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Redeeming and Reconstructing
Baur's Model of Gnostic Return

Placing Western culture as a whole, or certain of its discourses, as an after to a before seems an irradicable feature of interpretive behavior, as if the *what*, or the *who* implied in the *what*, cannot be determined, even imagined, without speaking of the effects of discourses whose pastness encourage the sense of conceptual securability in the way the discourses in process of an evanescent present do not. Naming, it appears, demands the resources of the plot. Yet what is thus irradicable has been submitted to tireless critique. In a postmodern culture of suspicion, all such emplotments of wherefrom are deemed plots in the pejorative sense, that is, conspiracies of consolation in a situation indelibly marked by ambiguity and perplexity. And in the rebuff to naming the present by means of the vocabulary of the past, whether in the light of the present's contingency or uniqueness, or in the light of the diagnosis of the ideological claim of a presence to which knowledge can be adequate in principle, the unborn future is also protected, for emplotment with its wherefrom is ordered toward a whereunto that is predictable because in a sense it is already known. At one level, it must be confessed that the suspicion of plot is undefeatable. No clean bill of health can be given any plotline and not simply for the reason that many authoritative plotlines have revealed themselves as superficial when they have not been exposed as coercive rather than persuasive. Genealogical accounts have more than occasionally offered themselves as being beyond debate, thereby suggesting that genealogy as such represents a descent into ideology and an authoritarian form of discourse.

Yet plot too seems undefeatable. The discourses of demonizers of plots such as Jacques Derrida, Jean François Lyotard, and Mark C. Taylor, in their different ways, eloquently, but unwittingly,

testify to this.[2] The chaos or chaosmos supported by hyperbolic valorizations of contingency are full of plots;[3] our principled inability to situate ourselves is justified in terms of precise genealogies why this is and must be so; and our condition, discursive and otherwise, seems to have a massive consistency, even if this consistency is that of erring, to use Taylor's word. If wayless, we are certainly not tractless: what Heidegger calls *Wegmarken*, literally "way-markers," are everywhere.[4] Certainly we seem to have little difficulty marking where we have come from and where we are, and we have a determinate idea about change in direction. The persistence of plot suggests something beyond accident. Yet even if all one could do was appeal to naked survival, it is uncertain that survival is not the proxy for truth or that Darwinism is not the manifold of alethic claims. And, of course, many antigenealogical discourses themselves suggest some discomfort regarding their disavowals. They may make pained confession or simply acknowledge that continuity is a posited element even of antigenealogical discourses. Thus continuity is something to be abjured in one's own performances in the name of the unsayable discontinuity that is the truth, or continuity is embraced reluctantly as a serious fiction, complementary to the other truer historiographical fiction of absolute discontinuity. Here is not the place to test the relative merits of genealogical and antigenealogical discourse in the variety of its forms. Although in a later chapter I present the agon between a genealogical and a sophisticated antigenealogical discourse, all I wish to suggest for the moment is that genealogical discourse, at least in an epistemically humble form, can survive antigenealogical critique and thus gain a measure of vindication.

In a project that will unfold over a number of volumes I wish to deal with *Gnosticism* and *Gnostic* as items of genealogical discourse, as ways of relating discourses of modernity to discourses of the past with the interest of naming important discursive structures of the contemporary world. I do not suggest that these are the most common and decisive ones. Specifically, I wish to illustrate the work these genealogical counters do with respect to certain discourses of modernity, aesthetic (Romanticism), philosophical (German Idealism and its development), as well as expressly religious (Jacob Boehme, Thomas Altizer, Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann), which suggest that they have at once revived and revised Christianity and by so doing made it culturally pertinent as well as intellectually and morally defensible. An inescapable aspect of this illustration, however, is determining what role these genealogical counters *can* play

in assessment: determining their conceptual parameters is a condition of the possibility of legitimate employment.

In attributing Gnosticism to specific fields of discourse in modernity or summing up the work of an individual author or a particular text as Gnostic, one needs to know what is being claimed about these discourses. Indeed, given the vagueness of much taxonomic use, one needs to know whether anything is being claimed, whether the words *Gnostic* or *Gnosticism* simply function as a longhand for a particular state of mind regarding the world, most often an agitation with respect to its polymorphous out-of-jointness. Certainly, quite often the terms have more rhetorical than propositional force. They are likewise heavily polemical, although I grant that the rhetoric can function positively by indicating an elective affinity to discourses marginalized by the mainline traditions of religious and philosophical discourse or suggesting an aesthetic dismissal of the banality of public traditions. Large swatches of relatively heterogenous modern discourses, some rationalistic or mystical, others contemplative or practical in orientation, others again which consider knowledge to be method or which consider method as absolute knowledge are denounced. These discourses can be subjected to pathological examination in which the hatred of social, communal, and ethical reality is evinced and in which the overweening will to power expressed in the portentious claim to have the key to reality's secrets is revealed. Eric Voegelin is, arguably, the thinker most responsible for the polemical and pathological use of the term *Gnostic* with respect to modern discourses.[5] Not denying the sometimes high level of insight and sound judgment with respect to a number of major modern thinkers, the careless attribution of Gnosticism risks making Gnosticism an element of a demonological discourse.[6] Lamentation is declamation's other side: *Gnosticism* and *Gnostic* are ciphers of decline at best, violation at worst, with classical and/or Christian culture as their favored object. Although judgments about the overextension of application, and its demonological character, risk being too harsh, such interpretive use suggests more nearly the discourse of prophecy than philosophical analysis. Certainly the overplus of tone over meaning of which Kant complained and that Derrida, recently repeating Kant,[7] insists should be resisted, is something that urgently calls for attention.

Needed, then, is a nonrhetorical, or at least nonhyperbolic genealogical deployment of Gnosticism and Gnostic that makes clear the cognitive dimensions of the claim while indicating why the claim should matter. A good place to start is Baur's *Die christliche Gnosis*,

written in 1835, because it still represents the benchmark of ge-
nealogical employment of Gnosticism and Gnostic. This very early
work of Baur's, written under the influence of Hegel, is by no means
Baur's last word on Gnosis or Gnosticism. The great historian of
dogma in his later work will retreat significantly from the brave new
world of a speculative genealogy and significantly revise his assess-
ment of the Gnosis of the first centuries.[8] Yet in terms of history of ef-
fects in general intellectual culture, although not necessarily in
theology, it is his early reflections that have continued to matter.
Much twentieth-century genealogical deployment of Gnostic or Gnos-
ticism points back directly or indirectly to *Die christliche Gnosis*, and
in terms of comprehensiveness of proposal, determinacy of criteria,
and general explanatory power, Baur's epochal text sets a standard
that most twentieth-century accounts of the Gnostic physiognomy of
modern discourses palpably fail to meet. This is not to suggest that
Baur's thesis is adequate in the form presented in *Die christliche
Gnosis*. Without supplementation, correction, and fundamental me-
thodological rehabilitation, Baur's position seems unviable at key
points. What I suggest here, therefore, is not so much that we capture
a Baur *in actu* as a Baur *in posse*, not the actual model of Baur but a
model of genealogical use that has Baur at its base.

In *Die christliche Gnosis* Baur is not unaware that his thesis of
the return of "ancient Gnosis" in modernity is provocative, and
provocative on both philosophical and theological fronts. On the
philosophical front, Baur is effectively contesting the Enlightenment
thesis of the *absolute* novelty of modernity, which is supported by the
view that its characteristic discursive structures do not repeat pre-
modern forms of discourse or present their contents. For Baur, a
major trend in modern thought, which receives its apogee in Hegel,
displays manifest signs of repetition across the gap of rupture be-
tween the premodern and the modern. Furthermore, one can think
of ancient Gnosis as providing a template for a speculative philoso-
phy of religion that points to the intimate relation between religion
and philosophy that is denied by skeptical forms of rationalism and
forms of Christianity that are fideistic or biblicist in orientation. On
the theological front—the front of most concern to Baur—he contests
a reading of the theological situation that makes the only cogent
choice that between a newly minted rationalism and an ancient and
moribund orthodoxy. A third option is represented by the speculative
strand of Christianity in the post-Reformation tradition, which not
only has a vitality lacking in more traditional forms of Christianity
but also represents the return of ancient forms of thought marginal-

ized by emergent orthodoxy. If the Reformation is the condition of
the possibility of this speculative strand of Christianity because of
its pneumatic emphasis, it is the theosophic mystic Jacob Boehme
who sets in motion a particular stream of Christian discourse that is
further developed in Romanticism and German Idealism. Whether
some of the inclusions (such as Friedrich Schleiermacher) rightly be-
long in this trajectory matters less for the moment than the caliber
of the discourses that are included.[9]

In any event Baur's diagnosis of heterodox repetition cannot
avoid the metaphorics of haunting. The metaphorics are double: a
dead gnosis inhabits the Christian bodies of Protestant thought and
paradoxically is responsible for any vitality they display; ancient
gnosis spawns multiple doppelgängers in the modern field occupied
by rationalism and orthodoxy. This metaphorics, which must neces-
sarily be regarded as mythological by rationalism, is shared by
Baur's Roman Catholic contemporaries, Johann Adam Möhler
(1796–1838) and Franz Anton Staudenmaier (1800–1856). They,
however, contest Baur's evaluation at every turn. To the degree to
which ancient Gnosis returns, Möhler sees no friendly ghost but a
sign of the demonic and judges Protestantism to be not a scene of
health but a scene of endless multiplication of the self-centered, in-
curving spirit.[10] And Staudenmaier,[11] who focuses on the details of
Baur's return hypothesis in a way that does not engage Möhler,
specifically on the post-Reformation trajectory from Boehme to
Hegel, calls for a kind of Irenaean exorcism.

In what turns out to be both a philosophical and theological
provocation, Baur perceives himself to be working on the authority
of his master Hegel with respect to both the form and content of his
thesis.[12] The return of ancient Gnosis is cast in the language of de-
velopment (*Entwicklung*), which with its teleological connotation
recalls the Hegelian philosophy of history. The language of develop-
ment at once disguises and realizes the metaphorics of haunting. On
the one hand, the metaphorics is disguised to the extent that devel-
opment suggests unilinear progress in the order of appearance of
discourses. On the other, the metaphorics of haunting is ultimately
conceptually realized in that development is thought to be dramatic:
negated ancient thought reemerges in new philosophical and reli-
gious forms after a nonspeculative Catholic interregnum that repre-
sents its overcoming, or as it turns out, merely its repression. And
these new forms of speculative thought surpass the ancient forms in-
sofar as they realize dimensions of discourse that were not fully ex-
plicit in ancient forms of gnosis.

It is true that on the level of content Hegel does not elaborate a thesis that explicitly links his own discourse to ancient Gnosis by way of Lutheran pneumatism in which Jacob Boehme is a major figure. Nevertheless, such an extrapolation can be made on the basis of Hegel's extraordinary positive judgments in *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* on Gnostic and Neoplatonic metanarratives and on the thought of Boehme[13] where all evaluation is referenced to the realization of the thrust of discourse in the Hegelian system. My interest in recalling the Hegelian background of Baur's thesis is more than historical. From a systematic point of view one of the desiderata with regard to redeeming Gnosticism and Gnostic in genealogical discourse is to contest the teleological pattern of Hegelian discourse, whose purpose is to overcome contingency and to provide a narrative intelligibility that reaches all the way to logical necessity. Only by conceding the antiteleological point to an anti-Hegelian historicist such as Hans Blumenberg is a defensible genealogical discourse possible at all.[14] I discuss this at length in chapter 2.

As indicated, the superiority of Baur's model over its Gnostic genealogical rivals rests on its comprehensiveness, the determinacy of criteria for identifying modern discourses as Gnostic and its explanatory power. We begin with the issue of comprehensiveness. The scope of Baur's genealogical use of Gnostic is significantly larger than much twentieth-century use. With respect to the return of ancient Gnosis, one is not talking about a particular text or author, or even a particular religious, aesthetic, and philosophical movement, but of a broad discursive trajectory in modernity that displays attention-getting features. Yet if the scope is significantly large, it is not exhaustive. Specifically, the scope of genealogical use is not coextensive with modernity as such. In identifying as Gnostic a band of post-Reformation discourse, which has its alpha in Luther, its omega in Hegel, and an important mediating link in Boehme, Baur is determinate in attribution in a way Voegelin, for example, is not. In Voegelin the term *Gnostic* covers a dizzying array of religious, political, philosophical, and psychological discourses that amounts to an indictment of the whole of modernity. The whole postclassical tradition in political thought from Machiavelli and Locke to the present day is excoriated as *Gnostic*, as are Descartes, Romanticism, Idealism, phenomenology, Heidegger, existentialism, psychoanalysis, and religious movements such as Puritanism.[15] A comprehensive Gnostic genealogy steers between the Scylla of a focus on a particular discourse at a particular moment in modernity and the Charybdis of

identifying as Gnostic the entire range of discourses generated in the modern period.

A first and general condition of *Gnostic* ascription is that the discourses are theological in the broad sense. Discourses, therefore, which are intrinsically atheological or explicitly atheistic, are not exemplary candidates for *Gnostic* ascription; they are not even viable candidates. This is not to say that there is not a critical element vis-à-vis the definition of modernity in *Die christliche Gnosis*. Not only does Christianity have available alternatives to confessional orthodoxies, but whatever the essential constitution of modernity—and Baur does not contest its methodological foundationalist leanings, its this-worldly proclivities, and its tendency toward univocal discourse—full description has to allow for the presence of narrative discourses that are not formally methodological, nor reductively this-worldly, nor purely nonsymbolic. What the relationship is between these discourses and the discursive field in general, and whether these discourses play any legitimating role with respect to the overall tendency of modernity, are issues that Baur does not decide, although Hegel has left relatively cogent answers. Put most simply, Hegel's particular metanarrative discourse, which he acknowledges has antecedents in ancient Gnosticism and Boehme,[16] represents the realization of modernity on the level of discourse, and functions to legitimate it. In fact, Hegel's reading has come to function as a template for all metanarrative discourse in modernity, whose authoritarian and ideological intentions have to be exposed.[17]

A second feature, marking Baur's genealogical model, is the relatively determinate criterion for identifying a Christian discourse in the modern field as Gnostic. In *Die christliche Gnosis* (arguably following August Neander[18] and undoubtedly influenced by Hegel's synoptic reflection on Hellenistic thought), in one fundamental drift at least, Baur tends to identify ancient Gnosis with ontological story in general, a specific ontological story in particular.[19] Thus Gnostic return has to do with the repetition in modern Christian discourses of a narrative focused on the vicissitudes of (divine) reality's fall from perfection, its agonic middle, and its recollection into perfection. In identifying Gnostic return in this way, Baur offers one of the two major paradigms of Gnostic genealogical assessment not only for the nineteenth century but also for the twentieth century. A central line of his contemporary Staudenmaier is that his assessment of the perdurance of Gnosticism in modern Christian thought operates in terms of this paradigm. Similarly, Balthasar finds himself with Staudenmaier in fundamental agreement with Baur's judgment

that Hegel represents the completion of a post-Reformation line of narrative discourses that justify a Gnostic attribution.[20] Perhaps most tellingly, because of Hans Jonas's profound knowledge of the literature of Gnosticism and, surprisingly, in light of the fact that much of his work operates in terms of another paradigm, some of Jonas's later essays also articulate this paradigm.[21]

If Baur, at his most disciplined in *Die christliche Gnosis*, offers essentially a narrative paradigm from which to generate and justify use of Gnostic with respect to modern discourse, which we support, the experiential or existential paradigm of genealogical assessment, which is its main rival, is rejected. This paradigm has by and large dominated in the twentieth century. Harold Bloom, C. G. Jung, Eric Voegelin, and the early Hans Jonas are just a few of the more important thinkers whose reflections operate in terms of this paradigm, although, obviously, interests, strategies of interpretation, and assessment differ. In all of these authors Gnosticism is identified with a particular mind-set, fundamentally one of displacement and alienation from reality that, nonetheless, is a condition of one's specialness. Bloom's texts, for instance, display an interest in exploring (1) the Gnostic mindset in its pure phenomenological form, (2) Gnosticism's transgressive hermeneutic paradigm that challenges all authoritative texts right down to *the* text, the Bible, and (3) Gnosticism's various historical instantiations within literature and modern religions.[22] Jung is interested in the Gnostic mind-set to the extent that its symbols have a boldness and clarity lacking in many traditional religious accounts, but above all because these symbols reveal feminine and negative archetypes, exiled in history by monotheism, which point toward what needs to be integrated in the psyche, and in some cases reveal the processes of integration.[23] Voegelin is interested in the mind-set, which in his view is primarily one of revolt against order and the will to power,[24] to the degree to which this mind-set is illustrated in the thought of modern high culture and especially in political theory. On the level of interpretive strategy, if Bloom sometimes reads mind-set off literary symbols, most often he adopts the more indirect route of excavating Gnostic assumptions from the modalities of interpretation in and through which Gnostic texts dismantle the authority of prior texts and by implication the biblical text as the primordial authoritative text. The interpretive strategy of Jung is more straightforward with the symbols of ancient religious texts indicating the presence of archetypes, elsewhere confirmed in the analysis of dreams. Although Voegelin does not totally avoid the analysis of symbols or

the nature of intepretation, he tends to focus on the explicitly de-
clared programmatic ambitions of major discourses, an important
example of which is Hegel's famous declaration in the Preface to
Phenomenology that "the science of experience" is the movement to-
ward a state of absolute knowledge or wisdom that transcends phi-
losophy, conceived as the love of wisdom.[25]

But the experiential-existential paradigm also has nineteenth-
century roots. It is found, for example, in the Catholic Tübingen
School. For Möhler, Gnosticism, as with all heresy, is indicative of a
state of mind that is egotistical and aggrandizing and that puts ex-
cessive emphasis on freedom.[26] This is true also for Staudenmaier,
who at once operates in terms of the Baurian paradigm and against
it. In his *Zum religiösen Frieden der Zukunft*, which is a text that
anticipates Voegelin's concern with the social consequences of Gnos-
tic thought and perhaps to some extent John Milbank's *Theology
and Social Theory*, the Gnostic mind-set is chaotic, essentially an-
tinomian, and finally demonic. That this state of mind turns out to
be pathological is important and relatively unimportant. It is impor-
tant historically in that the Catholic Tübingen School initiates a par-
ticular evaluative trajectory, which, one could argue, receives its
crescendo in Voegelin. It is unimportant, or at least less important
methodologically and systematically, in that evaluation of a state of
mind, whether negative (Voegelin, Balthasar, Milbank), positive
(Bloom, Jung), or ambivalent (Jonas) is secondary relative to identi-
fying Gnosticism with a state of mind.

Within the second interpretive paradigm, there are in turn es-
sentially two streams of interpretation with decidedly different ev-
identiary requirements. At one end stand Möhler and Voegelin, who
tend to ascribe Gnostic states of mind on the basis of a perceived
sense of a discourse's swerve from the normative traditions;[27] at the
other end are Jung, Jonas, and Bloom, who think of states of mind
as analytic results from the complicated process of interpretation of
symbols and their relations in which states of mind are embodied.
Clearly, the first kind of Gnostic state of mind ascription escapes
testability. But difficulties also exist with respect to the second
stream of interpretation. Not only are specific symbols often inter-
preted differently, and different relations with other symbols high-
lighted, but also the same or similar symbols can belong to different
fields or matrices of symbols so that without some means to define
the field or matrix within which symbols or local networks of sym-
bols operate, determining whether individual symbols (such as
exile) or local networks of symbols (such as death and life, sleep and

wakefulness) indicate the presence of a dualistically exaggerated Christian discourse, a Platonic, Neoplatonic, or Gnostic discourse is difficult. Thus, while important and useful as a supplement, symbolic analysis presupposes a broader and deeper discrimen of symbolic matrix that establishes the horizon of symbols and their interpretation. *Die christliche Gnosis* responds to this need by identifying this matrix with a dramatic narrative ontology or ontotheology, which has a high index of testability. This lack of a testable evidential criterion, therefore, bedevils the experiential or existential paradigm of Gnostic attribution in both its forms.

The third and most important factor with regard to the superiority of Baur's hypothesis over its Gnostic genealogical rivals lies in its explanatory power. Of course, explanatory power depends on the first two criteria of comprehensiveness of genealogical scope and determinacy of criterion of assessment. It has three more specific aspects: (1) the interpretive fertility of Baur's Gnostic genealogy from a historical point of view, (2) potential extendibility of discursive terrains covered by the genealogical terms *Gnosticism* and *Gnostic*; and (3) the ability of Baur's genealogical model to demonstrate its explanatory power in competition with alternative, non-Gnostic genealogical hypotheses that cover essentially the same discursive terrain. Even Baur himself suggests the possibility of a non-Gnostic genealogical account of narrative ontotheologies from Boehme to Hegel. I cover each of these three aspects in turn.

(1) Baur's genealogical Gnostic hypothesis has proved interpretively fertile in that it has been recalled, explicitly or implicitly, in whole or in part, by a number of important nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers interested in the complex shifts in basic attitude and discursive forms of modern culture and concerned specifically with the state of confessional Christian discourses, forced to share discursive space not only with rationalistic, fideistic forms of Christian discourse but also with simulations of the biblical narrative and/or its first-order theological translation. Staudenmaier repeats more than one Baurian genealogy in his prolific output in the 1840s, but in one drift at least *Zum religiösen Frieden der Zukunft* (1845–1851) recalls the Gnostic genealogy of *Die christliche Gnosis*. Gnosticism returns in and through Lutheran pantheism (e.g., Boehme) and has its crescendo in German Idealism.

Balthasar also recalls the complete plotline of Baur's Gnostic genealogical thesis. In his early multivolume work *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele*, Balthasar ascribes as Gnostic a fundamental tendency in German Romanticism and Idealism.[28] Other aspects of

Baur's scheme are filled out in his great trilogy. In *Glory of the Lord*, the first part of the trilogy, while heroizing Irenaeus's authentically theological aesthetic,[29] Balthasar links Boehme with the aesthetic theological project of German Romanticism and Idealism in which the divine mysteries are grasped independently of Christ and articulated by means of organic, teleological categories.[30] At the very least, a strong analogy is implied between Gnosticism on the one hand, and Boehme and German Idealism on the other, since as the antitype of the theological aesthetics of Irenaeus, Gnosticism is a singularly intense version of an aesthetic theology that includes Boehme and German Idealism as representatives. In *Theo-Drama*, the second part of the trilogy, Balthasar associates mythological thought in general and Gnostic mythological thought in particular with German Idealism, but the grounds for association go deeper than and are more determinate than those found in *Apokalypse*, where the emphasis on knowledge (*gnōsis*) rather than faith (*pistis*) appears to be regarded as a relatively sufficient reason for *Gnostic* ascription. Balthasar suggests that what unites the myth that Irenaeus resists and the religious thought of German Idealism is a dramatic narrative ontology or ontotheology, whose function is to provide an explanation for evil and a justification of the divine.[31]

As figured in Hegel in particular, the divine, as trinitarian, is not given, but becomes. Specifically, it becomes through the economy of creation, incarnation, redemption, and sanctification, in which the pathos of the cross has an essential place. In line with Staudenmaier's extended critique of Hegel in the nineteenth century, for Balthasar this is to confound ontotheological story with the necessity of speaking about the divine in a narrative fashion, to think of this story as fundamentally self-legitimating and uncontestable, rather than a narrative being verified in community confession and practice. It is also to install deipassionism as essential to a vision of the divine. And from Balthasar's perspective, once again against the background of his nineteenth-century Tübingen precursor, Staudenmaier, this is to reinstate Gnosticism or more specifically Valentinianism. For Valentinianism of the second century elaborates not the narrative of faith but incontestable myth as logos, which myth requires no community, or more specifically practical, sources of verification.

Explicit recalls of important sections of Baur's genealogical trajectory are fairly common throughout scholarship. Working from within Gnostic studies, both Gilles Quispel and Hans Jonas have noted the affinities between Gnosticism and German Idealism.[32]

In a powerful essay, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon—
Typological and Historical," undergoing something of a methodologi-
cal *metanoia*, Jonas argues that the relationship is constituted in the
final analysis not so much by particular states of mind or networks of
symbols but rather by a narrative ontotheology, since the real subject
of becoming is directly the divine and, perhaps, indirectly, the more-
than-human self. Not only have I made the connection between
Boehme and Hegel, with Gnosticism functioning as a background cat-
egory, but David Walsh and John Milbank have also made the con-
nection.[33] Even if with both of these authors, after the pattern of
Voegelin, we see a tendency to focus on social and political dis-
courses,[34] there are definite gestures in a Baurian direction. If Walsh
interests himself in the corresponding symbolisms of Boehme and
Hegel, it is nonetheless clear that aside from the claim to absolute
knowledge, the attribution of Gnosticism is predicated on the repeti-
tion of a narrative ontology that is characteristic of ancient Hellenis-
tic modes of thought. Although the link of Boehme and his tradition
to Hegel and the post-Hegelian tradition does not enjoy the same
status for Milbank, nevertheless in *Theology and Social Theory*, Mil-
bank suggests that the connection of Hegel with Boehme clarifies the
ascription of gnosis and, moreover, that the content of ascription is
once again a narrative ontology or, better, a narrative ontotheology.

(2) I have said enough, perhaps, about the fertility of Baur's
model of Gnostic return. It is time to say something about a second
aspect of the explanatory power of the Baurian model, that is, the
extensibility of its modern trajectory. The discursive terrain covered
by Baur's thesis admits to being extended in three directions. First,
one can ask whether figures, broadly speaking in the Protestant tra-
dition but outside Baur's own German cultural tradition, display the
kind of narrative ontology that would justify ascriptive use of *Gnos-
ticism* or *Gnostic*. A second important extension concerns that of
genre. In *Die christliche Gnosis*, Baur privileges theological and
philosophical forms of discourse. Although Baur has good reasons to
limit discursively attribution in this way, including finitude, inter-
est, perceived competence, and theological pertinence of a direct
sort, the exclusion of the genre of literature arguably underesti-
mates this discursive genre's importance in modernity, removes the
possibility of seeing that it may come to function as a replacement
discourse to Christianity, and denies purchase on the aesthetic vi-
sion that inflects the discourses of Schleiermacher (626–668),
Schelling (611–626), and Hegel (668–735) who are regarded as in-
stances of Gnostic return in modernity.[35]

Balthasar, who follows Baur with respect to both the paradigm of ascriptive use of *Gnostic* and his basic genealogical plotline, improves on Baur here. Balthasar makes both cultural-historic and systematic points. He posits as a matter of fact that the discourses of Romantic culture are mutually inflecting but that one important direction of influence is from the aesthetic to the theological and philosophical. Religious thinkers such as Schleiermacher and Hegel must be seen against the background not only of Herder but also against the background of Schiller and Hölderlin.[36] At the same time, Balthasar more systematically suggests (a) that aesthetic discourses may be privileged vehicles of religious response, for bad as well as good, even if in genuine aesthetic discourses there is always a fundamental quotient of illumination, and (b) that theological and philosophical discourses in the modern field may be intrinsically aesthetic in their vision of reality as a self-organizing, self-constituting whole that is affectively and noetically satisfying. With respect to the second systematic point, Balthasar has Staudenmaier as his precursor, and especially the latter's still important text on Hegel, *Darstellung und Kritik des Hegelschen Systems* (1844), which struggled mightily against Hegel's aesthetic holism. Such holism was a singularly attractive feature in the wake of the atomization of theology that is both cause and effect of the rationalistic reduction of faith and the fideistic exclusion of the content of faith.[37] Moreover, the second kind of extension, the extension of genre, can overlap with the first kind of extension, that is, extension outside Baur's cultural field, by making the poetic discourses of English Romanticism—themselves frequently the subject of Gnostic attribution—candidates for inclusion in an expanded Baurian model.[38]

The third and most obvious extension of Baur's model is temporal. While *Die christliche Gnosis* has a tendency to echo Hegel's own teleological assessment of his system, in principle, if not necessarily in fact, as the dominant intellectual influence in Germany of his generation, Hegel is simply the latest in a line of Protestant thinkers who offer variations on Gnostic return. Although the Baur of *Die christliche Gnosis* is somewhat reluctant to see it,[39] after the death of Hegel there could be others, even if these others would have to be classed as Hegel epigones. More realistically, discursive improvisations on the variations of Gnostic return could be offered by figures such as Boehme, Schelling, and Hegel. Given their deep affinities with Boehme and Schelling, and their sense of the necessity of a narrative ontotheology with the suffering of the cross at the center, Nicholas Berdyaev,[40] and to a lesser extent Vladimir Soloviev and

Sergei Bulgakov, are prime candidates for analysis, given their complex weave of myth, Idealism and the Eastern orthodox tradition. They present different kinds of complication than those found in the Western Christian tradition. The latter will receive the bulk of our attention in subsequent volumes. Our twentieth-century focus will fall mainly on theologians such as Altizer, whose extra-confessional theology from his early death of God theology to his more recent celebrations of apocalyptic shows remarkable consistency, Tillich, who provides the classical Protestant mediational theology of the twentieth century; and Moltmann, whose trinitarian political theology seems more nearly to stretch confessional theology than break it. These theologians, and theologians associated with them, come under examination for essentially two reasons. First, their texts display, overtly or covertly, a dramatic narrative ontotheology. Second, we find evidence of actual influence by one or more of the emblematic variations of Gnostic return in modernity diagnosed by Baur. For example, in the case of Altizer it is preeminently Hegel, but lately Boehme and Schelling; in the case of Tillich, it is the later Schelling with echoes of Boehme; and in the case of Moltmann, it is again primarily Hegel, but Hegel inflected by Schellingian and Boehmian elements.

Arguing for *Gnostic* ascription in these cases is understandably difficult. The cultural location of each bears at best an analogy to pre-1835 Germany and, of course, the cultural situation of each of these theologians is hardly identical. In addition, each presents unique obstacles. Altizer, who covers much of the terrain of Baur's Gnostic genealogy, refuses *Gnostic* ascription to these discourses and, placing his own discourse in this lineage, defines it as just the opposite of Gnosticism. In the case of Tillich, not only is the Schellingian reprise attended by a demythologizing urge that marries Enlightenment apologetic with Kierkegaard's existential analysis, but Schelling's philosophy of freedom is thought to be a bulwark against nontheistic cooptions of Christianity. This position is one which German theologians entertained almost from the first appearance of Schelling's post-Idealist work, not excluding Staudenmaier, and is also very much alive in contemporary theology, as evidenced by the work of Walter Kasper and Wolfhart Pannenberg.[41] Moltmann also provides numerous obstacles. The biblical intention of his work cannot be ignored, nor can his eschatological configuration of history, which owes much to Joachim of Fiore.[42] Although I carry out no extended analysis of these theological figures in this introductory volume, I hope by demarcating here the deep

narrative structure that is in fundamental respects Valentinian that I can go on to show how it is constitutive of all three theological twentieth-century figures.

(3) I come now to the third factor relevant to the explanatory power of Baur's Gnostic genealogical model, that is, its ability to demonstrate its explanatory superiority with respect to a field of narrative ontological or ontotheological discourse in modernity over alternative non-Gnostic genealogical rivals. Again, only the series of volumes in their entirety can pass for such a demonstration. One is not in a position to outline the basic shape of Gnosticism's superior explanatory ratio until the Baurian model has been further adjusted and corrected. I sketch in the next chapter a somewhat formal account of the explanatory superiority of Baur's Gnostic genealogical model, and specifically its ability to assimilate its non-Gnostic rivals. This sketch is filled out significantly in part II, especially in chapters 4 and 5, when the discussion of assimilation or enlisting, as I refer to it, proceeds on the basis of the excavation of a Valentinian narrative grammar from classical Valentinian narratives. All I offer at this stage is an inventory of the important non-Gnostic genealogical rivals attended by a brief description of each.

Three kinds of non-Gnostic genealogies cover the discursive field of Baur in both its unextended and extended versions. That is, three rival accounts exist for the third line of Christian discourses fundamentally constituted by an encompassioning narrative of dramatic divine self-constitution. These rival models of return can be labeled apocalyptic, Neoplatonism, or Kabbalah.

To begin with the apocalyptic genealogy, we find numerous instances of apocalyptic interpretation of various figures (e.g., Boehme, Blake, Shelley, Hegel, Moltmann), and various discursive regions of Baur's genealogy (e.g., German Idealism). But we find fewer instances of genealogies that cover the full scope of Baur's genealogy, in principle allowing for cultural, generic, and temporal extension. Where we do, they seem to fall into two types. The first is genuinely non-Gnostic because it does not expressly exclude or deny a Gnostic genealogy. The second is anti-Gnostic in that it expressly contests *Gnostic* ascription of the Baurian chain of narrative discourses. The first type is associated with Henri de Lubac,[43] although suggestions of this genealogy are also found in Staudenmaier and Voegelin and his followers,[44] who support the Gnostic hypothesis. The second is associated with Altizer. Within the coordinates of the first type, the Reformation in general with Boehme at its apex and subsequently German Romanticism and Idealism and

their successor discourses, are regarded as representing a repristi-
nation of the apocalyptic theology of Joachim of Fiore. Within the
second, whatever the prima facie link between classical Gnosticism
and a chain of narrative discourses in which Boehme, Blake, Hegel,
and Schelling feature, the pronounced this-worldliness of these dis-
courses and their commitment to time and history mark them as
belonging to another genealogical dispensation. Altizer feels com-
pelled to identify them with (or as) apocalyptic. Both apocalyptic
types overlap with Baur's actual trajectory of narrative ontological
discourse while extending it culturally, generically, and temporally.
De Lubac includes post-Idealist discourses[45] and plausibly would in-
clude Moltmann, given Moltmann's self-consciously apocalyptic and
specifically Joachimite commitment. Altizer includes English
Romanticism and its precursor (e.g., Milton) and successor 'poetic'
discourses (e.g., Joyce) as well as his own kenotic theology that con-
stitutes, in his view, a postmodern radicalization of the modernity of
Romantic and Idealist discourses.

   The second serious non-Gnostic genealogical rival is that of Neo-
platonism. Influential Neoplatonic readings of German Idealism
have been offered this century by Werner Beierwaltes and others,[46]
but the practice dates back to nineteenth-century interpreters such
as Friedrich Creuzer, who felt entitled to think of German Idealism
as representing the revival of the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Pro-
clus, a determination that had some basis in the works of Hegel and
Schelling and one not particularly resisted by them.[47] Similarly, if
matters are otherwise with regard to German Romanticism, Neo-
platonic readings of the major figures of English Romanticism are
relatively commonplace. Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley have
all been read in this way, and Blake in particular has been submit-
ted to powerful analyses that argue that not only is the dominant
symbolism of Blake's poems Neoplatonic but so also is their basic
metaphysical frame.[48]

   Neoplatonic readings of the entire Baurian line of narrative dis-
courses, in both its unextended or extended forms, however, are once
again fairly rare. As with the apocalyptic genealogy, however, the
Neoplatonic genealogy also has two emblematic renditions, both of
which are articulated in the nineteenth century. Ironically, the first
is provided by Baur himself, and the second, almost as ironically, by
Staudenmaier. In the case of Baur, the Neoplatonic genealogy is first
simply an implicate of the lack of unique reference for the signifer
"ancient Gnosis," which includes various forms of Platonism with
Valentinian and other Hellenistic discourses. One can just as legiti-

mately speak of Platonic or Neoplatonic as Valentinian return in Boehme and beyond, given the lack of determinacy of Gnosis. What is implied in *Die christliche Gnosis* is made more explicit in Baur's great work on the Trinity,[49] where Neoplatonism not only provides the proximate context for the interpretation of the Trinity in the patristic period, but dynamic modulations of Neoplatonism are suggested to be constitutive of the trinitarian conceptuality central to the modern dramatic narrative ontotheologies cited as instances of Gnostic return in *Die christliche Gnosis*. Staudenmaier follows Baur in tracing a Platonic or Neoplatonic trajectory that has German Idealism in general, and Hegel in particular, as its apogee. Following his *Darstellung und Kritik des Hegelschen Systems*, in his important *Die Philosophie des Christentums*,[50] Hegel and the Idealist Schelling are taken to complete a Neoplatonic trajectory that extends from Plotinus and Proclus via medieval and Renaissance Neoplatonism with Bruno being especially important. Moreover, the privileged Christian location in modernity is Lutheran Protestantism (671–743), in which a figure such as Boehme stands out for his speculative bravery (726–740). For Staudenmaier, if *Neoplatonism* is relatively interchangeable with *pantheism*, as the generic term of opprobrium, he also makes clear that the pantheism that is of interest is a dynamic, narrative, and finally, theogonic variety (234, 809).

The Kabbalah, or better its Christian cooption in modernity, represents the third non-Gnostic genealogical rival to the Gnostic Baurian genealogy. It is also, arguably, the least prominent of the non-Gnostic genealogical rivals for, on the one hand, it tends to get paired with Gnosticism without differentiation, as is sometimes the case in Balthasar and Milbank,[51] and on the other, with the possible exception of Bloom,[52] it lacks powerful proponents of the kind found in the other two non-Gnostic genealogical schemes. Individual figures and determinate regions of Baur's field of narrative ontotheological discourse, viewed in both its unextended and extended dimensions, however, have been characterized in this way. Hegel offers a surprisingly appreciative account of the Kabbalah in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, and his description of it offers analogues to his own dramatic narrative ontotheology.[53] Ernst Benz has focused attention on the Kabbalistic line that runs from Boehme to Schelling through Friedrich Oetinger.[54] Balthasar has made gestures toward the importance of Kabbalah in the Romantic-Idealist field,[55] an importance underscored by Herder's borrowings from the Kabbalah as he proposes a dynamic organicist alternative to a static Christian theism.[56] And

Harold Bloom suggests that the Kabbalah might very well be a more adequate taxon than Gnosticism for English Romanticism and especially William Blake if the Kabbalah's view of the world is taken into account together with its mode of interpretation of the biblical text. Moreover, theologians such as Altizer and Moltmann,[57] who self-consciously think of the Baurian field of narrative ontotheological discourse as one of their major inheritances, either suggest that Kabbalah is a relatively adequate taxon or draw attention to the way (or ways) in which the Kabbalah can help correct skews within the Christian tradition, especially those that exaggerate divine transcendence, emphasizing the incommensurability of the divine sphere with the cosmos and that operate with a conviction of the basic ontological meanness of human being that supports a rhetoric of heteronomy and fear.

I return to these three rival genealogies in chapter 2, when I illustrate in a provisional way the superior explanatory power of Baur's Gnostic genealogy. What I now turn to are the steps that necessarily must be taken to rehabilitate the Baurian model so that it can successfully engage its genealogical rivals. At a minimum, four steps need to be taken.

As a first desideratum, Baur's Gnostic genealogical model, as elaborated in his classical text, must be de-Hegelianized. Specifically, the imperious teleological code by which ontological discourses in modernity are interpreted as repetitions and realizations of ancient Gnosis ought to be curbed. While Baur can call on the dramatic, (dis)ruptive element implied in a dialectical modality of development and can take for granted the Hegelian view that modernity as a whole is not a repetition, but spins on its own axis, the teleological code brings with it a number of dangers to which a philosopher of culture and history such as Hans Blumenberg has been especially sensitive. First, the danger exists that the discontinuity between the modern field of narrative discourse and that of ancient Gnosticism is insufficiently acknowledged. Baur, if not necessarily his successors Balthasar and Jonas, here seems to fall below the level of Voegelin, who insists on this point.[58] Second, and relatedly, the danger exists of ignoring telling differences in narrative ontological commitment: narrative ontologies or ontotheologies in modernity appear to be explicitly progressive and developmental in a way that those of classical Gnosticism are not. And third, the danger exists of inadequately attending to the contingency of history: history happens or is made and is not the effect of the cunning of intrahistorical reason with its cogent teleological aim.

A second step of correction lies in achieving a higher index of determinacy with respect to Gnostic ascription than that attained by Baur himself and many of his successors. When it ascribes Gnostic to discourses that unfold narrative ontotheologies, as we have seen already, the Baurian genealogy has a determinacy advantage over what we might call its Möhlerian competition, where the emphasis falls on experience.[59] Möhler, of course, is not the most significant advocate of the experiential paradigm, but he has the advantage from a typological point of view of being a contemporary of Baur's, indeed a Catholic Tübingen colleague who took exception to Baur's hallowing of the post-Reformation Protestant tradition. In competition with relatively powerful genealogical rivals, however, it becomes clear that even this level of determinacy is inadequate. Getting in the way of a fully adequate *Gnostic* ascription are (a) the tendency in Baur and his tradition to plot the same modern narrative ontotheological discourses in a multitude of genealogies of which Gnosticism is only one and (b) relatedly, the lack of specificity regarding the referent of Gnosticism in the ancient world.

With respect to (a), like Voegelin, who primarily operates in terms of the Möhlerian experiential paradigm,[60] Baur and some of his successors clearly see a particular Protestant strain of narrative ontotheologies as repetitions-realizations of a number of traditions. As shown earlier, Baur thinks that these modern narrative ontotheologies repeat and realize Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. Staudenmaier adds apocalyptic,[61] and Balthasar adds the Kabbalah. Multiple genealogical ascription, where no attempt is made to adjudicate between ascriptions or order them, obviously affects the degree to which modern narrative ontologies can be illuminated. To the degree that the ascriptions are determinate, the more equivocal will appear the description of the Baurian band of modern discourses. Contrariwise, if more than one ascription is regarded as legitimate, then the less the ascriptions themselves have determinate boundaries.

With regard to (b), greater determinacy with regard to the referent ancient Gnosis is evidently in order. As used by Baur, it functions as an umbrella term for heterogeneous discourses that include Hermeticism, Neopythagoreanism, Marcionism, Manichaeism, as well as Valentinianism. And the early Jonas at least displays a similar tendency to use *gnosis* as an umbrella term, with Gnostic religion covering Hermeticism, Marcionism, Manichaeism, as well as the non-Valentinian and Valentinian species referred to by Irenaeus and exemplified in the cache of Nag Hammadi. Demanded then is a

restriction of Gnosticism to a determinate religious phenomenon, defined by particular texts, which articulate quite specific narrative ontotheologies. Specifically, Gnosticism finds its focus in Valentinianism that, from a methodological point of view, must be regarded as finding its determining expression in the texts of Nag Hammadi. Such determinacy with regard to *Gnostic* ascription, however, does not rule out complex historical and systematic relations between Valentinianism and other non-Gnostic taxa put to genealogical use.

Third, it is necessary to deny that Baur is entitled to his presumptive reading of Valentinian narrative ontotheology as theogonic. In addition to insistent avowals in classical Valentinian texts of the unsurpassable perfection of the divine before narrative adventure, the massive structural contrasts between unfallen and fallen states of reality leads to the plausible conclusion that the implied ontology or ontotheology is static rather than dynamic, and most certainly not progressive and developmental. Nevertheless, a denial of the necessity of a theogonic reading is not a denial of its possibility. As Balthasar and Jonas have both argued,[62] the surface semantics of Gnostic narrative discourse should not be fetishized, and in effect a split occurs between the surface and depth narrative intentions and ontological commitments in Valentinian texts with the latter being dynamic and developmental in a way the former is not. By observing the phenomenon of splitting or doubling in Valentinian discourse, both Balthasar and Baur bring out a feature of Gnosticism alluded to by Baur's master Hegel,[63] and they provide a necessary step in the argument for significant continuity between ancient and modern narrative discourses.

Fourth and lastly, if good reasons exist for examining Baur's presumption of theogonic continuity between Valentinian Gnosticism and modern heterodox forms of thought, even more compelling reasons exist for avoiding the presumption of an *Urnarrative* that either accompanies or undergirds theogonic assertion. The postulate of a Gnostic or Valentinian *Urnarrative* has at least two invidious consequences, the first affecting relations between classical Valentinian texts, the second affecting relations between classical Valentinian texts and Romantic and Idealist texts, as well as their precursors and successor texts. In the context of classical Valentinian texts themselves the construct of a Gnostic *Urnarrative* is in grave danger of functioning as a prescription that ignores the patent surface plurality of Valentinian narratives with regard to personae, attitude, and nuance in ontotheological posi-

tion. Because the textual surface may be just that, the interpreter is not entitled to presume the semantic split between surface and depth in each and every case. Nor may the interpreter simply assume that in the event of verifying such a split, the textual surface is neatly resolvable into a relatively simple narrative ontotheology of which it is the allegory. In the context of the relation between classical Valentinianism and Boehmian, and between classical Valentinian forms and Romantic and Idealist forms of thought, the construct of *Urnarrative* is perhaps even more invidious. For the *Urnarrative* view to work, the interpreter has to negate plurality in the Romantic and Idealist fields and repress narrative differences between these discourses and those that emerge in the Hellenistic field. Implied also is a repression of the reality of historical change indicated by the discontinuity in discourse.

Against this background of reinscribing historical discontinuity and contingency, I want to insist on taxonomic determinacy, announce the need to prove that theogony is a legitimate (if nonobvious) reading of Valentinian narrative ontotheologies, and promote a plurality of Valentinian narrative ontologies. To pursue these aims, I turn to a notion that has proved helpful elsewhere in philosophy and theology, that is, the notion of *grammar*.[64] Specifically, I wish to propose the construct of Valentinian narrative grammar as offering the theoretical means for a justification of Baur's profound intuition of repetition and development of Gnostic narrative ontotheology by taking account of the four desiderata of rehabilitation. Now, as grammar allows plural lexical instantiations, indeed lexical instantiations with substantial amounts of difference, Valentinian narrative grammar points to an underlying set of rules of formation of Valentinian narrative open to plural instantiation and difference. While we find the exemplary instances or paradigms of this narrative grammar in the second- and third-century texts of historical Valentinianism, nothing rules out the possibility that later systems, including Romantic and Idealist systems, and their precursor and successor discourses, might not be discovered to be substantially determined by the same rules of narrative formation. Grammatical continuity between early and late would permit in principle a substantial degree of difference, as well as sameness, between narrative ontotheological discourses in the modern field and the Valentinian narratives of the Hellenistic period.

The construct of Valentinian narrative grammar allows, therefore, for serious discontinuity as well as continuity over time. But grammars can be generous or restricted. If one is to steer this

construct toward the pole of generosity and underwrite more than trivial discontinuity, then grammar may need a conceptual supplement. The supplemental concept I propose is a variant of *rule-governed deformation of classical narrative genres*, which I borrow from Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*.[65] Ricoeur uses the concept in the context of discussion about the possibility-impossibility, advisability-inadvisability of a total destruction, or at least deconstruction, of narrative in postmodernity. In accepting that massive differences exist between modernist and classical literary discourses, Ricoeur argues that the modernist novel continues to be literature only to the extent to which it recalls—even if it represses—systemic features of classical genres or styles of narrative rendition, above all plot structure. Whatever the level of change of modernist novels from classical forms of plot or, put somewhat differently, whatever the level of deformation wrought by modernist novels with respect to classical narrative genres, there are both de facto and de jure limits to change and/or deformation. For instance, Ricoeur does not believe that modernism constitutes a successful denarratization or dechronologizing of literature. Plot is rendered less visible, but still remains ineluctable. And Ricoeur thinks this failure is built into the nature of the literary enterprise as such. If modernism were to succeed in what sometimes is its express aim, it would do so at the price of ceasing to be literature. But Ricoeur's account is not nostalgic. Deviation from the classical narrative genres or paradigms is a good thing; it is the way in which over time narrative form avoids sclerosis. Or positively put, deviation or deformation is the way in which novelty is produced.

The first and primitive sense in which Ricoeur uses rule-governed deformation of classical narrative genres is that change, deviation, or deformation has limits. This means that deformation itself is covered by the rules of formation, and in the final analysis remain subordinate to them. For the most part Ricoeur is satisfied with this first sense, leaving it to the literary historian to articulate the ways and means by which plot (and character) are challenged without being erased. Despite the division of labor, the elucidation of the rules of deformation is clearly important to seeing the continuity in discontinuity and the discontinuity in continuity of narrative form and provides a second and more maximal sense of rule-governed deformation of classical narrative genres.

Rule-governed deformation of classical Valentinian narrative genres is my variant of Ricoeur's important concept forged in *Time and Narrative*. As with Ricoeur's concept, it is intended to point to

continuity in discontinuity, and discontinuity in continuity, the former when it insists on the limits to the deformation of classical Valentinian genres, the latter when it emphasizes the deviation from, or actual deformation of, classical Valentinian genres by narrative discourses in the Baurian field, from Boehme to Altizer. As with Ricoeur's concept, rule-governed deformation of classical Valentinian genres has more minimal and more maximal senses. The more minimal sense is that there are limits to the deformation wrought by the modern narrative ontotheologies on the classical Valentinian paradigms, where these limits are essentially set by the rules of narrative formation, what I call rules of narrative grammar. This has the very important consequence that whereas pragmatically rule-governed deformation of classical Valentinian narrative genres can function as a coordinate concept to Valentinian narrative grammar, theoretically it is a subordinate concept. It is theoretically a subordinate concept given that deformation occurs only to the extent to which a narrative discourse, as a language or grammar, permits, even encourages, different narrative formations over time. The onus, of course, is to demonstrate that Valentinianism has or is such a narrative grammar. This is one of the major burdens of part II.

This brings me to the second and more maximal sense of rule-governed deformation of classical Valentinian narrative genres. I observed earlier that Ricoeur also implies the analogate of this second sense in *Time and Narrative*, while for the most part parsing rule-governed deformation in the more minimal way. Unlike Ricoeur, I focus in general as much on the maximal as the minimal sense of rule-governed deformation in this text and in the genealogical articulation that follows. Specifically, I elucidate the systemic kinds of deformation that are enacted on the classical Valentinian genres by modern narrative genres, which still, however, obey the same general rules of narrative formation. Although I begin at the end of chapter 2, chapter 4 carries the bulk of the interpretive burden. In chapter 4 I justify Baur's insight that the theogonic and pathetic character, even world-affirming character, of the third line of post-Reformation Christian discourses does not disqualify them from Gnostic or Valentinian attribution. I do so by showing that theogonic, pathetic, and world-affirming figuration are some of the systemic deformations wrought by modern narrative ontotheologies—which themselves obey the basic rules of Valentinian narrative formation—on the classical Valentinian genres or paradigms.

Summary

In this chapter I made a fundamental decision regarding the most promising line of inquiry into the possibility of constructing a Gnostic genealogy of discourses in modernity. I judged that the early Baur of *Die christliche Gnosis*, and to an extent also Staudenmaier and Balthasar, offer a more sound methodological entree in their focus on narrative than nineteenth- and twentieth-century proponents of Gnostic return, who focus on experience. Although numerous twentieth-century thinkers focus on either narrative structure or experience, parsing the fundamental opposition of paradigm by the opposition of two nineteenth-century German theologians, Baur and Möhler, who were colleagues at Tübingen, I affirmed the value of the Baurian paradigm over the Möhlerian. I acknowledged, however, that both paradigms find a precedent in heresiological discourse, above all in the discourse of Irenaeus. Irenaeus provides us with both classical examples of narrative structure and motif—the myths of the *gnostikoi*—and attempts to analyze the motives of the purveyors of myths and the kinds of selves that create them.[66] To the extent to which I wish to claim that, in some analogical sense, the general character of the Baurian model of Gnostic return I am in the process of constructing is Irenaean, I am forced to decide between two equally essential drifts in Irenaeus. That the preference for a narrative focus in genealogical construction does not automatically guarantee a more irenic disposition is shown by the example of Staudenmaier, who could not be more vituperative with regard to Hegel,[67] whom he regards as the supreme instance of Valentinianism in the modern period. Nevertheless, narrative focus, arguably, promotes a measure of irenicism, if only because a narrative criterion is in principle more analytic. Diagnosing states of mind, which is a feature of the Möhlerian paradigm, tends to encourage (e.g., Voegelin), although it does not demand, pathological description as the examples of Bloom and Jung clearly show.

Despite the merit of its narrative focus, Baur's Gnostic genealogy of the third line of post-Reformation discourses has to be extended culturally, generically, and temporally. Specifically, a Baurian Gnostic genealogy has to cover more than German Protestant thought, although this continues to be a major part of the story. A Baurian genealogy must include nontheological and nonphilosophical discourses that refigure Christian narrative in a unique way. Thus, it must include not simply Romantic theoretical reflection or its echo in a religious thinker such as Schleiermacher, but also must

include Romantic poetry itself in its predilection to totalizing narrative as an object of analysis. Of course, we are also obliged to ask whether Hegel and Schelling, as good Gnostics, have any nineteenth- or twentieth-century successors. That I answer in the affirmative provides the raison d'être of this entire genealogical project.

But Baur is not simply extended, he is also corrected. Again, there is more than one form of correction. In Baur Gnosis, as applied to discourses in the Hellenistic world, suffers from a lack of referential determinacy. Because Gnosis includes most of the speculative narrative discourses of the Hellenistic period, defining it more narrowly is necessary. This is done by stipulating that it is defined by Valentinianism whose textual bases are Nag Hammadi with supporting material from the heresiologists, especially Irenaeus. Again, and relatedly, the tendency in Baur toward ambiguous genealogies and multiple genealogical construction must be corrected. To imply that one can speak indifferently of the third line of modern Protestant discourses as Valentinian or Neoplatonic undermines genealogy itself, which demands determinacy. With this in mind, I sketched in a very preliminary way the kinds of genealogical rivals that a *Gnostic* or *Valentinian* ascription of the third line of Protestant thought must face and defeat by showing greater explanatory power. I leave until the next chapter some plausible account as to how a Baurian view of Gnostic return shows such greater explanatory power. The third and most basic line of correction takes the form of forsaking Baur's tendency to think of Gnostic return as the repetition of an invariable narrative structure. The most important concept introduced for this revisionary purpose is that of Gnostic narrative grammar or Valentinian narrative grammar. A Gnostic or Valentinian narrative grammar is sufficient to guarantee the kind of continuity between modern Christian narratives to the side of both orthodoxy and the Enlightenment and classical Valentinian narratives. Rule-governed deformation of classical Valentinian narrative genres is an important supplemental concept introduced to underscore the systemic differences between the modern forms of Valentinian narrative grammar and the classical paradigms of this narrative grammar. While pragmatically coordinate with Valentinian narrative grammar, rule-governed deformation of classical Valentinian narrative genres is theoretically subordinate to it.