

**The soul grown heavy and the winged soul (*Phdr.* 246a6-248c2)
according to Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa**

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The metaphor of the winged soul which, thanks to its orientation towards beauty, wisdom, the good, and other aspects of deity, rises up to participate in the procession of the gods¹ and, on the other hand, grows heavy, loses its wings, and falls into a particular body,² whether through its own confusion³ or a mess of other souls⁴ distracted from this contemplation, is among the most famous topics of the Platonic tradition. The popularity of this image from Plato's *Phaedrus* with Platonic philosophers, the Jewish exegete Philo of Alexandria, and Christian authors, too, was exceptional.⁵ In this paper, I compare the interpretation of this topic in Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, not in order to affirm that Clement could have been a direct inspiration for Gregory, but rather to show a very similar approach to the Platonic material, which, nevertheless, led to slightly different results in both Christian authors.

Clement of Alexandria

¹ Plato, *Phdr.* 246d6-e2: Πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθεὶς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα ἢ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ, κεκοινωνήκε δέ πη μάλιστα τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ θεοῦ [ψυχῆ], τὸ δὲ θεῖον καλόν, σοφόν, ἀγαθόν, καὶ πᾶν ὅτι τοιοῦτον· τούτοις δὴ τρέφεται τε καὶ αὔξεται μάλιστα γὰρ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πτέρωμα.

² *Phdr.* 246c2-6; 248c5-8.

³ *Phdr.* 247b3-5: βρίθει γὰρ ὁ τῆς κάκης ἵππος μετέχων, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων ᾧ μὴ καλῶς ἦν τεθραμμένος τῶν ἡνιόχων.

⁴ *Phdr.* 248a1-c1.

⁵ P. Courcelle, s. v. *Flügel (Flug) der Seele I*, in: RAC 8, Stuttgart 1972, 29-65; J. Daniélou, *La colombe et la ténèbre dans la mystique byzantine ancienne*, in: *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 23, 1954, 389-418, here 396-400; Idem, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux II^e et III^e siècles*, Tournai 1961 (reprinted 1990), 115-121. On the tradition of the Middle Platonic interpretation of the *Phaedrus*, as attested, among others, by Philo of Alexandria, cf. P. Boyancé, *La religion astrale de Platon à Cicéron*, in: REG 65, 1952, 327!!; Idem, *Sur l'exégèse hellénistique du Phèdre (Phèdre, 246c)*, in: *Miscellanea di studi Alessandrini in memoria di Augusto Rostagni*, Torino 1963, 45-53. On Philo, see A. Méasson, *Du char ailé de Zeus à l'Arche d'Alliance. Images et mythes platoniciens chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, Paris 1986. Likewise cf. below, !!.

In his *Stromata* – to which I confine myself in this paper⁶ – Clement mentions the title of Plato’s “Phaedrus” several times.⁷ The most interesting passage for our question, however, combines elements of Plato’s *Phaedrus* with his *Phaedo*. We are told that the soul separated from the body (as described in the *Phaedo* 65c7) will, through its love, gain feathers and participate in ideas (as exposed in the *Phaedrus* 246e1-2):

“Also in the *Phaedrus* he says that only when in a separate state can the soul become partaker of the true wisdom and surpass human power; when, by heavenly love, it receives wings to the ascent to heaven.”⁸

Elsewhere, Clement mentions a very similar combination of Platonic elements under the title “On the Soul”, which is what Plato’s *Phaedo* was called in antiquity.⁹ Here, the metaphor of a pair of horses from the *Phaedrus* (247b3-5 and 248c5-8) is connected with the tripartite soul from Plato’s *Republic* (439d-441a):

⁶ The elements of the *Phaedrus* in Clement’s *Protrepticus* were collected by G. W. Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria’s Protrepticus and the Phaedrus of Plato*, in: CQ 10, 1916, 198-205 (on our topic, see esp. 201f.). On the metaphor of the winged soul, see *Protr.* 10,93,3 (GCS Clemens I³, 68,24-26): ... ἐκεῖνος ὁ θησαυρὸς τῆς σωτηρίας, πρὸς ὃν γε ἐπειγέσθαι χρὴ φιλολόγουσ γενομένους, συναπαίρει δὲ ἡμῖν ἐνθένδε τὰ ἔργα τὰ ἀστεῖα καὶ συνίπταται τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας πτεροῦ. *Ibid.* 10,106,3 (GCS I³, 76,8-11): τάχα που ὁ κύριος ἀπλότητος ὑμῖν δωρήσεται πτερόν (πτεροῦσαι προήρηται τοὺς γηγενεῖς), ἵνα δὴ τοὺς χηραμοὺς καταλίποντες οἰκήσητε τοὺς οὐρανοὺς. The charioteer of the soul is interpreted as Christ; see *Protr.* 12,121,1 (GCS I³ 85,18).

⁷ *Strom.* I,68,3 (GCS II⁴ 43,1); II,22,1 (GCS II⁴ 124,4); V,14,2 (GCS II⁴ 335,6); V,16,3 (GCS II⁴ 336,7); V,93,1 (GCS II⁴ 387,12); V,95,3 (GCS II⁴ 389,1); V,97,1 (GCS II⁴ 390,4). Clement also mentions the dialogue *Phaedrus* in *Paed.* II,86,2 (GCS I³, 210,2). See O. Stählin – U. Treu, GCS, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, IV, Register, Berlin 1980, 52; 187; further Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien*, Berlin – New York 1983, 30-34; 39; 92; 125-127; 167f.; 172; 223; 256; 261; 266; 310f.; 315f.

⁸ *Strom.* V,14,2 (GCS II⁴ 335,6-9): καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐν τῷ Φαίδρω αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν γενομένην τὴν ψυχὴν λέγων μόνην δύνασθαι τῆς ἀληθινῆς σοφίας καὶ κρείττονος τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης δυνάμεως μεταλαβεῖν, ὅταν αὐτὴν ὁ ἐνθένδε ἔρως εἰς οὐρανὸν πτερώσῃ. English translation William Wilson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, Buffalo, NY 1885, modified. Cf. *Phd.* 65c7: αὐτὴ καθ’ αὐτὴν γίγνηται. See also *Phd.* 65c7; d1-2; 67a1; 79d1.4. See further D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 256f.

⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* III,58,641f. (Dorandi 273); see further *ibid.* 36,401 (Dorandi 262); 37,411 (Dorandi 263); 55,609 (Dorandi 272).

“Thus also Plato, in his book *On the Soul*, says that the charioteer and the horse that ran off — the irrational part, which is divided in two, into anger and concupiscence — fall down.”¹⁰

As some interpreters suggest, Clement might have used some thematic excerpts from Plato’s dialogues, where passages from the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Republic* were combined.¹¹ At any rate, he does not cite Plato literally, but in a very loose paraphrase.

Nevertheless, we do find literal quotes from the *Phaedrus* in Clement’s *Stromata*, too. In one of these passages, Clement repeats the description of ideas as seen by the soul in its contemplation in the realm above heaven, according to the myth in the *Phaedrus* (247c3-8). Along with the Middle Platonic interpretation, Clement understands ideas as the thoughts of God.¹² Another almost literal quote from the *Phaedrus* refers to the procession of the gods, into which the soul is incorporated to see ideas, as if initiated into mysteries, as Plato puts it. Clement interprets this participation in the procession of the gods as eschatological and that is why he uses the future tense here, to say “we will see” (ἐποπτεύσομεν) where Plato does not have it.¹³ In another place, Clement cites Socrates’ prayer to Pan from the concluding part of Plato’s dialogue almost literally.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Strom.* V,53,1 (GCS II⁴ 362,7-9): οὕτως καὶ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Περὶ ψυχῆς τὸν τε ἡνίοχον καὶ τὸν ἀποστατήσαντα ἵππον (τὸ ἄλογον μέρος, ὃ δὴ δίχα τέμνεται, εἰς θυμὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν,) καταπίπτειν φησίν. English translation W. Wilson. Cf. *Phdr.* 247b3-5: βρίθει γὰρ ὁ τῆς κάκης ἵππος μετέχων, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων ᾧ μὴ καλῶς ἦν τεθραμμένος τῶν ἡνίοχων. *Phdr.* 248c5-8: τοῦτο δύνηται ποιεῖν, ἀεὶ ἀβλαβῆ εἶναι· ὅταν δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπέσθαι μὴ ἴδη, καὶ τινι συντυχίᾳ χρησαμένη λήθης τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῆ, βαρυνθεῖσα δὲ πετρορρουήση τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ.

¹¹ Cf. *Strom.* I,69,2 (GCS II⁴ 43,7-10). Here Clement, under the title “On the Soul”, refers to Plato’s *Republic* X, 617d-e. See A. Le Boulluec, SC 279, 196f. As D. Wyrwa (*Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 5-8; 185) puts it, it is probable, but cannot be proved, that Clement had access to Plato’s dialogues themselves.

¹² *Strom.* V,16,3-4 (GCS II⁴ 336,7-12): ἐν δὲ τῷ Φαίδρω περὶ ἀληθείας ὡς ιδέας λέγων ὁ Πλάτων δηλώσει **. ἡ δὲ ιδέα ἐννόημα τοῦ θεοῦ... ἔχει δὲ τὰ τῆς λέξεως ὧδε· “τολμητέον γὰρ οὖν τό γε ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν ἄλλως τε καὶ περὶ ἀληθείας λέγοντα· ἡ γὰρ ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσημάτιστος καὶ ἀναφῆς οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη μόνῳ νῶ θεατῇ.” Cf. D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 262f.; A. Le Boulluec, SC 279, 84f.

¹³ *Strom.* V,138,3 (GCS II⁴ 419,24–420,8): “ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῶ” κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα “μακαρίαν ὄψιν τε καὶ θέαν” ἐποπτεύσομεν, “ἐπόμενοι μετὰ μὲν Διὸς ἡμεῖς, ἄλλοι δὲ μετ’ ἄλλων θεῶν, τελετῶν, ἢ θέμις λέγειν, μακαριωτάτην τελούμενοι, ἦν ὀργιάζομεν,

As far as our metaphors are concerned, Clement knows both of them: the “feathering” of the soul for its journey upwards caused by love (ἔρωσ)¹⁵ and the fall of its pair of horses into the body.¹⁶ In the latter case, however, he does not mean the incarnation of the soul into a terrestrial body¹⁷ but rather its spiritual or moral fall, its inappropriate involvement in earthly things, or its inability to control itself. This is clearly illustrated in the passage from the fifth book of the *Stromata*, just mentioned, where Clement, in a real patchwork of classical and biblical elements, combines the fall of the pair of horses in the soul with the myth of Phaëthon and, what is more, the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea (cf. Ex 15,1.21):

“And when, again, it is said in the ode, *For He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea; the many-limbed and brutal affection, lust, with the rider mounted, who gives the reins to pleasures, He has cast into the sea, throwing them away into the disorders of the world.* Thus also Plato, in his book *On the Soul*, says that the charioteer and the horse that ran off — the irrational part, which is divided in two, into anger and concupiscence — fall down; and so the myth intimates that it was through the licentiousness (ἀκρασία) of the steeds that Phaëthon was thrown out.”¹⁸

όλόκληροι μὲν αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀπαθεῖς κακῶν, ὅσα ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑστέρω χρόνῳ ὑπέμεινεν, ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἀτρεμῆ φάσματα μυσούμενοι τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρῶ, καθαροὶ καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου, ὃ νῦν σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὁστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι.” Cf. *Phdr.* 250b6-c6 (with slight differences). On Clement’s analogy between the Christian religion and Eleusinian mysteries, see A. Le Boulluec, SC 279, 370f.; more carefully Christoph Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien*, Berlin – New York 1987, 116-161. On his eschatological understanding of this passage, see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 315f. On the metaphors taken from the mysteries in Plato, see Ch. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 30-69.

¹⁴ *Strom.* II,22,1 (GCS II⁴ 124,4-7) a V,97,1 (GCS⁴ 390,5), cf. *Phdr.* 279b8-c1.

¹⁵ See above, n. 8!!.

¹⁶ See above, n. 10!!.

¹⁷ Clement very probably rejected the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul; see *Strom.* III,13,1-2 (CGS, Clemens II⁴, 201,13-19); III,94,2 (GCS, Clemens II⁴, 239,11-14); IV,167,4 (GCS Clemens II⁴, 322,29–323,2). For more details, cf. Jean Héring, *Étude sur la doctrine de la chute et de la préexistence des âmes chez Clément d’Alexandrie*, Paris 1923, 28-34.

¹⁸ *Strom.* V,52,5–53,1 (GCS II⁴ 362,3-9): ὅταν τε αὖ ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ λέγη «ἐνδόξως γὰρ δεδόξασται, ἵππον καὶ ἀναβάτην ἔρριψεν εἰς θάλασσαν», τὸ πολυσκελὲς καὶ κτηνώδες καὶ ὀρητικὸν πάθος, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, σὺν καὶ τῷ ἐπιβεβηκότι ἡνιόχῳ τὰς ἡνίας ταῖς ἡδοναῖς

The myth of Phaethon's "burning out" (ἐκπύρωσις), as Clement puts it elsewhere,¹⁹ was rationalised as a meteorological phenomenon in Plato's *Timaeus*;²⁰ Plutarchus, on the other hand, uses the tragedy of Helios' son as an example of arrogant foolishness (ἀφροσύνη).²¹ Clement mentions his story almost as a historical event²² which, nevertheless, does not prevent him from moralising it in a Plutarchian vein.²³ An allegorical interpretation of the biblical narrative on the ruin of the Egyptians in the depths of the sea as a victory over passions has already been given by Philo of Alexandria, who, nevertheless, did not combine it with the fallen soul from the *Phaedrus* or the myth of Phaëthon.²⁴

The "feathering" of the soul for its flight to heaven, also known to Philo,²⁵ is used by Clement in a Christianised version and presented as a result of Christian preaching which can bring the listener to eternal life²⁶ or as a gift of the "Spirit of Christ" for the (eschatological) journey to "my Jerusalem".²⁷ In this last passage, Clement even quotes an unknown work by Euripides: "Golden wings are round my back, and I am shod with the winged sandals of

ἐπιδεδωκότι «ἔρριψεν εἰς θάλασσαν», εἰς τὰς κοσμικὰς ἀταξίας ἀποβαλὼν. οὕτως καὶ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Περὶ ψυχῆς τὸν τε ἡνίοχον καὶ τὸν ἀποστατήσαντα ἵππον (τὸ ἄλογον μέρος, ὃ δὴ δίχα τέμνεται, εἰς θυμὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν,) καταπίπτειν φησὶν. ἢ καὶ τὸν Φαέθοντα δι' ἀκρασίαν τῶν πῶλων ἐκπεσεῖν ὁ μῦθος αἰνίττεται. English translation W. Wilson. Cf. above, n. !!.

¹⁹ *Strom.* I,103,2 (GCS II⁴ 66,17).

²⁰ Plato, *Tim.* 22c-d.

²¹ Plutarchus, *De exilio*, 607F5-7.

²² *Strom.* I,103,2 (GCS II⁴ 66,16f.); I,136,4 (GCS II⁴ 84,29–85,1).

²³ *Paed.* III,14,1 (GCS I³, 244).

²⁴ Philo of Alexandria, *Agr.* 82-83 (Cohn-Wendland II, 111f.); *Ebr.* 111 (Cohn-Wendland II, 192); *De somn.* II, 269-270 (Cohn-Wendland III, 301). See D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 266f.; A. Méasson, *Du char ailé*, 170f.; 180f.; A. van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model*, Leiden 1988, 193.

²⁵ *De spec.* I,207 (Cohn-Wendland V, 50). See below, !!.

²⁶ *Strom.* I,4,3 (GCS II⁴ 5,9).

²⁷ *Strom.* IV,172,2 (GCS II⁴ 324,24f.): ἐγὼ δὲ ἂν εὐξαίμην τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ πτερωσαί με εἰς τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ τὴν ἐμήν. cf. Ga 4:26 ("the Jerusalem above"); Hebr 12:22 ("the heavenly Jerusalem"); Rev 21:2 (the "new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven"). On the eschatological meaning of this passage, see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 295-297.

the Sirens; and I shall go aloft into the wide ether, to hold converse with Zeus.”²⁸

In another place, Clement wonders whether the heavenly Father “draws” the purified soul to him (John 6:44) or it makes this jump by its free choice (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν αὐτεξούσιον) when it approaches the knowledge of good.²⁹ In any case, he presupposes this “feathering, winging and lifting over everything which even transcends the soul, not to be possible without a special grace”.³⁰ Very interestingly, Clement tries to find this “special grace” even in Plato, who also speaks about virtue as a divine gift.³¹

The soul had “to put away the load which weighed it down and to deliver it to the elements congruent (τῷ συγγενεῖ)”,³² so that it liberates itself for this flight (as if in a balloon, we might imagine). With the image of “delivering the load” Clement probably means the detaching of the soul from the body – composed of four elements – after death. At the same time, he alludes to the philosophical “separating” of the soul from the body, as discussed in Plato’s *Phaedo* (65c) and as mentioned elsewhere in the *Stromata*.³³

²⁸ *Strom.* IV,172,1 (GCS II⁴ 324,19-23): χρύσειαι δὴ μοι πτέρυγες περὶ νότω/ ... καὶ τὰ Σειρήνων ἐρόεντα (Kannicht πτερόεντα) πέδιλα ἀρμόζονται,/ βάσομαί τ’ ἐς (Kannicht δ’ ἀν’) αἰθέρα πουλὺν ἀερόεις/ Ζηνὶ προσμίσξω (Kannicht προσμείξω). Euripides, *frg. incogn.* 911 (ed. R. Kannicht, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*, V,2, Göttingen 2004, 918; equally *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*, IX, ed. A. S. Hunt, London 1912, p. 161f., Nr. 1176, frg. 39, col. xvii,30-39 = Satyros, *Vita Euripidis*). Engl. translation W. Wilson.

²⁹ *Strom.* V,83,1 (GCS II⁴ 381,15-19): εἴτ’ οὖν ὁ πατήρ αὐτὸς ἔλκει πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντα τὸν καθαρῶς βεβιωκότα καὶ εἰς ἔννοιαν τῆς μακαρίας καὶ ἀφθάρτου φύσεως κεχωρηκότα, εἴτε τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν αὐτεξούσιον εἰς γνῶσιν ἀφικόμενον τὰγαθοῦ σκιρτᾷ τε καὶ πηδᾷ ὑπὲρ τὰ ἔσκαμμένα, ἢ φασιν οἱ γυμνασταί.

³⁰ *Strom.* V,83,1 (GCS II⁴ 381,19f.): πλὴν οὐ χάριτος ἄνευ τῆς ἐξαιρέτου περροῦταί τε καὶ ἀνίσταται καὶ ἄνω τῶν ὑπερκειμένων αἴρεται ἡ ψυχὴ.

³¹ *Strom.* V,83,2 (GCS II⁴ 381,21-24); cf. Plato, *Men.* 100b2-4.

³² *Strom.* V,83,1 (GCS II⁴ 381,20f.): ... πᾶν τὸ βροῖθον ἀποτιθεμένη καὶ ἀποδιδούσα τῷ συγγενεῖ.

³³ *Strom.* VI,75,3 (GCS II⁴ 469,13-19): ἢ γὰρ οὐχί, ἀποδημῶν πρὸς τὸν κύριον δι’ ἀγάπην τὴν πρὸς αὐτόν, κἂν τὸ σκῆνος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ γῆς θεωρῆται, ἑαυτὸν μὲν οὐκ ἐξάγει τοῦ βίου (οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτέτραπται αὐτῷ), ἐξήγαγεν δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν τῶν παθῶν (συγκεχώρηται γὰρ αὐτῷ) ζῆ τε αὐτὸ νεκρῶσας τὰς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ οὐκέτι συγχρῆται τῷ σώματι, μόνον δὲ αὐτῷ ἐπιτρέπει χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἀναγκαίοις, ἵνα μὴ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς διαλύσεως παράσχη;

In the case of weak souls, Clement even speaks metaphorically about “falling down to the ground” (ἀποπίπτουσι χαμαί) under the attack of passions.³⁴ In a similar vein, he warns the soul “still weighed down by a (heavy) corner which hinders it” to risk “a crash down in its ascent of faith”.³⁵ In this last passage from the seventh book of the *Stromata*, Clement combines the metaphor of “the soul grown heavy” with the ideal of the round-shaped perfect soul, presupposed in Stoic doctrines.³⁶ Only a soul liberated from all “corners” or “angles” (γωνία), and thus perfectly “round”, is prepared for the winging up.

In a very interesting passage of the same book, Clement links the feathering of the soul and its flying up towards the intelligible realm (εἰς τὴν νοητὴν οὐσίαν) with the gesture of lifting the head and arms and even standing on tiptoe (τούς τε πόδας ἐπεγείρομεν) during prayer.³⁷ Clement explains this unusual gesture as follows:

³⁴ *Strom.* VII,9,4 (GCS, Clemens III², 8,27n.). See René Cadiou, *Introduction au système d'Origène*, Paris 1932, 25!!.

³⁵ *Strom.* VII,46,8 (GCS, Clemens III², 35,7-9): ὅσοις δὲ βρίθουσά τις ἔτι ὑπολείπεται γωνία κάτω ῥέπουσα, [καί] κατασπᾶται τὸ διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἀναγόμενον. Some interpreters propose to emend γωνία (“corner”) to ἀτονία (“slackness”) or ἀγνωσία (“ignorance”); cf. Joseph Mayor – Fenton J. A. Hort (ed.), *Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies Book VII*, London 1902, 80,23 *ad loc.*

³⁶ SVF II,815: Χρύσιππος δὲ μετὰ τὸν χωρισμὸν τοῦ σώματός φησιν αὐτὰς [τὰς ψυχὰς] σφαιροειδεῖς γενέσθαι. In a moral sense, Marcus Aurelius, *Ad se ipsum*, VIII,41,1,10; XI,12,1,1-3; XII,3,2,1-5; Ovidius, *Fasti* VI,269-272. The ideal round shape of the soul seems to be developed from the supposed round shape of the universe; cf. Plato, *Tim.* 33b. See I. P. Postgate, *On the Text of the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria*, in: *Classical Quarterly* 8, 1914, 237-247, here 245-247; A. Le Boulluec, SC 428, 160f., n. 3. The same shape of the soul was also known to Origen; see e.g. *De or.* 31,3 (GCS Origenes II, 397,5-7); for this passage, a common source with Clement can be supposed; see above, !!.

³⁷ *Strom.* VII,40,1 (GCS III² 30,19-22): Ταύτη καὶ προσανατείνομεν τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εἰς οὐρανὸν αἴρομεν τούς τε πόδας ἐπεγείρομεν κατὰ τὴν τελευταίαν τῆς εὐχῆς συνεκφώνησιν, ἐπακολουθοῦντες τῇ προθυμίᾳ τοῦ πνεύματος εἰς τὴν νοητὴν οὐσίαν... On lifting hands, see Psalm 140(141):2 (quoted by Clement in *Strom.* VII,43,8 [GCS III² 33,4n.]), and similarly Ps.-Aristotle, *De mun.* 400a16f.; 1Tm 2,8. Lifting the hands, eyes, and soul during prayer is also mentioned by Origen, *De or.* 31,1-2 (GCS 395,21-24; 396,2-4). The gesture of standing on tiptoe during the conclusion of prayer (τούς τε πόδας ἐπεγείρομεν κατὰ τὴν τελευταίαν τῆς εὐχῆς συνεκφώνησιν, 30,20) seems to be rather unusual (cf. A. Le Boulluec, SC 428, 141, n. 6), even though, according to A. Méhat, it must have been “well-known”; cf. A. Méhat, *Prière (III A)*, in: *DSp XII/2*, Paris 1986, 2247-2256, here 2252. A similar passage is to be found in *Paed.* I,16,3 (GCS I³, 99,31f.): “stretching upwards in

“[While] we thus endeavour to detach the body from the earth by lifting it upwards along with the uttered words, we spurn the fetters of the flesh and constrain the soul, winged with the desire of better things, to ascend into the holy place.”³⁸

The fact that it is a common prayer seems to have a certain significance, since Clement understands the ascent of souls as the formation of the eschatological body of Christ.³⁹

Clement presupposes the intelligible realm, identified with the thoughts of God, as the goal of the soul’s flight. This combination of the myth from Plato’s *Phaedrus* with the Middle Platonic identification of ideas as the thoughts of God⁴⁰ seems to be rather difficult, as it implies the soul lifting into the very mind of God. Clement embraces this difficulty and titles God, with Philo, metaphorically as a “place” (based on Gen 22:3f.) which “contains everything”.⁴¹

the soul (ἀνατεινόμενοι δὲ ἄνω), loosed from the world and our sins, touching the earth on tiptoe (ὀλίγω ποδὶ ἐφαπτόμενοι τῆς γῆς) (English translation W. Wilson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2). Cf. L. Perrone, *Clemens von Alexandrien und Origenes zum Gebet: Versuch eines Paradigmenvergleichs anhand ihrer Schriftstellen*, in: M. Havrda et al. (eds), *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21-23, 2010)*, Leiden 2012, 143-164, here 158, n. 49. This last passage seems to resemble Philo, *De spec. leg.* I,207 (Cohn–Wendland V, 49f.).

³⁸ *Strom.* VII,40,1 (GCS III² 30,20-25): ... συναφιστάνειν τῷ λόγῳ τὸ σῶμα τῆς γῆς πειρώμενοι, μετάρσιον ποιησάμενοι “τὴν ψυχὴν ἐπτερωμένην” τῷ πόθῳ τῶν κρειττόνων, ἐπὶ “τὰ ἅγια” χωρεῖν βιαζόμεθα, τοῦ δεσμοῦ καταμεγαλοφρονοῦντες τοῦ σαρκικοῦ. English translation Mayor–Hort, 69. On the ascent into the “holy place”, see Heb 9:25.

³⁹ *Ecl. proph.* 56,3-4 (to Ps 18[19]) (GCS III², 153). My thanks to Jana Plátová, who drew my attention to this passage.

⁴⁰ Cf. also *Strom.* IV,155,2 (GCS II⁴ 317,11).

⁴¹ *Strom.* V,73,3 (GCS II⁴ 375,18-21): δυσάλωτος γὰρ ἡ χώρα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃν χώραν ἰδεῶν ὁ Πλάτων κέκληκεν, παρὰ Μωυσέως λαβὼν τόπον εἶναι αὐτόν, ὡς τῶν ἀπάντων καὶ τῶν ὄλων περιεκτικόν. Cf. Philo, *De somn.* I,63-64 (Cohn–Wendland III, 218f.) on Gen 22:3f.; see also *Post.* 17-18 (Cohn–Wendland II, 4). Viz. A. Méhat, *Le “lieu supracéleste” de saint Justin à Origène*, in: *Forma futuri: Studi in onore del Cardinale M. Pellegrino*, Torino 1975, 282-294, here 292, n. 35; D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 274f.; A. van den Hoek, *Clement*, 169; 172; 175f.; A. Le Bouluec, SC 279, 252f.

In a Christianised version, Clement also applies the image of the procession of the gods who contemplate ideas, as described in Plato's *Phaedrus*. The ruler who supervises "the multitude of angels and gods" is supposed to be the divine Logos,⁴² and what is not yet purified and worthy of seeing the pure truth has "no access to this choir" (ἔξω θείου χοροῦ).⁴³ Like Plato (*Phdr.* 247a7), Clement also especially excludes envy from this choir,⁴⁴ as it is responsible for the crashing of souls and damage to their wings.

Clement even tries to Christianise "Adrasteia's law", which, for Plato, links the success of the individual souls in their heavenly contemplation with their chances after their incarnation: only the soul which contemplated ideas can become incarnate as a human being, capable of understanding general notions.⁴⁵ Clement, on the other hand, interprets "Adrasteia" as a law according to which God will save those who search for salvation. "God cannot be escaped (διαδρᾶναι)," states Clement, alluding to the etymology of Adrasteia's name, probably following Chrysippus.⁴⁶

The Gnostic Julius Cassian, "the founder of Docetism" (as Clement introduces him),⁴⁷ is reproached by Clement for taking Plato's law of reincarnation too literally, as he assumes "the divine soul to have entered the world of coming-to-be and passing away after becoming effeminate because of its desire" (cf.

⁴² *Strom.* VII,5,6 (GCS III² 6,3f.): τούτῳ πᾶσα ὑποτέτακται στρατιὰ ἀγγέλων τε καὶ θεῶν, τῷ λόγῳ τῷ πατρικῷ. Cf. Luke 2,13: ... σὺν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ πλήθος στρατιᾶς οὐρανόυ. *Phdr.* 246e6: ... στρατιὰ θεῶν τε καὶ δαιμόνων.

⁴³ *Strom.* V,19,2 (GCS⁴ 338,26); cf. *Phdr.* 247a7. On the divine choir, see also *Strom.* VII,49,4 (GCS III² 37,6).

⁴⁴ *Strom.* V,30,5 (GCS II⁴ 345,26n.) = *Phdr.* 247a7: φθόνος γὰρ ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἴσταται.

⁴⁵ *Phdr.* 249b6-c4.

⁴⁶ *Strom.* VII,20,8 (GCS III² 15,11f.): αὕτη που ἡ Ἀδράστεια, καθ' ἣν οὐκ ἔστι διαδρᾶναι τὸν θεόν. Cf. *Phdr.* 248c2: θεσμὸς τε Ἀδραστείας ὄδε. On the etymology of this name, see Chrysippos, SVF II,528 (from Areius Didymus according to Eusebius: Ἀδράστειαν δὲ, ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔστιν αὐτὸν ἀποδιδράσκειν); see U. Treu, *Etymologie und Allegorie bei Klemens von Alexandrien*, in: TU 79 (= StPatr 4), Berlin 1961, 191-211, here 194.

⁴⁷ *Strom.* III,91,1 (GCS II⁴ 238,9f.). On Cassian and his doctrines, see the entire passage *Strom.* III,91,1-95,2 (GCS II⁴ 238,9-240,5) and further *Strom.* I,101,2 (GCS II⁴ 64,23); III,102,3 (GCS II⁴ 243,12). On this figure, cf. Nikolaus Walter, *Der angebliche Chronograph Julius Cassianus. Ein Beitrag zu der Frage nach den Quellen des Clemens Alexandrinus*, in: *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Patristik. Erich Klostermann zum 90. Geburtstag dargebracht*, TU 77, Berlin 1961, 177-192; Kurt Rudolph, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion*, Göttingen 1980, 181f.!!.

Plato's *Tim.* 42b5-6; 90e6-91a1 and perhaps *Phdr.* 248c5-8).⁴⁸ On the other hand, it is to the "barbarians" that Clement ascribes the idea that rather the good souls left the "place above heaven", as Plato puts it, to become incarnate and "write down laws and proclaim philosophy".⁴⁹ Neither here nor elsewhere in the *Stromata* does Clement argue directly against Plato.⁵⁰ Unlike the reproach addressed to Cassian, Clement shares Plato's appreciation for the respect the "barbarians" (the Brahmins, the Odrysi, the Getae, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Arabians, and a portion of the Persian race) pay, thanks to this idea, to their teachers and lawgivers.⁵¹

Clement thus uses the metaphor of the soul "grown heavy" but he does not understand it literally as a statement concerning the protological destiny of the soul entering the body.⁵² He reproaches the heretics and praises the "barbarians" for their literal understanding thereof but for his part, he applies this metaphor only as describing the spiritual involvement of the soul with the corporeal realm.

Similarly, the image of the "feathering" and "winging up" of the soul, even more frequently used by Clement, describes metaphorically the spiritual ascent of the soul into the intelligible realm, i.e. into the "place" which is God himself. Unlike the metaphors of a fall and load, which do not allow the literal (i.e. protological) meaning in Clement's eyes, the "feathering" and

⁴⁸ *Strom.* III,93,3 (GCS II⁴ 239,5-7): ἡγεῖται δὲ ὁ γενναῖος οὗτος Πλατωνικώτερον θείαν οὖσαν τὴν ψυχὴν ἄνωθεν ἐπιθυμία θηλυθυεῖσαν δεῦρο ἦκειν εἰς γένεσιν καὶ φθοράν.

⁴⁹ *Strom.* I,67,4 (GCS II⁴ 42,14-18): ψυχὰς γὰρ ἀγαθὰς κατὰ Πλάτωνα καταλιπούσας τὸν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον ὑπομῆναι ἐλθεῖν εἰς τόνδε τὸν τάρταρον καὶ σῶμα ἀναλαβούσας τῶν ἐν γενέσει κακῶν ἀπάντων μετασχεῖν ὑπολαμβάνουσι, κηδομένας τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους, αἱ νόμους τε ἔθεσαν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν ἐκήρυξαν. In this passage, it is not very clear whether Clement attributes only the remark on the "place above heaven" to Plato or (rather) the fact of leaving it or even (which would be rather surprising) the idea of good souls leaving it. See D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 91-93.

⁵⁰ D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 305. Clement speaks about Plato with real esteem, calling him a "lover of the truth", cf. *Strom.* I,42,1 (GCS II⁴ 28,3f.); V,66,3 (GCS II⁴ 370,20); V,78,1 (GCS II⁴ 377,27); see Ch. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 116, n. 3.

⁵¹ *Strom.* I,67,3 (GCS II⁴ 42,13n.); 68,1-3 (GCS II⁴ 42,20-43,1). Clement also underlines Plato's appreciation of these "barbarians" and says, among other things: "In the *Phaedrus*, he shows the Egyptian king to be wiser than Thoth"; *Strom.* I,68,3 (GCS II⁴ 43,1f.). Cf. *Phdr.* 274c-275b. On this idea, probably inspired by the Middle Platonic tradition, see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 92-101.

⁵² See J. Daniélou, *Message évangélique*, 378.

“winging up” admit the interpretation as the eschatological dwelling of the soul with God, which, in the terrestrial life, is anticipated by the constant orientation of the Gnostic towards God.⁵³

The gesture of stretching the body upwards during prayer may indicate that Clement hopes for an elevation into heaven even for the body.⁵⁴ In the *Phaedrus*, Plato observes that “the wings have the natural power of lifting what is heavy and raising it towards the dwellings of the gods; of all things concerning the body the wings may thus be most likely to have companionship with the divine”.⁵⁵ The image of the feathering of the soul and its winging up thus need not mean only its detachment and separation from the body but, at the same time, its task of intermediating the participation in divinity to the body. However, this idea is not really intended by Plato and it is not developed by Clement either. Very interestingly, Clement seems to presuppose a common flight of souls which have to form the eschatological body of Christ.

Gregory of Nyssa

The title of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (like that of his *Cratylus*) is mentioned by Gregory in his polemics against the neo-Arian bishop Eunomius of Cyzicus to document the pagan inspirations of his adversary.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Strom.* VI,75,3 (GCS II⁴ 469,13-19), quoted above, n. !!. On the anticipation of the eschatological communion with God in the terrestrial life of the Gnostic, see J. Wytzes, *The Twofold Way II: Platonic Influences in the Work of Clement of Alexandria*, in: *VCh* 14, 1960, 129-153, here 135-137.

⁵⁴ See *Paed.* I,36,6 (GCS I³, 112,5f.): “For with this flesh, having a face which is like an angel’s, we shall see the promise face to face.” (σὺν αὐτῇ [scil. τῇ σαρκί] γὰρ τὸ πρόσωπον ἰσάγγελον ἔχοντες πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ὁψόμεθα). Cf. Acts 6:15; Luke 20:36. English translation after W. Wilson. My thanks to Veronika Černušková, who drew my attention to this passage. On Clement’s idea of the resurrected body, see Klaus Schmöle, *Läuterung nach dem Tode und pneumatische Auferstehung bei Klemens von Alexandrien*, Münster 1974!!.

⁵⁵ *Phdr.* 246d6-8: Πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθεὲς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα ἢ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ, κεκοινώνηκε δέ πη μάλιστα τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ θεοῦ [ψυχῆ], τὸ δὲ θεῖον.

⁵⁶ *C. Eun.* III,7,33-34 (GNO II, 227,2-8): τὸ γὰρ περιγεγραμμένον ἄπειρον εἶναι οὐ δύναται. πόθεν οὖν ὁ Πλατωνικὸς οὗτος Φαῖδρος τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς ἐκεῖ φιλοσοφηθέντα τῷ Πλάτῳ τοῖς ἰδίῳ δόγμασιν ἀσυναρτητῶς ἐρράπτει; ὡς γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἐκεῖ παῦλαν εἶπε κινήσεως,

What Gregory has in mind is probably the argument for the immortality of the soul as self-moving in the *Phaedrus*, which directly precedes the exposition on the heavenly pairs of horses. Here Plato mentions the “stopping of movement” (παῦλα κινήσεως)⁵⁷ applying to everything which is moved by something else. The connection of this idea with the doctrine of Eunomius, as cited by Gregory, is not very clear; however, it mentions the “stopping of birth” (παῦλα τῆς γεννήσεως),⁵⁸ which probably reminds Gregory of the “stopping of movement” in the *Phaedrus*. Be that as it may, what is now important to us is the knowledge of at least some passages of the *Phaedrus* which Gregory must have known almost by heart to recognise them even where they probably are not present.

In his dialogue “On the Soul and Resurrection”, also called the “Christian *Phaedo*”,⁵⁹ Gregory mentions, among the doctrines of ancient philosophers on the soul, the “Platonic carriage (τὸ Πλατωνικὸν ἄρμα) with the pair of horses dissimilar in their motions, and a charioteer above them – all enigmatic images in which (Plato) philosophises on the soul”.⁶⁰ Besides this quote, Gregory also refers to the idea of the “nations of souls which, before their incarnation, lived in a special community and, thanks to the fineness and movability of their nature, were carried by the circulating movement of the universe. However, because of a turning toward evil, these souls lost their feathers/wings and became incarnate.”⁶¹ According to the same doctrine, the soul “grown heavy” (ἐμβριθές) because of its sin and “descended”

οὕτω παῦλαν γεννήσεως καὶ οὗτος εἰπεῖν ἐπεθύμησεν, ὡς ἂν τοὺς ἀπείρους τούτων ταῖς Πλατωνικαῖς καλλιφωνίας περικομπήσειε. On Cratylus, cf. C. *Eun.* II,404 (GNO I, 344,13f.). See F. Mann, *Lexicon Gregorianum*, X, Leiden 2014, 336.

⁵⁷ *Phdr.* 245c6f.

⁵⁸ C. *Eun.* III,7,26 (GNO II, 224,11); cf. the entire passage, *ibid.* 4-14.

⁵⁹ On the tradition of this title, see H. M. Meissner, *Rhetorik und Theologie. Der Dialog Gregors von Nyssa „De anima et resurrectione“*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, 2, n. 2.

⁶⁰ *De an. res.* (GNO III/3, 33,14-17): ... τὸ Πλατωνικὸν ἄρμα καὶ τὴν ὑπεξευγμένην αὐτῶ ξυνωρίδα τῶν πάλων οὐχ ὁμοίως ταῖς ὁρμαῖς πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐχόντων καὶ τὸν ὑπὲρ τούτων ἡνίοχον, δι’ ὧν ἀπάντων τὰ τοιαῦτα περὶ ψυχῆς φιλοσοφεῖ δι’ αἰνίγματος.

⁶¹ *De an. res.* (GNO III/3, 14-19): Ἦκουσα γὰρ τῶν τοιαῦτα δογματιζόντων, ὅτι ἔθνη τινὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑποτίθεται ἐν ἰδιαζούσῃ τινὶ πολιτείᾳ πρὸ τῆς ἐν σώματι ζωῆς βιοτεύοντα ἐν τῷ λεπτῷ τε καὶ εὐκινήτῳ τῆς φύσεως ἑαυτῶν τῆ τοῦ παντός συμπεριπολοῦντα δινήσει, ῥοπήν δέ τινι τῇ πρὸς κακίαν πτερορροῦσας τὰς ψυχὰς ἐν σώμασι γίνεσθαι.

(κατωφερές) as far as the human body,⁶² may obtain its feathers/wings again by virtue and return to from where it fell down.⁶³

Gregory clearly rejects this idea developed from Plato's *Phaedrus* in its literal meaning, especially because of the doctrine of reincarnation implied in it.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, he likes to use it as a metaphor,⁶⁵ beginning with his first writing, "On Virginité". Here, the image of the charioteer (ὁ τοῦ ἄρματος ἐπιστάτης)⁶⁶ who controls the divergent horses is applied to the capacity of reason (νοῦς) keeping the qualities of the body in balance. Unlike Plato, Gregory probably has three horses in mind, not two, and, what is more, he speaks about controlling the body, not the soul.⁶⁷ In another place, however, Gregory also uses the image of a charioteer and the pair of horses to explain how irascibility (ὁ θυμός) and desire (ἡ ἐπιθυμία) may become very useful animals if reason controls them and directs them upwards.⁶⁸

⁶² *De an. res.* (GNO III/3, 85,2-4): ... ὡς τὸ τῆ φύσει λεπτὸν καὶ εὐκίνητον, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ, πρῶτον μὲν ἐμβριθὲς τε καὶ κατωφερὲς γίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνοις σώμασι διὰ κακίας εἰσοικιζόμενον. See equally *De hom. op.* 28 (PG 44, 233b-c): Ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο, τὸ μήτε κατὰ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν ἀπάτην ἐν κακίᾳ τινὶ βαρηθείσας τὰς τῷ παντὶ συμπεριπολούσας ψυχὰς, ἀδυναμία τοῦ συμπαραθέειν τῇ ὀξύτητι τῆς τοῦ πόλου κινήσεως, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καταπίπτειν οἶεσθαι.

⁶³ *De an. res.* (GNO III/3, 86,7-10): ... ἐντεῦθεν μὲν δι' ἀρετῆς πτεροφυήσασαι μετεωροποροῦσιν, ἐκεῖθεν δὲ διὰ κακίας τῶν πτερῶν ἐκπιπτόντων χαμαιπετεῖς καὶ πρόσγειοι γίνονται τῇ παχύτητι τῆς ὑλικῆς καταμιγνύμεναι φύσεως;

⁶⁴ *De an. res.* (GNO III/3, 84,12-14). On the necessity of comparing this doctrine with the Holy Scripture, see *ibid.* (GNO III/3, 33,6-14).

⁶⁵ On Gregory's application of this metaphor, see F. Mann, *Lexicon Gregorianum*, VII, Leiden 2009, 845-848.

⁶⁶ *De virg.* 22,2 (SC 119, 516 = GNO VIII/1, 332,14f.).

⁶⁷ *De virg.* 22,2 (SC 119, 516-518 = GNO VIII/1, 332,15-26): Ὅσπερ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος (scil. ὁ τοῦ ἄρματος ἐπιστάτης), εἰ μὴ συμφωνούντων ἐπιστατοῖν τῶν πάλων, οὔτε τὸν ὀξὺν ἐπισπέρχει τῇ μάστιγι οὔτε τὸν βραδὺν κατάγει ταῖς ἡνίαις, οὐδ' αὖ πάλιν τὸν ἐνδιάστροφον ἢ δυσήνιον ἀνετον ἐὰν ταῖς οἰκείαις ὀρμαῖς εἰς ἀταξίαν ἐκφέρεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν εὐθύνει, τὸν δὲ ἀνακόπτει, τοῦ δὲ καθικνεῖται διὰ τῆς μάστιγος, ἕως ἂν μίαν τοῖς πᾶσι τὴν πρὸς τὸν δρόμον σύμπνοιαν ἐμποίησιν, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ὁ ἡμέτερος νοῦς ὁ τὰς τοῦ σώματος ἡνίας ὑφ' ἑαυτὸν ἔχων οὔτε πλεονάζοντι τῷ θερμῷ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς νεότητος τὰς τῆς πυρώσεως προσθήκας ἐπινοήσει, οὔτε κατεψυγμένῳ διὰ πάθος ἢ χρόνον τὰ ψύχοντα καὶ τὰ μαραίνοντα πλεονάσει. See M. Aubineau, SC 119, 518, n. 1-2.

⁶⁸ *In inscr. Ps.* I,8,25 on Psalm 106 (SC 466, 246 = GNO V, 62,1-5): ἀγαθὸν κτηνὸς ἐστὶν ὁ θυμός, ὅταν τοῦ λογισμοῦ ὑποζύγιον γένηται· ἕτερον τοιοῦτον κτηνὸς ἢ ἐπιθυμία νωτοφοροῦσα τρόπον τινὰ καὶ βαστάζουσα τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ὕψος ἀνάγουσα, ὅταν ἐπὶ τὰ ἄνω τῇ ἡνίᾳ τῆς διανοίας εὐθύνηται.

In the treatise “On Virginité”, we also find the upward flight of the soul enabled by virtue (ἀνωφερέες πρᾶγμα ἢ ἀρετή)⁶⁹ or “on the wings of virtue” (τῷ τῆς ἀρετῆς πτεροῶ).⁷⁰ Gregory equally praises virginité, which “gives wings to the desire of heavenly things”⁷¹ or even “dwells in heaven with the Father of the (angelic) spirits and dances together with the cosmic powers”.⁷² In this last wording, Gregory combines the biblical title of God as “the Father of the spirits” (ὁ πατήρ τῶν πνευμάτων, Hebr 12:9) with, probably, the procession of the gods in the *Phaedrus* (246e4-247a7; 250b6-8) or the dance around the One in Plotinus’ treatise “On the Good or the One” (*Enn.* VI,9[9],8,43-9,2), or he develops the Christian idea of dancing with the angels during the Easter celebration.⁷³

In a very similar vein, Gregory combines the feathering of the soul from Plato’s *Phaedrus* with the flight of a dove in the biblical line of Psalm 54(55):7 and, at the same time, the Plotinian ascent to beauty, which makes the soul beautiful:

“How can anyone fly up (ἀναπταίη) into the heavens, who does not have the wings/feathers of heaven (μὴ πτερωθεὶς τῷ οὐρανίῳ πτεροῶ) and is not, by his lofty behaviour, directed and carried upwards? Few can be such strangers to evangelic mysteries as not to know that there is but one vehicle (ὄχημα) on which man’s soul can mount into the heavens, i.e. to assimilate itself to the descending dove, whose wings (πτέρυγας) David the Prophet also longed for. This is the enigmatic name used in Scripture for the power of the Holy Spirit; whether it be because not a drop of gall is found in that bird, or because it cannot

⁶⁹ *De virg.* 18,5 (SC 199, 482 = GNO VIII/1, 322,11f.).

⁷⁰ *De virg.* 4,6 (SC 119, 326 = GNO VIII/1, 275,3f.).

⁷¹ *De virg.* 2,3 (SC 199, 270 = GNO VIII/1, 255,9f.): ... πρὸς τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων ἐπιθυμίαν πτεροῦσα καὶ οἶονεὶ σύνδεσμός τις γινομένη.

⁷² *De virg.* 2,3 (SC 119, 268 = GNO VIII/1, 255,4-6): Ἐπεὶ οὖν τοσαύτη ἐστὶ τῆς παρθενίας ἡ δύναμις, ὡς καὶ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων μένειν καὶ μετὰ τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων χορεύειν δυνάμεων...

⁷³ See M. Aubineau, SC 119, 269, n. 6-7. Elsewhere Gregory, in a more Origenian than Platonic vein, speaks about the intelligible nature which, originally, created a single choir of dance (μία τῆς λογικῆς φύσεως ἦν ἡ χοροστασία), from where the first human beings fell as a result of their sin and to which one can return only with great difficulty. Cf. *In inscr. Ps.* II,6 (SC 466, 306 = GNO V, 86,14-27).

bear any noisome smell, as close observers tell us.⁷⁴ He therefore who keeps away from all bitterness and all the noisome effluvia of the flesh, and raises himself on the aforesaid wings above all low earthly ambitions, or, more than that, above the whole universe itself, will be the man to find that which is alone worth loving, and to become himself beautiful as he approached the Beauty, and to be made bright and luminous himself in the communion of the real Light.”⁷⁵

The cited passages cannot be clearly identified as a quote from the *Phaedrus*;⁷⁶ nevertheless, it is obvious that Gregory directly or indirectly borrows the Platonic image of the feathering of the soul, which he tries to Christianise by combining it with Psalm 54(55):7 (LXX): “Who will give me wings like a dove, so that I might be able to fly away and find rest?” (Τίς δώσει μοι πτέρυγας ὡσεὶ περιστερᾶς καὶ πετασθήσομαι καὶ καταπαύσω;) and, at the same time, an allusion to the scene of the baptism of Jesus, where the Holy Spirit descended on him as a dove (that is why Gregory speaks about a dove which “descended”, τῆς καταπτώσης περιστερᾶς).⁷⁷

We find the biblical line of Psalm 54(55):7 (LXX), speaking of the wings of a dove, quoted quite frequently by Gregory as biblical support for the spiritual

⁷⁴ On these characteristics of the dove, see M. Aubineau, SC 119, 388f., n. 3-4.

⁷⁵ *De virg.* 11,4 (SC 119, 386-388 = GNO VIII/1, 294,8-26): Πῶς δ’ ἂν τις πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναπταίη μὴ πετρωθεὶς τῷ οὐρανίῳ πετρῷ καὶ ἀνωφερῆς καὶ μετέωρος διὰ τῆς ὑψηλῆς πολιτείας γενόμενος; Τίς οὕτως ἔξω τῶν εὐαγγελικῶν μυστηρίων ἐστίν, ὡς ἀγνοεῖν ὅτι ἐν ὄχημα τῆ ἀνθρωπίνῃ ψυχῇ τῆς ἐπὶ τοὺς οὐρανούς πορείας ἐστί, τὸ τῷ εἶδει τῆς καταπτώσης περιστερᾶς ἑαυτὸν ὁμοιωσάσθαι, ἧς τὰς πτέρυγας γενέσθαι αὐτῷ καὶ Δαβὶδ ὁ προφήτης ἐπόθησεν; Οὕτω γὰρ ἐν αἰνίγματι τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος δύναμιν τῆ γραφῆς σύνηθες ὀνομάζουσιν, εἴτε διότι χολῆς ἐστὶν ἄμοιρον τοῦτο τὸ ὄρνεον, ἢ καὶ ὅτι δυσωδίας ἐχθρόν, καθὼς φασὶν οἱ ταῦτα παρατηρήσαντες. Οὐκοῦν ὁ πάσης πικρίας καὶ σαρκικῆς δυσωδίας ἑαυτὸν ἀποστήσας καὶ πάντων τῶν ταπεινῶν τε καὶ χαμαιζήλων ὑπεραρθεὶς, μᾶλλον δὲ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου γεγονῶς ὑψηλότερος ἐν τῷ προειρημένῳ πετρῷ, ἐκεῖνος εὐρήσει τὸ μόνον ἐπιθυμίας ἄξιον καὶ γενήσεται καὶ αὐτὸς καλὸς τῷ καλῷ προσπελάσας· καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ γεγονῶς λαμπρὸς τε καὶ φωτεινὸς ἐν τῇ μετουσίᾳ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτὸς καταστήσεται. English translation by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY 1893), modified.

⁷⁶ M. Aubineau, *Introduction*, in: SC 119, 29-243, here 99.

⁷⁷ *De virg.* 11,4 (SC 119, 388,7f. = GNO VIII/1, 294,13f.); cf. Mk 1:10 parr. (τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν). See M. Aubineau, SC 119, 388, n. 1.

ascent of the soul above the whole universe. It can thus rest in a place that is “free of every evil and abounding in divine things”⁷⁸ and “grasp the unmovable power that reposes on itself and bears all things”.⁷⁹ The flight on the wings of a dove, i.e. the Holy Spirit, is interpreted as divine help in the ascent. Elsewhere, Gregory associates the spiritual ascent and the contemplation of the immutable realm with the flight and sharp sight of an eagle.⁸⁰

In his homilies “On the Song of Songs”, Gregory combines the Platonic feathering and the wings of a dove with the line of this biblical book about the “eyes giving wings” (Cant 6,5[4] LXX):⁸¹

“Therefore, I am winged once more by your eyes
(τὸ πάλιν πτερωθῆναι) and I take up the wings (τὰς πτέρυγας) of a dove through the virtues which give me the power of flight; I can now fly and rest.”⁸²

The erotic poetics of the “Song of Songs” brings the image of “getting wings” through the regard of the divine bridegroom very close to its original setting in the *Phaedrus*. Here, too, the feathering is provoked by seeing the beauty of the beloved, which produces heat and thus opens the blocked pores hindering the feathers from growing.⁸³ These technical details of feathering

⁷⁸ *De inscr. Ps.* II,13,67 on Psalm 54 (SC 466, 434 = GNO V, 143,1-4): ... τὸ πτερωθῆναι αὐτὸν τοῖς τῆς περισσεῶς ὠκυπτέροις καὶ μετάρσιον γενόμενον ἐκεῖ παῦσαι τὴν πτήσιν ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ τόπῳ, ὃς τῶν κακῶν πάντων ἔρημος ὧν εὐθαλής ἐστὶν τοῖς θειοτέροις.

⁷⁹ *De or. Dom.* 2 (GNO VII/2, 23,3-5): ... καὶ καταλαβεῖν τὴν ... ἀμετακίνητον δύναμιν, τὴν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς καθιδρυμένην, τὴν πάντα ἄγουσάν ... English translation by Andrew Radde-Gallwitz (unpublished). See the entire passage 22,20–23,5.

⁸⁰ *In inscr. Ps.* I,8,20 on Psalm 106 (SC 466, 224 = GNO V, 52,13-18).

⁸¹ Cant 6,5(4) LXX: ἀπόστρεψον ὀφθαλμούς σου ἀπεναντίον μου, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἀνεπτέρωσάν με. The Hebrew version of Cant 6:4 does not speak about eyes giving wings but eyes which disturb: רְחַבְּהִיפּ (r-h-b hiph.).

⁸² *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 449,18–450,1): διὰ τοῦτο γίνεται μοι ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν σου τὸ πάλιν πτερωθῆναι καὶ ἀναλαβεῖν διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν τὰς πτέρυγας τῆς ὡσπερεὶ περισσεῶς, δι’ ἧς γίνεται μοι ἡ τῆς πτήσεως δύναμις, ὥστε πετασθῆναι καὶ καταπαῦσαι. English translation by Casimir McCambley, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Brookline, Mass.: Hellenic College Press 1987, 268 (modified).

⁸³ *Phdr.* 251b1-7: δεξάμενος γὰρ τοῦ κάλλους τὴν ἀπορροὴν διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων ἐθερμάνθη ἢ ἢ τοῦ πτεροῦ φύσις ἄρδεται, θερμανθέντος δὲ ἐτάκη τὰ περὶ τὴν ἔκφυσιν, ἃ πάλαι ὑπὸ

are left aside by Gregory, who probably does not understand the Greek term πτερωθῆναι as “furnish with feathers” but “furnish with wings”. In any case, he represents the flight of the soul as carried by the wings of a dove, i.e. of the Holy Spirit.

In the above-mentioned passage of the fifteenth homily “On the Song of Songs” Gregory even presupposes the original state of the soul as being furnished with the wings lost as a result of the fall. In the *Phaedrus* narrative, too, “Every soul used to be feathered/winged (πτερωτή).”⁸⁴ However, Gregory does not refer to Plato for this idea but to Holy Scripture. Human beings, as he explains, were created “after the image and likeness” of God (Gen 1:26); but God is metaphorically represented as “winged” in the Scripture because he protects people under his wings (Gregory quotes Ps 16[17]:8; 90[91]:4; Dt 32:11 and Mt 23:37). That is why human beings, created in God’s image, originally had wings, too:⁸⁵

“But according to scripture, the prototype had wings (ἐπτέρωται); hence human nature was created with wings (πτερόεσσα) so that it might be in the divine likeness through its wings (πτέρυξιν) too. It is clear that the term ‘wings’ may be symbolically applied to God in a sense appropriate to him. They represent God’s power, blessedness, incorruptibility, and anything else. All these divine attributes were in man as long as he resembled God in everything, but the inclination towards evil robbed us of our wings: not being under the protection of God’s wings, we were stripped of our own wings too (καὶ τῶν ἰδίων πτερύγων ἐγυμνώθημεν). Therefore, ‘God’s grace became manifest’ to us and enlightened us. By rejecting ‘impiety and worldly desires’ (Tt 2:11f.), we might again grow wings (πάλιν ... πτεροφύησωμεν) through holiness and righteousness.”⁸⁶

σκληρότητος συμμαμκότα εἶργε μὴ βλαστάνειν, ἐπιρρυνείσης δὲ τῆς τροφῆς ᾧδησέ τε καὶ ᾧρησε φύεσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς ῥίζης ὁ τοῦ πτεροῦ καυλὸς ὑπὸ πᾶν τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδος.

⁸⁴ *Phdr.* 251b7: πᾶσα γὰρ ἦν τὸ πάλαι πτερωτή.

⁸⁵ *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 447,13–448,2).

⁸⁶ *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 448,2–16): ἀλλὰ μὴν ἐπτέρωται κατὰ τὴν ἀγίαν γραφὴν τὸ πρῶτότυπον. οὐκοῦν πτερόεσσα καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατεσκευάσθη φύσις, ὡς ἂν καὶ ἐν ταῖς πτέρυξιν ἔχοι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὁμοίως. δῆλον δὲ ὅτι τὸ τῶν πτερύγων ὄνομα διὰ τινος τροπικῆς θεωρίας εἰς τι θεοπρεπὲς μεταληφθήσεται νόημα, δυνάμεώς τε καὶ

In this passage, again, we find an amalgam of biblical and Platonic elements given a Christian meaning by Gregory. In Plato's myth, too, the soul was winged/feathered and thus similar to the gods, who, in their procession, drive their "winged chariots" (πτηνὸν ἄρμα).⁸⁷ In Gregory's interpretation, the original wings of the soul are its similarity to the "wings" of God, i.e. his attributes of power (δυνάμεως), happiness (μακαριότητος), or indestructibility (ἀφθαρσίας). All these characteristics are (as regards their meaning, not the terminology) the attributes of the gods in the *Phaedrus*, too: Zeus is represented as the "great ruler in heaven" (ὁ μέγας ἡγεμὼν ἐν οὐρανῷ)⁸⁸ and the gods are "happy" (εὐδαίμονες) as they continually contemplate the blissful vision (μακάριαι θέαι) of ideas⁸⁹ and, of course, "immortal" (ἀθάνατόν τι ζῶον), which means, according to the inaccurate human notion, that their soul is permanently joined to the body.⁹⁰

In the *Phaedrus* narrative, the soul lost its wings because of its own confusion or in the crowd of other souls, as already mentioned.⁹¹ Gregory calls this unhappy turn which causes the loss of wings "the fall into evil" (ἡ πρὸς τὴν κακίαν ῥοπή),⁹² in a very similar vein to how he describes the reasons for the incarnation of the soul in Platonism.⁹³ In the quoted homily, Gregory explains this fall as a loss of protection under God's wings, which also caused the loss of the soul's own wings or feathers: it became naked.⁹⁴ We can surmise how Gregory understands this loss of wings from his exegesis of Psalm 56(57):2.

μακαριότητος καὶ ἀφθαρσίας καὶ τῶν τοιούτων διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῶν πτερυγῶν σημαιομένων. ἐπεὶ οὖν ταῦτα καὶ περὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἦν, ἕως ὅτε τῷ θεῷ διὰ πάντων ὁμοῖος ἦν, μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ ἡ πρὸς τὴν κακίαν ῥοπή τῶν τοιούτων πτερυγῶν ἡμᾶς ἀπεσύλησεν (ἕξω γὰρ τῆς σκέπης τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ πτερυγῶν γενόμενοι καὶ τῶν ἰδίων πτερυγῶν ἐγυμνώθημεν), διὰ τοῦτο ἐπεφάνη ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ χάρις φωτίζουσα ἡμᾶς, ἵνα ἀποθέμενοι τὴν ἀσέβειαν καὶ τὰς κοσμικὰς ἐπιθυμίας πάλιν δι' ὀσιότητός τε καὶ δικαιοσύνης πτεροφυήσωμεν. English translation by Casimir McCambley, 267 (modified).

⁸⁷ *Phdr.* 246e5.

⁸⁸ *Phdr.* 2456e4.

⁸⁹ *Phdr.* 247a4f.

⁹⁰ *Phdr.* 246c7-d2.

⁹¹ *Phdr.* 247b3-5; 248a1-c1.

⁹² *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 448,11).

⁹³ *De an. res.* (GNO III/3, 84,17-19): ... ῥοπή δέ τινη τῇ πρὸς κακίαν πτερορροούσας τὰς ψυχὰς ἐν σώμασι γίνεσθαι.

⁹⁴ *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 448,12f.): ἕξω γὰρ τῆς σκέπης τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ πτερυγῶν γενόμενοι καὶ τῶν ἰδίων πτερυγῶν ἐγυμνώθημεν.

Here he explains the “shadow of God’s wings” as a “robe” (περιβολή) of virtues which protects the soul. Virtues (such as wisdom, prudence, science, etc.) are its assimilation to God, an imprint (χαρακτήρ) or a “painting with the shadows” (σκιαγραφία) representing the incomprehensible nature of God in the human soul, i.e. “a shadow of his wings” (σκιὰ θείων πτερύγων).⁹⁵ As we can see, even the biblical metaphor of the protective wings of God is Platonised as participation in the divine nature through virtue by Gregory.⁹⁶

The soul can regain its wings/feathers, lost as a result of the unfortunate fall, by its love of beauty, according to Plato, and by its “holiness and righteousness”, according to Gregory, i.e. thanks to an illumination of “grace which has appeared” (Tt 2:11f.). As already mentioned, Gregory ascribes this grace or the help in regaining the wings to the eyes of the divine bridegroom (cf. Cant 6:5[4] and Psalm 16[17]:2), which regard the bride with love (φιλανθρωπία) and thus give her grace or beauty (χάριν).⁹⁷ Elsewhere in his homilies, Gregory emphasises the beauty of the bridegroom (Christ), which provokes the love of the bride (the soul), so that she, too, becomes beautiful.⁹⁸

The inverse metaphor of “burden”, frequently used by Gregory,⁹⁹ does not depict a soul which, as a result of its confusion, grew heavy, lost its wings, and settled in a terrestrial body, as Plato puts it. What Gregory has in mind is rather “a perishable body which weighs down the soul” (φθαρόν γὰρ σῶμα

⁹⁵ *In inscr. Ps.* II,14,74 on Psalm 56,2 (SC 466, 464 = GNO V, 155,23–156,4): σκιάν δὲ θείων πτερύγων ἀντὶ περιβολῆς ἡμῖν γινομένην τὰς ἀρετὰς τις νοῶν οὐχ ἀμαρτήσεται. αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ θεῖον ὃ τί ποτε τῇ φύσει ἐστίν, ἀνέφικτον μένει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει καὶ ἄληπτον, ἄνω πού κατὰ τὸ ἀφραστον τοῦ λογισμοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπερπετόμενον. χαρακτήρ δὲ τις τῆς ἀφράστου φύσεως διὰ τῆς τῶν ἀρετῶν σκιαγραφίας τοῖς πρὸς αὐτὴν ὁρῶσιν ἐγγίνεται, ὡς πᾶσαν σοφίαν καὶ φρόνησιν καὶ ἐπιστήμην καὶ πᾶσαν ἔφοδον τῆς καταληπτικῆς ἐπινοίας οὐκ αὐτὰς εἶναι τὰς θείας πτέρυγας, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῶν θείων πτερύγων σκιάν.

⁹⁶ On the Neo-Platonic interpretation of wings as virtue, see Hierocles, *In aur. carm.* 24,8 (Koehler 99,25–100,1); see J. Daniélou, *La colombe*, 397. The wording σκιαγραφία ἀρετῆς is also used by Plato, *Resp.* II, 365c4; see J. Reynard, SC 466, 465, n. 1.

⁹⁷ *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 449,1-3): ὁμοῦ τε γὰρ ἐπεῖδεν ἡμᾶς τοῖς τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ὀφθαλμοῖς ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἡμεῖς κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν χάριν ἀνεπτέρωθημεν.

⁹⁸ *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 439,11-440,7; 442,10-15) etc.

⁹⁹ Cf. F. Mann, *Lexicon Gregorianum*, II, Leiden 2000, 7-9; 92.

βαρύνει ψυχήν), as mentioned in Wis 9:15,¹⁰⁰ although Gregory (unlike Origen)¹⁰¹ does not expressly cite this biblical line.

In his treatise “On the Making of Man”, Gregory identifies the “inclination to/of sin” (ἡ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ῥοπή) as “heavy” (βαρεῖα) and “pushing down” (κατωφερής) the soul. Here he explains that the irrational part pulls down even the ruling part of the soul (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν), so that it is only with much difficulty that the reason may lift up what is “heavy and earthy” (τὸ βαρὺ τε καὶ χοϊκόν).¹⁰²

The same characteristics as “heavy” and “earthy” are attributed to the body affected by sin in Gregory’s homilies “On the Lord’s Prayer”. As Gregory puts it, the terrestrial body “weighs down and pushes to the ground” the soul; it is a “sediment of mud”, from which the soul has to separate itself,¹⁰³ to regain its “original robe”¹⁰⁴ of the “divine”,¹⁰⁵ the “eternal and luminous” body which it wore at the beginning.¹⁰⁶

I leave aside the difficult question of whether or to what extent Gregory presupposed an individual luminous body at the beginning.¹⁰⁷ What is more important in our context is his hope for a body liberated from its weight after the resurrection,¹⁰⁸ purified of dross (σκωρία)¹⁰⁹ and “remelted”, as it were.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ Cf. also Philo, *De spec. leg.* IV,114 (Cohn–Wendland V,235,9–11): ἡ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ σώματος ὀλκή φύσει βρίθουσα τοὺς ὀλιγόφρονας συνεφέλκεται τῷ πλήθει τῶν σαρκῶν αὐχενίζουσα καὶ πιέζουσα.

¹⁰¹ Origen, *Exhort. mart.* 47 (GCS, Origenes 1, 43,9); *Hom. Num.* 23,11 (GCS 30, 222,28f.); *Comm. Rom.* III,2,17,7f. (SC 539, 74); VI,3,8,6f. (SC 543, 106); VII,2,7,10f. (SC 543, 266).

¹⁰² *De hom. op.* 18 (PG 44, 193c): Ἄλλ’ ἐπειδὴ βαρεῖα τίς ἐστι καὶ κατωφερής ἡ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ῥοπή ... μάλλον γὰρ τῷ βάρει τῆς ἀλόγου φύσεως συγκατασπᾶται τὸ ἡγεμονικόν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἢ περὶ τῷ ὕψει τῆς διανοίας τὸ βαρὺ τε καὶ χοϊκόν ἀνυψοῦται.

¹⁰³ *De or. Dom.* 4 (GNO VII/2, 48,21f.): ... κεχωρισμένη σώματος, τούτου λέγω τοῦ ἀντιτύπου τε καὶ εἰς γῆν βρίθοντος. *De or. Dom.* 4 (GNO VII/2, 48,25f.): ... διὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸ γεῶδες συγγένειαν οἷον τινα ἰλύος ὑποστάθμην.

¹⁰⁴ *De or. Dom.* 2 (GNO VII/2, 27,18): ... τὴν στολήν, οὐκ ἄλλην, ἀλλὰ τὴν πρώτην.

¹⁰⁵ *De or. Dom.* 2 (GNO VII/2, 30,19f.): ... περιστελεῖ σε τῇ θεῖα στολῇ.

¹⁰⁶ *De or. Dom.* 5 (GNO VII/2, 65,5f.): ... τῶν αἰδίων τε καὶ λαμπρῶν ἐνδυμάτων γυμνωθέντες.

¹⁰⁷ I tried to analyse this question in my study *Gregory of Nyssa, “Our Father in Heaven”: De oratione dominica, II* (SC 596,348–384), in: M. Cassin et alii (eds.), !!.

¹⁰⁸ *De mort.* (GNO IX, 62,18–27): νῦν μὲν γὰρ πᾶν τὸ παχὺ καὶ στερέμνιον ἐκ φύσεως ἔχει τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ κάτω φορᾶν, τότε δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἀνωφερές ἡ μεταποίησις τοῦ σώματος γίνεται ...

In Gregory's eyes, it is a very important task of the soul, cognate with heaven but dwelling in the body, to lead the body liberated from its weight into heaven, so that the whole universe might be brought back to the unity and perfection it had at the beginning.¹¹¹

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If we compare the metaphor of the "winged" soul and the soul "grown heavy" as interpreted by Clement and Gregory, we find similarities and different elements alike.

(1) Both authors know about the Platonic origin of this metaphor. Clement even links the "winged" soul with Plato's *Phaedrus* (even though he combines it with the *Phaedo*). He supposes the fall of the charioteer and his horses to be taken from the dialogue "On the Soul" (i.e. the *Phaedo*); he might have known it from a doxographic anthology of Plato's texts on this topic. His literal quotes from the *Phaedrus* attest that he had, in one form or another, access to

εἰ τοίνυν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀλλαγέντων τὸ βάρος οὐ παραμένει τῷ σώματι, ἀλλὰ συμμετεωροποροῦσι τῇ ἀσωμάτῳ φύσει οἱ πρὸς τὴν θειοτέραν μεταστοιχειωθέντες κατάστασιν. See also *De beat.* 1 (GNO VII/2, 88,27–89,2); *De hom. op.* 22 (PG 44, 208a); *Vita Moys.* II (GNO VII/1, 99,1-6). Cf. Giuseppe Lozza (ed.), Gregorio di Nissa, *Discorso sui defunti: Edizione critica con introduzione, traduzione, note e indici*, Torino 1991, 157; A. Le Boulluec, *Corporité ou individualité? La condition finale des ressuscités selon Grégoire de Nysse*, in: *Augustinianum* 35, 1995, 307-326.

¹⁰⁹ *De mort.* (GNO IX, 60,18). *Ibid.* (61,1-4): ὅπερ οὖν ἐν τῷ πυρὶ περὶ τὸν σίδηρον γίνεται τὸ ἄχρηστον ἅπαν τῆς χωνείας ἀποποιούσης, τοῦτο διὰ τοῦ θανάτου κατορθοῦται τῷ σώματι παντὸς περιπτώματος ἀποποιουμένου διὰ τῆς ἐν τῇ νεκρότητι λύσεως. See G. Lozza (ed.), Gregorio di Nissa, *Discorso sui defunti*, 154f.

¹¹⁰ *De mort.* (GNO IX, 61,25f.): ... ὁ τοῦ παντὸς τεχνίτης τὴν τοῦ σώματος βῶλον εἰς ὄπλον εὐδοκίας μεταχαλκεύσει.

¹¹¹ *De or. Dom.* 4 (GNO VII/2, 49,4-8): ... τοῦ τε νοεροῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ... τοῖς γηϊνοῖς σώμασιν ἐνοικοῦντος, τῆς τε γεηρᾶς ταύτης σαρκὸς ἐν τῇ ἀποκαταστάσει τῶν πάντων εἰς τὸν οὐράνιον χῶρον τῇ ψυχῇ συμμετοικιζομένης. Cf. the entire passage *De or. Dom.* 4 (GNO VII/2, 48,18–49,8). The idea of connecting heaven and earth through man is frequent in Gregory; see D. L. Balás, *Μετουσία Θεοῦ: Man's Participation in God's Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, Roma 1966, 48f. On the eschatological goal, i.e. the return to the beginning, Gregory's inspiration by Origen, and his difference from him in this point, see M. Alexandre, *Protologie et eschatologie chez Grégoire de Nysse*, in: U. Bianchi – H. Crouzel (ed.), *Arché e telos: L'antropologia di Origene e di Gregorio di Nissa. Analisi storico-religiosa (Atti del colloquio, Milano, 17-19 Maggio 1979)*, Milano 1981, 122-159; B. Salmona, *Origene e Gregorio di Nissa sulla resurrezione dei corpi d'apocatastasi*, in: *Augustinianum* 18, 1978, 383-388.

this dialogue. Likewise Gregory knew some passages from the *Phaedrus* almost by heart (at least the argument for the immortality of the soul) and he also mentions the title of this dialogue. Nevertheless, he does not connect the “Platonic chariot” explicitly with the *Phaedrus*.

(2) Unlike Origen, both authors reject the literal interpretation of the Platonic chariot for the incarnation of the soul. Clement criticises this understanding as heterodox, even though he also knows of its positive application by the “barbarians”. Gregory sees in it a pagan doctrine connected with reincarnation which is not to be reconciled with Christianity (alternatively, he rejects it as an error committed by the author of “On principles”, i.e. Origen).¹¹²

(3) In the metaphoric Christian sense, neither author speaks about the soul “grown heavy”. Nevertheless, Clement knows of the image of the “corners” of the soul which weigh it down. Gregory speaks about the “inclination to/of sin”, which pulls down the soul and affects the terrestrial body, too. Both authors also mention the eschatological liberation of the soul from the heaviness of the terrestrial body.

(4) The image of the winged soul is used by both authors for the eschatological journey to God and, at the same time, its anticipation in the spiritual ascent of the soul during this life. Both authors highlight the role of divine help in this ascent; Gregory repeatedly mentions the flight of a dove (interpreted as the Holy Spirit) from Psalm 54(55):7 and the regard of the bridegroom’s eyes which “give wings” in Cant 6:5 (LXX).

(5) Thanks to the context of the biblical “Song of Songs”, which he comments on, Gregory comes much closer than Clement to the original erotic sense of the “feathering” of the soul through the love of beauty in the *Phaedrus*. However, this accidental loyalty to Plato is far from being intended by Gregory.

(6) What seems to be rather un-Platonic is Gregory’s idea, only implied in Clement, of using the metaphor of flight more literally and elevating not only

¹¹² *De hom. opif.* 28-29 (PG 44, 229b-236b); *In Cant.* 7 (GNO VI, 241,4-6).

the winged soul but equally the body, liberated from its terrestrial weight, into heaven.

The enumerated points on which Gregory differs from Clement (4-6), are not necessarily to be held as his own innovations. Before concluding, I try to summarise their origin, as far as it can be traced.

(a) The wings of the soul which assimilate it to the dove of Psalm 54(55):7 and its spiritual flight on high are likewise discussed by Origen in his “Commentary on the Song of Songs” (partially surviving in Rufinus’ Latin translation). The soul longs for “the wings of a dove”, says Origen, in order to be able to “fly in contemplation of spiritual mysteries (*in intellectu spiritualium mysteriorum*) and rest in the courtyards of truth”. This “flight on the wings of a dove”, as well as the “eyes of a dove” ascribed to the bride (i.e. the soul) in Cant 1:15, have to be interpreted as the capacity of a spiritual understanding of the Old Testament Scripture, rather than merely a literal one,¹¹³ as a flight from terrestrial to heavenly things on the wings of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁴ Origen also knows about the wings of the soul and their loss,¹¹⁵ as well as the flight of the soul liberated from the burden of the terrestrial body,¹¹⁶ but he does not mention them in this context. An explicit identification of the wings from Plato’s *Phaedrus* with the Holy Spirit is attested by Ps.-Hippolytus as a Gnostic idea of the Basilidians;¹¹⁷ it is only very carefully that it is also indicated by Clement.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ *Comm. Cant.* III (GCS 33, 173,13-20); similarly, *ibid.* IV (GCS 33, 223,26-29).

¹¹⁴ *Comm. Cant.* IV (GCS 33, 224,5n.): ... *de terrenis et corporeis locis evolent ad caelestia „pennis“ sancti Spiritus sublevati*. See also *Frg. Lament.* 83 (GCS, Origenes III, 267, 7f.), where the “wings of a dove” from Psalm 54(55):7 are mentioned.

¹¹⁵ Origen assimilates the expulsion of the first human beings from paradise and the putting on of “the tunics of skin” (cf. Gen 3:21.23) to the loss of wings and incarnation of the soul in Plato. Cf. *C. Cels.* IV,40,25f. (SC 136, 290): ὑπὲρ τὴν κατὰ Πλάτωνα κάθοδον τῆς ψυχῆς, πτερορροσύνης καὶ δεῦρο φερομένης, “ἕως ἂν στερεοῦ τινος λάβηται”.

¹¹⁶ *C. Cels.* VII,5,5-7 (SC 150, 22): ἡ μὲν καθαρὰ καὶ μὴ βαρομένη ὑπὸ τῶν τῆς κακίας μολιβδίδων μετέωρος φέρεται ἐπὶ τοὺς τόπους τῶν καθαρωτέρων καὶ αἰθερίων σωμάτων.

¹¹⁷ Ps.-Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII,22,10 (GCS 26, 199,6-10): ἐπτέρωσεν οὖν αὐτὴν ἡ υἰότης ἡ παχυμερεστέρα τοιούτω τινὶ πτεροῦ, ὁποῖω διδάσκαλος ὢν Πλάτων Ἀριστοτέλους ἐν Φαίδρω τὴν ψυχὴν πτεροῖ, καὶ καλεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτο Βασιλείδης οὐ πτερὸν ἀλλὰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ὃ εὐεργετῆ ἡ υἰότης ἐνδυσάμενη καὶ εὐεργετεῖται.

¹¹⁸ See above, n. 26.!!

(b) The wings given to the soul by virginity are likewise known to Gregory's predecessor Methodius of Olympus, who, in his *Symposium*, lets several female characters present their praise of virginity and the love of God. This imitation of the Platonic *Symposium* on love¹¹⁹ which, at the same time, provides a Christian correction of Plato's notion thereof, puts the metaphor of wings back into its erotic context.

One of the speakers in Methodius' *Symposium* highlights the power of the wings given by virginity,¹²⁰ but she also warns of their possible weakening and loss caused by involvement in worldly pleasures.¹²¹ In an etymological wordplay, virtue (ἀρετή) is praised as "elevating" (αἴρειν) and "carrying on high (μετεωρίζειν)"¹²² to the heavenly vision which cannot be eclipsed by anything terrestrial,¹²³ to the life of angels.¹²⁴

Another of the virgins borrows, in her speech, the metaphors of the Old Testament "Song of Songs" and quotes, among other things, the line Cant 4:9 ("you have ravished my heart with one glance of your eyes"),¹²⁵ which she combines with an allusion to Cant 6:5(4)LXX ("your eyes gave me wings", ἀνεπτέρωσάν με). As in the biblical text, both these lines are attributed to the bridegroom, who, as Methodius puts it, appreciates the spiritual progress of the bride, i.e. the soul.¹²⁶ Likewise Origen, in his "Commentary on the Song of Songs", understood the line Cant 6:5(4)LXX in this sense, as far as we can judge from a record in catenas.¹²⁷ Gregory very probably knew of these interpretations and that is why he protested explicitly against attributing this

¹¹⁹ Methodius, *Conv.* proem. 89n. (SC 95, 50); cf. Platon, *Symp.* 177d2f. On other possible inspirations for Methodius, see J. Daniélou, *Message évangélique*, 99.

¹²⁰ *Conv.* 8,1,11-14 (SC 95, 202).

¹²¹ *Conv.* 8,1,23-27 (SC 95, 202); 8,2,1 (SC 95, 204).

¹²² *Conv.* 8,128-30 (SC 95, 202).

¹²³ *Conv.* 8,2,6-12 (SC 95, 204) ; 8,3,1-7 (SC 95, 206).

¹²⁴ *Conv.* 8,2,17-22 (SC 95, 204).

¹²⁵ Cant 4:9: ἐκαρδίωσας ἡμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀπὸ ὀφθαλμῶν σου.

¹²⁶ *Conv.* 7,2,8-12 (SC 95, 182).

¹²⁷ *Schol. Cant.* PG 17, 276d: εὐφραινόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ δυνάμει τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, τῆς εἴτε Ἐκκλησίας εἴτε νύμφης τοῦ λόγου ψυχῆς· πετροῖς αὐτὴν λογικοῖς ἀποστραφῆναι κελεύει πρὸς τὸ μετέωρον· ὡς ἂν ἐπ' ἄκρον ἔλθοι τῆς τελειότητος, ὡς ἂν κἀκεῖνη βλέπη τοῦτον ἐπτερωμένον, καὶ μηκέτι συγκαταβαίνοντα δι' αὐτὴν...

line to the divine bridegroom, as his predecessors had it, and ascribed it to the bride, i.e. the soul, given wings by the bridegroom's regard.¹²⁸

The winged soul was thus already connected with the erotic context of the "Song of Songs" by Methodius, whom Gregory very probably follows in both his treatise "On Virginité" and homilies "On the Song of Songs".¹²⁹ Origen was very probably an inspiration for Gregory's homilies, too;¹³⁰ given the fragmentary state of both Origen's commentary and homilies on this book, we can hardly say with certainty whether Gregory could also have drawn from this source for our topic. However, in the introduction to his "Commentary on the Song of Songs", Origen mentions the idea of love which elevates us from earth to heaven as "the Greeks" represented it in their dialogues, probably alluding to Plato's *Symposium*.¹³¹

(c) Finally, the idea of the soul which, thanks to its wings, elevates with itself equally the body liberated from its terrestrial weight into heaven was already mentioned by Hippolytus of Rome. In one of the exegetical fragments, he speaks about the "Spirit giving wings to the soul, so that it, together with the body, can fly up".¹³² In his eschatological ideas, Gregory might have followed, quite paradoxically, both Origen and his opponent Methodius. Like the apostle Paul (1Cor 15:44.46) and Origen (in Rufinus' version)¹³³ after him,

¹²⁸ *In Cant.* 15 (GNO VI, 446,14-447,2): τοῖς μὲν γὰρ δοκεῖ παρὰ τοῦ δεσπότου πρὸς τὴν καθαρὰν εἰρησθαι ταῦτα ψυχὴν, ἐγὼ δὲ τῇ νύμφῃ πρέπειν ὑπονοῶ μᾶλλον τὸ ῥητὸν ἐφαρμόζεσθαι. ταύτη γὰρ κατάλληλον εὐρίσκω τὴν τῶν σημαιομένων ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου διάνοιαν.

¹²⁹ On *De virginitate* cf. M. Aubineau, *Introduction*, in: SC 119, 132-134; on *In Canticum* see F. Dünzl, *Braut und Bräutigam. Die Auslegung des Canticum durch Gregor von Nyssa*, Tübingen 1993, !!.

¹³⁰ F. Dünzl, *Die Canticum-Exegese des Gregor von Nyssa und des Origenes im Vergleich*, in: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 36, 1993, 94-109.!!

¹³¹ *Comm. Cant.* prol. (GCS 33, 63,6-11).

¹³² *Hom. Ps. 17* (ed. Pierre Nautin, *Le dossier d'Hippolyte et de Mélicon dans les florilèges dogmatiques et chez les historiens modernes*, Paris 1953, 181,3f.): Δεῖ γὰρ ἀναπτερωσαί τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος, ἵνα ἀναπτῆναι ἅμα σώματι δυναθῆ.

¹³³ *De princ.* I,6,4 (SC 252, 204); II,3,2 (SC 252, 250-254); II,10,3 (SC 252, 380); II,10,1 (SC 252, 376); III,6,4 (SC 268, 242). See also C. *Cels.* V,18-19; V,22-23 (SC 147, 58-62 and 66-70). It is in this sense that Origen is understood by most contemporary interpreters; see H. Crouzel, *Les critiques adressées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, in: *Gregorianum*, 53, 1972, 679-716; Idem, *La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, in: *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, 81, 1980, 175-200; 241-266; I. Ramelli, 'Preexistence of Souls'? *The ἀρχή*

Gregory presupposed the resurrection of the “spiritual body”, liberated from its earthy character; on the other hand, he affirmed, together with Methodius, that the human soul is not to be separated from the human body, and he thus rejected its pre-existence.¹³⁴

As we can see, the points where Gregory most clearly differs from Clement – i.e. the combination of the Platonic winged soul with particular Old Testament texts, the erotic vein of the “feathering of the soul”, and the elevation of the body together with the soul – find support in Gregory’s Christian predecessors Origen, Methodius of Olympus, Hippolytus of Rome, and Ps.-Hippolytus.

The method of combining biblical, especially Old Testament, and Platonic elements into a Christian collage seems to be shared by both authors (we could see its application, among other things, in Clement’s connecting the fall of the soul with the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea or in Gregory’s description of the original winged nature of the human soul). Clement even offers theoretical grounds for it, as he understands both Jewish Law and Greek philosophy as “pedagogues” to bring Jews and Greeks unto Christ (cf. Ga 3:24 for Jewish Law).¹³⁵ As far as I can see, we do not find a similar reflection in Gregory, whose interest in Greek philosophical authors is rather apologetic, as e.g. his dialogue “On the Soul and Resurrection” attests. The fact that Gregory’s interpretation of the soul winged through love of beauty comes closer to the original Platonic idea in the *Phaedrus* than Clement does is

and τέλος of *Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians*, in: *StPatr* 56, 2013, 167-266, here 167-181.

¹³⁴ *De hom. opif.* 28-29 (PG 44, 229b-236b); *In Cant.* 7 (GNO VI, 241,4-6). Here Gregory, very probably, argues against the version of Origen’s doctrine, as he knew it from Methodius of Olympus; cf. Methodius, *De res.* I,4,2-3 (GCS 27, 223f., German translation of the Old Slavonic text). See H. Crouzel, *Les critiques adressées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité*, in: *Gregorianum*, 53, 1972, 679-716. For his part, Methodius presupposes the simultaneous creation of the soul and body together; cf. *De res.* I,50,3-4 (GCS 27, 304) *et passim*. He also criticises Origen’s idea of the “spiritual body” as “light and aerial” (λεπτομερὲς καὶ ἀερώδης); cf. *De res.* III,16,9 (GCS 27, 413,6).

¹³⁵ Cf. *Strom.* VI,44,1 (GCS II⁴ 453,16-18); VI,94,2 (GCS⁴ 479,1-5); I,28,3 (GCS II⁴ 18,1-5). On philosophy as a propaedeutic to faith, see also e.g. *Strom.* VI,153,1 (GCS II⁴ 510,21-24). Cf. T. J. Muckle, *Clement of Alexandria on Philosophy as a Divine Testament for the Greeks*, in: *Phoenix*, 5, 1951, 79-86.

surely not a result of Gregory's loyalty to Plato but rather a concurrence of the circumstances mentioned above.

The method of incorporating Platonic ideas into a new semantic synthesis is already to be found in Philo of Alexandria. The metaphor of the winged soul and its flight over heaven is used to illustrate e.g. Philo's interpretation of the creation of man after God's image (Gen 1:26),¹³⁶ the ladder of Jacob (Gen 28:12f),¹³⁷ Moses' ascent of the mount to God (Ex 24:1),¹³⁸ the "permanent feast day" (as Philo probably interprets Nu 28:2),¹³⁹ or even the washing of the legs of the animal that had been sacrificed (Lev 1:9).¹⁴⁰

Unlike Clement, Philo does not intend to draw parallels between the Old Testament and Platonic texts; he rather applies the latter for the interpretation of the former.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, this Jewish exegete not only provided Christian authors with the allegorical method for understanding the Old Testament but he also offered them a key for how to integrate Platonic ideas in a new theological synthesis. Thanks to this "spoliation of the Egyptians",¹⁴² the image of the winged and falling soul finds its stable place in the tradition of Platonising Christianity.

¹³⁶ *De op.* 69-71 (Cohn-Wendland I, 23n); cf. A. Méasson, *Du char ailé*, 196; 209f.; 369-390; 406f. Similarly *De plant.* 19-22 (Cohn-Wendland II, 137n).

¹³⁷ *De somn.* I,134-139 (Cohn-Wendland III, 234f.).

¹³⁸ *De migr. Abr.* 168 (Cohn-Wendland II, 301).

¹³⁹ *De spec. leg.* II,42-45 (Cohn-Wendland V, 96f.). Cf. A. Méasson, *Du char ailé*, 203f.

¹⁴⁰ *De spec. leg.* I,207 (Cohn-Wendland V, 49f.). A. Méasson, *Du char ailé*, 193-196; 201f.

¹⁴¹ Likewise the terminology of the mysteries seems to be applied by Philo as a rhetorical or stylistic ornament; cf. Ch. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 115.

¹⁴² This episode accompanying the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt (cf. Ex 3,21-23; 11,2f.; 12,35f.) was, both in its literal and allegorical meanings, commented on by Philo, who, nevertheless, did not interpret it as an appropriation of a foreign cultural heritage. See Philo, *De vita Mos.* I,140-142 (Cohn-Wendland IV, 153,2-154,7) and *Quis rer. div.* 272-275 (Cohn-Wendland III, 62,5-22), respectively. Clement mentions it in the same vein; *Strom.* I,157,2-4 (GCS II⁴ 99,1-15). It is interpreted as an allegory of borrowing a philosophical heritage by Origen, *Ep. ad Greg.* 1-2 (= *Philocalia*, 13,1-2; Robinson 63f.), and Gregory of Nyssa after him, see *Vita Moys.* II (GNO VII/1, 67,17-69,3). On this frequently discussed topic in its history, see e.g. Georges Folliet, *La Spoliatio Aegyptiorum (Exode 3:21-23; 11:2-3; 12:35-36): Les interprétations de cette image chez les pères et autres écrivains ecclésiastiques*, in: *Traditio*, 57, 2002, 1-48; Joel Stevens Allen, *The Despoliation of Egypt: In Pre-Rabbinic, Rabbinic and Patristic Traditions*, Leiden 2008.!!