one comment! Fazlur Rahman mentions that the medieval Muslims couldn't move beyond the literalization and concretization of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Muhammad....thus they had revelations being whispered into His ear!

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