

A Word on “What is meant by Gnosticism”?

“Philosophical and religious movement prominent in the Greco-Roman world in the 2nd century AD. While Gnosticism drew from and influenced in turn many traditional religions, its effect was most clearly felt on nascent Christianity, in which it led to the formation of the canon, creed, and episcopal organization. The designation Gnosticism, derived from the Greek gnōstikos (one who has gnōsis, or ‘secret knowledge’), is a term of modern scholarship. Evidence for the Gnostic phenomenon, found in the Church Fathers who opposed Gnostic teachings (Irenaeus, c. 185; Hippolytus, c. 230; Epiphanius, c. 375) and in the Gnostic writings themselves, reveals a diversity in theology, ethics, and ritual that defies strict classification. Yet Gnostic sects appear to have shared an emphasis on the redemptive power of esoteric knowledge, acquired not by learning or empirical observation but by divine revelation. The origins of the Gnostic worldview have been sought by scholars in the dualism of Iranian religion, the allegorical Idealism of the Middle Platonic philosophers, and the apocalypticism of certain Jewish mystics. There are analogies also with Egyptian and Mesopotamian thought. It was only with the rise of Christianity, however, that Gnostic syncretism came to full expression. In the Gnostic view, the unconscious self of man is consubstantial with the Godhead, but because of a tragic fall it is thrown into a world that is completely alien to its real being. Through revelation from above, man becomes conscious of his origin, essence, and transcendent destiny. Gnostic revelation is to be distinguished both from philosophical enlightenment, because it cannot be acquired by the forces of reason, and from Christian revelation, because it is not rooted in history and transmitted by Scripture. It is rather the intuition of the mystery of the self. The world, produced from evil matter and possessed by evil demons, cannot be a creation of a good God; it is mostly conceived of as an illusion, or an abortion, dominated by Yahweh, the Jewish demiurge, whose creation and history are depreciated. This world is therefore alien to God, who is for the Gnostics depth and silence, beyond any name or predicate, the absolute, the source of good spirits who together form the plērōma, or realm of light. These conceptions are expressed in various myths, which employ material from many traditional religions but serve to express a basic experience that is new, the discovery of the unconscious self or spirit in man which sleeps in him until awakened by the Saviour. The Gnostic sects of the 2nd century made use of Hebrew and Christian religious writings, employing the allegorical method to extricate Gnostic meanings from them.” Brit. Encyc

What exactly does a 2nd century religious philosophy have to do with Rousseau, or anything else today? Is that a valid question? Things like this don't survive in any kind of influential form, right? What of the fact that *“it was only with the rise of Christianity, however, that Gnostic syncretism came to full expression”*? Has Christianity survived in an influential form from before the 2nd century, to this very day? The question then would be why would NOT Gnosticism also have survived?

So assuming this to be so, what is the meaning of Gnosticism today? It would be everything it was then, but larger, much better defined and formed, more concentrated and powerful. It was a competitor, an imitator, and antagonist of Christianity, and is so today in a larger and more powerful way. It was smugly esoteric, led by self-deifying “evolved” beyond-the-average-fools-and-slaves elitists, and is so today in a larger and more powerful way. It is based on unverifiable “truths”, secretly and mysteriously attained to by the “evolved” and their fellow mystic brethren, come forth from the breath of an unnamed celestial source. It is in opposition to the drudgery of *“learning or empirical observation”* (i.e. true science), and finds its liberty in the claims of the esoteric elite, that receives and blessingly implements “truth” from *“divine revelation”*. This “revelation” is nothing other than the “self discovery of their celestial origins”. It believes that man is *“consubstantial with the God”*, that is, man is made of the same stuff as God is, and so, would be God as well if not for *“a tragic fall that throws them into a world that is completely alien to their real being.”* It believes that this *“tragic fall”* and ensuing imprisonment in *“evil matter that is possessed by evil demons”*, is the doing of and *“dominated by Yahweh, the Jewish demiurge”*. It is then anti-Judaistic, and so in turn also anti-Christian (antichrist as for the Christ presented in the only begotten son of God in the person of Jesus). It believes that *“this world is therefore alien”*

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