

Plato and Stoa in Hippolytus' Theology

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In his masterpiece, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (written in Rome, between A.D. 222 and 235), Hippolytus stresses the significance of his own Theology, as opposed to countless heretical doctrines, and especially to the Patripassianism of his archrival, Pope Callistus (Proem 6; X. 4; X. 5. 1 & 2; X. 31. 6 & 34. 1). He calls his own doctrine *Truth*, and I think the term has a special meaning for him. In my opinion, it stands for the Holy Ghost as the conveyer of God's truth to man, as Spirit of truth, in one word, as Truth itself.¹ The suggested interpretation seems to find support in Hippolytus himself.

Consider such expressions as these. (1) By *simply appearing*, Truth will refute any heresy (X. 5. 1 *μόνον φανείς ἐλέγξει τὴν πλάνην*).² (2) Hippolytus' statement (Proem 7), "we proclaim whatever Truth has ministered to men, after receiving it from the grace of the Father (*ὅσα ἡ ἀλήθεια ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς χάριτος παραλαβοῦσα ἀνθρώποις διηκόνησε, ταῦτα . . . κηρύσσομεν*), is only a synonym for his preceding expression (Proem 6), "we generously communicate to all whatever has been offered by the Holy Ghost" (*ὅσα παρέχει τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα πᾶσιν ἀφθότως κοινωνοῦντες*).

Hippolytus' True Doctrine comprises the three closing chapters of his *magnum opus* (X. 32–34), as its *κορωνίς* (X. 5. 2). His Theology

¹ Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford 1961), s.v. *ἀλήθεια*, B, 4, and *ἀντοαλήθεια*, 4.

² The text is quoted from my edition of Hippolytus: *Patristische Texte und Studien*, im Auftrage der Patristischen Kommission der Akademien der Wissenschaften in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland herausgegeben von K. Aland und E. Mühlenberg, Band 25 (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter 1986).

is highly elaborate, learned, and peculiar enough.³ In this philosophical volume of *ICS*, we shall limit ourselves to pointing out the main philosophical sources of Hippolytus' inspiration. They are two—Plato and Stoa.

Plato. According to Hippolytus, prior to the Creation, God first conceives in his mind the ideas or forms of the future beings—*αἱ ἐν τῷ πατρικῷ <νῷ> ἐννοηθεῖσαι ἰδέαι* (X. 33. 2). This act is called “the Father's mental conception” (*ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐννοια*). Now leaving apart Greek antecedents of the term *ἐννοια*, I think the most likely sources of Hippolytus' inspiration are Justin Martyr (1 *Apology* 64. 3 *ἐννοηθέντα τὸν θεὸν διὰ Λόγου τὸν κόσμον ποιῆσαι*) and especially the Valentinian Gnostic Ptolemy, who is quoted by Hippolytus at *Ref.* VI. 38. 5. According to Ptolemy, the Father (or Bythos) has two consorts, dispositions or powers—*Ἐννοϊαν καὶ Θέλησιν πρῶτον γὰρ ἐνενοήθη τι προβαλεῖν, ἔπειτα ἠθέλησε*. Notice that both acts of the God creator—Conception and Will—recur in Hippolytus' own Theology—*ὅτε <αὐτὸς> ἠθέλησε ποιεῖν* (X. 32. 1); *ὅσα γοῦν ἠθέλησεν ποιεῖν ὁ θεός . . . ; ὅτε δὲ <ὅσα> ἠθέλησεν ὡς ἠθέλησε καὶ ἐποίησεν . . .* (X. 33. 6–7); *Λόγος ἐν ἑαυτῷ φέρων τὸ θέλειν τοῦ γεγεννηκότος* (X. 33. 2); *τὸ ἀρέσκον θεῷ* (*ibid.*).

As the next step, God creates the four basic principles (*ἀρχαί*) or first substances (*αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι*) for the future beings—fire and spirit (*πνεῦμα*, not air), water and earth (X. 32. 2 and 33. 4). According to Hippolytus, beings are made either out of a single substance (*τὰ μονοούσια*) or a combination of the four elements. This process of combination is called “binding a living organism together” (*σύνδεσμος*, X. 32. 2), and is most probably Platonic in origin (compare, e.g., *Tim.* 73 b 3 *ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι συνδουμένη*; *Symp.* 202 e 6 *ὥστε τὸ πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι*).

Following this theory of “fastening the elements in a whole (an organism),” Hippolytus concludes that only the beings made out of one single substance are imperishable, since they cannot be “undone”—*καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐξ ἐνὸς ἀθάνατα ἦν* (*λύσις γὰρ <αὐτοῖς> οὐ παρακολουθεῖ τὸ γὰρ ἐν οὐ λυθήσεται πώποτε*), *τὰ δὲ ἐκ δύο ἢ τριῶν ἢ τεσσάρων λυτά. διὸ καὶ θνητὰ ὀνομάζονται θάνατος γὰρ τοῦτο κέκληται, ἡ τῶν δεδεμένω λύσις* (X. 32. 3).

Now, the idea that all which has been fastened together may be undone and perish, is Platonic. Compare, e.g., *Tim.* 41 a 7 *τὸ μὲν οὖν δὴ δεθὲν πᾶν λυτόν*. I need not engage here in the discussion about

³ On Hippolytus' Theology compare M. Richard, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 44–45 (Paris 1968), s.v. Hippolyte de Rome, pp. 545–571; L. Bertsch, *Die Botschaft vom Christus und unserer Erlösung bei Hippolyt von Rom* (Augsburg 1966).

whether Hippolytus is consistent in his theory. Briefly stated, I think he is consistent but elliptical (ικανὸν οὖν νῦν <ἔστι ταῦτα> τοῖς εὐφρονούσιν ἀποκεκρίσθαι . . . τὸ δὲ νῦν ἱκανὸν <δοκεῖ> εἶναι ἐκθέσθαι τὰς αἰτίας, X. 32. 4–5). Presumably, the only being composed of one single substance is the Holy Ghost (Πνεῦμα). Jesus, the Logos, consists of the divine substance of the Father (οὐσία ὑπάρχων θεοῦ, X. 33. 8). Sun, moon and the stars are made of fire and spirit, thus perishable. So is the world (ὁ δὲ κόσμος . . . ἐπιδέχεται καὶ λύσιν, X. 33. 8). If my restoration of the corrupt text is correct, the angels too are made of fire and spirit (compare OT Psalm 103:4 and Gregory Naz. *Orat. theol.* 28. 31 and 31. 15). Consequently, they too are potentially perishable. Finally, when Hippolytus states that fish and birds are made of water, while reptiles, beasts and other animals are made of earth, I think we should understand, “primarily of water or earth, respectively.” For, evidently, the animals are not τὰ μονοούσια and thus imperishable.

Man is created out of all four elements—ἐκ πασῶν σύνθετος οὐσιῶν (X. 33. 7). This idea too is Platonic. Compare *Tim.* 42 e – 43 a, and Albinus clearly states, οἱ δὲ θεοὶ ἔπλασαν μὲν προηγουμένως τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ γῆς καὶ πυρὸς καὶ ἀέρος καὶ ὕδατος (*Epitome* 17. 1, ed. Hermann, Plato vol. VI, p. 172).

A third encounter of Hippolytus with Platonism seems to occur in his reinterpretation of the Delphic injunction, Γνώθι σεαυτόν (quoted at I. 18), in the sense of, “Man, recognize that thou art godlike”—<καὶ> τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸ “γνώθι σεαυτόν,” ἐπιγνοὺς <ἐν σεαυτῷ> τὸν πεποιηκότα θεόν (X. 34. 4). Doubtless, Hippolytus is building upon OT Genesis 1:26 (referred to at X. 34. 5)—Man is made in God’s image and likeness. But there is no injunction, “Know thyself,” in the Old Testament. On the other hand, a reinterpretation of the Γνώθι σεαυτόν in the sense of Γνώθι τὸ θεῖον ἐν σεαυτῷ is to be found in the first *Alcibiades* 133 c 4—“Then this part of the soul resembles God, and he who looks at this part, having realized all things divine, will be most likely to know himself” (Τῷ θεῷ ἄρα τοῦτ' ἔοικεν αὐτῆς, καὶ τις εἰς τοῦτο βλέπων καὶ πᾶν τὸ θεῖον γνοῦς, . . . οὕτω καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἂν γνοίη μάλιστα).

In conclusion, throughout the Elenchos, Hippolytus dismisses Plato’s pagan philosophy—and he calls Valentinus Πλατωνικός, οὐ Χριστιανός (VI. 29. 1)—only to succumb to the Platonic spell in his own Theology, as did Athenagoras half a century before him.

Stoa. Hippolytus’ Christology displays a peculiar blend of Stoic and Christian ideas. Contrary to the doctrine of Noetus and Callistus, according to Hippolytus the Son does not coexist with the Father,

but is being first mentally conceived and then born by the Father as any other being—Οὗτος οὖν <ὁ> μόνος . . . θεὸς Λόγον πρῶτον ἐννοθεῖς ἀπογεννᾷ (X. 33. 1). The only difference of significance between the “first-born” son (NT Col. 1:15) and the rest of the creatures is in the fact that the Son consists of pure being, i.e., of the same substance as the Father (τοῦτον <οὖν> μόνον ἐξ ὄντων ἐγέννα· τὸ γὰρ ὄν αὐτὸς ὁ πατήρ ἦν, ἐξ οὗ τὸ γεννηθὲν, X. 33. 1; ὁ Λόγος . . . οὐσία ὑπάρχων θεοῦ, X. 33. 8), while the rest of the beings are made out of one or more of the four basic elements.

The “first-born” Son exists in the Father as his *immanent reasoning* about the universe (οὗ <δὲ> Λόγον ὡς φωνήν, ἀλλ’ ἐνδιάθετον τοῦ παντὸς λογισμόν, X. 33. 1). When the Father decides to create the world, presumably, he opens his mouth, and his *immanent reasoning* (ἐνδιάθετος λόγος) becomes at once an *uttered Word* (προφορικὸς λόγος). It is this uttered Word that becomes the Father’s only *agent of Creation*—καὶ αἴτιον τοῖς γινομένοις Λόγος ἦν (X. 33. 2); ἵνα Λόγος ὑπουργῇ (33. 4); ὅσα γοῦν ἠθέλησεν ποιεῖν ὁ θεός, ταῦτα Λόγῳ ἐδημιούργει (33. 6); τα(ῦτα) δὲ πάντα δῶκει ὁ Λόγος ὁ θεοῦ (33. 11). Hippolytus’ elliptic account is perhaps best illustrated by the Christology of Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autolyicum* II. 10 & 22): Ἐχων οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐνδιάθετον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳις σπλάγχνοις (cf. OT Psalm 109:3), ἐγέννησεν αὐτόν . . . ; ὁπότε δὲ ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἐβουλεύσατο, τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐγέννησεν προφορικόν, “πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως . . .” (NT Col. 1:15).

Now, the distinction between the two kinds of Logos—“mental reasoning” (ἐνδιάθετος) and “uttered word” (προφορικὸς)—is clearly Stoic,⁴ with possible antecedents in Plato (*Sophist* 263 e) and Aristotle (e.g., *Anal. Post.* A 10, p. 76 b 25). But, as the examples of Theophilus, Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* II. 12. 5), or Origen (*Contra Celsum* VI. 65) show, it was well established in the time of Hippolytus.⁵

The problem, however, is in the function of the Logos as a *Voice* (φωνή). We can understand that a Stoic *προφορικὸς λόγος* is no other thing but an uttered *voice*, or, as Hippolytus puts it,—ὁ Λόγος ὁ θεοῦ . . . , ἡ πρὸ ἐωσφόρου φωσφόρος φωνή (X. 33. 11); (Χάος) ὑπὸ Λόγον φωνῆς μὴ καταλαμφθὲν (X. 34. 2); φωνὴν φθεγγόμενος καὶ φῶς ἐκ φωτὸς γεννῶν προῆκεν τῇ κτίσει κύριον τὸν ἴδιον νοῦν (*Contra Noetum* 10, p. 253. 5 Nautin; cf. NT II Petri 1:19).

We can also understand that Logos serves as a “voice of God” to men (Adam, the prophets and others). Consider, e.g., X. 33. 13 καὶ

⁴ Cf., e.g., Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*² I (Göttingen 1959), pp. 39; 185; 373 ff.; 412; 435; 451.—II (Göttingen 1955), Erläuterungen.

⁵ It suffices here to refer to M. Mühl, in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (Bonn, Bouvier), VII (1962), 7–56.

ταῦτα <δὲ> ὁ θεὸς ἐκέλευε Λόγωι, ὁ δὲ Λόγος ἐφθέγγετο λέγων <τοῖς προφήταις> . . ., or Theophilus (II. 22) 'Ὁ δὲ λόγος αὐτοῦ, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα πεποιήκεν, . . . ἀναλαμβάνων τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς, . . . οὗτος ὠμίλει τῷ Ἀδάμ. . . φωνὴ δὲ τί ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἄλλ' ἢ ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν καὶ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ;

What is peculiar in Hippolytus' Christology is the fact that Logos bears in himself the Father's ideas *as a voice*— ἅμα γὰρ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ γεννησαντος προελθεῖν . . . <ὡς> φωνὴν εἶχεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰς ἐν τῷ πατρικῷ <νῷ> ἐννοηθείσας ιδέας (X. 33. 2). If I understand Hippolytus correctly, he is trying to tell us that Logos is fulfilling his Demiurgical duty by *transforming* the Father's *immanent ideas* into *uttered words*. How can we explain such a function of Logos? Certainly we are not dealing here with the folkloric motif of the creation of the world by a Demiurge's sound of music. Nor is it likely that Logos brings beings into existence simply by naming them, by giving them a name (in the sense of Basilides' *ὀνόματι μορφοῦν*, *Ref.* VII. 18. 1). For we learn from Hippolytus himself that the naming of the beings did not coincide with their very creation— ὅτε δὲ <ῥσα> ἠ<θέλησεν> ὡς ἠθέλησε καὶ ἐποίησεν, ὀνόμασιν <αὐτὰ> καλέσας ἐσήμηνεν (X. 33. 7).

Since no Stoic theory of language seems to be of avail in our case, the only suggestion I am at present able to offer is that Logos transforms the Father's ideas into voice in his role of the traditional Old Testament "*voice of God*." Compare, e.g., OT Genesis 1:3 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός· Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς, with Basilides' interpretation (*Ref.* VII. 22. 3), οὐ γὰρ γέγραπται πόθεν γέγονε τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ μόνον <τὸ γενόμενον> ἐκ τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ λέγοντος. . . . Or Hippolytus (*Contra Noetum* 10) Θεὸς μόνος ὑπάρχων καὶ μηδὲν ἔχων ἑαυτῷ σύγχρονον ἐβουλήθη κόσμον κτίσαι· ὅς κόσμον ἐννοηθεὶς θελήσας τε καὶ φθεγξάμενος ἐποίησεν.

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