

HUMAN GNOSIS: THE EMERGENCE OF GNOSTICISM, THEN AND NOW, AS A EXPRESSION-PHENOMENON OF HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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**COURSE: THEOLOGY, RELIGION & APPLIED
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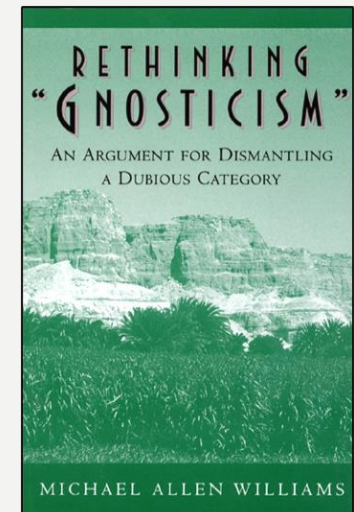
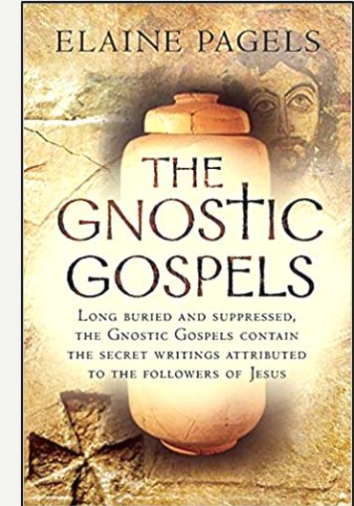
GNOSTICISM: MODERN RELEVANCE

- As of late, there has excitement of speculation and, as such, concern over a possible re-emergence of Gnostic tendencies within and exterior to the church (1, 2).
- Danger of determining Gnosticism as self-generating its features,
 - Rather than recognising them as phenomena of situational-contextual formed psychology and, as such philosophy, which are articulated into a narrative expression.
- Gnosticism has been delved into heavily as a topic of discussion, but little has been done on its ‘causes’.
- It is theorised that psychological and philosophical rationales for Gnosticism’s existence can be determined;
- Though, building on and further to this, theologically, there may be features found in Gnosticism within the narrative of Genesis: Pre-fall and Fall.



SECTION 1A: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

- Estimated Word Count: 2500.
- History Literature:
 - A History of Gnosticism – Giovanni Filoramo
 - Gnosis: The nature and history of Gnosticism – Kurt Rudolph
 - What is Gnosticism? – Karen L. King
 - The Gnostic Gospels – Elaine Pagels
- Critical Literature:
 - Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category – Michael William.



SECTION 1A: FEATURE ANALYSIS

- Word Count: 1250
- Will occur throughout and as concluding the historical analysis.
- What are the 'essential features' of Gnosticism which may be extrapolated as reoccurring in the modern landscape?:
 - So far:
 - **Body-self dichotomisation** – the body is recognised a temporal, physical, material and, as such through narrative explanation, Evil. Contrary to this, the Spirit – the all- , god- , divine- spark. – is seen as separate, though bodily trapped, eternal and Good.
 - **Secret Knowledge; 'Gnosis'** – the inclusion of a knowledge which was hidden to others in its revelation, at least in Christian Gnosticism, yet such is also the only way by which individuals may free themselves from the material world. This Revelation which is learnt is also seen as Salvation itself.
 - Gnostics 'groups' – there is evidence of Gnostic groups – which needs further investigation in this study – which individualised rituals and practices.



SECTION 1B: MODERN 'FEATURE RE-EMERGENCE'

- Estimated Word Count: 1250 – 2500.
- Techno- /Cybergnosis:
 - *The Disappearing Human: Gnostic Dreams in a Transhumanist World* – Jeffrey C. Pugh
 - 'Reality Sucks': *On Alienation and Cybergnosis* - Stef Aupers & Dick Houtman
- Christian sources:
 - *Gnosticism, the Enduring Heresy* - Bishop Robert Barron
 - *Gnosticism: Why History Repeats Itself* – The Remnant Radio**
 - *Gnosticism Series* – Robin Phillips*,**
 - *Accompany Them with Singing – The Christian Funeral* - Thomas G. Long*
- Areas where Gnostic features may be recognised:
 - Suicide.
 - Transsexualism.
 - *Body seen as a shell after death, whereby the spiritual continues beyond.
 - **Sacraments (/ Eucharist) less understood / believed by Christians.



SECTION 2A: PHILOSOPHICAL TO PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- Words: 2500

Philosophical inference is primarily used as an initial foundation for psychological investigation, before allowing the latter to self-evident:

These act as investigational principles.

- The spiritual may be recognised as consciousness or a perspective-observation which is entrapped within the body. It is debatable if features of Gnosticism would be adopted in a situational-context which, as of so far, presented material / bodily matters to be purely positive.
- In this light, the body extends into the context of the individual in all facets of their life exterior to their body; it becomes the *Embodied-Life*.
- The *Embodied-Life* 'entraps' the consciousness within a given experience of life: a 12th century peasant in South-France unlikely to escape their Embodied-Life of being a peasant.
- Knowledge can be split into three: recognition, understanding / experience, observation / information itself
 - Gnosis / Secret Knowledge acts as a projection of desire for experiential release from the Embodied-Life; since it represents the keys to different experience, it also represents the experience itself.

The embodied self is the same person who woke to the world in a burst of visionary immediacy, who soon found that he was not the center of that world but on the contrary, a dependent and even hapless creature, and who then discovered that he was doomed to die

— Roberto Unger —



SECTION 2B: THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION

- Words: 2500
- Physics is still present on the spiritual front:
 - Whereby there is a limit, stop-point, barrier – a law system of formation and interaction, there is a physics system in play.
 - Only, at least in most Christian understandings, does God have free-will, -reign and -action in establishing limitation / law or moving beyond such.
 - The spirit is tantamount to the material body in its encapsulation of a perspective-observation – consciousness – which is determined upon a divine law based form-frame – that being, outside of the body, the spirit is not God: purely free.
 - Then the spirit always has a body: ‘that of determined parameters’.
- The Garden of Eden, and Adam-Eve’s (pre-fall) emplacement within may be seen as a Matryoshka Doll: dimensionally different, thematically similar.



PREDICTED CONCLUSION OF ARGUMENTATION

- Beliefs incorporating body-self dichotomies and desires of 'secret-knowledge', including other attributed aspects, in the modern landscape are being mis-labelled as features of a Gnostic re-emergence.
- By recognising Gnosticism as generated and adopted by prior predicators – human-psychology projecting; as elaborated expression in reaction of situated context – the phenomenon's 'features' can be understood as articulated projections formalised into narrative.
- Such features may be found within the narrative of Genesis and, theologically, inter-linked to anthropological phenomenon which will likely continuously re-emerge time and time again, regardless of the Gnostic narrative's survival.



NEXT STEPS

- Experience as resource:

The re-examining of the following concepts through an experiential frame

- *The Body as an Accumulation Strategy* – David Harvey
- *The Self as Rooted in the Ambiguity of Time: Merleau-Ponty on Temporality and Subjectivity* – Shahrzad Ghanooni
- *Material Interests as Ideology* – Eric Lutzuk

- Investigation into Psychological research in:

- Motivation, desire and temptation:

- *Why self-control seems (but may not be) limited* – Inzlicht et al.
- *Everyday Temptations: An Experience Sampling Study of Desire, Conflict, and Self-Control* - Roy Baumeister
- *The Craving Experience Questionnaire: a brief, theory-based measure of consummatory desire and craving* - Andrade Jackie
- *Imaginary relish and exquisite torture: The elaborated intrusion theory of desire* - Andrade et al.
- Further Research Necessary

- Reading Genesis:

- *On Reading Genesis I-II' in The Theology of the book of Genesis* - Moberly, R. W. L
- *Genesis and Christian Theology. Elliot* – Mark W. et al.



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PICTURES

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