

# Introduction

Throughout antiquity Christian intellectuals debated the question of free will: Can all human beings freely choose the good and thus gain salvation, or does God's providence or differing human natures and capacities limit freedom and thus the possibility of being saved? Several of the most famous and prolific early church writers displayed serious interest in this question. Already Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria defended the idea that God had endowed humans with complete freedom of will, and they identified this view as fundamental for the development of any ethical system. In his work *On First Principles*, Origen of Alexandria would further this case by advancing a truly sophisticated Christian exploration of the nature of human freedom of will, concepts that Augustine would later build upon. The early Christian doctrine of free will has naturally become a large area of study in modern academia and numerous scholars have highlighted its importance for early Christian discourse on ethics; free will has even been portrayed as one of the key features of Christian thinking setting itself apart from Greek and Roman thought.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars who have explored the topic of early Christian views on free will often argue that the 'Christina view'—that all humans are endowed with the ability to freely choose between good and evil—was developed in opposition to the 'Gnostic view', which rejected free will in favor of determinism.<sup>2</sup> As developments in 'Gnostic Studies' during the last half-decade have shown, the dichotomy Christian-Gnostic is polemically inspired and many of those ancient people associated with 'Gnosticism' were Christians and should be regarded as part of early Christian history. It is somewhat curious, then—considering the strides that have been taken towards revealing the true breath of early Christian pluralism—that most recent studies on the nature of will in early Christian thought have omitted any serious analysis of what was clearly one of the most important early Christian discussions of will, namely proto-heterodox views that restricted it, those views associated with determinism and compatibilism.<sup>3</sup> These positions were serious contenders in the discourse

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- 1 For some of the more recent works, see George E. Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 144; Michael Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought*, ed. A. A. Long (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
  - 2 See the note above and below for scholars who have argued this.
  - 3 Frede, *A Free Will*; Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2013); Karamanolis, *Philosophy*; Scott, when discussing Origen's views of will repeatedly refers to the 'Gnostic'

on human will and vital in the development of early Christian discussions on the nature of human will and its relation to ethics.

The chief opponents of those church fathers who promoted free will were without a doubt the so-called ‘Valentinians’. These Christians were for polemical convenience sake often associated with ‘Gnostics’. According to many church fathers, the Valentinians favored determinism, a position that supposedly caused them to disregard ethics as irrelevant. That Valentinians would have been uninterested in ethics is a polemically inspired slander that has been rightfully abandoned by most scholars during the past few decades.<sup>4</sup> Valentinian texts undoubtedly engage with ethics and consequently, several studies in the field have been dedicated to the subject.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. Some scholars have portrayed determinism, too—just like the lack of Valentinian interest in ethics—as an invention of polemically inspired church fathers.<sup>6</sup> This view is not accurate. As will be demonstrated here, there were indeed early Christians who rejected

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view (represented by Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion), as the ‘deterministic’ view without any real qualification (see Mark S. M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)).

- 4 At times one still encounters the old preconception, however; see, for example, Panayotis Coutsoumpos, “The Strong/Gnosis: Paul, and the Corinthian Community”, in *Paul and Gnosis*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and David I. Yoon (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 195. Here ‘Gnostics’ (what is meant by that remains unclear) are still portrayed as either drawn to renouncing the world or libertine ethics.
- 5 For a discussion of ethics in Valentinian works, see, for example, Michel Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Philip L. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse: Determining the Social Function of Moral Exhortation in Valentinian Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Ismo Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).
- 6 In her monograph on ‘Gnostic’ attitudes toward fate, Nicola Denzey Lewis commented upon Irenaeus’s portrayal of certain Valentinians as determinists, claiming that: “... there is no substance to Irenaeus’ claim; it is merely a standard critique of an opponent’s theological position applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Valentinians” (Nicola Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate in Gnosticism and Graeco-Roman Antiquity: Under Pitiless Skies* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 27). In a recent journal article, Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta states that: “The discovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts has, however, dramatically changed our conception of the Gnostic worldview. We now know, for example, that determinism, in spite of the heresiologists, did not characterize Gnostic anthropology” (Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “A Way of Salvation: Becoming Like God in Nag Hammadi”, *Numen* 60 (2013): 72–73). In one very fundamental way Roig Lanzillotta and Denzey Lewis are both right, one should be careful of generalizing about ‘Gnostics’ and ‘Valentinians’. A closer look at these two quotations suggests that determinism is reduced to an invention of polemically inspired heresiologists. It is not my intention to point out these two scholars particularly, but rather to highlight what I consider to be a broader trend in recent scholarship.

the view that all humans were endowed with free will, a position which could be used to generate an ethical system similarly effective to that of those who professed the doctrine of free will. It is understandable that one could come to the conclusion that determinism must have been a polemical invention, considering that the detailed workings of early Christian views associated with deterministic and compatibilist views, and how exactly they sustained an ethical system, remain to be explored. With this book I hope to take a step toward remedying this lack.

## 1 The Structure of the Present Study

Determinism, for our purposes, is the rejection of the thought that humans are endowed with free will, and the adoption of the notion that each person's fate is preordained. Compatibilism—which I will treat as a form of determinism—is the idea that causal determinism is compatible with human ability to make choices, however limited they may be.<sup>7</sup> In the scholarship of ancient philosophy, deterministic views have not been reduced to the descriptions of their opponents, nor treated as polemical façades. The rejection of free will did not equal simple fatalism, nor did it lead to disinterest in ethical questions. For example, no one today would think of Stoics as disinterested in ethics, yet Stoicism represents perhaps the most famous ancient determinism.<sup>8</sup> A well-known study which shows how determinism can indeed work to construct and sustain ethics is Max Weber's classic work on sixteenth-century Protestant ethics in light of the theology of predestination.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in early Christian studies, Christian deterministic views have often been dismissed as either irrational 'Gnostic' claptrap, or reduced to the inventions of heresiologists.<sup>10</sup>

As a case study this book explores the ethics of an early Christian text that has received less scholarly attention than it merits: *The Tripartite Tractate*

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7 In the modern discourse surrounding Christian attitudes toward free will and human volition one mostly encounters the term determinism, even if the term compatibilism would be more fitting. In order not to lose touch with this discourse, I will mainly employ the term "determinism". For more on the nature of determinism and compatibilism, see below.

8 See for example Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

9 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001 [1930]).

10 For a more thorough discussion of previous attitudes toward early Christian determinism, see further below.

(henceforth abbreviated *TriTrac*).<sup>11</sup> *TriTrac* is the second longest text in the Nag Hammadi collection and contains an immensely detailed creation story, as well as comprehensive discussions on anthropology and soteriology. Several translations and text-critical commentaries have been published on *TriTrac* since the Nag Hammadi texts were encountered, yet hardly any thematic studies at all.<sup>12</sup> By investigating the ethics of *TriTrac*—a text that should indeed be described as an example of early Christian determinism—I argue that we can gain valuable insights into a part of the early Christian world that has been misrepresented and overlooked.

A few preliminary notes are due on the text in question. *TriTrac* is part of Nag Hammadi Codex I, and usually dated to the fourth century, although it is most likely based on an earlier Greek version.<sup>13</sup> The text, 88 manuscript pages long, is without a title, getting its name from the fact that the ancient copyist divided the text with decorative markings in two places, thus separating the tractate into three parts—hence it was called ‘The Tripartite Tractate’. The first part (51–104), which is by far the longest of the three, deals with protology. We read of the Father, the Son, and the Church from where a community of Aeons emanate. The youngest of these Aeons, “the Logos”, strays away from the highest world to commence his own creation together with the Demiurge and other lowly cosmic powers.<sup>14</sup> The second part of the text (104–108), the shortest, deals with the creation of humanity. Here we read that humankind is split into three types: the pneumatic, psychic, and material. The third and last part of the text (108–138) deals with the coming of the Savior, (identified as Jesus on earth) and the salvation of the pneumatic humans, as well as the psychics,

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11 This is the only time I give the full title of a text which is otherwise abbreviated. For a full list of abbreviations, see above.

12 To my knowledge, there are no previously published thematical monographs on *TriTrac*. However, there are two unpublished dissertations: Owen Michael Smith, “Approaches to the Unknown God in Second-Century Middle Platonic Natural Theology and the Valentinian Gnosticism of the Tripartite Tractate (NHC I,5)” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1995); and Matthew Clark Brewer, “The Form of the Formless: A Hermeneutical Exegesis of the Tripartite Tractate from Nag Hammadi Codex I” (PhD diss., University of Kent at Canterbury, 2000). These works are discussed further below. I do not include unpublished M.A. theses here.

13 The above is merely meant as a short introduction to *TriTrac*. Details of the text’s material and contextual background are discussed in more depth further below, where references to previous research into *TriTrac* are also provided and discussed.

14 In this study, I refer to the Logos in the male gender. Even though the Logos and the Aeons could be seen as standing above cosmic classifications like male and female, the text at times presents femaleness as a sickness (94:16–18) which Logos combats, thus I choose to refer to the Logos as ‘he’. For more on the text’s attitude to male versus female, see Chapter 2 below.

while the material human beings are condemned to dissolve into nothingness. As I argue in greater detail in later chapters, *TriTrac* seems to present a soteriology detached from the notion of free will, which is restricted to the beings in the highest heavens; how people react to the appearance of the Savior reveals whether they are pneumatic, psychic, or material humans, that is, if they have the capacity for salvation or not.

The central goal of the present study is to address how such a seemingly fixed system laid the foundations for ethical discussion. In order to engage with questions like, ‘by what proposed principles should people live?’, and ‘how is virtue defined?’, we first need to understand how *TriTrac* presents the basic workings and mechanisms behind human decision-making and the nature of the faculty of choice.<sup>15</sup> This entails research into ancient physics, epistemology, cognitive theory, and cosmology. Approaching *TriTrac*’s ethics, and the basic ontological and cognitive principles at its foundation, also allows us to consider—in a more detailed manner than before—the context of this most intriguing and complex early Christian text.

This book, just like *TriTrac*, is divided into three parts. Part I is devoted to *TriTrac*’s place within the theoretical foundations of ancient ethical discourse, illuminated by unpacking and studying aspects of its very detailed creation myth. Looking more closely at the creation scene—chiefly the description of, and relations between, the different substances that make up humanity and all existence—allows us to enter the realm of ancient physics, cognitive science, epistemology, and anthropological theories. Part I is divided into three chapters that examine how human cognition and decision-making is thought to have worked. Chapter 1 explores the epistemology and ontology presented in *TriTrac*. Chapter 2 focuses on the composition of the human mind read from the perspective of *TriTrac*’s theory of emotions. Chapter 3 penetrates further into the theory of the mind, investigating how human choice and the mechanisms of cognition work, and how free will is defined. Each of these chapters explores topics relevant to the ethics of the text as these matters—ontology, epistemology and cognitive theory, the nature of passions, and the *debate* over (not just acceptance of) free will—are areas that remain understudied in *TriTrac*.

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15 I am not ignorant of the important and insightful work of many classicists such as Albrecht Dihle, who has masterfully explained and expanded upon the complexity of ancient discussions of will and choice. See Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982). However, these studies have yet to be applied on a detailed level to the material that was then called Gnostic. For detailed discussions of the use and development of the notion of free will in antiquity, see Chapter 3 below.

In Part II we turn to lived ethics, exploring questions such as: What is the ideal social structure of society? How do people differ from each other and how should they live their lives in the world? Part II is also divided into three chapters. The first chapter in Part II, Chapter 4, deals with the anthropology of *TriTrac*, a much-debated topic in studies of Valentinian texts. Here I argue that the anthropology presented in the text follows a pedagogical model common in antiquity. I put the findings in Part I into context and ask what social ramifications an ethical system would have that rejected the doctrine of free will and did not allow for humans' transcending the limitations of their physical, intellectual, and soteriological nature. How would a fixed anthropology have worked in practice? Chapter 5 discusses the ideal social structure presented in *TriTrac*. The text mentions teaching, learning, and a school, and in this chapter, we explore the importance played by pedagogy and the relation between the two concepts school and church. The term 'School of Valentinus', which some scholars have adopted, is also scrutinized. Chapter 6 explores *TriTrac's* attitudes to involvement in politics and everyday life. How should Christians participate in the non-Christian majority society and what can this tell us of the context of the composition of *TriTrac*? The three chapters in Part II deal with questions which represent common topics addressed in studies of early Christian ethics, questions such as: How should people live in the world? What social structures and hierarchies are most suitable? How do people improve morally? My aim has been for the answers presented in these chapters to illuminate early Christian ethics in general, especially considering the deterministic nature of the text.

The book concludes with Part III, which contains one chapter: Chapter 7. Here the findings of the study are summarized and their implications discussed. In conclusion, a hypothesis about the 'original' context of *TriTrac* is presented which suggests that the text derives from a pre-monastic city context consisting of an inner circle of people engaged in theological study within a larger lay-Christian community: two groups that would meet at times for communal worship and for basic educational and catechumenal purposes. Although it is not the main task of this study to explore *TriTrac's* later contexts, it nevertheless becomes evident that many of the themes central to *TriTrac* reverberate in later monastic literature. This final chapter is followed by a short appendix with a few suggestions on where further research would be most likely to yield fruitful results.

Before this study of *TriTrac's* ethics can commence, there are important preliminary issues that need to be addressed regarding the terminology to be used in this study. After these considerations, I provide a resume of the contents of *TriTrac* and situate *TriTrac* in the ancient context wherein the study takes

place. This is followed by a review of previous research on the text and, finally, some general points are made on the study and nature of early Christian views on free will and ethics and where *TriTrac* fits into this discourse.

## 2 Who Were the Valentinians?

*TriTrac* is often defined as a Valentinian text, a phenomenon that is traditionally described as a form of ancient Christian ‘Gnosticism’. As is well known today, the term ‘Gnosticism’ has brought with it deeply negative connotations.<sup>16</sup> It has been defined in many ways but most often in opposition to ‘true’ or ‘pure’ Christianity or Judaism or Platonism—just to pick three phenomena that Gnosticism has been thought to ‘appropriate’—as if these terms were in some way clear categories. After 1945, when the Nag Hammadi writings were discovered, some of which fit particular patterns that the church fathers rejected, it became clear the extent to which the church fathers’ polemics had influenced the definition of the category. Michael A. Williams’ book, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, showed that many stereotypes associated with ‘Gnosticism’ were misleading.<sup>17</sup> The texts and groups that were being labeled Gnostic did not represent what the category was thought to reference: anti-cosmism, body-hatred, disinterest in ethics, to mention a few supposed characteristics. Williams’ work illustrated the imprecision of the term and showed that it brought with it erroneous preconceptions that did not find support in the ancient source material. Karen King went on to describe how the term had been used in modern time

16 The term ‘Gnosticism’ was first used, as far as we can tell, in 1669, by the Protestant apologetic theologian, Henry More, to designate the teachings of his Catholic opponents. The Catholics were, according to More, leading the masses to heresy, just like he maintained “Gnosticism” had done in ancient time. ‘Gnosticism’ was a term More used for many different groups and individuals that the church fathers had written about and whom they said called themselves ‘Gnostics’, or whom they labeled as such. The church fathers’ portrayal of their opponents, ‘the Gnostics’, was at first read uncritically. Irenaeus of Lyon disputed those who claimed possession of a certain knowledge (gnosis) which Irenaeus viewed was a “knowledge falsely so called” (probably citing 1Tim 6:20–21). These ancient people were prone to mythologizing and distorting, and were lured by syncretistic ‘Hellenism’, according to Adolf von Harnack (Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma I* (New York: Dover Publishing, 1961). For a history of the term among early apologetic Protestants, see Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

17 Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Morton Smith, “The History of the term Gnostikos”, in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 796–807.

to construct 'the other'; and here, too, it had been used arbitrarily, often more or less as a synonym for heresy.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the work of King, Williams, and others, many scholars have stopped using the term 'Gnosticism', arguing that it is just too laden with imprecision and apologetic circumstance to be used in an effective and neutral way. I sympathize with this view, yet the rule that guides me in choosing whether to employ a category or not is its functionality. Is the term useful? Does it allow us to approach and understand the material at hand better? This is not the case for *TriTrac* and early Christian ethics in general. Using the term in this study would most likely imply relations between texts, individuals, and groups that did not necessarily exist, as well as clouding other possibilities. Thus, the categories 'Gnosticism' and 'Gnostic' will not be utilized in this study.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the same problems that come with the term 'Gnosticism' are also associated with 'Valentinianism', which is also a polemical construction; contrary to 'Gnosticism', however, many of the church fathers' descriptions of Valentinian theology fit ancient sources in a much more concrete and precise way than the sweeping term 'Gnosticism', which is ultimately a modern concept. Contrary to 'Gnosticism', Valentinianism can be more firmly traced to historical people, possibly an originator (Valentinus), as well as concrete theological motifs.<sup>20</sup> Thus, I will use the term Valentinian at times to refer to these theological peculiarities that were identified by some church fathers and that

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18 King, *What is Gnosticism?* See further, Karen King, "Social and Theological Effects of Heresiological Discourse", in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, eds. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 28–49; Karen King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category 'Gnosis/Gnosticism': The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip", in *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen. Beiträge zu außerkanonischen Jesusüberlieferungen aus verschiedenen Sprach- und Kulturtraditionen*, eds. J. Frey and J. Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 445–465.

19 A recent trend among some scholars is to narrow down the use of the term 'Gnostic' and 'Gnosticism' to refer to the Sethian material, beginning with those Irenaeus first called "multitude of Gnostics" in the end of book 1 of *Against Heresies* (Chapters 29–31). See Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987); David Brakke, *The Gnostics* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2010); and Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Myth-making: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). However, I will simply use the term Sethian when referring to this category, in order not to risk confusion. But as Rasimus has shown, the category Sethian is not simple either, most likely the category includes several *different* groups and myths. For example, the creation story of the *Ophite* traditions were most likely foundational for what we today call Sethianism. Nevertheless, I wonder if this category becomes more clear if we instead call it Gnostic, which brings with it many other preconceived notions.

20 This has been studied in detail in Einar Thomassen's book, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).



can also be found in later texts from the Nag Hammadi collection. However, I do not use the category Valentinian to refer to a homogenous movement or a *fixed* theological system in antiquity, but rather a collection of theological motifs of sorts (possibly going back to Valentinus) that inspired some early Christian theologians.<sup>21</sup> These Christians were called ‘Valentinians’ by some church fathers for polemical convenience.<sup>22</sup> However, there is no evidence that those identified as Valentinians called themselves that, nor do we find the term in any of the texts that have been identified as Valentinian.<sup>23</sup> Considering this background, it is problematic to classify texts, people, and theological features as Valentinian.<sup>24</sup> However, since our sources for ancient Christianity are scarce as they are, it would be unfortunate to limit ourselves even further by disregarding similarities just because the sources have a critical and polemical tone.<sup>25</sup> Instead, we should formulate carefully, and not impose preconceived notions on texts that do not fit them.<sup>26</sup> We should strive to read the

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- 21 I will when possible avoid using the ‘-ism’ Valentinianism, in order not to add to the reification of a fixed theology or social category, and instead refer to Valentinian traits or texts.
- 22 For details on Valentinus’ life and works, see Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).
- 23 Frederik Wisse, “Prolegomena to the Study of the New Testament and Gnosis”, in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson*, ed. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 138–145.
- 24 Michel Desjardins, “The Sources for Valentinian Gnosticism: A Question of Methodology”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 49 (1986): 342–347. David Brakke rightly points out that in using terms like ‘Gnosticism’ (and this applies to Valentinianism also), there is a risk that peripheral ‘Gnostic’ features of a text/group (for example, belief in a Demiurge) take precedence in importance at the expense of something that could have been more central, for example, the saving message of Jesus (Brakke, *The Gnostics*, 1–28). See also Williams, *Rethinking*, 51, where he acknowledges the usefulness of using terms like ‘Valentinian’ to highlight specific sub-traditions within the broader category of Christianity. See also the discussion in Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 1–20; and Einar Thomassen, “L’histoire du valentinisme et le Traité Tripartite”, in *L’Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études* 103 (1994–1995): 301–303.
- 25 This has recently been discussed by, for example, Geoffrey Smith, in *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 170.
- 26 See also Michael Kaler and Marie-Pierre Bussi eres, “Was Heracleon a Valentinian? A New Look at Old Sources”, *Harvard Theological Review* 99:3 (2006): 275–289. Here it is argued that people were often described as Valentinians on genealogical grounds in antiquity, and not on doctrinal similarity (although the one does not exclude the other). Kaler and Bussi eres look at how Origen and Clement attached the term ‘Valentinian’ to Heracleon on different grounds; Clement on a genealogical basis and Origen on grounds of hearsay. Nevertheless, this does not make the category less useful for our purposes; there are indeed notions in Heracleon’s work (at least that cited by Origen) that could be called Valentinian as we here will define the term.

second-hand sources critically without drawing absolute conclusions: making suggestions, arguing for the most probable and illuminating perspectives, and opening them up for discussion and interpretive possibilities rather than obstructing them. In light of this, and remembering not to reify as a fixity or a social identity something that did not necessarily exist, I do think the category ‘Valentinian’ is useful in the present study, in order to point out particular early Christian theological traits and help situate them in a specific context.

So, what are these particular traits, and in what concrete way does the category illuminate the study at hand? The motifs that are found in church fathers’ depictions of Valentinians<sup>27</sup> that also fit first-hand sources, and thus make up the category as it will be used here, include the following: (1) interest in protological and pleromatological issues;<sup>28</sup> (2) the idea that the cosmos was not formed by the highest God but rather a lower being (sometimes called the Demiurge); (3) the idea that the heavenly world (often called the Pleroma) was populated by eternal beings called Aeons (sometimes identified as the emanations of the Father); (4) the idea that the youngest of these Aeons fell from heaven and gave rise to a lower form of existence, that is, material existence in the cosmos where some of the heavenly substance and the youngest Aeon ended up; and lastly (5) the raising of a barrier between Pleroma and cosmos and the entry of a heavenly Savior figure into the cosmos, identified with Jesus on earth, who comes in need of salvation himself.<sup>29</sup>

Texts that can be viewed as Valentinian, according to this typology, include, but are not restricted to: *GosTruth*,<sup>30</sup> *TriTrac*, *GosPhil*, *InterpKnow*, *ValExp*,

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27 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.1–7; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*; Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians*; Clement, *Stromata* 11.3, 11.8, 111.1, 111.4, IV.9, IV.13, V.1, VI.6, VII.17; Origen, *Commentary on John*; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 33. For a discussion of these sources and for the exact passages, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 39–45, 59–61, 104–107, 119–129, 193–230, 241–247. It should also be noted that, since the work of David M. Litwa, the attribution of *Refutation of All Heresies* to Hippolytus is in question. See David M. Litwa, ed., *Refutation of All Heresies* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

28 Protology refers to the events in the first beginnings, between the time the first godhead started the initial creation until the beginning of the formation of matter. Pleromatology is what I call the interest shown in the detailed formation of the Pleroma, the workings of, and relation between, the different heavenly figures in the Pleroma. The term Pleroma is here used when the highest realm is made up of a larger group of heavenly beings, most often called Aeons. Thomassen and others have discussed this in detail and chiefly identified two pleromatological approaches in Valentinian material. For details, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 193–332.

29 The typological features have been thoroughly studied before. For more detailed descriptions of what Valentinian theology included, see Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, 3–17; Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*.

30 When referring to *GosTruth* below, I always refer to the better-preserved version in Codex I, if nothing else is indicated.

and *ExcTheod.*<sup>31</sup> The heresiologists discussed many people, who they called Valentinians, to whom these theological traits were attached, such as Ptolemy and Heracleon (just to mention two referred to in more detail by the church fathers).<sup>32</sup> Not all of the above texts have every one of these features and the features do at times differ between the texts. Furthermore, there are other texts and fragments that arguably should be included in the category (or at least texts that are often thought to be Valentinian).<sup>33</sup> However, since I do not propose to present a coherent definition of the phenomenon of Valentinianism, nor strive to present a final list of Valentinian texts, I will not venture into detailed analysis of which other texts could be included in the category. These texts are here called Valentinian so as to facilitate a smoother discussion of particular theological traits found in them, traits that church fathers such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement, Origen, and Epiphanius attached to the theological opponents they called Valentinians.<sup>34</sup>

There are other attributes that could be added to the list of Valentinian traits, for example, a tripartite anthropology, specific rituals (like the bridal

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- 31 *GosTruth* does not have a clear myth of a falling youngest Aeon; instead we have the character Error (πλανη). However, we do find a Pleroma and Aeons, as well as a soteriology and anthropology that fit the other texts, so one can with relative certainty draw connections between the theology of these texts. The variance is not a problem for the present purposes, but rather proves my point about Valentinian theology not being a clear-cut category in ancient time. *GosPhil* is difficult to place in an earlier setting, since it, as Hugo Lundhaug has argued convincingly, shows awareness of fifth century theological debates. Lundhaug does not view the text as Valentinian (see Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). However, there is material in the text that recalls Valentinian theology as defined above; for example, Sophia is an important character, and the Demiurge as well as the Aeons of the Pleroma are discussed in the many seemingly disconnected passages that comprise the text. Concerning *ExcTheod.*, we should be aware that this is not *one* text, but rather a composition of what seems to be several different Valentinian texts. It was already divided into four parts in the nineteenth century. See Georg Heinrich, *Die valentinianische Gnosis und die heilige Schrift* (Berlin: Weigandt und Greiben, 1871), 92. For a translation into English, and for the edition which will here be referenced, see Robert Pierce Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1934).
- 32 For more information on these two, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 17–22, 103–118, and for a list of individuals identified as Valentinians by the church fathers, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 491–508.
- 33 For example, Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* quoted by Epiphanius in his *Panarion*, and Nag Hammadi texts such as *PrPaul* (1,1), *Letter to Rheginos* (1,4), *First and Second Apocalypse of James* (v,3–4), *Letter of Peter to Philip* (viii,2). For a more thorough discussion of who counts which of these texts as Valentinian and why, see Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 15–17.
- 34 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*; Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians*; Clement, *Stromata* II.3, II.8, III.1, III.4, IV.9, IV.13, V.1, VI.6, VII.17; Origen, *Commentary on John* (Fragments of Heracleon); Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.

chamber), and soteriological details (like the correspondence of the body of the Savior with those he comes to save), but there is no need to further define the term ‘Valentinian’ here since I will not treat the category as a clearly defined social or theological entity;<sup>35</sup> rather arguing that previous research on *TriTrac* has at times been led astray by reading it in light of a grand narrative of Valentinian theology. Furthermore, Valentinian texts have many similarities to other religious phenomena such as Sethian texts; *ApJohn*, for example, also presents a myth where an Aeon falls, a Demiurge creates the cosmos, and a Savior appears from the highest heaven.<sup>36</sup> However, there are fundamental differences that set Sethian texts apart from Valentinian texts: for example, the role played by Seth and the image of the highest world populated by four light creatures, traits that are not extant in Valentinian material. When I use the term ‘Valentinian’, I refer to a set of ideas, not a fixed social group.<sup>37</sup> The term will be employed simply to highlight particular theological traits popular among some of the Christians the church fathers opposed, Christians who did not necessarily have more in common with each other than their being inspired by similar theological and cosmological traits.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the term is here used chiefly to locate *TriTrac* and some other texts that at times will be used as *comparandum* within a particular intra-Christian discussion.

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35 The contrary approach has perhaps most vividly been argued for by Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*; Einar Thomassen, “Going to Church with the Valentinians”, in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, eds. April DeConick et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 183–197.

36 See, for example, Karen King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

37 We cannot presuppose that there is an active social group that reflects a text’s community ideal and ritual outlook. What is more, we should certainly not take *several* different texts that have clear differences, their exact background being uncertain, and reify the same community context. The social context should be argued for, for each specific text. Furthermore, the ancients who were inspired by the kind of mythologumena that is here called Valentinian, could have been part of Christian communities to which also proto-orthodox theologians belonged. This is surely not inconceivable; consider that Valentinus was, in his lifetime, never excommunicated. He and his followers did not start a competing Church, unlike Marcion.

38 However, I do not deny that people who were inspired by Valentinian myths would have been more easily drawn to other people harboring similar myths, rather than Christians who rejected these myths. My point is simply that we cannot reify a fixed social group from a text that has particular theological traits. At the same time, it is important to remember the plurality and dynamic nature of the early Christian landscape. For more on the plurality of early Christianity, see Brakke, *The Gnostics*, 90–111.

### 3 The Myth in *TriTrac* and the Ethics in Storytelling

Much of *TriTrac* consists of a very long and complex creation myth, which, I argue, is the key to understanding the basic principles that supply the foundations for the ethics presented in the text. A myth is a story—that much is generally agreed upon—although the question of what else ‘myth’ is, and is not, is a huge topic in religious studies. In the past and in some contexts still today, myth is synonymous with ‘made up’ or ‘false’.<sup>39</sup> This view of myth, narrowed down to its colloquial sense, is indeed an outdated use of the term in religious studies. However, as Bronislaw Malinowski pointed out at the beginning of the twentieth century, myth “is not merely a story told but a reality lived ... [a] sacred story [that] lives in our ritual, in our morality, as it governs our faith and controls our conduct”.<sup>40</sup> Malinowski’s view is close to how religion in general was approached by Clifford Geertz, who suggested that religions are like cultural systems of symbols that simultaneously create “models of” reality and “models for” reality.<sup>41</sup> All symbols fluctuate between these two; they are appropriated in order to give meaning to reality by simultaneously making reality conform to the system while arranging the system in light of reality. By this he means that religion explains how and why things are as they are while simultaneously telling us how things ought to be.<sup>42</sup> It is by means of this

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39 As Paul Veyne has pointed out concerning the Greeks’ relation to their myths: the question whether myths are ‘true’ or not would probably have come as a surprise to many of the ancients. He notes, along with many other scholars like Foucault, that how truth is defined is not a self-evident question, it varies historically. Power relations should be taken into consideration: who decides what is considered to be knowledge, truth, beauty, goodness, or truth? This is context-bound. Of course, the Greeks—if we take them as an example—saw their myths as being true in some sense, just as people today value the stories that belong to our time and culture. See Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Gods? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*. Translation by Paula Wissing (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1983). This, however, does not mean that myths were not also questioned and discussed by some. Atheism is not an exclusively modern phenomenon; see Tim Whitmarsh, *Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016).

40 From his talk “Myth in Primitive Psychology” held in honor of Sir James Frazer in Liverpool 1925. The quote is taken from the collection of Malinowski’s works, in Ivan Strenski, ed., *Malinowski and the Work of Myth* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 81.

41 Clifford Geertz, “Religion as Cultural System”, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 2000 [1973]), 87–125.

42 Geertz has been criticized by Talal Asad, for example, who rejects all definitions that border on essentialism and universalism, which Asad sees as necessarily Eurocentric and Christocentric considering the background of concepts like ‘religion’ and ‘myth’. Asad has written that Geertz’s definition ignores “varying social condition” (Talal Asad, “Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz”, *Man* 18:2 (1983): 237).

perspective that I approach religious narratives as myth, and the creation story we encounter in *TriTrac*. Myths are stories that create and legitimate structures and values for the group to whom they belong.<sup>43</sup>

The ethics of *TriTrac* can be approached through the myth presented in the text. There are few passages in *TriTrac* that elaborate on ethical conduct explicitly, which is in all likelihood one reason why the ethics of *TriTrac* remains rather unexplored.<sup>44</sup> My argument is that even though the clear paraenetic sections in the text are few (I return to this question shortly), the ethical outlook presented in the text would most likely have seemed quite clear for an ancient reader familiar with ethical discourse. As I will argue in Chapters 4 and 5, formative ethical deliberation was in the ancient curriculum one of the

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This critique could be countered by reference to a quote from Santayana that Geertz provides in the introduction to his essay: “Any attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular ... Thus every living and healthy religion has a marked idiosyncrasy” (Santayana, *Reason in Religion*, taken from Geertz, “Religion as Cultural System”, 87). Furthermore, Kevin Schilbrack has argued that Asad does not represent Geertz fairly in his critique, especially when presenting as Eurocentric and Christocentric Geertz’s view of religion as involving metaphysical claims. Claiming metaphysics as Christocentric or Eurocentric is a strange statement because invoking metaphysics has often been used to demonstrate the superiority of the West over non-Christian cultures (who are at times viewed as relying on metaphysics rather than ‘science’). For details of this debate, see Kevin Schilbrack, “Religion, Models of, and Reality: Are We Through with Geertz?”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73:2 (2005): 429–452.

43 See also Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999). Lincoln’s approach to myth is similar to the way Geertz looks at religion. Lincoln views myth as values in narrative form.

44 Studies have been made of ‘Valentinian’ ethics but *TriTrac* does not play a central part in them. See, for example, Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, devoted to *GosTruth* and *InterpKnow*. Desjardins investigates sin in Valentinianism and devotes approximately eight pages to the concept of sin in *TriTrac*, concluding that both pneumatics and psychics are indeed stricken and troubled by sin and need salvation from God. Thus, Desjardins’ thesis that ethics is not at all unimportant is confirmed. There is to my knowledge only one text that is solely devoted to the ethics of *TriTrac*: Alexander Kocar’s article “‘Humanity Came to Be According to Three Essential Types’: Ethical Responsibility and Practice in the Valentinian Anthropogony of the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5)”, in *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity*, eds. Lance Jenott and Sarit Kattan Gribetz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 193–221. This very important article will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, because Kocar investigates parallels to Stoic thought in order to illuminate *TriTrac*, which I also explore in detail below. Kocar’s text is divided into two parts, the first examines parallels with Stoicism, the other explores the ethics of the pneumatics in *TriTrac* and concludes that the text is strongly influenced by Pauline theology. I agree, further exploring topics Kocar touches on, for example the dynamics of soteriological fixity and social dynamics (see Chapter 4).

last topics a student approached, that is, an advanced topic, proceeded by rigorous studies in physics, rhetoric, argumentative techniques, and other areas that were thought necessary to master before approaching formative ethics. It is in the myth presented in *TriTrac* that we find the foundations for advanced ethical considerations: epistemology, cognitive theory, and anthropology. Before elaborating on this point, let me give a very brief summary of the myth presented in *TriTrac*. The following are not quotes, but short accounts of the contents and structure of the different parts of the text:

**Part I (51:1–104:3): the Godhead, the Structure of the Heavens and the Nature, Organization, and Purpose of the Cosmic System**

- 51:1–74:18      In the beginning, there is only the Father. He is without beginning and without end, being complete and perfect and good. The Father wishes to be known. He creates a Son and then a Collective of Aeons called the Church. The members of the Church are given individuality and free will, and they exist in harmony, giving praise to the Father.
- 74:18–77:11      The youngest of the Aeons, called the Logos, driven by love of the Father, steps outside the harmony of the collective Church, also called the Pleroma. This happens in accordance with the will of the Father and a border is drawn between the Pleroma and the outside, occupied by the Logos.
- 77:11–95:38      As a result of the absence of the Father, the Logos becomes confused and creates lower beings. The Logos' initial creation is identified as passions and creatures made of matter, which are described as the lowest form of existence. The Logos suffers due to his isolation and his association with the lack he has created. He repents and prays for forgiveness for the erroneous result of his creation. From this remorse, psychic substance and psychic powers emerge. The psychic powers and the material creatures stand in opposition and fight each other. The Logos continues to be challenged by his creation and the Aeons of the Pleroma take pity on him. They send down the Savior, identified with the Son, the second principle of the Godhead. The Logos rejoices at the vision of the Savior and from this joy spiritual, or pneumatic, substances and powers are born.

95:38–104:3 In a pedagogic act to teach the psychics the nature of error, and to subject the pneumatics to evil so they will learn of the toils of cosmic life, the Logos commences with organizing a system for this purpose. Each of the three levels of powers (material, psychic, and pneumatic) is given a dominion to rule. The Logos creates a demiurge. The Demiurge and his minions create the cosmos and all the things in the world, also humankind.

### **Part II (104:4–108:12): the Creation of Humans**

104:4–108:12 Humans are formed. They are made of a mix of all three substances to which the Logos originally gave rise: matter and psychic and pneumatic stuff. Humanity is also divided into three kinds: people who reject the Savior, people who need to be convinced of the Savior's message, and those people who recognize the Savior right away. These three types of humans are called by the substance with which they are chiefly associated: material, psychic, and pneumatic people.

### **Part III (108:13–138:27): the Situation on Earth and Final Restoration**

108:13–114:30 Before the Savior appears on earth humans only have partial knowledge and the material and psychic powers rule. Greek philosophers, who are guided by the material powers, are divided concerning knowledge and fight amongst each other. The Jews, on the other hand, have partial knowledge and are guided by the psychic powers. But they, too, are divided concerning knowledge of God.

114:31–118:14 The Savior appears on earth. He takes on the same form as the humans on earth and is born in body and soul. The Savior, born as Jesus Christ, accepts death in order to grant humans salvation and freedom from ignorance and suffering. Those who reject him are destined for destruction, but are allowed to remain as long as Logos' organization exists because they are useful for the system that he set in place.



- 118:14–122:12 Humans react differently to the coming of the Savior. The pneumatic people react instantly and rush toward the Savior. The psychics need convincing but nevertheless possess the ability to recognize the Savior. The psychic people celebrate communion with the pneumatics, sing hymns and share in their suffering. The material people reject the Savior.
- 122:12–138:27 The pneumatics are the main target for the Savior’s work. They make up the body of the Savior, they are his church and correspond to the Church in the Pleroma.<sup>45</sup> The psychic people who accept the Savior are rewarded for their work. However, the pneumatic and psychic humans’ reward in the end-time differs. Everything will be reduced once again to the three substances. The material substance is alien to the Pleroma and will be destroyed. The pneumatic substance is of the same kind as those who exist in the Pleroma and will be integrated into it and to the aeonic collective. The psychic substance is not naturally from the Pleroma but, as a reward for their acceptance of the Savior and the aid they bring to their pneumatic superiors, the psychics will reap the benefits of salvation in a position below the Pleroma.

This story needs unpacking and elaboration in order to be made relevant for ethical discussions, that much is clear.<sup>46</sup> It is with this that the present study of *TriTrac* is chiefly concerned. By looking more closely at the creation scene (Part I of *TriTrac*), the relation between the different substances and how they are described—the substances that later make up humanity—we enter the realm of ancient physics, cognitive science, epistemology, and anthropological theories.

I have already emphasized the importance of context when approaching an ancient text and large parts of this present study engage with the detailed

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45 I use the capital C for the Church in the Pleroma, not the community of pneumatics on earth, in order to separate the two.

46 There is, of course, a plethora of theological details that this summary omits, for example exactly how Logos organizes the cosmic system or that Logos is split as he falls away from the Pleroma; the baser part of him becoming trapped on the outside while the higher parts of him is reintegrated into the Pleroma. These particular theological details will be discussed in the following chapters as they become relevant for elucidating the ethical outlook of the text.

discussions that Greco-Roman philosophers—chiefly Stoics and Platonists—and Christians utilized when explaining the foundations of ethics. I will show how *TriTrac* positions itself within this debate. How the substances and the different powers we encounter in *TriTrac* relate to each other and to humanity are fundamental questions for ethical considerations, because they help us answer basic questions: Of what does a human action consist? To what degree are humans free to choose their own actions? Are there hidden structures that influence human behavior? After these fundamental questions have been answered, we can go further and look more closely at how *TriTrac* relates to questions concerning lived ethics. How should followers of Christ conduct their lives in the world? What is the ideal social state according to the text? These topics—lived ethics and their theoretical foundations—lie at the core of this study. Before I deliberate on why these issues are important to explore, however, it is time to contextualize the text at hand. What is known of the material and historical background of *TriTrac* and what have previous scholars written about it?

#### 4 Previous Research on *TriTrac* and the Historical Setting of the Text

*TriTrac* is the fifth text in Nag Hammadi Codex 1. Several suggestions have been presented over the years as to the origins of the Nag Hammadi collection. The earliest scholarship examining these fascinating texts suggested that they could be related to the Egyptian monastic movement that had its birth, both chronologically and geographically,<sup>47</sup> in the area where the texts were found.<sup>48</sup>

47 There have been many suggestions as to what kind of monks these might have been; Melitian, Origenist, and Pachomian monks have all been suggested at one time or another. Torgny Säve-Söderberg has suggested that the texts could have been read by monks, not for edification, but to learn about their theological opponents to be able to refute them. See Torgny Säve-Söderberg, “Holy Scripture or Apologetic Documentation? The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Nag Hammadi Library”, in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: Colloque du Centre d’Histoire des Religions (Strasbourg, 23–25 octobre 1974)*, ed. J. E. Menard (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 3–14. This is a view with few supporters today. The texts were most likely owned by people who valued them as more than reference works, which is suggested by the decorations on the covers as well as the importance placed on the order of the texts. For a brief overview of the history of scholarship on the subject, see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 4–7.

48 There has recently been some debate concerning the validity of the story of the find; James Robinson’s credibility has been questioned and he has been accused of orientalism. See Mark Goodacre, “How Reliable is the Story of the Nag Hammadi Discovery?”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35 (2013): 303–322; Nicola Denzey Lewis and

Yet many have found it difficult to believe that monks owned the Nag Hammadi texts, much less read them for edification. Some have suggested that the texts belonged to one or a few wealthy learned individuals, while others have hypothesized a ‘Gnostic’ group behind them. Scholars supporting the view that the texts could not have belonged to proponents of the ‘mainstream’ Church are perhaps most clearly represented by Alexandr Khosroyev, who argued that most of the data, including codicological evidence, point to a Gnostic urban intelligentsia behind the codices, chiefly due to what was considered to be their ‘anti-biblical’, ‘esoteric’, and philosophically laden material. *TriTrac* is one of the texts that has been used as a prime example of these characteristics.<sup>49</sup> According to Khosroyev, the Nag Hammadi texts were commercial products, produced by professional booksellers, commissioned by urban religious group(s) with ‘syncretistic’ tendencies; he claims that they would not have interested monks.<sup>50</sup>

Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott have recently argued, rather convincingly in my opinion, that there are several problems with Khosroyev’s thesis. The Gnosticism-Christianity paradigm, which Khosroyev and others who pose a ‘Gnostic-sect origin’ take as their departure, has permitted several flawed ideas to fester: for example, that the Nag Hammadi texts are ‘anti-biblical’,

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Justine Ariel Blount, “Rethinking the Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014): 399–419. For an overview of the debate, a nuanced defense of Robinson (where the accusation of orientalism is rightly rejected), and arguments against the hypothesis that the Nag Hammadi texts were Christian books of the dead, used as grave goods among Christians, see Brent Nongbri, “Finding Early Christian Books at Nag Hammadi and Beyond”, *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 45 (2016): 11–19; Dylan Burns, “Telling Nag Hammadi’s Egyptian Stories” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 45 (2016): 5–11.

49 Alexandr Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi: Einige Problem des Christentums in Ägypten während der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1995). Khosroyev’s perspective has, over the years, gained support by many, for example Alastair Logan, *The Gnostic: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006) and Ewa Wipszycka, “The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist’s Point of View”, *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 30 (2000): 179–191. For a summary, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 2–3.

50 Khosroyev, *Die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi*, 10–13. This is mostly drawn from his analysis of Codex VI where we find a scribal note. Khosroyev is not alone in his opinion that the Nag Hammadi codices are commercial products; this is also the conclusion drawn by Eva Cornelia Römer in “Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Papyri” in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 623–643; as well as Joseph Montserrat-Torrents, “The Social and Cultural Setting of the Coptic Gnostic Library” in *Studia Patristica XXXI: Papers Presented at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1995*, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 464–481.

'syncretistic',<sup>51</sup> and philosophically complex, qualities which would have made Christian monks reject them.<sup>52</sup> Lundhaug and Jenott have rephrased the argument for a monastic setting and taken issue with Khosroyev's representation of the texts,<sup>53</sup> suggesting instead that the codices were produced in book-exchange networks associated with monasteries and that the texts were read by monks who most likely would have found much of the content in the Nag Hammadi texts of great interest. Furthermore, just because certain texts were housed and copied by monks does not necessarily mean that they agreed with everything written in them. I concur; one does not have to agree with everything in a text to find it edifying.

What then, has been said about Codex I and *TriTrac* in particular? *TriTrac* is, as stated above, the fifth and last text in Codex I,<sup>54</sup> which has been thought to form a larger collection of books. However, it is unclear if the twelve codices known today as the Nag Hammadi library ever formed a distinct collection, or if they were part of a bigger collection, or belonged to a single or several owners.<sup>55</sup> Palaeographic—as well as some dialectical—investigations have shown a close connection between Codex I, VII and XI (there are other groupings as well).<sup>56</sup> The sequence of the texts in Codex I also seem to have

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51 For a study on the problematic use of the term 'syncretism', and an argument that the term should be avoided if not further qualified, see Paul Linjamaa, "Gnosticism as Inherently Syncretistic?: Identity Constructions among Ancient Christians and Protestant Apologetes" in *Theological and Philosophical Responses to Syncretism: Beyond the Mirage of Pure Religion*, eds. Mika Vähäkangas and Patrik Fridlund (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 25–40.

52 These arguments are systematically and thoroughly countered in Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 74–103.

53 Lundhaug and Jenott develop the justified critique leveled at the artificial Gnosticism-Christianity dichotomy, beginning with the groundbreaking work of Michael A. Williams, see Williams, *Rethinking*.

54 There was possibly a sixth text following *TriTrac*, which ends at page 137, but we cannot be certain since the last two leaves are missing. Stephen Emmel has pointed out that these pages were most likely not uninscribed, as there are ink-marks at the presumed end of *TriTrac* indicating that there was something following *TriTrac*. Stephen Emmel, "Announcement", *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 14 (1977): 56–57.

55 Something that seems to support the hypothesis that the Nag Hammadi codices actually represent several collections is the fact that there are duplicates of some texts, and that these do not appear to be codices compiled by the same scribal team. For more, see Michael A. Williams, "Interpreting the Nag Hammadi Library as 'Collection(s)' in the History of 'Gnosticism(s)'" in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification*, eds. L. Painchaud and A. Pasquier (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 3–50.

56 This is established by way of identifying the scribal hands in the codices. The scribe who copied *Letter to Rheginos* in Codex I also copied the first half of Codex XI. The scribe who copied the second part of Codex XI also copied the whole of Codex VII. For more information, see Williams, "Interpreting", 11–20. For the dialectical similarities between

been of some importance.<sup>57</sup> Some attempts have been made to read Codex I as a collection with a particular purpose<sup>58</sup> and most suggestions up until now have viewed the placement and topic of *TriTrac* as designed to give the proceeding texts contextualization, putting the ‘message’ of Codex I into a bigger

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Codex I and XI, which both include Lycopolitan (L6), see Wolf-Peter Funk, “The Linguistic Aspect of Classifying the Nag Hammadi Codices”, in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification: Actes du colloque tenu à Québec du 15 au 19 septembre 1993*, ed. L. Painchaud and A. Pasquier (Québec: les Presses de Université Lavall, 1995), 107–147. For similarities and differences in the way they were produced, see James Robinson, “The Construction of the Nag Hammadi Codices”, in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts: In Honor of Pahor Labib*, ed. Martin Krause (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 170–190; James Robinson, ed., *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 71–86.

57 The pages of the fourth text, *Letter to Rheginos*, are un-collated and the text is followed by an empty half page, suggesting that Scribe A skipped over these pages after copying *ApJames* and *GosTruth* and before proceeding to copy *TriTrac*. Thus, there must have been a reason not to copy *TriTrac* after *GosTruth* or a reason why *Letter to Rheginos* should follow *GosTruth* and not *TriTrac*. *PrPaul* was most likely added later, on the flyleaf, which is also un-collated. The *ApJames* begins as page 1. (Actually, the first eight pages are fragmentary at the top, but page nine of *ApJames* is collated as page nine.)

58 Michael Williams reads Codex I as a collection like the New Testament, beginning with the words of Jesus and ending with commentary and elaborations. According to Williams, it makes sense to end the codex with an exposition on “systematic theology” as he interprets *TriTrac* to be. Previously in the codex we have an introductory prayer (*PrPaul*), a dialogue between Christ and the Apostles (*ApJames*), a homily (*GosTruth*), and a treatise about the resurrection (*Letter to Rheginos*). Ending with *TriTrac*, according to Williams, puts what has previously been discussed in Codex I into a broader perspective. For this reason, Williams writes, *TriTrac* would fit just as well in the beginning. However, then the likeness to the New Testament would disappear, there are no sayings of Jesus nor much elaboration on Jesus’ life in *TriTrac* (Williams, “Interpreting”, 14–15). Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler have gone further and argue that there was a purpose for the whole collection of the texts connected to the scribal team. They suggest that Codex I, XI and VII (read in this order) introduce the reader to ‘heterodox doctrine’ which would have induced sympathy for a minority Christian group calling themselves the “lineage of the Father”. Codex I and XI portray a context of conflict between different Christians and prepare the reader for what comes in Codex VII: expositions on revelation. See Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler, “From the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* to the *Three Steles of Seth*: Codices I, XI and VI from Nag Hammadi Viewed as Collection”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 445–469. Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels have also presented a hypothesis on the purpose of Codex I as a whole. They read Codex I as a curriculum for a fourth-century Christian seeking divine revelation. The first two tractates function to invite the reader to seek revelations and the last three provide more detailed advice and information on how to attain it. See Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels, “Antony’s Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18:4 (2010): 557–589.

picture.<sup>59</sup> However, no view has received wide scholarly acceptance. As I have argued elsewhere, building on Lundhaug's and Jenott's recent work, *TriTrac* would most likely have interested Christian monks in the early Egyptian monastic movement,<sup>60</sup> in all likelihood Codex I was produced by and belonged to Christian monks, possibly in the emerging Pachomian monasticism.<sup>61</sup>

Still, the fact remains that *TriTrac* most likely existed before it became a part of Nag Hammadi Codex I. The text is preserved in an irregular form of the Coptic dialect Lycopolitan (L6).<sup>62</sup> Kasser has suggested that *TriTrac* was first

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59 All the different suggestions as to the order of texts in Codex I seem to have in common the view that *TriTrac's* placement and role in the collection offers contextualization (for what exactly, scholars disagree). *TriTrac* takes up more than half of Codex I and seems to offer an attempt at a systematic theological overview, thus bringing the previous texts in the codex into the perspective of a larger whole. However, these observations do not seem to satisfactorily answer the question of why *TriTrac* was placed at the end (although not last, since there was likely a sixth text). Among the Nag Hammadi codices (apart from Codex I) it is only Codex IX that has the obviously longest text at the end (*Testimony of Truth*). The longest text is more often placed at the beginning, especially if the text is a systematic overview, from creation to salvation, as *TriTrac* is often portrayed as. Take for example Codex III and IV, where *ApJohn* is the first and longest text, as well as Codex VII (*Paraphrase of Shem*) and Codex VIII (*Zostrianos*). In the case of Codex II, we have three texts that are almost the same length: *ApJohn*, *GosPhil* and *OnOrigWorld*. As Williams argues, it makes sense to have the text that is most like an overview at the beginning (Williams, "Interpreting", 20–32).

60 Paul Linjamaa, "Why Monks Read *The Tripartite Tractate*: A New Look at the Codicology of Nag Hammadi Codex I", in *The Nag Hammadi Codices as Monastic Books*, eds. Hugo Lundhaug and Christian Bull (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

61 Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*. The view that the text derived from a Pachomian context has received critique by Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices?", *Adamantius* 23 (2017): 432–458. While it is true that one cannot be 100% certain of the specific monastic context of the Nag Hammadi Codices, in my opinion, Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka do not portray the "goal" of Lundhaug's and Jenott's work fairly. They state that "The goal of Lundhaug and Jenott's work was to demonstrate that the Nag Hammadi codices are a product of copyists and bookbinders active in the monastic environment, namely the Pachomian congregation, and that, in consequence, the treatises they contain were read by Pachomian monks" (Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin", 432). This is not how I read Lundhaug's and Jenott's work, as the main objective of the book is obviously to show that the Nag Hammadi texts derive from a monastic context, rather than from an urban intelligentsia associated with a 'Gnostic' group. Exactly what context is a secondary question, which is only briefly discussed in comparison to the larger and central question, and only comes up in the very end of the book.

62 It is assumed that Lycopolitan was spoken (if it was not just a literary dialect) in and around Lycopolis in Upper Egypt. This dialect has also been called 'Subakhmimic'. Wolf-Peter Funk has recently shown that Lycopolitan is most likely not *one* dialect, but up to

translated (most likely from Greek) into Sahidic before this present Lycopolitan version.<sup>63</sup> Thomassen points out that there are no other known instances of this phenomenon and, as Layton has argued, it was rather common the other way around, that when standard Sahidic gained status as a literary language, texts in other dialects were made to conform to standard Sahidic.<sup>64</sup>

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four *different* dialects. L6 is the form of Lycopolitan one finds in the Nag Hammadi-texts (*ApJames, GosTruth, TriTrac, Letter to Rheginos, InterpKnow, ValExp, Marsanes*)—which otherwise contains mostly Sahidic Coptic. L6 differs from, for example, the Manichean form of Lycopolitan (L4), in which the labials were expressed differently. For example, where L6 (and L5) has ⲕⲓ (“to carry”), L4 would have ⲃⲓ. Furthermore, there are, Funk maintains, idiosyncrasies within these classifications, too. See Wolf-Peter Funk, “How Closely Related are the Subakhmimic Dialects?”, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 112 (1985): 124–139. Kasser et al. have suggested that *TriTrac* was translated from Greek to Sahidic and then to Subakhmimic, due to the many irregularities, but this remains a suggestion which has not gained wider acceptance. See Rodolphe Kasser, Michel Malinine, Henri-Charles Puech, Gilles Quispel and Jan Zandee. *Adiuuantibus: Werner Vycichl and R. McL. Wilson. Tractatus Tripartitus: Pars I: De Supernis* (Bern: Francke, 1973), 22, 26. Peter Nagel has suggested that the translator of *TriTrac* might not have been a native Coptic speaker, which would explain the many irregularities in the Lycopolitan (Peter Nagel, “Lycopolitan (or Lyco-diospolitian or Subakhmimic)” in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 152–153). Nagel also suggests that the *Vorlage* of *GosTruth* might have been of Syriac origin, due to what he suggests are Syriaisisms in the text. The same argument could be applied to other texts in Codex I (Peter Nagel, “Die Herkunft des Evangelium Veritatis in Sprachlicher Sicht”, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 61 (1966): 5–14). However, this view has not found much support. There are several linguistic irregularities which make *TriTrac* stand out, such as the use of both Lycopolitan and Sahidic vocalization (alternating for example between ⲙⲙⲟⲥ and ⲙⲙⲁⲥ ⲉ-, ⲉⲣⲟⲥ and ⲁ-, ⲁⲣⲁⲥ) and irregularities in orthography (for example, the letter γ is also rendered as ⲉγ, ⲟγ, and γⲟγ, so the word ⲙⲉγⲉ also appears as ⲙⲉⲟγⲉ, ⲙⲉγⲟγⲉ, and ⲙⲉⲉγⲉ). For a more complete list of the different linguistic originalities in *TriTrac*, see Harold W. Attridge and Elaine Pagels, “The Tripartite Tractate”, in Harold W. Attridge, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introduction, Text, Translation, Indices* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 160–174. See also Peter Nagel, *Der Tractatus Tripartitus aus Nag Hammadi Codex I (Codex Jung)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 1–8. For more on the details of Lycopolitan Coptic, see Nagel, “Lycopolitan”, 151–159. Wolf-Peter Funk has stated that *TriTrac* contains “puzzling inconsistencies ... even in its most superficial respects (such as spelling, vowel representation and basic morphology”. For more on the language of Codex I in relation to the other Nag Hammadi codices, see Funk, “Linguistic Aspect”, 130.

63 Rodolphe Kasser, Michel Malinine, Henri-Charles Puech, Gilles Quispel and Jan Zandee, *Adiuuantibus: Werner Vycichl and R. McL. Wilson, Tractatus Tripartitus: Pars II: De Creatione Hominis, Pars III: De Generibus Tribus* (Bern: Francke, 1973–1975), 35.

64 See Bentley Layton, “The Hypostasis of the Archons or The Reality of the Rulers”, *Harvard Theological Review* 62 (1974): 351–424. For more, see Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud, *Le traité tripartite: (NH I,5)* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1989),

No one to my knowledge has opposed Kasser's initial suggestion that there was a Greek *Vorlage* to the Coptic text we now possess.<sup>65</sup> Thomassen has pointed out the reasons for what is often just assumed, such as sentences that are incoherent in their Coptic phrasing and have to be imagined in the Greek original to make sense.<sup>66</sup> The unusual application of  $\chi\epsilon$  throughout the text—placed at beginning of what may be new paragraphs, for example—has also been thought to reflect a Greek *Vorlage*. This use of  $\chi\epsilon$  is not common in Coptic texts and would make more sense viewed as rendering of  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ ,  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ ,  $\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\omicron$  or some other particles to bind together paragraphs and sections in a text.<sup>67</sup> However, as Attridge and Pagels have noticed, this does not explain the occurrence of  $\chi\epsilon$  at the very beginning of the text, as the opening word, where one would not expect a 'thus' or 'next' or 'thereafter'.<sup>68</sup> Hans-Martin Schenke has suggested that the  $\chi\epsilon$  is short for  $\pi\epsilon\chi\lambda\alpha\gamma \chi\epsilon$  ("they say"), which, he writes, could indicate that *TriTrac* is an anthology, a summary of a longer work, or exegesis of another work. However, the internal logic of the text, which comprises a coherent mythological excursion, does not recall an anthology, or a summary (rather the opposite, it is extremely varied and detailed), or an exegesis elaborating on a *different* text, like commentaries on biblical texts by Origen, which are full of references and excursions.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, it is possible that the first line of *TriTrac* in Codex I (51:1) is not the beginning of the original text, but that the scribe, for some reason, started copying from a passage further into the text,

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60–61. This publication is based on Thomassen's doctoral dissertation, and although Painchaud helped edit the volume, I will only refer to Thomassen when citing this work. For Thomassen's dissertation, see Einar Thomassen, "The Tripartite Tractate: New Translation with Introduction and Commentary" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1982).

65 Kasser et al., *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 33–35.

66 Thomassen points to un-intuitive sentences in the text that make better sense if translated into Greek. For example, 110:17–18 reads  $\rho\eta\epsilon\lambda\gamma \eta\epsilon \rho\iota \mu\eta\tau\rho\epsilon\varphi\mu\eta$ , "they are glories and theories" (referring to Greek medicine and rhetoric, mechanics and music). Here  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  was most likely erroneously translated to  $\epsilon\lambda\gamma$  "glory", because  $\epsilon\lambda\gamma$  makes very poor sense in this context, while the other meaning of  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  (*opinion, belief, notion*) fits perfectly into the sentence criticizing Greek "theories and *opinions*" ( $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ ). Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*, 10–11. For more on the use of Greek terms in *TriTrac*, see J.-D. Dubois, "L'utilisation du grec dans le texte valentinien copte du Traité Tripartite", in *Gnose et Philosophie. Études en hommage à Pierre Hadot*, eds. J.-M. Narbonne and P.-H. Poirier (Paris and Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 29–44.

67 For more on this, see Attridge and Pagels, "The Tripartite Tractate", 172–174; Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*, 9–10.

68 Attridge and Pagels, "The Tripartite Tractate", 173.

69 Hans-Martin Schenke, "Zum sogenannten Tractatus Tripartitus des Codex Jung", *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 105 (1978): 133–141.



thus explaining its beginning with  $\alpha\epsilon$ , as a reflection of a Greek version's use of a particle like  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ ,  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ , or  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ .<sup>70</sup> Considering the many other anomalies in the copying of *TriTrac*, this is indeed a possibility to take seriously.<sup>71</sup>

*TriTrac* remains a fairly anonymous text within the field of early Christian studies.<sup>72</sup> One reason for this is most likely the vast scope of the text

70 Furthermore,  $\alpha\epsilon$  most likely has more than one function in *TriTrac*. Attridge and Pagels have suggested it could be a stylistic feature added to mark the beginning of paragraphs (Attridge and Pagels, "The Tripartite Tractate", 173). This is common in long texts. They refer to *Pistis Sophia* as a parallel, a very long text that uses paragraph markers in the form of forks to section off portions of the text. See Violet MacDermot and Carl Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 1.4.12, 1.5.20, 1.7.5, 1.8.3, 1.13.15, 1.15.3, 1.15.19, 1.16.11, and passim. Another example is *Zostrianos*, which also has paragraph markers in order to guide the reader. These are also in the form of forks, at the left side of the margin. Unfortunately, large parts of *Zostrianos* are damaged, but for some visible examples, see 40:7, 44:4–5, 45:1. Considering the length of *TriTrac*, it would undoubtedly be a candidate for a text that would benefit from paragraph makers, but the fact remains that there are no such marks in the text's margin (apart from *diploi* markers at a handful of places, which are not all paragraph markers, for details see Linjamaa, "Why Monks"), but  $\alpha\epsilon$  could have had this function as well as being a particle that introduces, in a more literary style, a new paragraph. Furthermore, recent studies have indicated that the classical pedagogic technique of memorizing and practicing passages from popular texts—for rhetorical and argumentative purpose—was practiced in monastic contexts (Lillian Larsen, "Early Monasticism and the Rhetoric Tradition: Sayings and Stories as Schooltexts", in *Education and Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. P. Gemeinhardt et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 13–33). Even if  $\alpha\epsilon$  does not stand out in a particular way from other words in the text, an experienced reader would most likely still have been able to identify passages more quickly by looking for the word  $\alpha\epsilon$ . Thus,  $\alpha\epsilon$  could have had the function, apart from being a particle that introduces new paragraphs in the narrative, of being a reading aid that facilitated a more effective orientation and identification of passages for discussion and study.

71 The scribal style in the portion of Codex I that makes up *TriTrac* is somewhat erratic, with inconsistent print style, and fluctuating word count, as well as line length. For details on these features, see Linjamaa, "Why Monks".

72 To my knowledge only two studies, unpublished dissertations, take a thematic approach to the text. Owen Michael Smith's thesis focuses mainly on Middle Platonism, more specifically the metaphysical, ritual, and mystical approaches of five Middle Platonic authors to the "unknown god". 23 pages of the 500-page study are devoted to *TriTrac*. In this space, Smith "assesses the degree" to which Middle Platonism influences *TriTrac* from the perspective of approaches toward the "unknown god"; he concludes that *TriTrac* and the Middle Platonic authors have much in common concerning the approach to what is perhaps more commonly known as apophatic theology. As such, Smith's study is very interesting (although preliminary because, as Smith himself points out, the study only investigates a small part of the *TriTrac*; Smith, "Approaches", 286), indicating the similarities between Middle Platonic authors and *TriTrac*'s use of analogy, where the "unknown god" is approached through different likenesses that refer to images and phenomena in the world that allow humans to begin to conceptualize what is ultimately unknowable (like the image of creation being like "a drop from a fountain" (62:8–9) (Smith, "Approaches", 288).

(88 manuscript pages) and what at a first glance looks like an impenetrable complexity. It is generally agreed that *TriTrac* is a philosophically inclined text. Some have even gone so far as to view its disposition as an attempt to convert philosophically trained people to this particular stance of Christianity.<sup>73</sup> Although I am unsure about this hypothesis,<sup>74</sup> there is nevertheless little doubt that *TriTrac* derives from an advanced philosophical and theological context.<sup>75</sup> The myth of the text is indeed daunting and the irregular form of Lycopolitan does not make it more approachable. Thus, most of the detailed scholarly works on it consist of translations and commentaries, studies aimed at making the text legible and comprehensible. The first thorough work to this end was a French collaboration under the editorialship of Rodolphe Kasser, a three-part/two-volume work with facsimile, published in 1973 and 1975.<sup>76</sup> An English translation and commentary followed in Einar Thomassen's doctoral dissertation (1982). This work remained unpublished, however, until 1989 when the French translation in collaboration with Louis Painchaud appeared.<sup>77</sup> By then,

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However, Smith also seeks to present an "analysis of the central paradox of Gnosticism" (Smith, "Approaches", abstract), and he treats Gnosticism as a movement "independent of Christianity" (Smith, "Approaches", 3). Thus, it is obvious that Smith's work predates the paradigm shift that has occurred in light of Williams' and other scholars' work problematizing the term Gnosticism and especially the separation between Christianity and Gnosticism. Matthew Clark Brewer's dissertation is a "hermeneutical engagement with the Valentinian tradition as embodied in the *Tripartite Tractate*" and he seeks to answer the question: what does "the *Tripartite Tractate* and more generally the Valentinian tradition as a whole say?" (Brewer, "The Form of the Formless", 1). Brewer's approach differs from the goal of this study, in that I do not believe it is possible to get to a deeper overall meaning behind a text, nor to answer the question what *TriTrac* or Valentinianism "as a whole say". I approach the text historically and wish to highlight particular aspects of the text (pertaining to ethics) in particular and very specific *historical contexts*. One example of how our approaches differ is in the way we engage the source material: Brewer does not work with the Coptic text first-hand, but through Thomassen's French translation which is translated back into English. I am grateful to both Smith and Brewer, who generously shared their work with me.

73 PHEME PERKINS, "Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices", *Vigiliae Christianae* 35:4 (1981): 388.

74 I am not sure that, if the purpose were to engage pagan philosophers, we would find such harsh condemnations of Greek philosophy and culture as we do on pages 108–115.

75 For a more detailed description of the Platonic background of *TriTrac* see John Peter Kenney, "The Platonism of the *Tripartite Tractate* (NH I, 5)" in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. Richard T Wallis and Jay Bregman (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 187–206; Perkins, "Logos", 379–396.

76 Kasser et al., *Tractatus Tripartitus*.

77 Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*. The translation into French in this work was in collaboration with Louis Painchaud, but the introduction and commentary are by Thomassen, and the whole work is based on his PhD dissertation (Thomassen, "The Tripartite Tractate").

Harold Attridge and Elaine Pagels had, in 1985, published their English translation and commentary, included in *The Coptic Gnostic Library* series under the general editorship of James M. Robinson.<sup>78</sup> About a decade later, a German translation appeared by Peter Nagel, published in 1998.<sup>79</sup> In recent times a few new popular translations have appeared: for example, Einar Thomassen's English translation in Marvin Meyer's edition *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, and a German translation by Hans-Martin Schenke in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch*.<sup>80</sup>

Over the years, many and varied suggestions have been made as to the background of the text. One of the earliest of these, offered by Puech and Quispel, was that *TriTrac* was a product of Heracleon because they had noticed the Valentinian traits of the text; since it could not have been Ptolemy writing it—as he portrayed a very different pleromatology—Heracleon was an obvious candidate because he was also reported to have referred to the Logos as the creating principle (according to Origen's comments on Heracleon's commentary on the Gospel of John).<sup>81</sup> This was accepted—and even developed—by some scholars, while others drew different conclusions.<sup>82</sup> Kasser and his team attributed *TriTrac* to a 'Western' form of Valentinian theology that differed from Heracleon's theology. Einar Thomassen rejected both of these claims, pointing to the fact that Heracleon equated the Logos with the Savior,<sup>83</sup>

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When discussing Thomassen's views, I will refer to the French translation, since it contains revisions to the dissertation, and since it is Thomassen's work in almost all respects, I refer only to Thomassen when citing it.

- 78 Attridge and Pagels, "The Tripartite Tractate". The Notes were published in a separate publication: Harold W. Attridge and Elaine Pagels, "The Tripartite Tractate", in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Notes*, ed. Harold W. Attridge (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 217–497. When I refer to the notes in Attridge and Pagels work on the text, I write "in *Notes*", after "The Tripartite Tractate".
- 79 Nagel, *Der Tractatus Tripartitus*.
- 80 Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007); Hans-Martin Schenke et al., eds., *Nag Hammadi Deutsch: 1 Band: NHCI, 1–V, 1* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001). There is also a Spanish and a Russian translation. See Francisco Garcia Bazan, "Tratado Tripartito", in *Textos gnósticos: Biblioteca de Nag Hammadi I*, eds. Antonio Piñero et al. (Madrid: Trotta, 1997), 168–213; and Alla I. Elanskaya, ed., *Tractatus tripartitus (Codex Nag Hammadi I, 5)* [in Russian] (Saint Petersburg: Aletheia, 2017).
- 81 Henri-Charles Puech and Gilles Quispel, "Le Quatrième Écrit gnostique du Codex Jung", *Vigiliae Christianae* 9 (1955) 65–102.
- 82 Alexander Böhlig also argued that Heracleon was the author in "Zum Gottesbegriff des Tractatus Tripartitus, Nag Hammadi C. 1,2", in *Kerygma und Logos: zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70 Geburtstag*, ed. A. M. Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1979), 49–67; see also Carsten Colpe, "Heidnische, jüdische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi", *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 22 (1979): 98–122.
- 83 Origen, *Commentary on John* VI.20–21, XIII.44.

which *TriTrac* does not. Thomassen concluded that *TriTrac* must have been an ‘Eastern’ Valentinian treatise considering the way the Savior is described—as “putting on” the body of those he comes to save—which echoes other treatises associated with the Eastern Valentinian stance (like *ExcTheod* 26:1).<sup>84</sup> Pagels and Attridge, however, agreed with earlier opinions that *TriTrac* belonged to a Western tradition (although not Heracleon) because, as the text states, the psychics will indeed be saved in the end (129:34–131:13), a stance associated with Western Valentinians.<sup>85</sup>

The date of the text was originally based on the attribution to Heracleon, and thus placed between 150–180 AD.<sup>86</sup> Kasser et al., who rejected the attribution to Heracleon, nevertheless agreed on the dating of the text to the second half of the second century.<sup>87</sup> Attridge and Pagels have suggested a somewhat later dating, to approximately the first half of the third century, based on their understanding of the text as a revision of earlier Valentinian currents. Ismo Dunderberg has argued that since *TriTrac* portrays both knowledge of persecution as well as an ambivalence toward political power, it supports the dating of the text to 150–250, a time when relations between Christians and the Roman ruling elite was volatile and unstable.<sup>88</sup> Thomassen suggests a later dating, based on passages in the text that he argues revealed influences from Origen’s thought, concluding that the text probably derived from the second half of the third century AD, rather than the first.<sup>89</sup> Thomassen has argued that *TriTrac* rejects the third-century notion that the Father was made up of a substance, and also points to linguistic evidence for a later dating via a suggested use of Origen’s *Hexapla*. This dating is based on Thomassen’s hypothetical reconstruction of the Greek behind the Coptic in 107:11–13, that states that the serpent was “more cunning than all the evil powers” (ΟΥΤΙΔΝΟΥΡ[ΓΟΣ] ΝΔΕ ΔΕ ΝΞΟΥΟ· ΔΝΙΘΑΜ ΤΗΡΟΥ Ε[Τ]ΞΑΥΟΥ). He argues that the Greek behind this Coptic sentence would not have matched the LXX version of Gen 3:1 (which has φρονιμώτατος rather than *TriTrac*’s πανούργος, as well as some of the other Genesis variants that Origen gave in *Hexapla*). There is no reason, however, that this cannot be a coincidence or that the version of Genesis that calls the serpent πανούργος was more common than we think, and not only available to Origen. Whatever the case, the premises of Thomassen’s argument seem too weak to date *TriTrac*. The other two arguments Thomassen uses for dating the

84 Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*, 13–20.

85 Attridge and Pagels, “The Tripartite Tractate”, 177–178.

86 Puech and Quispel, “Le Quatrième”.

87 Kasser et al., *Tractatus Tripartitus*, 70.

88 Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 171.

89 Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*, 18–20.

text to the second half of the third century—theological content similar to that of Origen and the idea that the Father did not have a substance with him from which he created—can also be found during the first half of the third century, with Tertullian discussing the substance and advocating the same view we find in *TriTrac*.<sup>90</sup> Thus, while I agree with Thomassen that there are many similarities with Origen's thought, I do not think we can rule out the possibility that *TriTrac* derives from a Christian tradition that was contemporary with Origen in his time in Alexandria. In fact, as I argue in Chapter 3 and Part III, the existence of deterministic ideas among Christians in Alexandria, such as those reflected in *TriTrac*, would explain why Origen felt the need to include such a detailed discussion of the doctrine of free will in *On First Principles*, where he rejects notions we find in *TriTrac*. Of course, *TriTrac* could also have originated from Christians influenced by a similar view on anthropology as that found among Origen's opponents; certainly, this cannot be ruled out. Thomassen offers the date "250 or later" as an estimate suggestion,<sup>91</sup> but I will argue that it is older, at least by a few decades.

As we can see, many scholars who have worked closely with the text have approached it from an internal Valentinian discussion, even though a number of scholars, including Thomassen, have noticed similarities to Origen's theology.<sup>92</sup>

90 Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 4, 26.

91 Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*, 18–20.

92 The division of the Valentinian tradition into two different "schools" is explored in detail by Einar Thomassen in *Spiritual Seed*. For the similarities to Origen's thought in the beginning of *TriTrac*, see Alberto Camplani, "Per la cronologia dei testi valentiniani: il Trattato Tripartito e la crisi Ariana", *Cassiodorus* 1 (1995): 171–195; J.-D. Dubois, "Le Traité Tripartite (Nag Hammadi 1, 5) est-il antérieure à Origène?" in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27–31 August 2001*, eds. L. Perrone et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 303–316. Camplani arrives at a late dating, the second half of the fourth century, on account of what he sees as fourth-century theology affecting the text. For example, Camplani reads the expression we find in *TriTrac* that the Father is necessarily a Father because there is a Son, as representing the same language that is found, for example, in Athanasius. Camplani seems to take the perspective that *TriTrac* is an example of Valentinian theology made to fit orthodox theology, an attempt to reposition Valentinian theology in light of the trends that become prominent in the fourth century. As I have argued above, I will here move away from reading the text through the lens of internal Valentinian development. Furthermore, Camplani reads the anthropology in the text as a move *away* from determinism, while I argue in this study that *TriTrac* is a clear positioning *for* determinism, although one could of course imagine the determinist position in *TriTrac* being expressed even more clearly. For a critique of Camplani's position, see Dubois, "Le Traité Tripartite", 303–316. Dubois takes a similar perspective on *TriTrac* as Markschiefs has argued is the case for Valentinus, that the 'author' of *TriTrac* was a Platonizing interpreter of the Bible. Dubois writes that this author was active *before* Plotinus and argues that the text belongs to a particular

Arguments for dating the text have often come from viewing it in light of internal Valentinian ‘developments.’<sup>93</sup> I am uncertain, however, in what way distinctions such as Eastern/Western (or Italic) Valentinianism—categories that have occupied much of the scholarship on this text’s background—actually help us understand the context of *TriTrac* better. These categories might be helpful when comparing texts that have Valentinian traits on an abstract level, but I wonder if we have enough sources to reify actual theological ‘schools’ of thought or traditions, let alone currents of development from one system to another—especially considering the polemical background as well as the uncertainty of some of the attestations of the split in Valentinian traditions.<sup>94</sup>

Another common trend within the scholarship on *TriTrac* consists of investigating the relation between *TriTrac* and Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic systems. John Peter Kenney has suggested that the text was influenced by Middle Platonists like Numenius and Alcinoüs, who, like *TriTrac*, posited a creation

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strand of Eastern Valentinianism. See, J.-D. Dubois, “La sotériologie valentinienne du Traité tripartite (NH 1, 5)”, in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification*, eds. L. Painchaud and A. Pasquier (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 221–232; and Dubois, “Le Traité Tripartite”.

93 It has been suggested that *TriTrac* belongs to a variant of an early Western Valentinian ‘monadic’ theology described by Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* vi.29.2) and, thus, that the text is from the end of the second century. See Kasser et al., *Tractatus Tripartitus*, passim. Rather than treating *TriTrac* in its own right, the early work done on the text by Kasser et al., systematically views the story of the Logos’ as the myth of Sophia. It has also been suggested, by Attridge and Pagels, that the theology in *TriTrac* represents an attempt to revise the traditional Valentinian myth to more orthodox views. See Attridge and Pagels, “The Tripartite Tractate”, 177–178. Thomassen views the text as Eastern because it lacks the developed pleromatology of Western Valentinian theology while presenting the Savior as coming chiefly to save the pneumatics, rather than the psychics. Attridge and Pagels refute Thomassen’s argument that the text is representative of Eastern Valentinian theology, and state that what might seem as Eastern tendencies are “survivals of original Valentinian positions, which were modified by some of the major Western Valentinians”, Attridge and Pagels, “The Tripartite Tractate”, 178, n29. These views on *TriTrac*’s relation to internal Valentinian developments must ultimately be viewed as conjecture. See also Pierre Létourneau, “Croyances et contraintes sociales: l’évolution du mouvement valentinien à la lumière du Traité tripartite (NH 1,5) et du Dialogue du Sauveur (Nh III,5)”, *Théologiques* 13 (2005): 79–94.

94 The category Eastern vs Western Valentinianism has been argued as being a polemical construction by theological opponents. See Joel Kalvesmaki, “Italian versus Eastern Valentinianism?”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008): 79–89. Kalvesmaki makes some important points which raise doubt as to the accuracy of the church fathers’ portrayals of this distinction. For the opposite perspective, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, where a detailed development between what is called “type A” and “type B” forms of Valentinianism is presented.

scene in which the highest God's thoughts instigated creation.<sup>95</sup> Kenney, in line with previous early Christian scholars, approached the text from its relation to a grander narrative of Valentinian theology and suggested that the text's affinity with Middle Platonic cosmology resulted in a revised Valentinian creation myth wherein Sophia was replaced with the Logos.<sup>96</sup> *TriTrac*, Kenney suggested, derived from a late-second to early-third century philosophical context, perhaps Rome or Alexandria, and contributed to the critique that Plotinus would later level at 'Gnostics'.<sup>97</sup>

Recently Francesco Berno has written that:

[The] Author [of *TriTrac*] wants to gain favor in the eyes of the contemporary pagan culture: indeed, the battle against the Great Church had been lost for a long time. Clearly, it does not weaken the deeply Christian nature of the text, which aims to restructure Valentinian theologoumena, making them pleasing to a reader used to (neo) Platonic literature.<sup>98</sup>

This comes close to the way Pheme Perkins has viewed the text, as a Valentinian recruitment pamphlet directed at pagans.<sup>99</sup> Yet I am also hesitant about this way of approaching the text, which seems to juxtapose, in too firm a way, 'Valentinians' and 'the Great Church' (whatever that is in the third century). The kinship to Platonism are clear, but the use of ancient philosophy does not end there—as becomes clear further on in the present study. Still, rather than going as far as proposing that this reflects attempts to convert pagans, it could merely be an indication of how ancient Christian theologians operated, many of whom were engaged in an intellectual enterprise that in the third century was, more often than not, conducted in close proximity to, and in the language of, ancient philosophy.

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95 Kenney points out other similarities, for example the "non-demiurgic forms of production". Kenney, "The Platonism", 202.

96 Kenney, "The Platonism", 202.

97 Kenney, "The Platonism", 203.

98 Francesco Berno, "Rethinking Valentinianism: Some Remarks on the *Tripartite Tractate* with Special Reference to Plotinus' *Enneads* II, 9", *Augustinianum* 56 (2016): 342, n33.

99 Perkins, "Logos", 388. Perkins has discussed 'Gnostics' in a value-laden way, presenting them (homogenously) in an unappealing light, as "irrational" and deriving from "absurd premises" (the latter referring to a number of speculations). See Pheme Perkins, "Beauty, Number, and Loss of Order in the Gnostic Cosmos", in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, ed. Richard T. Wallis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 279.

Most scholarly work on *TriTrac* is devoted to the text's hypothetical original context but this approach raises some problems that should be considered.<sup>100</sup> There are important considerations that must be made when working with texts that have undergone translation and copying, producing alterations in transmission which probably affected *TriTrac*, perhaps several times. The transformation a text might undergo due to translation from one language to another is apparent—errors unavoidably occur and some things may be lost in translation—and there are also problems attached to copying.<sup>101</sup> That being said, a skilled copyist who could copy a work without errors was in high demand in antiquity, which reflects the desire when copying of staying as close to the original as possible.<sup>102</sup>

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100 See, for example, Hugo Lundhaug and Liv Ingeborg Lied, “Studying Snapshots: On Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology”, as well as Hugo Lundhaug, “An Illusion of Textual Stability: Textual Fluidity, New Philology, and the Nag Hammadi Codices”, both in *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology*, eds. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1–19, 20–54.

101 An illustrative example concerns the way one views the texts in the Bible. Let us take as an example the text that is most often considered to be the earliest gospel in the New Testament, the Gospel of Mark. Many Mark-scholars consider this text to have been written around the years 66–70. See James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004). It was then spread among Christians, and the way this was done was through copying, one letter, one word, one page at a time. Mistakes were unavoidable (none of the different copies of any ancient text we have is identical to another). Once a copy was made it was then copied by others who wanted the text, who in turn lent it out for further copying: copies were copied and copies of copies were copied, and so on. The earliest manuscript of the Gospel of Mark is from around the year 200, i.e. around 130 years after the time the text is typically dated. But in light of the points concerning ancient copying, to what extent can the Gospel of Mark from the year 200, which includes mistakes and attempts at corrections and sometimes clarifications from 150 years of copying, be said to be the Gospel of Mark written in the second half of the first century? This is a problem we face with more or less every text of the ancient world. For more, see Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005). I do not suggest that this methodological problem implies that texts that were copied at a certain date cannot be used as sources for earlier periods; that would be extreme and would, for example, negate the possibility of speaking of many of Plato's and Aristotle's works before the middle ages. Rather, we should be aware of this difficulty and remember that the ancient texts that we read are not unproblematic mirrors of the time they are thought to have been first written down, and we should remain open to the possibility that texts have been subjected to emendation in later periods, or at the very least recognize that the meaning conveyed by, and the use of, a text (even while remaining much the same) may have changed considerably.

102 L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 23–24.



It is, nevertheless, possible that *TriTrac* underwent intentional redaction, a concern for most of the Nag Hammadi-texts. It is very hard to establish the 'original' text and its context with any certainty. Still, the present study is not limited to investigating its fourth-century context; I also treat *TriTrac* as a separate text that makes sense on its own, not only as a part of the collection where it is now found. The chronological window which this study addresses stretches from 200–400 CE, a span of time based on several factors. The manuscript has been carbon dated to the fourth century.<sup>103</sup> The Coptic is in all likelihood based on a Greek *Vorlage*. The Valentinian theology in *TriTrac* is indeed unique, but parts of it are reminiscent of the interest shown in questions that also interested second-century Middle Platonists like Numenius and Alcinous, and later Neoplatonists like Plotinus, while other parts resemble a theology close to Origen of Alexandria. In fact—as I argue in Chapter 3—there are details in *TriTrac* that fit well with the views of Origen's opponents (identified as Valentinians) in *On First Principles*, a work thought to have been composed in Alexandria shortly before Origen left for Caesarea around the year 231.<sup>104</sup> The Christian school milieu of third-century Alexandria—as I suggest in Chapter 5—is also a good match with *TriTrac*. This, together with the fact that Codex I can be dated to the fourth century, gives us a fairly narrow context in which to conduct the present study, a span of approximately 200 years, from the first decades of the third century (or slightly before) to the second half of the fourth century CE.<sup>105</sup>

Most evidence, as I have argued above, points to the text's being copied by monks but many have rejected this scenario. Why would late-fourth or

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103 Codex VII, which was copied by a scribe also associated with the scribal team behind Codex I, had documentary papyri (contracts) inside the cover dated to 346 and 348. These dates do not fix the codices to this time, necessarily, the papyri in the cover of Codex VII might have been older. For more, see Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 9–11, 104–144.

104 See the introduction to the translation of *On First Principles* by G. W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles* (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2013), xxxix–xliii. By looking at references in *On First Principles* to Origen's own works, and from cross-referencing with Eusebius' chronology of some of Origen's works (unfortunately not *On First Principles*), Butterworth shows, convincingly in my opinion, that *On First Principles* was likely written in Alexandria sometime between 219–231. See also John Behr, *Origen: On First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xvii. For a similar dating but a critique of Butterworth's translation, and a thorough discussion of the sources for *On First Principles*, see Behr, *Origen*, xv–xxviii.

105 It can appear as if I support my narrowing of the contextual field of my study with the aid of findings that the study has yet to produce. However, as I arrived at my own demarcation, I was guided by previous studies by Attridge and Pagels (dating it to the beginning of the third century) and Thomassen (dating it to the second half of the third century).

early-fifth-century monks be interested in a text that reflected earlier theology, and 'heterodox' Valentinian theology at that? The answer to this is probably that third-century theology was not out of fashion at the time, on the contrary.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, one does not have to agree with everything in a work to find it valuable, interesting, or even edifying. Origen's writings were hotly debated in the fourth century.<sup>107</sup> Those interested in this debate, or just fascinated by Origen's theology, would undoubtedly have found *TriTrac* interesting as well. In fact, as I argue in several chapters in this study and as has been pointed out by previous scholars, what we find in *TriTrac* often comes close to Origen's own thought, not just that of the opponents Origen addresses. This is not a contradiction because, as is often the case, it is those one resembles the most—those with whom one risks becoming identified—whom it is most urgent to reject by clarifying where differences exist.<sup>108</sup>

*TriTrac* is a text that can be understood as representing views held by Valentinians Origen rejected (like belief in a demiurge and a tripartite anthropology), but the text also shares many of the doctrines that are very closely associated with Origen in the Origenist debates of the fourth century: for example (1) support of a non-bodily resurrection; (2) the doctrine that human souls existed before they came down into the body; (3) the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.<sup>109</sup> *TriTrac* would have been of interest not only for those drawn to Valentinian theology, but for anyone interested in Origen's theology and, as I argue further in Part I below, philosophical debates over the workings of the mind in the first few centuries. Furthermore, if *TriTrac* was identified as containing material by Origen's opponents, it would without a doubt have been of interest for the actors involved in the Origenist debates, particularly on the side that came to Origen's defense, who copied and read (or thought they did,

106 See for example, Jon Frederick Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity* (Macon, G.A.: Mercer University Press, 1988); Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

107 See Hugo Lundhaug, "Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices", *Studia Patristica LXIV: Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2011*, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 217–228.

108 Marilynn B. Brewer has pointed out that in the pursuit of effective identity-formation there is an equal need for the group/individual to be similar to those within the group (extended group) and different from those outside the group (other groups). Marilynn B. Brewer, "The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 17 (1991): 475–482.

109 For more on the Origenist controversy see Clark, *Origenist Controversy*.

at least) tractates between Origen and his Valentinian opponents.<sup>110</sup> In the concluding chapter, I return to the questions of the *Sitz im Leben* of *TriTrac*.

Having outlined preliminary considerations concerning *TriTrac*, it is timely to discuss the topic of this book: early Christian ethics and determinism.

## 5 Early Christian Ethics and the Bad Reputation of Determinism

Ethics deals with right and wrong conduct, or rather the theories, structures, and nature of what makes right right and wrong wrong. I will mainly use the term ethics, rather than morality, because I take ethics to mean the theory behind what makes an action moral or a-moral: the structure of moral actions or values rather than the actions or values themselves. As Wayne Meeks put it in his study of the origins of Christian morality, ethics is a “reflective, second-order activity: it is morals rendered self-conscious”.<sup>111</sup> Thus, I will focus on the structures behind the morality presented in *TriTrac*: not so much on which actions or values are counted as moral; rather, the mechanism that supports them.

How did Christians, and people in general around the Mediterranean world, convey their ethical convictions? One way that this was done—which allows us to study ancient time in some detail—was through the writing of texts of different kinds. There were many ways of expressing hortatory statements in written form. The most obvious are perhaps lists of ‘dos and don’ts’, catalogues of virtues and vices, letters of admonition like Paul’s epistles or more detailed and complex expositions devoted specifically to ethics, like Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus*, or testaments and *vitae* of different kind depicting the lives of saints for the purpose of imitation.<sup>112</sup>

So, what kind of paraenesis do we find in *TriTrac*? Philip Tite, in his book *Valentinian Ethics*, has stated that *TriTrac* “is replete with moral discourse” and an “excellent example of Valentinian work that is very concerned over moral discourse without being hortatory in nature”.<sup>113</sup> It is unfortunate that Tite does not pay much attention to *TriTrac* in his book, especially since he devotes a whole chapter to the relations between Valentinian texts and different

110 I discuss this further in Chapter 3 when delving into the relation between *TriTrac*, Origen, and his immediate readers and commentators.

111 Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 4.

112 For a discussion of textual hortatory genres, see Meeks, *Origins*, 66–90; and Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 135–184.

113 Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 184, n84.

ancient paraenetic literary genres. Tite identifies four different literary aspects of Greco-Roman paraenesis in Valentinian material while not discussing *TriTrac* specifically: imperative/prescriptive discourse; moral *exempla*; virtue/vice lists; and Two-Way Schemas (literary contrasts between right and wrong, expressed in different topics). These literary tropes can, I would argue, be found in *TriTrac* as well.

The bulk of *TriTrac* is made up of the elaborate creation myth and the nature of the heavens, cosmos, and God (51–108). The lists of powers associated with different positive and negative attributes discussed in this part of the text could very well be understood as a kind of literary paraenesis similar to lists of virtues and vices one can find among philosophers and Stoics, as well as the New Testament writings. This is explored in detail in Chapter 2 from the perspective of the ancient theory of passions. A Two-Way Schema can be found in the contrast between what happens “according to the will of God” and what is “not according to the will of God”—the nature of which is discussed in Chapter 3 where I examine the way *TriTrac* tackles the question of free will. We do find, I argue, admonitions (and thus an imperative-type of trope, of sorts) in *TriTrac* that psychics should emulate the behavior of the pneumatics, a kind of *exempla*-type of literary paraenesis. What this means is explored in Chapter 5, which focuses on the nature of the community structure in the text and the relation between the image of church and school. There are other interesting literary paraenetic tropes that Tite does not discuss in his book that also can be found in *TriTrac*. One such trope, common especially among Jews inspired by Middle Platonism and Hermetism, was the popular way of approaching the question of how people should behave and live in the world from the perspective of seeing the cosmos as a reflection—granted, a lower and flawed reflection—of the heavens. This is also a topic addressed in Chapter 5, where I explore how *TriTrac* models the ideal social structure among humans on earth on the description of relations between the heavenly beings in the Pleroma. One paraenetic trope Tite does not find in Valentinian material is the household codes, instructions to members of a household to be submissive toward their superiors. It is true, no obvious household codes are found in *TriTrac*, such as those in Eph 5:22–6:9, yet the Logos’ creation is often likened to a household (οἰκονομία) and there are also other hierarchical structures that are used as models for the paraenetics in the text: that of a school, for example. This paraenetic trope is also explored in Chapter 5. I am sure that if one searched, one could find more similarities between *TriTrac* and the literary styles that Christians, Jews, and pagans used to express their ethical admonitions. As Tite argues, Valentinian texts, as with other Christian texts, employ the literary tropes found in their Greco-Roman context. However, I do not use

the concept “Valentinian paraenesis”, as Tite does, in order to avoid suggesting that Valentinian texts in general reflect the same ethics.<sup>114</sup> I do not see any convincing evidence for this and restrict the term ‘Valentinian’ to theological and mythological motifs—chiefly protological—as discussed above.

Much has been written on the topic of early Christian ethics; however, some perspectives are still lacking. One pertains to the serious study of ‘heterodox’ Christian ethics.<sup>115</sup> Tite’s study is one of few exceptions, but even before the paradigm shift that came to question the Christian-Gnostic dichotomy, Michel Desjardins published his groundbreaking book *Sin in Valentinianism*, a work that took seriously the ethical pursuits of ‘Gnostics’.<sup>116</sup> For a long time ‘Gnostics’, and particularly Valentinians, were thought to lack an interest in ethics, an idea that was the result of reading the church fathers uncritically.<sup>117</sup> The ‘othering’ of those with whom one does not agree is surely as old as humanity itself. The phenomenon of accusing the ‘other’ of lacking ethics while presenting oneself

114 It is somewhat unfortunate that Tite uses this concept so frequently, because it would seem that it is working against the aim of his study: to get the Valentinian material included in studies of early Christianity and to lessen the apparent gap between Valentinians and ‘mainstream’ Christianity (Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 314–316).

115 There are of course exceptions, but these often follow portrayal of Gnostics as either ascetics or libertines, perspectives that in light of Williams’ work are problematic. One classic study on the topic of ‘Gnostic’ ethics is Edwin Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1970). Yamauchi develops Hans Jonas’ distinction of ascetic and libertine ethics. Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, I: Die mythologische Gnosis, mit einer Einleitung zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Forschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964). Yamauchi recognizes that some gnostic material seems to discuss marriage as a positive thing, and thus does not fit into the two categories of gnostic ethics, where sex was either viewed as free or rejected. Nevertheless, this is seen as an exception, and not as evidence that there is anything wrong with the categories. A more recent work exploring ‘Gnostic’ ethics, is Emmanouela Grypeou, *Das vollkommene Pascha: Gnostische Bibelexegese und gnostische Ethik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), in which Grypeou argues that a particular ethics developed among people in antiquity who were dualists and who rejected the creator god and his laws, the result being that “ein genügsamer Lebenswandel und eine Absage an weltlichen Bindungen wird oft vorausgesetzt” (Grypeou, *Das vollkommene Pascha*, 275).

116 See also Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*.

117 On example is Henry Chadwick, “The Domestication of Gnosis”, in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*. vol. 1, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 3–16. Here Chadwick argues that there is so much heresiological evidence of libertine and sexual behavior that it is likely that ‘Gnostic’ groups did indeed engage in the acts that the church fathers say they did. As Dunderberg has noted, Chadwick does not discuss the fact that these are hostile sources. See Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality*, 12–13. In fact, many of the same accusations the church fathers directed at ‘Gnostics’ were in fact directed against Christians in general by earlier Roman authors. See Bart Wagemaker, “Incest, Infanticide, and Cannibalism: Anti-Christian Imputations in the Roman Empire”, *Greece & Rome* 57:2 (2010): 337–354.

as in possession of the keys to righteous behavior is undoubtedly closely associated with identity formation.

Umberto Eco has written a thought-provoking essay called “Inventing the Enemy” where he expands on the need to have someone to be defined against when building one’s own identity and narrative of self. “Having an enemy”, he writes, “is important not only to define our identity but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our system of values and, in seeking to overcome it, to demonstrate our own worth”.<sup>118</sup> Eco argues that the need for an enemy is second nature to humans, reminding us of Jean-Paul Sartre’s concept of the “gaze of the other” as fundamental for becoming self-aware in the first place.<sup>119</sup> Eco also points out that the image of the enemy can easily be shifted from a person to a social or natural force, like communism, capitalism, poverty, or global warming,<sup>120</sup> and I might add: why not Gnosticism? Gnosticism, as Karen King has shown, has been used as an umbrella term for heresy in many shapes, and the heretic, as Carlo Ginzburg has pointed out in his work *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath*, is a historically popular archetypal ‘other’, along with, for example, Jews, Saracens, and lepers (often identified with each other).<sup>121</sup>

Nevertheless, a distinction has still been made in studies of Christian ethics, between the ethics of Christians on the one side, and that of ‘heretics’—specifically of Gnostic ethics—on the other.<sup>122</sup> In this study, I do not make such a distinction, one ultimately based on apologetic assumptions. I am not claiming that there are no differences in the ethical outlook of some of those who are later placed in the category of ‘the church fathers’, and that of the different Christians they opposed, but neither do I presuppose that the differences are greater than those one can find among some of the different church fathers—who often get to represent orthodoxy as if it were *one* thing. Intra-Christian debates over the ‘in-group’s’ ethics and the ‘out-group’s’ lack of morality should be critically assessed in light of what they fundamentally represent: identity constructing techniques. Thus, we should avoid reifying theological alliances that did not exist. Compare, for example, Origen with Irenaeus—both using the

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118 Umberto Eco, *Inventing the Enemy* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2013), 2.

119 However, ‘the other’, for Sartre, is not necessarily something hostile. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London: Routledge, 2003), III.1.

120 Eco, *Inventing the Enemy*, 17–18.

121 Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

122 Just to give one example, see Eric Osborn, *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 46–49; see also Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics*.

doctrine of free will for their argument of how best to live and approach the message of Jesus (which also differs greatly), meanwhile harboring completely different worldviews and outlooks on what free will actually was and how it came to be in the possession of humans.<sup>123</sup> Another example is Clement of Alexandria's distinction between the Gnostic Christian (an intellectual expert of sorts) and ordinary Christians: a distinction that sounds very similar to Irenaeus' description of some Valentinians who saw a distinction between pneumatics and psychics. Nevertheless, Clement (and other 'proto-orthodox' Christians) and Valentinus (as well as his followers) have been represented as holding completely opposing views on anthropology and ethics.

One recent example of the problems that the dichotomy Gnostic-Christian can cause for the view of early Christian ethics can be seen in George Karamanolis' book *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*. Here Karamanolis draws a picture of a unified 'Gnostic' view (which Valentinus gets to represent—although Karamanolis does not actually use any fragments of Valentinus in drawing up his view), against which the church fathers defended themselves. The 'Gnostic' view was deterministic, Karamanolis argues, in the sense that it devalued life lived in the possession of free will (the psychic peoples' fate) in favor of knowledge and predetermined salvation (the pneumatic people).<sup>124</sup> There are several problems with this depiction of early Christian ethics and philosophy. First, the employment of the term Gnostic in opposition to Christian is problematic, an issue which I have already addressed. Another problem is the way Valentinus' 'deterministic' view is presented—that is, without proper access to the sources, but rather through the very limited hearsay of Irenaeus. Furthermore, the determinism portrayed here does not deny free will at all, but only restricts it to some humans.

The latest example of this habit, of placing Christians (those who stand for free will) against Gnostics (who deny it), we find in Kyle Harper's work on early Christian sexuality.<sup>125</sup> Harper argues, correctly in my opinion, that early Christians should be taken as serious contenders in the debates on human volition, not only as would-be philosophers who delude advanced views on cognition and the human psyche in an attempt to forward their religious preferences. The study Harper presents, however, only takes serious some Christian

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123 This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

124 Karamanolis, *Philosophy*, 147–150. Karamanolis is not alone in presenting the 'Gnostics' as holding a *single* ethical outlook. For more, see Chapter 3 in the present study.

125 Although it remains unclear what he means by the term "Gnostic", and why Sethians "deserve" the term, while Valentinians do not. Harper, *From Shame to Sin*, 119. Harper presents Valentinian anthropology as fluid.

views, namely those associated with proto-orthodoxy,<sup>126</sup> and thus seems to suggest—erroneously—that the doctrine of free will was something that all Christians just universally accepted without any serious debate.

There is indeed the need of a study devoted to the nature of Christian determinism, one that also takes serious the ethics of a text belonging to a tradition similar to those Christians Irenaeus and Origen attack, while at the same time treating such Christians as part of intra-Christian discourse, not only as outsiders that ‘the mainstream Church’ defined itself against and ‘progressed’ away from.

In his book *Rethinking Gnosticism*, Michael A. Williams has tackled the erroneous representation of Gnosticism as a ‘deterministic elitism’.<sup>127</sup> Williams has rejected previous scholars’ presentations, such as those by Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, Henry Green, and Giovanni Filoramo, who based their views of ‘Gnostic’ anthropology and soteriology on the church fathers’ formulations and, as Williams saw it, presented a too “rigidly deterministic understanding of humankind”.<sup>128</sup> Williams rightly pointed out that not all those groups and texts lumped together as ‘Gnostic’ could be said to represent a deterministic worldview, and they certainly did not result in either ‘libertine’ or ‘ascetic’ morality, which was the older paradigm of scholars such as Hans Jonas.<sup>129</sup> However,

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126 Harper, *From Shame to Sin*, 120–122. I am, however, not convinced of Harper’s insinuation that the Roman Stoics interest in the question of free will was a reaction to Christian writers. Harper tones down the influence of Stoicism on the Christian view of free will. In my view the influence from Stoicism is undeniable, and Harper even cites the best example: Clement of Alexandria (as an exception), which makes Harper’s position even more unexpected. The reason that Stoics are rejected in name by some early Christians who forwarded the idea of free will, like Justin, is perhaps because of the same reasons some Christians felt the need to disassociate themselves from heretics: from the outside they looked very much alike. Looking closer, there are of course fundamental differences between the view that all humans have free will and the Stoic view that only the sage has free will. The reason why, I believe, Origen is most often counted as the originator of the first really developed case from a Christian for free will (a position Harper rejects), is because he tackled the question from within the cognitive and anthropological discourse of the time, i.e. that which was chiefly developed by Stoics. Justin did not treat the question in the same way, and Clement did not discuss free will at any length, even though he accepted the premises.

127 Williams, *Rethinking*, 189–212.

128 Williams, *Rethinking*, 189–190; Henry A. Green, *The Economic and Social Origins of Gnosticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, “Die gnostische Anthropologie”, *Kairos* 23 (1981): 31–42; Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

129 Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. Jonas deserves credit, however, for being one of the first scholars who thought that these texts deserve to be studied in their own right, and not just for what they could tell us about the development of orthodoxy.



merely because of the deficiencies in the previous use of the term ‘Gnosticism’ and the church fathers’ erroneous use of determinism as a disclaimer for ethics, it does not mean that there *were* no determinist positions in ancient times nor that these determinist positions were not effective in presenting a viable ethical system. Indeed, as Williams himself writes, and as earlier scholars such as Kurt Rudolph had already recognized, there seem to have been systems that were deterministic and at the same time interested in ethics.<sup>130</sup> In fact, Williams uses *TriTrac* as an example that could be understood as complying with what Irenaeus portrayed as determinism.<sup>131</sup> Unfortunately, Williams never discusses *TriTrac* in any detail, nor does he explain how the determinism could have sustained an ethical system; he is more interested in refuting the idea that the determinism that the heresiologists described appears in all those texts and groups that have been called ‘Gnostic’.

In spite of Williams’ nuanced work, one still finds in scholarship the idea that determinism was one of the errors pertaining to the wrongful use of the term Gnosticism and that it was just invented by the church fathers.<sup>132</sup> This is, I argue, a misconception that is most likely due to the fact that what such Christian determinism would have looked like and how it would have worked in practice still remains rather unexplored.

What has been recognized and studied recently is the great interest in fate and providence among early Christians.<sup>133</sup> As is discussed further in Chapter 2 and 3, some Christians spent considerable effort, like Middle Platonists, reconciling the idea of God’s providence and human will. If God was omnipotent and had created humans, was it really up to humans to choose their fate? The way some Middle Platonists solved this question was by proposing a division between fate and providence. Fate ruled the sublunary sphere and providence

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130 Williams, *Rethinking*, 201; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1987), 117–118.

131 Williams, *Rethinking*, 190.

132 See, for example, Roig Lanzillotta, “A Way of Salvation”; Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 27 who adopts Winrich Alfried Löhr’s argument that determinism was a heresiologist invention, in Winrich Alfried Löhr, “Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 381–390. It is possible, as Löhr writes, that Irenaeus and others did not have access to the relevant material; however, *TriTrac* would fit with what Origen writes in *On First Principles*, so we are dealing with caricatures, rather than inventions by the heresiologists.

133 See, for example, Michael A. Williams, “Higher Providence, Lower Providence and Fate in Gnosticism and Middle Platonism”, in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, ed. R. T. Wallis (Albany: New York State University Press, 1992), 483–507; and the more detailed study by Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*; see also Karl W. Giberson, ed., *Adam’s Dice: Chance and Providence in the Monotheistic Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

ruled above fate.<sup>134</sup> Even though humans could not control the mechanisms that fate controlled, such as that which guided conditionality (that action A unavoidably leads to result B), providence made sure that humans retained the freedom to choose their own actions and that they thus were ultimately responsible for their own destiny. We see a lot of interest in the realm of fate and providence in early Christian writings, and some seem to have been inspired by Middle Platonic discussions on the negotiation between human choice and fate/providence, especially among many texts that have been labeled 'Gnostic'.<sup>135</sup> Thus, as Williams and others have pointed out, a belief in fate and the power of God's providence did not necessarily negate the importance of human choice.<sup>136</sup> Humans were endowed by the providential will of God with a free will and thus humans were not slaves to fate. These Middle Platonic and Christian negotiations differed from Stoic deterministic systems. As Susanne Bobzien and others have pointed out, the accusation of determinism was sometimes used as a polemical slander,<sup>137</sup> applied by Middle Platonic writers in order to discredit their Stoic opponents.<sup>138</sup> Winrich Löhr and Nicola Denzey Lewis, among others, have also argued that these accusations of determinism were reused by some Christians to discredit other Christians.<sup>139</sup>

However, I argue that what was used as a polemical slander was the *caricature* of determinism: the thought that human will, attitude, or choice was irrelevant, non-existent, thereby leading to a disinterest in ethics. One is hard pressed to find any system in antiquity based on such views, although this does not negate the fact that there *were* determinists, material determinists such as Stoics, for example, who thought that divine fate permeated and decided

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134 For more on fate, free will, and Middle Platonism, see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), 84–88, 166–168, 208–211, 294–298, 320–326; John Dillon, "Plutarch and Second Century Platonism", in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. Arthur Hilary Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 214–229; George Boys-Stones, "'Middle' Platonists on Fate and Human Autonomy", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. Supplement 94 (2007): 431–447.

135 See for example ApJohn, in Zlatko Pleše, "Fate, Providence and Astrology in Gnosticism (1): *The Apocryphon of John*", *MHNH: Revista Internacional de Investigación sobre Magia y Astrología Antiguas* 7 (2007): 237–268; and on *OnOrigWorld*, in PHEME PERKINS, "On the Origin of the World (CG II, 5): A Gnostic Physics", *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 36–46.

136 Williams, *Rethinking*, 202–203.

137 Bobzien, *Determinism*; Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 89–90.

138 See for example Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-contradictions* 46.1055.

139 Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 27; Löhr, "Gnostic Determinism"; see also Gerard P. Luttkhuizen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 83–86; Alexander Kocar, "In Heaven as It Is on Earth: The Social and Ethical Dimensions of Higher and Lower Levels of Salvation" (PhD diss., Princeton, 2016), 246.

all things.<sup>140</sup> It is true, Stoics did not negate the existence and importance of human choice, but despite viewing the world as causally determined, with the events of a life course already decided; these two concepts were compatible, according to Stoics.<sup>141</sup> Human choice was real; although very limited and restricted to a small area of the mind, it could be trained and cultivated. Some Stoics even maintained that free will *was* possible to attain, but that only a select group of people, the sages, ever got that far. This notion of free will is very different from the notion of free will that was to take shape among many Christians. A person who possessed a completely free will, Stoics maintained, would *always* do good and act in perfect alignment with the divine Logos. Defined in this way, it was obvious that most people did not have free will. Thus, many Stoics viewed free will in a very particular way, and I argue that this is reflected in *TriTrac* but rejected by other Christians, such as Origen of Alexandria. Origen, and predecessors like Irenaeus, instead viewed free will as an ability bestowed upon all humans, one that enabled all humans to choose between good or evil at all times. Origen even went so far as to state that the very definition of humanity was their use and possession of free will.<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, there were, as I argue in detail in Chapter 3, Christians who rejected this view of free will, and instead adopted views reminiscent of Stoic positions on human choice, even going further, in some cases, to deny free will for humans altogether. It is possible, as Winrich Löhr has argued, that the church fathers did not have access to all relevant material when labeling Valentinians as determinists. Nevertheless, in light of what we find in *TriTrac*, we cannot conclude, like Denzey Lewis, Löhr, and others, that the church fathers *invented* the position of Christian determinism.<sup>143</sup>

Early Christian determinism has either been presented as ‘Gnostic’ and then not taken seriously, or it has been disregarded as belonging to the inventions of polemics. One of the chief aims of this study, apart from approaching a more nuanced understanding of the nature of *TriTrac*’s ethics, is to restore awareness of theories maintaining that human choice was limited and to show their importance to early Christian discourses of ethics. Before approaching discussions of how a person *should* conduct his or her life, however, it is useful to explore what people were actually thought to be able to do, and not do, in the first place. How was the human mind thought to work? How did the mind

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140 This is the topic of Bobzien, *Determinism*, a work devoted to explaining the workings of Stoic notions of causal determinism and its relation to human choice.

141 For a discussion of Stoic compatibilism, see Bobzien, *Determinism*, 234–324.

142 Origen, *On First Principles* preface 4–5.

143 Denzey Lewis, *Cosmology and Fate*, 27; Löhr, “Gnostic Determinism”; see also Roig Lanzillotta, “A Way of Salvation”; Luttikhuisen, *Gnostic Revisions*, 83–86.

relate to the body? How did sensory experience work and relate to human behavior? To what extent were humans affected by outside influence or coercion? These are fundamental questions when exploring how a person *could* act and I will argue that they were important to how ancients developed theories for how a person *should* act. Thus, in this study, it is my aim to connect these two fields: practical lived ethics (morality) and the theoretical foundations for ethical discussions in subjects like cognitive theory, epistemology, and physics. This dynamic is not always acknowledged in studies of early Christian ethics.

## 6 Notes on Translation and Transcription

The translation of *TriTrac* in the present study as well as the Coptic transcription is Attridge and Pagels', as it appears in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: Nag Hammadi Codex I* (edited by Harold W. Attridge. Leiden: Brill, 1985). Modifications to this translation are noted. When offering a translation which differs in a significant way from Attridge and Pagels', or when I favor some other translation, this is discussed in the note.<sup>144</sup> When rendering the Coptic, I have chosen to leave out the markings that indicate if a letter or word has been added by the scribe or a later redactor above or next to the line in the manuscript. In all other cases, the sigla used follows that adopted by the editors of *The Coptic Gnostic Library*.<sup>145</sup>

144 Chiefly Nagel, *Der Tractatus Tripartitus*; or Thomassen, *Le traité tripartite*; or Thomassen in Meyer, *Nag Hammadi*. I have also consulted the facsimile of Codex I and at times offer slightly modified lacuna suggestions. James Robinson, ed., *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Codex I* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

145 The raised dot (ⲁ̇), which appears frequently in the manuscript, indicates places where the copyist has felt the need to clarify where one word ends and the next begins. A dot under a letter (ⲁ̣) indicates that it is partly in a lacuna or that the ink is faded. A dot on the line next to brackets (for example [ⲁ] or [ⲁ]) indicates that there are residues of a letter in the manuscript but that the exact letter is uncertain. Square brackets, [ⲁ], indicate lacunas in the manuscript where there most likely existed text. The number of dots in the bracket indicates the size of the lacuna; each dot representing one letter. The brackets in the translation indicate whole words added from lacunas. Braces, {ⲁ}, indicate unnecessary words added by the scribe. When citing short sentences in the body I have left out the unnecessary words, to make the text more reader friendly. In the notes, for transparencies sake, all words have been left in, even those the scribe put there by accident. Pointed brackets in the transcription, <ⲁ>, indicate editorial corrections of words or letters that the scribe has omitted. In the translation, the pointed brackets indicate words that have been added. Parentheses in the transcription indicate scribal abbreviations that have been editorially explicated. In the translation, they indicate material supplied by me for the sake of clarity.