

Proclus, Erotokos and "the Great Confusion"

Neoplatonist Defense of Polytheistic Piety in Early Byzantine Athens

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ABSTRACT

Lankila, Tuomo, *Proclus, Erototokos and "the Great Confusion". Neoplatonic Defense of Polytheistic Piety in Early Byzantine Athens*. Doctoral dissertation.

The subject of this study is the defense of polytheistic piety in the Neoplatonist school of Athens. The dissertation consists of five articles together with a concluding and complementary essay.

Proclus' Art of Referring with a Scale of Epithets" shows that philosophizing in the form of sophisticated commentary also produced an art of referring to predecessors using a set of honorific epithets in order to convey an impression of a well-defined order of ranks and degree of orthodoxy from the perspective of the Athenian School.

In the "Hypernoetic Cognition and the Scope of Theurgy in Proclus" it is pointed out that Proclean hypernoetic faculties of the soul are also to be found in his highly original discussion of matter and the receptacle of Plato's *Timaeus* and that Proclus explicitly rejects the identification of hypernoetic cognition as a form of theurgy.

"Henadology in the two Theologies of Proclus" shows that the theory of the classes of the gods in the *Platonic Theology* is not only an extended version of the henadology in the *Elements of Theology* but brings forth some theoretical modifications of which some are so substantial that one must describe them as major rectifications of the theory.

In the "Aphrodite in Proclus' Theology" is shown that for Proclus Aphrodite is the most one-like and purest life at the hypercosmic level, the Uranic summit in Aphrodite being "the flower of life". The theory of the divine series enables Proclus to defend Aphrodite in all the forms of her traditional cult.

"The Corpus Areopagiticum as a Crypto-Pagan Project" considers the post-Proclean philosophers' strategies for adapting to the changed historical circumstances which required developing new and radical ways to protect the School's spiritual inheritance.

The complementary essay in its chapters concerning henadology argues that Proclus achieved success, due to his conception of the divine series, in forging a reasonable accord between philosophical monism and polytheistic theology. The primal structural principle in Proclus is the concept of the serialized set. Use of it permeates all his metaphysics.

Later Neoplatonism is reluctant to separate itself from traditional piety but tries to establish a balance where religious life is philosophically based and conceptually convincing and at the same time compatible with the modes of traditional piety and mythology. Henology and henadology are crucial elements of the Neoplatonic tradition, defining it apart from ontotheology and monotheism.

Analyzing the rise of Christianity and the resistance carried out by more or less isolated pagan pockets in 5th and 6th century Byzantine society, this

thesis underlines a tremendous novelty in the formation of the universal obligatory state religion. The significance of the birth of the confessional state cannot be overestimated.

One dimension connected to this process was the shift of the value of sexuality from the sacred sphere to that of sin, even to the position of the main sin, the most feared enemy of organized religion hereafter. Among late antique asceticism there was an erotophobic attitude pleading for the total destruction and abolition of this enemy, which was personified in Aphrodite. During the epoch when the idealization of virginity, sexual renunciation, and mortifying the lusts of the flesh with extreme forms of stringent asceticism were rapidly gaining a hegemonic position in ideology, Proclus' defense of Aphrodite situates him among the camp of those with a sober acceptance of the irresistible drifts of embodied life. But because later Neoplatonism shared so many of the positions with its adversaries, especially in the idealization of virginity subsumed to the male archetype of divinity, it was not able to recuperate in full the inheritance of the Greek erotic tradition or consistently vindicate the primordial concept of goddess.

Keywords: Proclus, Aphrodite, neoplatonism, henadology, late ancient philosophy, metaphysical theology, early Byzantine period

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TIIVISTELMÄ
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation collects five related articles, written between 2007 and 2011 and published between April 2009 and January 2012, together with an essay which provides an introduction to the themes of the articles, summarizes the content, draws together several threads that followed, concludes with the attained results, and outlines perspectives for future research.

The articles comprising this dissertation are as follows:

(I) Proclus' Art of Referring with a Scale of Epithets, *Arctos* 42 (2008) 123-133.

(II) Hypernoetic Cognition and the Scope of Theurgy in Proclus. *Arctos* 44 (2010) 147-170.

(III) Henadology in the two Theologies of Proclus. *Dionysius* 28 (2010) 63-76.

(IV) Aphrodite in Proclus' Theology. *The Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* Vol. 3 (2009) 21-43.

(V) The Corpus Areopagiticum as a Crypto-Pagan Project, *The Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* Vol. 5 (2011) 14-40.

1.1 Motives, aims, and methods of this study

The subject of this study is the defense of polytheistic piety in the Neoplatonist school of Athens under circumstances of the Christianized Later Roman Empire. My approach is to bring about a different dimension of the question from the viewpoint of Neoplatonic Aphroditology. Therefore, this study aims to be an exercise in a theologically oriented history of ideas, an attempt to reconstruct and make comprehensible Proclus' doctrine of Aphrodite understood as a theory of a "ground of love" that is related to the henad for the hypostasis of life, and to outline the doctrine's *Entstehungsgeschichte*, that is, set its emergence in proper historical context.

It is my opinion that Aphroditology offers a special vantage point for assessing the whole Proclean effort in his seemingly desperate struggle for the survival of the Hellenic religion. Firstly, the case of Aphrodite could be used as a measure to test the extent of Proclus' success in his attempt to metaphysically hypostasize every main deity of the traditional pantheon and to define a precise place for each god, known in cult and/or in mythology, inside his system of divine classes. Second Proclus' goal was to reconcile the Platonic doctrine of the gods as a foundation of pure moral order with the stories of mythical theology, and among the most embarrassing myths the majority was related to Aphrodite. Third, Proclus rose to fight for a religion in which eroticism and sex had a strong sacral role. This last point was one of the main reasons traditional piety aroused moralistic resentment in the changed world, and its defense was not easy for Platonists who themselves shared many of the attackers' attitudes.

Aphrodite stands at the focal point in all these issues. In addition, it seems that at the time when state oppression against the old religion was becoming more threatening, and monkish violence was in upsurge, exactly the cults of the goddesses and especially Aphrodite revealed the greatest capability to endure the storm.

It has been my intention to compose this work as a Proclean study not only in evidence and content, but also relating to how it is conducted. This work is essentially an exercise of exegesis and commentary. It is not intended to be a mere doxography, nor should it be read as a piece of philosophically motivated history of philosophy. However, both dimensions are present: a doxographic dimension exists, because much weight is placed on the technical details derived from a close reading of passages, and when it comes to Proclean Aphroditology the aim is high comprehensiveness of exposition. The philosophy historical dimension is present, however, because issues dealt with have more than antiquarian significance. A deeper and better comprehension of later Neoplatonic thought would serve to elucidate the roots of the traditions within which we still live. Neoplatonic thought will not be sufficiently grasped if its particular fusion of rational philosophy and enthusiastic spirituality is not adequately understood.

I would hesitate to call research presented here as fitting within the history of philosophy also because I am actually interested in Proclus as Proclus, whereas his ideas as having possible relevance to the problems of philosophy of our time is for me secondary and out of my academic niche. I certainly admit that a case for such a relevance could probably be made with good grounds, even if the criteria according to which relevancy of thought is evaluated were located completely outside the horizons of Neoplatonism. Such research would be more than justified, and happily it is nowadays practiced, but this is not the task of this specific study.

A brilliant example of a modern philosophical exposition on Proclus' thought is Carlos Steel's contribution in "The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity" where he says that he

shall refrain, however, from commenting on Proclus' various attempts to interpret the pagan divinities, to understand oracles and myths and to justify religious practices. I realize that this rationalistic approach goes against Proclus' own wish to keep together religious piety and learning, but I will follow as my main inspiration the *Elements*, this superb monument of theological metaphysics, wherein Proclus himself is surprisingly sober and rational, and never introduces proper names of gods.¹

The approach taken in this study is just that of following Proclus' own inclination and is θεολογικώτερον in comparison to ways usually adopted by current studies in Proclus.

Then again, we already have a well-established second tradition of Proclean research where ways of introducing proper names of gods has a prominent place. These studies are seldom focused primarily on theology: in them, Proclus is considered mainly as a literary scholar, an interpreter of myths, and a theorist of symbolism.² Dealing with these themes could not be avoided, but this present study shifts emphasis more towards the dogmatic content of Proclus' theological ideas.

In most recent times, some important contributions have appeared with the intention of recuperating Proclus' henadology as a well-grounded philosophical base for the systematic theory of polytheism. Among stimulating scholarly works are those of Edward P. Butler³, and some non-academic, but soundly informed, contributions come from the Neohellenist movement in Greece.⁴ However, these are still dealing more with Proclus' fundamental theological principles than his views on particular divinities.

The only academic work to my knowledge that closely parallels the present undertaking on Proclean Aphrodite is Spyridon Rangos' valuable article on Artemis in Proclus.⁵ Rangos' work on Proclean Artemis differs from the present study in that it is mainly intended to arouse the attention of the Classical scholars towards Proclus' relevance in understanding archaic and classical Greek religion, whereas I am instead trying to clarify Proclus' concept of Aphrodite as more or less defined dogma in a carefully thought-out theological system.⁶

1 Carlos Steel (2010), 637.

2 See especially Coulter (1976), Sheppard (1980), Lambertson (1986), Kuisma (1996).

3 See especially Butler (2005).

4 Εμπεδόττιμος (2009). Neohellenism is not their self-denomination.

5 Rangos (2000). It has to be admitted that Van den Berg in his study of Proclus' hymns (2001) had carried out very serious work in order to locate Aphrodite in Proclus' theological system, especially 38-43.

6 The growing interest in Neoplatonism has resulted in the recent decades in "an explosive expansion of the number of translations, handbooks, source books, monographs and papers", as Marije Martijn remarks at the beginning of her first-class study of Proclus on Nature (2010), 3. While Proclus is moving from a place of a depreciated figure to one claiming space in the philosophical canon, it is interesting to note that we do not yet have an adequate general introduction to his thought. Lawrence J. Rosán (1949) still has merits as a philosophical, may I say, idiosyncratic, interpretation. Paul Bastid's work (1969), gives us a sympathetic display of an established scholar of the other field returning to his youth's dreamed subject of study. While the work is essentially a compilation, it

Thus this study intends to contribute to filling an obvious gap in the research, taking Proclus' Neoplatonist theology seriously as theology. Perhaps the approach adopted in this study thus could be described as more comparable with the discipline of patristic studies in mainstream Western academia than to the history of philosophy or the study of late antique religious ideas in the ordinary sense. Proclus' ideas have been, of course, many times studied as relevant to theology, but the leading purpose has been almost always to consider him as a precursor to theological ideas of religious movements alien to him, especially to Christianity and its apophatic traditions. The present study does not regard him solely as forefather of later currents of theology or spirituality but, rather, aspires to remain within the proper domain of his system.

From a methodological point of view, a serious misgiving may arise. Is it really legitimate to seek such a thing as Proclus' theology of Aphrodite? Do we have justification to speak about systematic Neoplatonic Aphroditology? Does it mean that one is subscribing more systematically to a thinker under consideration than he in effect had himself? This risk is indeed worthy of notice. However, it could be thought that no one better than Proclus could be treated as a subject for such a systematization, taking into account the characteristic way he himself builds doctrines, always in eager pursuit of an assumed system in various authors who are the objects of his interest, let them be Plato, Homer, Orpheus, or even the gods of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Why not, then, probe how far Proclus' hermeneutical canons of systematic analysis are applicable for seeking the meaning of Aphrodite in Proclus?

One of the key principles for Proclus is that authors in whose writings embody authentic truth incarnate one and the same truth. Thus, there must be unity of thought in the different expositions of any truthful thinker and also between all representatives of truth. Proclus applies the common method of ancient Homeric interpretation to Plato's works, explaining the authors' obscurities by other passages of him, even in the cases where, from our modern viewpoint, passages seem to be taken from widely different contexts.

nevertheless achieves its aim of completeness. These works are really heroic attempts seeing that they were written at the time when Proclus' main works were not totally available in up-to-date editions. The same circumstance applies also to Werner Beierwaltes' *Proklos* (1965), in earlier times used to be picked up, if someone had the idea to dedicate oneself to Proclean studies. As an introduction, Beierwaltes' work is, however, problematic because it deals with only some, albeit crucial, dimensions of Proclus' metaphysics, totally omitting henadology, and in addition it belongs to that large number of interpretations which presupposes that a reader already has a fairly good knowledge of Proclus himself. We should also mention Giovanni Reale's *Introduzione* (1989) which is, however, too sketchy and list-like. *Proclo tra filosofia e teurgia* by Maria di Pasquali Barbanti (1983, 2nd ed. 1993), is in effect a quite good introduction in terms of the Italian scholarship of the 1980s, but it is undeservedly forgotten in the international scene. At the time of this writing, the most satisfying monograph-size introduction to Proclus is Lucas Siorvanes' *Proclus* (1996). Fortunately, we have reason to believe that the need for a comprehensive introduction to Proclus' thought will soon be met by the forthcoming study of Radek Chlup (2012), I have been able to use a chapter of this book in the section dealing with Proclus' symbolism.

In practice, Proclus' interpretation of Plato reveal that not all works are to be understood on the same level, because Neoplatonists assumed that each Platonic dialogue had to do with specific levels of reality. Like in hierarchically ordered reality, dialogues too have a natural order of rank. That is why *Parmenides*, as a dialogue dealing with the deepest truth and most lofty levels, provides an interpretive framework according to which the other dialogues should be explained. Among the different representatives of the authentic truth, one is the *primus inter pares*. Although the *Chaldaean Oracles* are for Proclus a direct revelation granted by the gods, and Homer and Orpheus are inspired theologians, he does not in effect modify Plato's works to fit within their frameworks, but he does adjust divine poets and oracles' words (given by gods themselves) to support what Plato says (of course, more accurately put, what Proclus and the Neoplatonist tradition think he says).⁷

This way, Proclus himself gives us advice on how we should interpret him. We could assume that he tried to achieve a high level of unity on his ideas expressed in different works. We could also assume that we have a key for finding an interpretative hierarchy in the Proclean corpus. The *Platonic Theology* has the role comparable to that which Proclus ascribes to *Parmenides* in his interpretation of Plato. This assignment turns into a methodological rule: the *Platonic Theology* should always have the last word. What Proclus states in other places should ultimately be explained from the viewpoint provided by his *magnum opus*. If we cannot find answers from the *Platonic Theology*, we should complete the image offered by it by drawing on other works where possible.

Thus, I will assume that Proclus has a definite placement for Aphrodite in his theological system of the classes of the gods, the forging of which he explicitly states to be the most important task of philosophy⁸. This conception perhaps does not attain the clarity of a specific theology of a particular divinity, but in any case we can assume that Proclus himself thinks that he has provided principles and hints to build up a Neoplatonic Aphroditology, at least at the level of clarity that his treatment of Athena and Zeus undoubtedly has achieved. Given this hypothesis, we have to test whether or not Proclus' testimony on Aphrodite has survived to the extent that this goal is attainable. In the case that the evidence turns out to be insufficient, we are justified to complete it with the aid of the authors whom Proclus sees as belonging to the holy chorus of the golden chain of Platonic exegetes (Plotinus, Iamblichus,

7 On the problem of pursuit of "orthodoxy" in later Neoplatonism and its wider context, Athanassiadi (2006) and (2010).

8 See Proclus' programmatic statements as his "research plan" for the *Platonic Theology*, *Theol. Plat.* 9.8-19 and *In Tim* 3.153.13-16: "In general it is the most important task of science to establish in detail grades and processions of beings" (καὶ ὅλως τοῦτο καὶ μέγιστόν ἐστι τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἔργον, τὸ τὰς μεσότητας καὶ τὰς προόδους τῶν ὄντων λεπτοῦργεῖν), which concerns specifically the theory of the gods unfolding in the world.

Syrianus)⁹ and also from the authors whom in time, place, and ideas were close to him (Hermias, Marinus and Damascius).

The challenge is to construct an interpretation that is coherent, plausible, and based on the texts. I believe that the perils of tweaking the evidence overmuch can be avoided. Even if we do not find from Proclus as much of a system as we would like, the adopted approach can yield some fruitful results. In the worst case we are left with a catalog of Proclean passages on Aphrodite with a rambling commentary. Demonstrating the Proclean *loci* can still be a useful service for the benefit of better-prepared scholars. But in the ideal case, we may discover information of interest not only to antiquarians but also relevant to discussions concerning the interpretation of ancient Greek religions; Proclus' role in the Neoplatonist tradition; other pertinent scholarly topics, such as the fervently discussed theme of supposed (pagan) Neoplatonic monotheism; and perhaps even point to areas beyond the purely academic perspective, such as themes which are relevant to discussions on notions of feminine divinity, the sacredness of nature, life, and sexuality.

In the article on Aphrodite, the order of exegesis is suggested by Proclus' own theory of the divine hierarchy, and it is followed here in a bottom-up fashion: beginning from below with Aphrodite as a terrestrial demon, proceeding to the goddess' higher manifestations, and at last to the interpretation of her as a hypercosmic deity. Even though "higher" or "deep" henadology is outside the scope of the Aphrodisiac subject area proper, it is necessary that it be dealt with in order to understand Proclus' fundamental theological ideas, so relevant problems concerning these themes are taken into account in this complementary essay and in the article on Proclus' protological principles. After the hypercosmic topics, we will return to deep theology in this contribution's chapter discussing the problem of Aphrodite's possible relation to Proclus' notion of primal intelligible Beauty. Aphrodite's role in Proclus' spirituality and personal piety is considered in a special chapter because the sources here are Proclus' hymns and Marinus' biography of Proclus, which could only artificially be forced to fit into a schema articulated by the theory of the divine classes. (The latter is otherwise apt to be used thanks to the systematic nature and intention of most of Proclus' writings.)

Some brief remarks relating matters of a more technical nature are in order here. In recent years, we have been able to enjoy seeing Proclus extensively translated into English, although Proclean studies in most relevant parts are still francophone. Without overlooking the heroic industriousness of Thomas Taylor, the amount of English translations which are philologically up-to-date and satisfying to modern taste has been previously small in quantity (*The Elements of Theology*, by Dodds; *The Commentary on Euclid*, by Morrow; *The Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, by Morrow and Dillon). This situation

9 Theol. Plat. 1 6.16-7.9 Proclus' famous definition of "holy chorus" formed by valid philosophers.

has now changed radically for the better, with many excellent contributions of which the new translation of the greater part of the *Timaeus Commentary* (Tarrant, et al) and *The Commentary on Cratylus* (Duvick) are most significant from the standpoint of this study. However, I have used these rarely without modification. Since the large part of my translations were made for academic papers before the publication of these works or their becoming available to me, I have stuck to my original efforts and, after consulting these works, only made corrections where I have felt this to be necessary. Thus, my translations are more dependent on Festugière's French in the case of the *Timaeus Commentary*, and Álvarez *et al.*'s Spanish and Romano's Italian in the case of *Cratylus' Commentary*, than on these current standard English works. Being non-native in (of course) the source as well as in the target language I have considered myself freed from any obligation to produce polished prose and inclined strongly towards literalness, respecting only general demands of intelligibility (which in Proclus' case can itself be a challenge).

In terminological matters, I try to follow the lead of Harold Tarrant's group and its pursuit of an adequate vocabulary for Neoplatonist concepts in English. For the sake of variation I will use well-established Greek and Latin derived counterparts for the key terms (like "noetic" and "intelligible"). Some word choices have more significant import. I never use "mind" for nous but always intellect; I think that "being" and "substance" for hyparksis are erroneous, so here I always use "existence" or "mode of existence"; ousia is never "substance", but it is "essence" and so on. Then again, dynamis and energeia are here rendered if possible into the generic "power", "force" and "activity" than the specific "potency" and "actuality". They surely are for Proclus technical terms, but his contexts do not necessarily demand to be expressed in the typically Aristotelian way, even when his use of these words often also carries with them the dimension which Aristotle wanted to explicate. For the amethekton "imparticipable" is better form, but I am not zealous enough to mark traditional "unparticipated" for total extermination. For the "henad", units or even unity will do, but I prefer to leave it without translation. Nothing is gained by trying to translate "monad": rendering it to "unit" would be especially erroneous. It is better to leave it alone and to understand it as a point-of-incipient-unfolding and as a root member of set (or series). For hyperousios, "supraessential" is better than "superessential", because the first emphasizes quality above being and the second could be easily understood as possessing being in an utmost measure.¹⁰

¹⁰ I owe this remark to Edward Butler.

1.2 The articles

(I) The first article of the series, "Proclus' Art of Referring with a Scale of Epithets", examines Proclus' manner of referring to his predecessors by names and by using a system of peculiar honorific epithets. Later Neoplatonist usage of marking appreciation or lack of it by calling, for example, Aristotle "demonic" and Iamblichus "divine" have been noticed many times, but this stylistic device in Neoplatonic commentary has never been, to the best of my knowledge, systematically studied before. I argue that Proclus used established epithets connoting value and importance and that these epithets formed a stable scale beginning from "philosopher" and ascending to "divine".

For Proclus the scale of epithets served as a means to convey varying degrees of Neoplatonic "orthodoxy" -- from the viewpoint of the Athenian school. For Proclus, this maneuver underlines his predilection for more hieratic and overtly theological streams of Neoplatonism, which for him originated from the Iamblichean turn and which came to be used as his model for scientific and Platonic theology in the teachings of Syrianus. These Iamblichean and Syrianic insights form the basis on which Proclus builds his attempt to defend traditional religion.

(II) The second article, "Hypernoetic Cognition and the Scope of Theurgy in Proclus", engages with the current discussion on Neoplatonic theurgy. It argues for a view that for Proclus theurgy is an important aspect of ascent to the divine but one which parallels philosophy and brings the soul to the semi-nameable and semi-ineffable level of the noetic realm. This level corresponds in Proclus' interpretation of myths to the theogonic sphere of Orphic Phanes. On the basis of a close reading of Proclus, I question the widely accepted view among scholars that union with the henads and the One should be seen as a privileged form of "higher" theurgy. For Proclus, the union with the One and henads is realized by activating the soul's foremost unitive powers, the "one (=flower) in the soul", and "the one (or flower in the soul's) intellect". Proclus tends to postulate these powers as specific cognitive faculties, in difference to Plotinus, who sees these kinds of powers as aspects of the intellect. In addition, the article argues that Proclus' highly original interpretation of Plato's ponderings on receptacle and matter offers "bastard opinion" and "bastard logos" as alternative Proclean names for these faculties which are elsewhere called by him the more poetic expressions of "the flower of the whole soul" and "the flower of the intellect".

(III) With the "Henadology in the two Theologies of Proclus", we are moving from the issues of commentary practice, metaphysical psychology, and the defining of space for theurgy to fundamental theories of Proclean deep theology. Reflecting on the relationship between Proclus' best-known treatise, *The Elements of Theology*, and the culmination of his lifework, *The Platonic Theology*, I present arguments for a view that there is in the former

work a certain ambiguity to be observed in the issue of how protological principles (Limit and Unlimited) relate to the henads, and this problem finds solutions in the latter, where Proclus grants to the principles the status of the henads. This resolution is evident in the third and fourth books of the *Platonic Theology* and remains Proclus' last word. In this thought he was also followed, with modifications, by Damascius.

In my opinion, supported with the evidence provided in the article, discrepancy between the two Theologies could be explained by assuming that the works represent two different developmental stages in Proclus' route from the starting-points adopted from Syrianus towards his mature henadology. Another supportive clue for this idea is the presence or absence of the noetic-noeric gods in different Proclean works. One difference between the Theologies' versions of henadology seems to be undeniable: The *Elements of Theology* has no definite answer to problems of the henads and the protological principle: The *Platonic Theology* hardly leaves any doubt that the Limit, at least, is a henad according to Proclus.

Proclus' henadology has an utmost importance in his endeavor to provide a rational basis for polytheistic piety, as it is moving towards establishing an adequate theory of the relation between the ground, or root, divinity and its manifestations as a series of henads, and at the same time it outlines an inalienable, radical critique of all forms of ontotheology and anthropomorphic creationism.

(IV) "Aphrodite in Proclus' Theology" seizes the opportunity to probe the extent to which Proclus was successful in his attempt to metaphysically hypostasize every main deity of the traditional pantheon and define a precise placement within his system of divine classes for each god, known in cult and/or by mythology. A focus on Aphroditology allows for the view that Proclus is not only dealing with an attempt to vindicate traditional religion with the aid of correct, scientific, and Platonic theology as he sees it, but also that he comes to the battleground armed with the sharpest weapons of Neoplatonic exegesis in order to repeal accusations launched by a moralistic critique of mythology. It is interesting to note that Proclus' attempt does not result in an abstract demythologizing of the stories dear to traditional religion, but his positions, for example, that the gods are manifestations of a force inherent in the world, comes very close to confirming many findings of recent research on ancient religious ideas. In this sense, Proclus' thought has good grounds for being represented as a reflected self-understanding of Greek polytheism, or at least as an important source for its genuine outlook.

(V) At last, with "The Corpus Areopagiticum as a Crypto-Pagan Project", we shift from the gray realm of theory to the colorful world of late ancient religious confrontation. Proclus had seen that in the current circumstances of his time philosophy had to stand, for an unknown period, as a replacement for the whole ritual of worship. How did his spiritual heirs react to the even grimmer situation, when the possibility of teaching philosophy openly in the spirit of the Neoplatonic School of Athens was suppressed? Could this state of

affairs be the real historical context for the emergence of the Dionysian Corpus? My approach to the Dionysian question is not so much to try to identify the author of this enigmatic corpus, but to investigate how to proceed in the most convincing mode, if one wants to defend the crypto-pagan hypothesis. It is argued in the article that after Proclus the historical conditions of the Athenian school make it plausible that the motive behind the Dionysian Corpus was a stratagem to secure better possibilities for the survival of Proclean corpus.

2 THE CONTEXT OF THE CASE

There are three intertwined factors which conditioned the formation of Proclus' theological views. Firstly, traditional religion with its rituals and cults were still in living memory and even partially present at his time.¹¹ The mythologies and theogonies associated with ancient religions formed a literary inheritance for all educated people irrespective of their religious stand. Secondly, there was the influence of the Greek philosophical tradition, particularly, of course, Neoplatonist interpretations of Plato, which were two centuries in the making. The third factor was the ideological domination of the Christian church in the Early Byzantine society. Schematically put, the later Neoplatonists were explaining and defending the first component, which was threatened by the third, and resorted in its defense to the interpretative outlook provided by the second.¹²

Historical periodization is always somewhat arbitrary, but admitting this I think that the following schema could be helpful for outlining the main stages of the process which lead to the circumstances in which Proclus and his school lived: In the period of 200 to 250, Christianity had unquestionably ceased to be viewed as a despised minority group and had established itself in significant religious fractions, especially in urban environments. The years

11 A good general view of the question is offered by Glenn Bowersock, who calls for the definite abandonment of the older Untergang-paradigm in relation to late antique paganism. "The study of late Hellenism reveals a pagan culture that is far from moribund. It is rather a living culture responding as sensitively to its Christian environments as Christianity itself responded to the pagan world in which it grew to maturity.", G.W Bowersock (1992), xi. This assessment does not concern only the earlier stages of the period but paganism as fragmented yet vigorous even during the later part of the 6th century.

12 Among the older studies upon which I depend, concerning the general picture of Christianization and the pagan reaction, should be mentioned at least Johannes Geffcken, *The* (1978, German original 1920) and Pierre de Labriolle (1935). From the vast amount of more modern studies, I would like to mention beside the relevant volumes of the Cambridge Ancient History and The Cambridge History of Christianity, Ramsay MacMullen, (1984), Trombley, F.R. (1994), Pierre Chuvin (1990), Gillian Clark (2004).

250 to 313 saw the main friction between state power and the rising Church, as periods of tension were cut by a series of violent persecutions, of which the last (in 304 to 311), launched by Diocletian, was the most serious and systematic.

Constantine's and his sons' age, 313 to 361, could be divided into two different sub-periods; the first one characterized tolerance with a steady growth in Church privileges and social power. After approximately 340, the second sub-period began when Christian militants moved into active aggression and the first restrictive laws against the old religions were decreed by the state power.¹³

Eighteen months of pagan revival ensued, in 361 to 363, under Julian, who himself was an Iamblichean Neoplatonist, and in whom the dynastic principle and unexpected military glory made an emperor were enough to secure decades of more or less peaceful religious co-existence (although the period saw intense internal disputes in the Church) after his untimely death.

The years of approximately 363 to 380 were thus a time of toleration, although Christianity enjoyed the privileged position of the officially defined "true religion".¹⁴ From these conditions emerged some official formulations of thought, which were not to be heard again in the Western history of ideas until the turmoil of Reformation and Counter Reformation, bringing about the difficult birth of the concept of freedom of conscience.¹⁵

With the Theodosian dynasty (380 to 450) a genuine confessional state was formed. Theodosius I (380 to 395) proclaimed Christian orthodoxy (in the shape defined by the council of Nicea 325) as being the sole permissible state religion. Theodosius carried out consistent repressions of traditional cults, not only by means of explicit legislation backed by the coercive power of state, but also supported by violence organized by clerical leaders themselves, using the rising monasticism as a pool for their *Sturmabteilungen*.¹⁶ The symbol and culmination of this period is the struggle concluding in the destruction of

13 Most important Cth, 16.10.2. prohibiting the sacrifices, year 341 and repeated 356. An excellent survey of religious legislation in 312-483 is provided by Roland Delmaire (2005), 13-107.

14 See Cth, 16.5.6 (*vera religio*).12, 16.6.4 (*vera fides*).

15 A famous testimony of this spirit of toleration is found in Valentinian's words in a law decreed by him with co-emperors Valens and Gratian on the 29th May, 371: "*Testes sunt leges a me in exordio imperii mei datae, quibus unicuique, quod animo inbibisset, colendi libera facultas tributa est.*", Cth.9.16.9. Valentinian permitted celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries with the law Cth. 9.16.7. A good survey of the period is provided in A. H. Armstrong (1984), 1-17.

16 Monks were not to be seen, of course: an obedient henchmen of the local bishop, Juvenal of Jerusalem having carried out his defection to the diaphysite camp in the Council of Chalcedon only nearly escaped from a murder attempt of his Palestinian monks and gained back his diocese only after three years, thanks to imperial military intervention. At the time of the Severus' patriarchate in Antioch, there were regular confrontations between armed monks following separate confessional leaders, and there was even an ambush, where Syrian monophysite monks slaughtered their Palestinian brethren. Like other great potentates of the time, the wealthiest bishops could have their own paramilitary retinues. As early as 416, emperor Theodosius II "sought to regulate the private army of the patriarch (of Alexandria -TL) after a period of intense intercommunal violence.", Christopher Haas (1997), 70.

the Serapeion in Alexandria. At the same time, the Byzantine state wiped out of existence some of the most honored institutions of antiquity, such as the Eleusinian mysteries and the Olympic games, and the oracles of Greece were never more heard.¹⁷

Proclus' own life time -- which I will deal with in more detail a little later in this chapter -- testified some spectacular cases of violence, the most famous being, of course, the fate of Hypatia. These were, however, relatively peaceful years, especially in comparison to what was to come in the next century, perhaps because Church leaders' energies were mostly absorbed by the ferocious internal strifes on the points of Christology. However, legislation on religious matters demonstrated a sharpening anti-pagan discrimination. Delmaire summarizes aptly the legal situation during the time of Theodosius II (408 to 450): "Nevertheless, Theodosius II continues to claim that merely being a pagan is not a crime in itself, and he forbids harassing them, if they live in peace and comply to laws (*Cth.* 9.10, 24, year 423); in addition, unlike heretics and Manicheans, pagans are not deprived of civil rights, with the notable exception of apostates, and thus paganism, deprived of temples, statues, rituals, and ceremonies, is reduced to a personal theism of which Marinus gives us an example of philosopher Proclus".¹⁸

Adherence to paganism was fragmented in different layers of society, lacking strong ties between. Christianity was infused into the center of social space with the old traditions thrown to the periphery. As the term pagan rightly implies, the greatest group among the supporters of the old religions were peasants living more or less isolated from the cultural centers and economically under various forms of dependence and unfree labor. Pagans were, however, in the 5th century still significantly present in the urban environment and especially in qualified professions. In addition, there were two prestigious pagan pockets at the higher echelons of society. First, the old aristocracy held on to tradition, especially some very high status senatorial circles in Italy and, for example, influential pagan fractions who ran affairs of such secondary centers as Aphrodisias in Caria. Second, there were cultural luminaries, like Proclus himself, who represented peaks in the institutions of higher education. The Imperial court was an almost entirely lost territory for pagans, but in stark contrast to the word of law, there were still until the 6th century some exceptions in the civil service and army.¹⁹ As Damascius' remarks testify, there were some intriguing cases, implying that some of the

17 In the legislation of Christian emperors before Theodosius I, paganism was defined as being "insanity" (15.5.5., 16.10.2), "stupid error" (15.5.5) and "superstition" (16, 10,2.3, 7,4, , 9.16.1, 2.8.22, (16, 10,12, 16-18, 20, 7,6). With Theodosius, it became first sacrilegium in 381 (16.7.3, 10.7.19) and then crime (16.10.7.21). An important point to note is that Theodosius extended a ban of paganism to include all modes of private ritual as well. See Delmaire (2005), especially 89. References are found in respective places in the Theodosian Code which came to force as the first total compilation of law in 438.

18 Delmaire (2005), 89. My translation.

19 The exclusion of pagans from armed forces occurred in the East in 415 and in the West in 425. *Cth.* 16.10.21,

leaders of the elite still could be seen promising the appearance of a new Julian.²⁰

Justinian's coming to power changed the situation radically. He was a determined, stubborn, and resourceful ruler, deeply convinced of the need to establish undisputed Christian orthodoxy as the foundation of the empire's well-being and base for reconquest for the lost territories. In addition, he was not dependent, as the highest arbitrator of the Church disputes, on the advice given by clerical leaders but considered himself, and in effect was, a first-rank theologian. Justinian launched several waves of anti-pagan persecution. He purged pagans from official positions when and wherever this was possible.

Justinian understood very well that the prestige of philosophy was a threat to Christianity, as the philosophical schools were capable of depriving the Church and state of some of the best young minds. Despite some clever attempts in modern scholarship to explain the end of the Athenian Neoplatonic School on ideologically neutral grounds, it hardly could be denied that Justinian carried out a deliberate and well-planned policy in order to extinguish pagan influence from higher education.²¹ Justinian also organized a massive campaign of forced evangelization in the countryside of Asia Minor. He demonstrated his ruler's art getting Monophysite leader John of Ephesus to assume, quite willingly, as John proud of his achievements himself clearly testifies, charge of operations against pagans and heretic Montanists at the same time as emperor was persecuting and imprisoning his coreligionists.

During the time of Justinian's immediate successors, the line of pagan teachers of philosophy ended in Alexandria with Olympiodorus the Younger (d.c. 570). Anti-pagan repression at this time has been recently likened to pogrom-style outbursts of urban violence. The last known high standing imperial office holder who was associated with paganism is probably Anatolius, who was exposed to circus beasts and impaled during the time of Tiberius II (574-582). Evagrius (d. 594) celebrates these events in chapter eighteen of his ecclesiastical history.

The Byzantine model of the confessional state was a historical novelty having far-reaching ramifications for the history of the Western world. One has to understand that there was no such thing as state-religion before. In the ancient world we have civic cults and different forms of personal religious behavior, varying from the pursuit of the very practical ends with the aid of "magic" to variously conceived paths towards individual "salvation". Even in some cases of dissidence were severely punished when interpreted as blasphemous or as introducing undesirable innovations in the framework of

20 Damascius (*Philosophical History*, chapter 115) enumerates four identifiable "attempts after Julian", that of Lucius, magister militum praesentalis, in Constantinople under Theodosius (Theodosius I or II?), "Great general of the East" (Isaurian general Zeno, died 451), Severianus "in our own times", actually during reign of Zeno (that is, before 491), Marsus (general?) and Illus (d. 484).

21 Especially laws 1.11.10.2 and 1.5.18.4 in the *Codex Iust.* After considerable discussion since 1969, common opinion in scholarship has re-established the fact that the end of the Neoplatonic school in Athens is to be linked with Justinian's legislation prohibiting pagans from teaching. For a summary of the question and on the current state of the issue in scholarship, see Sheppard (2000), 840.

civil cults -- the verdict against Socrates is a famous example -- this form of civilization had not taken up the responsibility of upholding by all possible means, including state compulsion, that each and all of individuals shall live in accordance with a set of tightly-bound religious dogmas. That such an unexpected idea could be formed required a long historical fermentation. One contributing factor in the process is probably the shift of focus in religion from the ritual orthopraxis to the demand of correct belief, a change whose emergence could be tracked at least to some Middle Platonists' text²² and which was observable also in the phenomena of more individual commitments to chosen religious practices, traditionally called "mystery cults" in the studies.²³

The historical process that brought about Christianity as the first universal religion (in contrast to the older types of religion, formed by civic cults co-existing with multifarious individual and group practices) originated in a sect born in a specific Jewish context, grew to distance itself from this ethnic background, and turned to Hellenistic oikoumene. In this last phase, Christianity appealed to individual consciences and disseminated a message forcefully resonating with tendencies already present and mentioned above, with its peculiar emphasis on a salvific event located at a specific point in historical time and proclaimed to be valid for all humankind. In the second phase, at the cost of dimensions of possible spiritual revival present in this teaching, the touchstone issue for being a participant in redemption was defined as being in possession, or more realistically for most believers, to be in communion with the leaders who were in possession of the correct belief concerning the nature and identity of the main protagonist of this peculiar soteriology. In the third phase -- which in effect as a historical process coincides with the second -- the emergence of the first universal religion turned out to also be a birth pang of Western totalitarianism.²⁴ A new historical conglomerate was born with the formation of the confessional state: the formation of the Church developed from a community of believers to an ideological state apparatus that held the exclusive right to represent the ultimate truth and the exclusive path to salvation.

Thinking minds of late antiquity did not dispose of these issues without reflection. Multiplicities of ideas were expressed in order to cope with the circumstances of the age. One of the views was held by a bishop of Hippo, a great representative of a kind of Platonism, who died during Vandal's siege of

22 For instance, Plutarch says (*De Iside et Osiride. Moralia* 355 b-d.) " ... if you perform and observe constantly the accepted rites, considering that nothing is more pleasing to the gods, whether sacrifice or ritual enactment, than the true belief about them, thus you will avoid superstition, which is no less an evil than atheism." (translation Catherine Tihanyi, cited in Luc Brisson (2004), 65.

23 'Mystery cult' likewise 'mysticism' are sometimes considered in recent studies as worn-out terminology. Gillian Clark, for instance, introduces the above-mentioned distinction using the terms 'civic' and 'elective' cults. The important point is that commitment to one 'elective' was not thought to exclude the possibility of participating in another or of respecting obligations of a civic cult. See Clark (2004), 5-6.

24 This process included the state's "suppression of private belief", as Trombley, for instance, brings forth in his considerations (1994), p. 66.

his town in 431, one year before Proclus' arrival to Athens. Within the legacy which Saint Augustine left to the medieval world was also an outline for a theory on justified persecution, in which Augustine constantly appeals to the concept of love. Ultimately love provides the duty to lead the recalcitrant by violence into the herd of the Church.²⁵ Augustine's contemporaries in the pagan Athenian school, of course, approached the issue from a different angle. Therefore without falling into anachronisms, one could perhaps say that conditioned by their life circumstances, Syrianus and Proclus wrestled with the same creature that was later challenged by, for example, the Waldesians, some representatives of the Reformation, and resoundingly by the French revolution. This correlation through the ages is one dimension which makes late antique Neoplatonism such a fascinating subject of study.

If Proclus' vast corpus was our sole testimony on the conditions in the ideological and religious situation of his world, we would not even be able to infer the existence of Christian religion. As we know the historical conditions of the time, we can nevertheless interpret some vague references as being Neoplatonist comments on the misfortunes of the time. The prevailing conditions are referred to with a set of code words. One of them summarizing the situation was "confusion". In the negative sense σύγχυσις (confusion) means illegitimate mingling, which Proclus qualifies with the adjective horrible. At least three instances point to erroneous views on gods and are felt to be acute in Proclus' own time. One of these cases refers almost overtly to the presence of Christianity. Proclus writes in the Republic Commentary about the "horrible disorder in religion under the present conditions (τὴν παροῦσαν ... δεινὴν καὶ ἄτακτον σύγχυσιν τῶν ἱερῶν θεσμῶν).²⁶ Terrible confusion is mentioned also in the *Commentary on Timaeus*, where the specific issue is the question of eternity and time²⁷, and in *Parmenides' Commentary*, where the negation of the gods' providential knowledge is explained as being the most dreadful concern.²⁸ All of these passages are according to Saffrey semi-overt critiques of the condition of Proclus' own time and point to Christianity.

Proclus never engaged in open discussion on Christian positions. A book titled "Against Christians", sometimes ascribed to him, with great probability never existed.²⁹ There are two reasons for Proclus' silence on Christianity.

25 Much has been written on this topic, see, for instance, Christenson (1968).

26 *In Remp.* 1. 74, 8-9.

27 *In Tim.* 3.44, 6.

28 *In Parm.* 954,1-2.

29 The notion of the specific anti-Christian work of Proclus was probably born from a mixture of Porphyry's and Proclus' figures in the later Byzantine tradition and influenced by John Philoponus' writings in reaction to Proclus' metaphysical and cosmological positions, which were also, of course, incompatible with the Christian creationist view. Thus, Suda's *Lexicon* ascribes to Proclus a work titled Ἐπιχειρήματα κατὰ Χριστιανῶν, and tells us "this is Proclus, who as a second after Porphyry used an abominable and insolent tongue against Christians (οὗτός ἐστι Πρόκλος, ὁ δεύτερος μετὰ Πορφύριον κατὰ Χριστιανῶν τὴν μιὰν καὶ ἐφύβριστον αὐτοῦ γλῶσσαν κινήσας). Suda's testimony about how John Philoponus answered marvelously to this work, shows that we are faced with a fallacy, where Philoponus' *De Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum* is interpreted as a response to a specific Proclean work, Suda, *Lexicon*, letter pi, entry 2473. In addition, the expression γλῶσσαν

First, the Athenian late Neoplatonic school was active under the real threat of religious persecution, and such acts as the imperial legislation promulgated in 448 condemning Porphyry's famous work against the Christian works to be burned were taken seriously.³⁰ Second, besides the tangible reason that it was too dangerous to publicly meddle with Christian opinions coming from a non-Christian position, Neoplatonists disqualified the Christians as having no validity on the intellectual level. From their perspective, Christians took no part in any genuine cultural traditions, and they were not Greeks in this sense. As foreigners, they were seen as an ignorant sect, without real science, and as impious innovators who were intemperate evildoers whose only aim was to do harm.³¹ The Neoplatonists concluded that Christians were permanently in disagreement even amongst themselves. If Neoplatonists were unwilling to seriously discuss the opinions of non-Platonic schools, they had even less desire to comment on works which according to them were below the level of proper philosophy. Besides, the refutation of a position defended by another genuine philosophical school already implied also a rejection of the Christians' dogmas.

At a practical level, Proclus' attitude towards persecution was restrained. In his treatise of Providence, he advised his friend Theodore the engineer with a Stoic spirit. He did not recommend taking no active resistance and avoiding open conflict as far as possible. The reason for this stand was not resignation but the Platonic world-view in which the urges of vulgar society were always deemed to be irrational. If this situation was now much worse than usual, the

κινήσας is reminiscent of Theodoret's reference to Porphyry: "Let Porphyry be a trustworthy witness to you, he, who having become a champion of impiety moved his licentious tongue against the God of the universe" (Πορφύριος γοῦν ὑμῖν μάρτυς ἀξιόχρεως ἔστω, ὃς τῆς ἀσεβείας γενόμενος πρόμαχος κατὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν ὄλων τὴν ἀκόλαστον ἐκίνησε γλῶτταν), *Curatio* II 43.9.

30 The law was set by Theodosius II and Valentinian III on the 16th of February, 448. The first paragraph of the *Justinian Codex* 1.1.3 reads: "We decree that all things which, impelled by his insanity or something else, Porphyry has written against Christian worship, among whomsoever found, shall be delivered to fire. For we want no writings which provoke God to ire and which offend human minds even to come to the knowledge of men." According to Saffrey, the wording was changed to include all anti-Christian writings before or during the Justinian codification, Saffrey (1990), 554. The third and second paragraphs of the law are intended mainly for inter-Christian consumption and directed especially against Nestorius, but the formulations are such that they too could provide a legal bases for the destruction of pagan books with appropriate interpretation, (chapter 3): "Since it has, moreover, come to our pious ears, that some persons have written and published ambiguous doctrines, which are not in absolute agreement with the orthodox faith laid down by the holy council of the holy fathers who assembled at Nicea and Ephesus, and by Cyrillus of blessed memory, once bishop of the great city of Alexandria, we order that such books whether written before or during this time, particularly those of Nestorius, shall be burned and delivered to complete destruction, so that they may not even come to the knowledge of any one. Persons who continue to have and read such writings or books shall be punished by death. Besides, no one shall be permitted as we have said, to acknowledge or teach any creed, except the one laid down at Nicea and Ephesus.", *Annotated Justinian Code*, ed. Fred H. Blume, 2nd edition, University of Wyoming, Estate of Fred H. Blume <http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/blume&justinian/>.

31 Hoffman's summary of Neoplatonic views on Christianity from Proclus to Simplicus, Philippe Hoffman (1987), p 60.

Neoplatonist notion was that divine truth nevertheless was invincible, and a cyclic movement of history was destined to bring forth better times. Remarkably, this was still the basic assessment of the situation until the very end of late antique Neoplatonic tradition. Simplicius, a hundred years after Proclus, thought in the same vein that Christianity could not survive.³²

At the theoretical level, Proclus' whole work could be seen as directed against the "great confusion". He saw two prevailing errors in the religious outlook of his time. One was diffuse monotheism, which reduced all divine reality to one God.³³ Its corollary was the equation of the primal cause with the demiurge, highest God being responsible for the creation of the living cosmos, a viewpoint which for Proclus was absurd. Second was the negation of the cult of intermediate divinities. At the root of both errors Proclus saw a deficient interpretation of mythology. In the dark age before Plotinus, philosophy had failed in its attempt to come to terms with mythology and popular religion. Instead of producing an adequate interpretation of these, philosophy had fallen into eroding criticisms, Aristotelian "sublunar" atheism, and had produced only physical allegorizations of the divinities. These were the causes whence "terrible disorder" had arisen. Now philosophy had to set out as its most important task to accomplish the forging of a scientific and detailed theory of the classes of the gods. This theory should provide an adequate description of the divine causes and different divine classes, properties, and behaviors of each god in every divine series, and present in this way a basis for the pure cult of the gods. In the meantime, as long as the corruption of the ideas concerning mythology and religion prevailed, and the surviving expressions of the old religion were persecuted, philosophy had to act not only in the role of the theoretical defender of the polytheistic cult but also as a substitute for it.³⁴ This is in my opinion the fundamental motivation of Proclus' work.

Since later Neoplatonists identified themselves as defenders of the traditional religion, it may be paradoxical to state that it is an elusive task to estimate the extent to which they were impacted by traditional religion. Although Proclus was an expert on ideas concerning traditional religion, what was for him natural we do not and never can know. Much of our knowledge of the Greek tradition has come from him, especially from the literary Proclus, that of the author of *Chrestomathy*. But even in his metaphysical works, which are not favored reading for modern researchers of the ancient religion, he

32 "In spite of the serious nature of the steps Justinian took in 529 and of his own precarious position as a pagan philosopher in the Byzantine empire, Simplicius takes the same basic view as Proclus, he does not believe that Christianity will survive, nor that pagan beliefs will pass away. The ubiquity and the ever-increasing inroads made by Christianity are a merely temporary phenomenon, regrettable though it may be. Besides, what is surprising for a Platonist is the idea that at a given moment the truth should be apparent to a tiny chaster of the friends of knowledge, while the rabble, greedy for novelty, feeds on passing fancies?" Hoffman (1987), 66-67.

33 On the current towards monotheism, see Polymnia Athanssiadi and Michael Frede (ed.) (1999).

34 Proclus explicitly says so in praising his teacher Syrianus, in Proclus, *In Parm.* 618.9-13.

brings forward mythological items and figures not found in other sources.³⁵ Then again, it is clear that he was ignorant of much that is known to us. This lack of knowledge does not necessarily apply only to information from the remote archaic period, which should be natural, but he made occasional slips even with issues concerning the classical period and his recent past.³⁶

It is not easy to truly understand the real condition of traditional religion in Proclus' lifetime.³⁷ It seems that the family of Proclus' oldest Athenian teacher, Plutarch, had been in an important position in managing the Eleusinian mysteries. These mysteries had ceased to be celebrated in the Theodosian period, and the holy area was severely devastated by the Gothic invasion at beginning of the 5th century. If there were something of this legacy still living, in practice, it would have been transformed in the private rituals of a restricted circle of enthusiasts. According to Marinus, Proclus' "biographer", Proclus indeed was well informed with old theurgic practices through Plutarch's daughter Asclepigeneia. Plutarch himself seems to have been an active patron of the Athenian city cult, but internal evidence of Proclus' writings as well as testimonies about his life narrated by other authors, especially Marinus and Damascius, both in their time Proclus' successors at the head of the Athenian school, seem to indicate that there were no official cults surviving in Athens at the time of Proclus' presence in the city. Marinus' account of the first meeting of Proclus with his future teachers shows that Proclus' overt display of traditional piety was seen as a courageous act. This incident could be reliably dated to autumn 432. A touching episode in Marinus' story about Athena, who appeared to Proclus telling him her decision to move from the Acropolis to Proclus' house as a consequence of the Parthenon's cult statue's removal and transmission to Constantinople, could be dated to sometime after 450, possibly around 470.³⁸ This episode does not as such testify to the profanation of the temple, prohibition of cult and marking of the temple with Christian symbols. The latter I assume must have taken place gradually, beginning possibly already under Theodosius I and consummated only in the 7th century, when some of the temples still standing were converted to Christian usage.

Even during the earliest period of Proclus' presence in Athens there was no possibility for any public practice of the traditional cults. Then again,

35 For example, Hypsipyle identified as nymph in *In Parm.* 640.39.

36 The famous passage (*In Remp.* 2.108.20) on the effects of mysteries on their participants probably has a genuine Eleusinian background. Proclus' and Syrianus's teacher Plutarch was a grandson of Nestorius the Great who was versed in Eleusinian mysteries, hierophant and theurgos (d. ca 380) who himself was probably grandson of Plutarch, archiereus of Attica and priest of Dionysus and Asclepius, see family tree in Castrén (1994), 6. On the network of connections between Eastern Mediterranean families and companions who were learned in philosophy and theurgy see also Polymnia Athanassiadi (1993 b), especially diagram p. 29.

37 A basic study on Athens is Alison Frantz's (1988). See also Arja Karivieri, in Castrén (ed.) (1994), 115-139 and Whitby (2000).

38 "... a development which probably occurred towards the end of Proclus' life", according to Whitby (2000), 725 who is basing his dates on previous works of Frantz (1988), 72-3; Fowden (1986), 499-501; Trombley (1994) ch. IV.

Marinus' account shows that just before Proclus' time, perhaps before 460, it was still sometimes possible to enter freely and pray privately with circumspection in the temples.³⁹ Marinus' discussion on Proclus' vegetarianism shows that Proclus could have occasionally made exceptions to Pythagorean inspired conduct, being faithful to even more sacrosanct rules, by tasting sacrificial meat. Archeological findings in the site of buildings which formed the complex of Proclus' school have provided a well of evidence pointing to private religious rituals. Marinus' speech itself is telling evidence of the prevailing ambiguity of the situation for pagans living in an officially Christian society. Sacrifices were forbidden on the threat of a death penalty by Theodosius, but they were still carried out in private circles, and the head of the Academy could openly refer to these practices of his predecessor in a semi-public speech delivered after the recent suppression of the revolt of Illus, which had assumed colors of pagan subversion due to Pamprepius and activities of the Neoplatonists at Aphrodisia.⁴⁰

Pagan elements continued to be respected as part of Athenian society during Proclus' whole lifetime. In effect, some of the most influential citizens were not only pagans but tied with friendship and family links to the Academy. The ruins of an immense complex from the 5th century called "the Palace of the Giants" symbolize well the uncertainty of the situation of pagan Neoplatonism in Proclus' time and our difficulties in assessing it. The building, situated in the immediate neighborhood of the Neoplatonist school, could have been the state's administrative center in Athens; however, it seems to be far too large for the purposes of a town, which from the imperial perspective was surely respectable but after all only provincial. If the building were the site of the Byzantine state's presence in Athens, it would have functioned as a constant reminder for philosophers of the rising power of ideology inimical to legacies dearest to them. The prevailing opinion in scholarship⁴¹ connects the palace to the rise of another Athenian family, from which came a remarkable representative, Athenais, the daughter of a pagan teacher, who was chosen to be the empress of Theodosius II. Converted to Christianity and with the name Eudocia, she was to play a major role in the relationship between the court and the rivaling Church fractions.⁴² In contrast, it has also been suggested that the building was a late example of an

39 Marinus, *Vita Procli* 29 (Boissonade).

40 Trombley (1994) dates an important turning-point in these years: "... After that, public expression of polytheist belief, even apart from sacrifice, might have proved troublesome or even dangerous to Hellenes, who at times hide their religion underground and became cryptopagans..", 66. These years saw the fall of the great stronghold of intellectual and popular paganism in the city of Aphrodisias: "... It seems probable, therefore, that the local archbishop supervised the demolition of the Aphrodisteion in the wake of Illus' ill-fated revolt against emperor Zeno", 66.

41 Whitby (2000), 722.

42 Eudocia was actually one of the most important woman writers in late antiquity. Some of her works are preserved. She has one teacher in common with Proclus, Alexandrian Orion who taught rhetoric, at least on a basic level, when they were quite young. On Eudocia see Holum (1981), entry of in LRE, and Julia Burman in Castrén (1994), 63-88.

aristocratic villa and would have belonged to Theagenes,⁴³ an enormously rich local potentate known to be connected with Neoplatonist circles. In this case the Palace of the Giants is not only a symbol of benevolence and patronage but would mark Proclus' school as the leading center of spiritual life of the city.

Pagan scholars could usually live without harassment, free from events of violent persecution which at intervals shook up grand metropolies of the Eastern Mediterranean. Besides holding the memories of past glory and current renown as a center of scholarship, 5th century Athens had little to boast of. One should not forget that lively academic activity was not a negligible source of income to the town.⁴⁴ Perhaps patriotic concerns were contributing to the relatively moderate attitude of Athenian Christianity. Another reason was an absence of the massive monasticism which guaranteed for Eastern Christian leaders eager manpower at their disposal for anti-pagan and intra-Christian conflicts. From Marinus' testimony we can see, however, that being already an established figure among the cultural elite of the city, Proclus at times nevertheless encountered hostility at least partly inspired by his religious confession. Once he had to go into self-imposed exile to Lydia, and there he found living pagan religiosity in full bloom and could help locals order their religious lives with his deep knowledge of divine things. This experience as a hieratic councilor must have been very agreeable to him.⁴⁵

Estimating Proclus' attitudes, we have to also consider his ambiguities, in the sense of how far he shared critics' and even enemies' outlooks when his identity was based on being a conscious defender of traditional religion.

43 Castrén suggests this idea, (1994), 1-14.

44 "... the Athenian intellectuals made a significant contribution to the local economy - like a modern university in a small town such as Lampeter or St Andrews.", Whitby (2000), 722.

45 *Vita Procli* 28. Whitby (2000) dates this episode to the late 440s, 725. A happy consequence of this incident was that Proclus wrote an astronomical work at the request of some Lydian friend, probably with Pericles to whom the Platonic Theology is dedicated, A. Ph. Segonds, "Philosophie et astronomie chez Proclus", (1987), 163.

3 PROSECUTOR'S STATEMENT

At the outset of the eleventh chapter of the first book of his ecclesiastical history, Evagrius Scholasticus pauses to ponder how differently divergences of opinions have emerged, on the one hand, inside the Church and, on the other, among the pagans. In this brief passage, Evagrius combines a surprisingly irenic and conciliative interpretation of the problem of heresies -- a problem undoubtedly aggravated by the fatigue felt by Syrian Christians at the end of 6th century's continual combat between Monophysites and Chalcedonians -- with a standard view of the anti-pagan polemicists on traditional religion. Its myths and ritual, even its concept of deity, are for Evagrius essentially manifestations of obscenity and debauchery.

All parties in the doctrinal controversies of late antiquity subscribed to the view that ideal unity was a sure sign of a thought's correctness in any tradition. That more than once the Christian Church made sharp turns in its definitions of belief was certainly an issue which some of its adversaries were pleased to point out. Idolaters should not, however, sneer that Christians have swayed in their views "in this or that direction" opines Evagrius. First, according to him, none of the heresies were caused by the intention to dishonor a Deity. Rather, heresiarchs fell from the truth for human conceit as they tried to improve over others and thus twisted their doctrines to one side. Second, all Christians have indeed a common belief in the most fundamental questions of religion: "for the Trinity is the single object of our worship, and unity the complex one of our glorification, and the Word, who is God begotten before immeasurable times, and who became flesh by a second birth in mercy to the creature"⁴⁶ (Τριάς γὰρ ἡμῖν τὸ προσκυνούμενον, καὶ μονὰς τὰ δοξολογούμενα, ὃ τε πρὸ αἰώνων γεννηθεὶς θεὸς Λόγος σαρκούμενος δευτέρᾳ γεννήσει φειδοῖ τοῦ πλάσματος). The reason for the existence of

⁴⁶ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, "The ecclesiastical history of Evagrius with the scholia", Ed. Bidez, J., Parmentier, L. London 1898, Repr. 1979, 18.27-29. Translation E. Walford. This formulation demonstrates the Christologically Neo-Chalcedonian origin of work.

doctrinal disputes among Christians is that the Savior God has given believers free will to exercise thinking on the issues of religion. These controversies have even a providential dimension as pure doctrine has been more accurately attained through them.

In contrast, the pagans, never had a desire to extol a true God but competed amongst themselves, shaking each other's opinions, devising new "gods upon gods". What they actually did was to attempt to transform the soul's irrational passions into divinities in order to find an excuse for acting according of them.

Thus, their supreme Father of Gods and men, under the form of a bird, shamelessly carried off the Phrygian boy; and as a reward of his vile service, bestowed the cup, with leave to pledge him in an amorous draught, that they might with the nectar drink in their common shame. Besides innumerable other villainies, reprobated by the meanest of mankind, and transformations into every form of brutes, himself the most brutish of all, he becomes bi-sexual, pregnant, if not in his belly yet in his thigh, that even this violation of nature might be fulfilled in his person: whence springing, the bi-sexual dithyrambic birth outraged either sex; author of drunkenness, surfeit, and mad debauch, and all their fearful consequences. To this Aegis-wearer, this Thunderer, they attach, in spite of these majestic titles, the crime of parricide, universally regarded as the extremity of guilt; inasmuch as he dethroned Cronos who unhappily had begotten him. Why need I also mention their consecration of fornication, over which they made Aphrodite to preside, the shell-born Cyprian, who abhorred chastity as an unhallowed and monstrous thing, but delighted in fornication and all filthiness, and willed to be propitiated by them: in whose company Ares also suffers unseemly exposure, being, by the contrivance of Hephaesthos, made a spectacle and laughing-stock to the Gods? Justly would one ridicule their phalli and ithyphalli, and phallagogia; their Priapus, and Pan, and the Eleusinian mysteries, which in one respect deserve praise, namely, that the sun was not allowed to see them, but they were condemned to dwell with darkness.⁴⁷

What most offends Evagrius and a long line of other similar thinking Christian authors is the overtly sexual element of divine archetypes, concepts, and rituals of ancient religion. Evagrius was not throwing sharp words against an artificially constructed straw man. He was condemning a real dimension of the traditional religion, or at least the remains of it.

In 2008, near Schelklingen, Germany, a female ivory figurine was found which is now studied at the University of Tübingen. The object dates to at least 35 000 to 40 000 years ago and is most probably the oldest known statue depicting a human to date. The figurine was named by researchers Venus of Hohle. Like the 11 000 - 16 000 year younger famous Venus of Willendorf, the statue was associated in scholarly speculation with shamanistic fertility beliefs. The statues' pose, huge breasts, and over-sized genitalia described with remarkable detail suggested to some experts to that they are "bordering on the pornography", and anthropologist Paul Mellars commented in *Nature* that "If there's one conclusion you want to draw from this, it's that an obsession with sex goes back at least 35,000 years... But if

47 Evagrius, Hist. 19.20-20.16, Translation E. Walford.

humans hadn't been largely obsessed with sex they wouldn't have survived for the first 2 million years.⁴⁸

Why I am introducing this Paleolithic piece of art to the discussion is to point to the fact that erotophobia, or aversion towards sexuality based on religious ideas, is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of humankind. When we come to the 30 000 years more recent times of Venus of Hohle, we notice Mesopotamian literature abounding with explicit sexual references and find a religion which adores Inana and Ishtar, precursors of Aphrodite -- or to put it in a Proclean way, manifestations of the same divine hypostasis and power in a different ethnic pantheon -- with hardly hidden expressions conveying approval for overt and enjoyable sexuality.⁴⁹ Some remains of this uncomplicated and ancient attitude of the Near East can still be found in the Hebrew Bible.

Greeks were not always prudish either. This is testified to by many well-known archeological findings: dwarfs with gigantic penises, huge phallus statues, and erotic paintings. In literature we can observe an enthusiastic approval of erotic allure and allusions to sex appeal even among some of the most honored cults and religious institutions.⁵⁰ In addition to this evidence, we

48 Nicholas J. Conard, "A female figurine from the basal Aurignacian of Hohle Fels Cave in southwestern Germany", *Nature*, 248-252, but I am using as a source Discover Magazine's blog <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/80beats/2009/05/13/pornographic-statue-could-be-worlds-oldest-piece-of-figurative-art/> (checked 17th February 2012).

49 See, for example, tales concerning the king Enmerkar in Vanstiphout (2003).

50 On masks, phalli, and aischrologia (that is, indecent ritual utterances) see, for instance, Walter Burkert (1985), 103-105. Burkert interestingly sees some of the rituals having Near Eastern and even Neolithic roots. It is unclear whether sacred objects of the Eleusinian mysteries were "obscene" symbols as Christian writers will insinuate, but concerning some of them this is quite probable in terminological grounds. Saffrey adds an interesting detail which links the Delphic oracle too to a sexual context, referring to evidence of the manuscript possibly originating from a Neoplatonic context, which tells us about priestess of the famous Greek shrine that "Pythia, seated in an indecent manner on the tripod receives divinatory penetrations by female parts (Ἡ Πυθία ἐπὶ τοῦ τρίποδος ἀσχημόνως ἐπικαθημένη διὰ τῶν γυναικείων μορίων τὰς μαντικὰς εἰσκρίσεις ὑποδέχεται.), Hypomnesticon. Cod. Cambridge, University Library 1157 (Ff. I 24), ff. 187rb-188rb, 143.56, Saffrey (2000), 32. "Rites with sexual emphasis are generally understood in terms of fertility magic in Frazer's sense. The Greek evidence, however, always points most conspicuously to the absurdity and buffoonery of the whole affair: there is a conscious descent to the lower classes and the lower parts of the anatomy, mirrored in the talk of mythical maids. Just as pomp and ceremony contrasts with everyday life, so does extreme lack of ceremony, absurdity, and obscenity; a redoubled tension arises between the two extremes, adding further dimensions to the festival. Similarly there are sacrifices which demand the very opposite to the usual holy silence, wild cursing or affected lamentation. By plumbing the extremes the just means is meant to emerge, just as the sexes which greet each other with jeers are dependent on each other.", Burkert (1985), 105. As an example of ambiguity of the Neoplatonists, let us remember that one of the earliest theorists who would have seen rites related to sexuality, such as the adoring of fertility, was Iamblichus in his answers to the embarrassed *Porphyry*, *De myst.* 1.11. (38,10-17): we declare that "the erection of phallic images" is a symbol (σύνημα) of generative power, and we consider that this is directed towards the fecundating of the world; this is the reason, indeed, why most of these images are consecrated in the spring, since this is just when the whole world receives from the gods the power of generating all creation. And as for the "obscene utterances," my view is that they have the role of expressing the

have the popular Greek erotic tradition with aspects of darker tones, emphasizing the compelling nature-driven dimension of sexuality.

Kathy L. Gaca deftly summarizes the basic tenets of this tradition, ideas of which were not literary tropes but popular beliefs, traceable from the earliest archaic age well into the Byzantine period:

"First, eros is a divine force emanating from the gods Aphrodite and Eros that simulates people to yearn to make love. Aphrodite "has tamed" human beings, gods, and animals, in Homeric Hymns 4, by arousing them to sexually engage in "the works of Aphrodite".

Second, when the gods of eros tame persons or gods, such as Zeus, they particularly quell their ability to rationally deliberate about their sexual desire and conduct. "Limb-loosening Eros subdues the mind and thoughtful will in the breasts of all gods and persons", as Hesiod states.

Third, Aphrodite and Eros often, and even habitually, exert their mastery contrary to the will their victims would exercise were they in their right mind, rather than possessed by eros. For instance, Aphrodite ensures that the woman Sappho loves will quickly be amorous in return, "even if the woman is unwilling" to do so prior to Aphrodite's intervention.

Fourth, the gods of eros become tyrannical and destructive when persons try to resist the gods' power, even when this would lead to a better course of action ... Sexually aroused persons must do the gods' bidding with alacrity, for the gods are going to make them do it anyway - and with greater suffering if they initially practice forbearance.

Fifth, despite the agony of eros, the ancient Greeks thought that mortals have not genuinely lived unless their reason and will power have been incapacitated by eros ... So strong is this conviction that persons who seem impervious to eros are thought to have something wrong with them ... And the gods will punish those who are arrogant enough to presume to regulate their sexual conduct. Nevertheless, persons never touched by the agony are worse off in their numbers than the walking wounded."⁵¹

Philosophers from the times of Pythagoras -- especially from the Hellenistic times, with their moralistic emphasis -- found these traits of the religious and Greek erotic traditions generally problematic and developed various strategies to cope with the issues. Neoplatonists continued this effort and Proclus' Aphroditology is one of the answers. According to Evagrius' *raison d'être* of the traditional religion is justification for such acts which are inspired by humans' lowest passions. Evagrius' concept of Aphrodite as a

absence of beauty which is characteristic of matter and the previous ugliness of those things that are going to be brought to order, which, since they suffer from a lack of ordering, yearn for it in the same degree as they spurn the unseemliness that was previously their lot. So then, once again, one is prompted to seek after the causes of form and beauty when one learns the nature of obscenity from the utterance of obscenities; one rejects the practice of obscenities, while by means of uttering them one makes clear one's knowledge of them, and thus turns one's impulses in the opposite direction.", transl. of E.E. Clarke, J.M.Dillon and J.P. Hershbell).

51 Kathy L. Gaca (2003), 64-66.

goddess of fornication and filthiness is diametrically opposed to Proclus' view of the goddess as most One-like and as the purest life.

The anti-pagan polemicists from the fifth and sixth centuries follow a long tradition of Christian apologetics and are dependent on the Church fathers, especially Clemens, Origen, and Eusebius. An example is Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393-458), who was a skilled theologian, though he was not so well versed in the proper philosophical culture. He was best known as an ecclesiastical historian and opponent of Cyril of Alexandria and of the Monophysite party in the great Christological controversy in the fifth century, but he was never canonized because part of his works were condemned a hundred years after his death, during the so-called Three Chapters quarrel by the council Constantinople (553). His musings on the human soul are based on the diffuse Platonism of the day and are fundamental to his more serious theoretical work in Christian theology. Theodoret's polemics against pagans in his *Curatio (The Cure of the Greek Diseases)*⁵² shows that he is in possession of remarkable knowledge concerning ancient and contemporary texts, and sometimes he could indeed almost sustain discussions on a proper philosophical level.⁵³ However, it is evident that his Platonism is not very original and is almost totally derived from Clement and Eusebius.⁵⁴ This replication of ideas raises the question of the nature and intended audience of his anti-pagan treatise.

In one of the recent serious studies on our author, Niketas Siniossoglou opines that Theodoret is indeed directing his words towards real pagans, even pagan elites. This claim could find support from the fact that Theodoret had missionary experience as a militant propagandist of the Church. However, I find it difficult to believe that he could have been able to have discussions with genuine, educated, pagans by resorting to undigested Platonism, occasional overt falsification of Platonic evidence (as Siniossoglou shows), and twisted and biased arguments that were permeated with derision and

52 Ελληνικῶν Θεραπευτικῆ Παθημάτων (*Graecarum affectionum curatio*), the title of Theodoret's work is significant, as it evokes medical literature, especially Galen's work. The title is also programmatic in defining traditional religion as form of the soul's disease and disorder caused by passions.

53 Theodoret argues that Plato was a convinced monotheist who had to keep his beliefs under cover (*Curatio* II 38; ".You see, my friends, how in these lines, Plato and Socrates expel the band of false gods and how they invite us to respect and not to fear anyone but the Ruler of the Universe, how they teach that if they happened to mention a greater number of gods, this is because a mistaken crowd of Athenians forced them to do that.") and only alluded to them with hints, such as in his letter to Dionysius, ruler of Syracuse (*Curatio* II 40-41).

54 Jörg Ulrich points out, in his citations of the Greek literature, that Theodoret slavishly follows even the order of presentation of his predecessors (Clemens and Eusebius). A new topic introduced by Theodoret is the defense of the cult martyrs, Ulrich (2010). This idea was criticized by pagan intellectuals, as Theodoret liked to present the martyr cult as a parallel to the hero worship of ancient religion but in its Christian shape relating to more worthy people. I believe Ulrich is right when he sees that Theodoret strives for a more systematic theological exposition than earlier apologetics. In this sense we can perhaps see his work as a precursor to the encyclopedically framed exposition of the Christian doctrine written by John of Damascus in the 7th century.

rudeness. If this work was directed towards pagans then the cultural level of the audience must have been relatively low; his intended readers would have been incapable or too indifferent to check Platonic texts themselves. Perhaps Theodoret's pagan audience consisted of a superficially educated middle class and some functionaries of the imperial administration. But even in this case, the self-esteem of the audience should have been already badly shaken, if Theodoret could assume that they would swallow his patronizing, mocking, and denigrating style. Although the *Curatio* is iced with expressions of affected friendliness, it is permeated on the whole with a despising and aggressive tone. This is in blatant contrast to the firm but cordial quality of the discussion in Theodoret's correspondence with pagans.⁵⁵ For these reasons, I think that the work is intended for inner consumption. It is a kind of Christian battle manual, a collection of potentially useful items to be picked up in controversies.

For our purposes Theodoret's work is important because it is the culmination of the apologetic tradition and contemporary to the rise of the Athenian school.⁵⁶ If Proclus ever deigned to throw a look at the compositions of polemicists against his religion, he might have browsed just this book and surely was acquainted with the general lines of the Christian arguments which Theodoret here tried to express in a more systematic form.⁵⁷ Theodoret's *Curatio* is the last apologetic writing in the sense that after that time there was no reason to pretend to uphold discussions with pagans. The next century signified a definite shift towards final suppression, pagans no longer having any chance of openly answering accusations directed at their religion. Evagrius, for his part, demonstrated that counter-arguments provided by Athenian Neoplatonism in the endeavor of symbolic exegesis and systematic theology were not received and probably in his case never heard. Proclus hardly would have been surprised, as for him attempts to discuss with Christians were a total waste of time.

55 See for examples letters 68 and 71 in Yvan Azema's edition of Theodoret's correspondence addressed to general Zeno. The second one congratulates Zeno for his election to the consulate in 448 and seems to include hope for his conversion. Zeno seems to be the same general whom Damascius mentions in his list of possible candidates at the time after Julian expected to carry out political change favorable to traditional religion. Zeno died in 451 in circumstances obscure to us. See prosopographic entry on Zenon 7, Martindale, J.R. (ed.) (1980).

56 Canivet (1957), 20 dates *Curatio* to years 421-423 on the grounds that Theodoret seems to speak about the persecution of the Christians in Persia as a current event, but Theodoret considers it in his Ecclesiastical History as having happened in the past. The work certainly belongs to the author's early period because its context seems to refer to a monastic rather than bishop's outlook, and Theodoret uses theological formulations which would be imprudent in the heat of the Nestorian controversy. His exulting tone considering unity among the Christians mirrors conditions predating the great Christological confrontation.

57 In comparing lists of offending passages of Homer treated by Proclus and Clement of Alexandria, Lambertson thinks it possible that "knowledge on Proclus' part of Clement's Prorepticus seems quite likely", and in any case Proclus' defense of Homer is a direct reply to objections raised by Socrates but an indirect response to Christians, Lambertson (1986), 78-79.

Theodoret expounds upon a theory on a set of polytheistic modes of god-making. The first case is transforming visible natural objects, like the Sun, Moon, and even animals, into gods. The second is the promoting of some heroes who have civilizing merits from human to godly status. The third mode is interpreting by allegorical exegesis natural forces as gods. The fourth is elevating by different allegorization the soul's states and passions to be gods. The fifth is the adoring of demons as gods.

The first four modes concern mental constructions, but the demons are for Theodoret real beings and certainly evil ones. In the cult of the demons, he sees a most dangerous aspect of polytheism, because according to his view pagans are worshipping evil spirits originating from a rebellion against God's will.⁵⁸

Curatio III 88.1-93.1⁵⁹:

I will admit that the divine Scriptures teach us about the existence of certain invisible forces, who sing praises to the Creator and are in service to his divine will. But we certainly do not call them gods, and we do not attribute to them the divine majesty of God. We do not share divine worship between the true God and them, but we say that firstly they are more worthy than humans and secondly they are subjects to Him like men. We do not distinguish within their incorporeal nature male and female gender. That distinction belongs indeed only to the created beings who are subject to death,

58 A good description on how classical deities were conceived among the Christians as very real existing demons is provided by Callinicus in his life of Saint Hypatius, a contemporary of Proclus and Theodoret, who fought against Artemis in the mountains and woods near Chalcedon, Callinicos, *Vie d'Hypatios*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (1971), ch. 43 and 45.

59 Ἐγὼ δὲ ὁμολογῶ μὲν τὴν θεῖαν ἡμᾶς διδάξαι γραφήν, εἶναι δὴ τινὰς ἀοράτους δυνάμεις, καὶ ὑπονοήσας τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ ὑπονοήσας αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ βουλήματι· οὐ μὴν θεοὺς τούτους ὀνομάζομεν οὐδὲ θεῖον αὐτοῖς ἀπονέμομεν σέβας οὐδὲ μερίζομεν εἰς τὸν ὄντα Θεὸν καὶ τούτους τὴν θεῖαν προσκύνησιν, ἀλλὰ τούτους τιμιωτέρους μὲν ἀνθρώπων, ὁμοδούλους δὲ εἶναι φαμέν. Καὶ οὐ διαιροῦμεν εἰς ἄρρεν καὶ θῆλυ τὴν ἀσώματον φύσιν· ταύτης γὰρ δὴ τῆς διαίρεσεως ἐνδεῆς τῶν ὑπὸ τῷ θανάτῳ τελούντων ἢ φύσις, ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐξανδραποδίζει ταύτην ὁ θάνατος, ὁ γάμος διὰ τῆς παιδοποιίας ἀντεισάγει τὸ δαπανώμενον· οἶον γὰρ τινὰ ἐπισκευαστὴν ἀθανασίαν ὁ ποιητὴς τῷ θνητῷ ζῶντι τὴν παιδοποιίαν ἐμηχρήσατο. Ταύτην τοὶ ἀναγκαῖα τοῖς θνητῶν ἔχουσι φύσιν ἢ τοῦ θήλεος χρεία, τοῖς δὲ γε ἀθανάτοις γεγεννημένοις τὸ θῆλυ γένος παντάπασιν περιττόν· οὔτε γὰρ αὔξεως προσδέονται, μείωσιν οὐ δεχόμενοι, οὔτε μίξεως, σωματῶν γε ὄντες ἐλεύθεροι. Μαρτυρεῖ δὲ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τούτων κάκεινων ἢ ποιήσις. Τοὺς μὲν γὰρ δὴ ἀνθρώπους οὐ παμπόλλους εὐθὺς ἐδημιούργησεν ὁ Θεός, ἀλλ' ἕνα ἄνδρα καὶ μίαν γυναῖκα διέπλασε καὶ διὰ τῆς τούτων κοινωνίας πᾶσαν γῆν καὶ θάλατταν τοῦδε τοῦ γένους ἐνέπλησε· τῶν ἀσωμάτων δὲ τὴν φύσιν οὐ κατὰ δύο πεποίηκεν, ἀλλ' ἀθρόαν ἐδημιούργησεν· ὅσας γὰρ τοὶ εἶναι αὐτῶν ἐδοκίμασε μυριάδας, ἐξ ἀρχῆς ταύτας παρήγαγεν. Διὰ τοῦτο περιττὴ τοῦ θήλεος ἐκείνοις ἢ χρήσις, ὡς μὲν ἀθανάτοις αὔξεως οὐ δεόμενοι, ὡς ἀσωμάτοις δὲ μίξιν οὐ δεόμενοι. Τῷ τοὶ καὶ ἀγίους αὐτοὺς ὀνομάζομεν ὡς γῆιν οὐδὲν ἔχοντας, ἀλλὰ τῶν περιγείων παθημάτων ἀπηλλαγμένους, ἔργον δὲ ἔχοντας τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ χορείαν καὶ τοῦ πεποιηκότος τὴν ὑμνωδίαν, καὶ αὐτὴν πάλιν τὰς ὑπουργίας, ἃς κελεύομενοι διακονοῦσι τῷ θεῷ βουλήματι, τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἵνεκα σωτηρίας παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν ὄλων στελλόμενοι. ... Τὴν ἐκείνων μιμούμενοι πολιτεῖαν, ὅσοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ θεραπείαν ἠσπάσαντο, ἔφυγον μὲν τῶν σωματῶν καὶ τὴν ἔννομον κοινωνίαν ὡς τῶν θεῶν ἀφέλκουσαν, κατέλιπον δὲ καὶ πατρίδα καὶ γένος, ἵνα πᾶσαν εἰς τὰ θεῖα μεταθῶσι τὴν μέριμναν, καὶ μηδεὶς τὸν νοῦν ἐπέχη δεσμός, εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀναπτῆναι καὶ τὸ ἀόρατον καὶ ἄρρητον τοῦ Θεοῦ κατοπεῦσαι γλιχόμενον κάλλος.

since death enslaves their natures, and marriage compensates for losses by means of procreation, and in this sense it is like a kind of immortality that the Creator has invented for giving mortals a means to procreate. That is why mortal nature needs a female gender, but for those who had been made immortal, the female is completely useless. In fact, they do not suffer any diminution, they have no need to grow, they are not embarrassed with a body, they do not need to marry. That is why we call them "saints" as they have nothing Earthly in them. They are free from worldly passions, their work is to dance in heaven and sing the glory of the Creator, and in addition they fulfill all the services wanted by the divine will ... It is imitating their way of life that so many men embrace God's service, they flee carnal desires, even legitimate ones, because these turn them away from divine things, they left families and homelands in order to turn their thoughts to the divine, and that no bind should deter their minds eagerly seeking heaven and contemplating the invisible and ineffable beauty of God.

It is interesting that in his attempt to distinguish the Christian doctrine of angels from the pagan belief in demons, Theodoret moves soon to the question of gender and defines femininity as secondary and totally inappropriate for angelic beings. Surely, he is arguing that angels are beyond (above) gender difference, but it is significant that the emphasis lays on the futility of the female gender and not the masculine. When he then shifts to dealing with the saints -- and in this context he is clearly speaking of ascetics of his day as they are imitating angels -- he places the focus on their striving to subdue sexual desires. Here too we have a very "anti-aphrodisian" line of discourse: demonic, feminine, and sexual are the attributes of the things to be avoided according to this teaching.⁶⁰

Almost all modes of the pagan theopoiesis seem to join with Aphrodite's cult in Theodoret's mind. Aphrodite also provides an example of the deification of "culture heroes". Among these her case is the most corrupt, because here pagans did not make a god out of an agent of civilizing value but, on the contrary, out of an ultimate vice.

Curatio III 29-31:

Surely, the Dioscuri, Heracles, and with them, Orpheus, who playing the lyre charmed the fish and forced them to follow his melodious sounds, completed the list of the Argonauts: now they preceded the Trojan War as one generation, which has been shown in a previous review. Also Dionysus, because he was the first to plant vines, squeeze the fruit and make known the use of wine, was ranked in among the gods. As for Aphrodite, who has done nothing good and has established herself as mistress of debauchery - because she was a prostitute and a courtesan loved by Cinyras - they gave her the name of goddess. And it is surely nothing amazing that those who had granted the title of god to venomous snakes could not easily deprive women of such a name.

⁶⁰ On the formation of Christian views on sin and sexuality and angelic life in relation to Hellenism see Jaroslav Pelikan (1995), especially 289-295. On angelic life on earth, Rist, J. (1992), 155-156: "One of the (desiderated) effects of extreme sexual renunciation, one of the marks of the "angelic" life on which the monks often set their hearts, was not merely the control of sexual desires, but the eradication of sexual feelings, (and in particular of uninvited sexual reactions (such as the pleasure or erection which might accompany the sight of a naked woman): indeed the eradication of instinctive reactions of all kinds, of fear at a threatening experience as well as of pleasure at what gives worldly attraction."

To render an instigator of sin as a god is more evil than to deify animals. In this argument also, Theodoret succeeds in including an inherent inferiority of the female gender.

If the fifth error of the Greeks, worshiping demons, is materially the most dangerous, the fourth is the most abominable and is to be morally condemned.

Curatio III 48-52:

We have just talked about the third form of deification invented by the Greeks. But there is still a fourth, where stupidity is mixed with the worst madness. They in effect deify those parts of the soul which they call sensitive and irrational, calling carnal lust Aphrodite and Eros, anger Ares, intoxication Dionysus, theft Hermes, calculating reason Athena, and trades Hephaestus, because these fires are assisting them. They are not ashamed that they censure immorality and punish those who engage in it and at the same time, on the contrary, honor it as a deity! In the name of the law, they punish those who engage in prostitution, they slit the throats of adulterers, and they impale and crucify murderers, but, on the other hand, they give to lust and drunken anger as causes the titles of "gods from heaven", and they worship these as gods: their laws are driven against these passions, but they want to honor these same passions in the name of the law, speaking with admiration of virtue but then discarding it as something superfluous. For if indeed, as they see it, carnal lust is a deity, one who does not surrender to it entirely has to be an atheist, and if in turn, drunkenness and anger are equally gods, he who tries to dominate them is declared an enemy of the god! Therefore, then, one has to flee from virtue, because it is contrary to the gods, and indulge in the intemperate with the pretext that it is called godly by them! But this is even more stupid and more pernicious than the stories of the poets!

When Theodoret defends Christians from the accusation that Christians represent blind faith and ignorance -- an accusation which seems to have been very much in use among the pagan critics from Celsus to the end of the open polytheistic stand -- he recurses to pointing out that in the pagan religion there is a very similar and problematic relation between faith and knowledge and that ultimately faith necessarily has and should always have epistemological primacy over rational knowledge. However, in this consideration he attaches a passionate condemnation against those who deify fornication in their ritual and allegorical theology.

Curatio I 107-114

Therefore, science does not belong to all but to those who by means of teaching, time, and experience have acquired it. Faith, on the contrary, belongs to all who are eager to learn something. Moreover, faith is certainly the basis and foundation of science. Even your philosophers defined faith as the 'voluntary assent' of the soul and science as an unchangeable state [brought about] by reason. It [would be] out of place and exceedingly absurd that while teachers possess the science and pupils have the faith in all professions, only in the case of the instruction in divinity the order should be reversed, demanding science before faith - because for invisible things we need the eyes of faith. This is why the divine apostle also cries that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6). This is also

why we bring forth the teaching of faith before everything else to those who approach us and desire to learn the divinity; and once they have been consecrated and initiated, we show them the hidden meaning of the mysteries. Neither among you does everyone know what the hierophant says; the masses watch the sacred performance and those who are called priests accomplish the ritual ceremonies, yet the hierophant is the only one who knows the meaning of the words and he makes them known [only] to those he deems fit. Some of the initiated know that Priapus was the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite; but why is he called their son? And being so small, why is a member enormous in erection attributed to him? It is the hierophant of these disgusting mysteries who knows, and whoever has come across their accursed books. They name pleasure Aphrodite, drunkenness they label Dionysus, and the product of both they call Priapus, because when pleasure unites with drunkenness, it produces the erection of the genital member. Again, in the same manner the comic poets call the male member the phallus of Dionysus and the feast of the phallus is called phallogogy by the Greeks; and all those taking part in the orgy worship and kiss it, yet they do not know why. The one called hierophant knows of Osiris and Typhon: how the parts of Osiris' body were cut into pieces by Typhon and dispersed to all directions, and how Isis, sister of Osiris reassembled them carefully without succeeding in finding the phallus, and therefore made an image of it, commanding it to be worshiped by all. Having learned these Egyptian orgies, Orpheus the Odrysian transferred them into Greeks and organized the feast of the Dionysia. (Translation István Pásztori-Kupán).

As Tatian and Clement before and Evagrius after him, Theodoret too sees a most promising target towards which he can direct an attack on obscenity and overtly sexual manifestations of ancient religious practices, estimating this to be a way to force even the pagans themselves to admit to the inherent depravity of their religion.

Curatio III 79-84:

For my part, I am amazed at the impudence of the hellenizers of our day. These people are indeed ashamed of the ancient error, saying that the poets have made up false mythical stories about the gods, but they do not shame their own conduct, as they admire idols of the gods that have been made in accordance with those same myths. Aphrodite's posture is more insolent than that of any street-girl. Who has ever seen a harlot standing naked in the agora, without a coat or belt? ... If your accusations against poets were sincere, you should burn their works, and in addition there should be a law prohibiting all the artists on pain of death never to create these kinds of images in any way, and those who in any way violate the law should be sentenced to death. You should also completely dispose of any works that offend and ridicule the so-called gods or that state what the fairy tales keep repeating about the gods, and all this you should proclaim to be only lies. The people worship idols, the very same which they condemn with words and celebrate in their honor sacrifices and mysteries. And even this species of an animal - I mean Priapus - with his huge erect member, they also honor, and the phallus of Dionysus receives the adoration of those who participate in the phallogogy and "comb" - that is the name given to the private parts of woman - was deemed worthy of divine reverence, by those silly women who celebrated Thesmophoria as initiates.

We should not take at face value Theodoret's demands of destroying classical statues or delivering death sentences to the artists, although there were and came to be people who put these kinds of ideas into practice. In the

writings of the later bishop of Cyrrhus, these views still only belonged in the literary domain, in the same way as Proclus' well-known opinions about how desirable it would be if all literature except the *Timaeus* and the *Chaldaean Oracles* were to be suppressed. Theodoret's fulminations are rhetorical outbursts even if we have no reason to suppose that he in principle was against the demolition of shrines. His are not especially extreme positions among the Christian writers of the age: on the contrary, he is quite representative of the general clerical and monastic mindset.⁶¹ From this perspective the demand for repressing ancient religion was strongly felt and its essential perniciousness from the Christian viewpoint clearly diagnosed. If the core of evil is demon worship, the most outstanding form of evilness both in the demons themselves and in the act of adoring them, is sexuality. The female gender seems to incarnate the dangers of evil among the demons as well as human beings. To establish a goddess as such is a perverted act: upholding an initiator of prostitution as a goddess is worse than worshiping animals. Aphrodite is fornication and deified *epithymia*. She is not allegory but a real demon. Thus from the Christian point of view, such as that of Theodoret and those of his contemporaries, every aspect of the enemy was concentrated in the archetypal figure of Aphrodite.

61 The extreme erotophobic wings were encratites or supporters of continence, represented by the second-century apologist Tatian and his followers. They rejected sexual relations totally (along with meat-eating, wine, and property). An Encratite current survived at least until the third century and is explicitly condemned as heresy in the Theodosian Code (XVI, 5.7. 9, 11), Delmaire (2005), 477. Clement of Alexandria struggled with Encratites, but he himself adopted a position which was clearly inclined towards a more negative estimation on sexuality than the current "middle-point" among the pagan philosophers. One could say that it was just Clement who established Christian sexual ethics for centuries to come on the basis of strict procreationism. As Peter Brown summarizes: "Clement allowed himself to be manouvered into a stance which pagan moralists had had the good sense to avoid. The norms of sexual conduct had remained somewhat peripheral matters for them. But Clement could not afford to imitate their reticence. He was a Christian writing for Christians faced by attacks on married intercourse of quite unprecedented circumstantiality. Encratite arguments against sex demanded answers taken from the very heart of the marriage bed. Clement told his readers, in a concrete and fastidious manner, that a well-ordered sexuality was not, it itself, a "bestial" act. Yet in so doing he moved the center of gravity of ancient attitudes to the grooming and control of the body out of their accustomed, daytime setting. They came to rest on the Christian couple in bed.", Brown (1988), 133.

4—DEFENSE STATEMENT

4.1.1 On the interpretation of symbolic activities

The Neoplatonist reflection originated from the ideas of Plato, who in a very strong sense was himself a cultural reformer. He tried to systematize and rationalize the ideal legacy, which Dodds calls an "inherited conglomerate" of Greek religious ideas by combining the archaic concept of divinity as an inherent force in the world with the idea of moral order. The activity of the gods for Plato is providential. If the archaic view saw gods as essentially morally neutral powers, for Plato gods could not be responsible for any evil. This idea was crucial for the future path of religious thinking. It was even more significant than another Platonic innovation, that of transforming the archaic idea of immortality and the eminence of the gods into their impassibility and transcendency understood in terms of intelligible order in contrast to the sensible world. Perhaps these ideas were also fatal in their consequences, but, in any case, during the centuries after Plato they became strongly rooted in the views of a large sector of opinion in the Greek world.

Post-classical religion is thus considerably permeated by diffuse Platonism. Hellenistic schools are clearly critical for ancient modes of religious thinking, and the gap between the Stoic project of naturalizing and mythologizing divinities and Hellenistic popular piety was probably very wide. Early Neoplatonism, that of Plotinus, could be characterized as a *religio mentis*. Not that Plotinus would deny the value of traditional religion, but participating in the practical forms of religious life was for him clearly secondary in comparison to the imperative for a wise soul to engage in searching for the divine in its own depth. Post-Iamblichean Neoplatonism, on the contrary, is reluctant to separate itself from traditional piety but tries to establish a balance where religious life is philosophically based and conceptually convincing and at the same time compatible with the modes of traditional piety and mythology.

I consider as an indication of its success that later Neoplatonism could find and formulate many valid notions for understanding traditional religions, notions which are similar to interpretive positions taken by modern research regarding ancient Greek religions, for example: 1. the concept of divinity inherent in the world; 2. a view of gods as powers and forces more numinous than persons; 3. the view that Homer's description of the Olympian pantheon was not intended on its anthropomorphic and poetic surface as an adequate and complete depiction of the nature of the gods adored in popular piety and honored by official cult.

In his *Commentary of Plato's Republic*, Proclus defends Homer against Plato, or better against Socrates, who would like to expel poetry and indecent myths from his ideal state. Proclus' attempt is also a defense of Plato because Plato's attitude towards Homer in the *Republic* seems to be inconsistent with his praising the poet as a voice of truth elsewhere. With the standards of his own exegesis, Proclus naturally succeeds in his aims and can conclude that Homer is indeed a divinely inspired poet and when properly interpreted in total agreement with Plato's doctrine in all the most important points. And surely, for Proclus this is ultimately Plato's authentic view too. Proclus could maintain a harmony between the poet and the philosopher by asserting that in reality Plato is not condemning Homer but is wanting to restrict the access to seemingly morally dubious poetry and myths from audiences which are not advanced enough to understand the real meaning below the surface.⁶²

In the course of demonstrating this thought, Proclus builds his own Neoplatonic theory that depicts a three-part poetry where genres are related to the different levels of the soul's life and correspond with distinctive levels of symbolic relations. His final theory at the end of the 6th dissertation of the *In Rempublicam* divides poetry into three main categories: inspired or entheastic (ἐνθεαστική), didactic and mimetic (μιμητική), the last of which he divided further into fantastic and eicastic (εἰκαστική) genres, related, as is explicitly stated in this treatise, to the three manners of soul's life. The first genre corresponds to the truly divine life of the soul and the use of secret signs (συνθήματα). The second corresponds to the soul's life according to reason and operates with lower symbols (σύμβολα) and trustworthy images (εἰκόνες) of intelligible things, while the third resonates with the irrational, emotive and sensuous powers of the soul operating solely with images from sensible world, in part good and correct ones and in part illusory and fantastic.

Proclus' ingenious defense of Homer has been narrated adequately in scholarship many times, so here there is no need to go into the details of it. I would only like to emphasize that Proclus' theory is relevant for the defense of the whole traditional religion, not only in its mythology, its extra-rational "theory", but also in its practice, its rites and mysteries. What Proclus says about poetry is valid also for the myths and rituals, which are in a sense re-enacted myths and which very much share the same shocking, indecent, and

⁶² *In Remp.* 1.198.8.-24, *In Tim.* 1.202.9-205.24 Proclus adds a historical remark according to which Plato's attitude could be explained on the grounds that in his time tragedians and poets enjoyed too much admiration in comparison with philosophers.

obscene traits derided and blamed in moralistic critique. For Proclus, rituals and mysteries are activities which can be interpreted as quasi-linguistic systems. Inspired poetry expresses with artistic sophistication themes derived from mythology, and myths speak with enigmas about the same divine truths to which the mysteries refer by a speechless language understood in the depths of the soul.⁶³

The similar hierarchy seen in the structure of myths and poetry is thus applicable to the different levels of the practice of religion. If this interpretation is correct, the lowest mode of religion for Proclus is idol worship, where the object of reverence is an image of an image. The second mode in conventional religion accords with the common notions of the gods and hopefully ethical conduct based on and derived from these notions. Third is the religion of the philosophers, with a rational grasp of divine reality achieved by purifying the mind with dialectics. The last and highest modes are the occasional experiences of real unification with the deities governing certain classes of gods and even touching on the hypernoetic level of their unified totality. This kind of reconstruction of Proclus' view regarding the scales of piety would result in a similar picture to that of Iamblichus in his theory of types of souls and corresponding sacrifices.⁶⁴

Ultimately Proclus' conception of the hierarchy of symbolical relations is also an explanation for the theory of the different modes of a soul's life, as it makes a distinction between the levels of mythology, poetry, and worship. A two-part division between an iconic mimesis and a non-iconic symbolic mode is too crude here. Proclus' view has a continuum of degrees establishing different relations between sign and signified, from the most faithfully representational image (εἰκόνες) to the upmost mysterious divine sign (συνθήματα). For Neoplatonists a symbol -- and I include here under the term symbol also its metaphysically weaker brother, icon, and the stronger, synthema -- is not an arbitrary sign but refers to a real relationship between

63 It is interesting to see that this is one point where later Neoplatonic views come close to recent notions in modern research of ancient religion. Considering a shift in the study of religions towards the end of the 20th century, Walter Burkert says that "An origin for the rituals themselves was sought, for the most part without discussion, in primitive thought or imagination. In recent times, the tendency is more to regard rituals as an initially autonomous, quasi-linguistic system alongside and prior to spoken language ... From this perspective, ritual is an action divorced from its primary practical context which bears a semiotic character, and its function normally lies in group formations, the creation of solidarity ... This quasi-language operates not only through learning and imitations, but acts as an imprinting force, especially for children and adolescents", Burkert (1985), 54.

64 In the seventh book of *De Mysteriis* Iamblichus distinguishes between three types of souls and their proper sacrifices. First are the noetic souls, whose sacrifices are absolutely incorporeal and spiritual, aiming at salvation, perfection, and the purification of the soul, and they are directed at the hypercosmic gods. Sacrifices carried out by people whose soul is stamped by the presence of matter are material, directed to the encosmic and hylic gods, and concern divine judgment and punishment. In between is a mixed group of souls with both material and incorporeal elements, who attain connection to the transitory level of the gods (which in Iamblichus anticipates Proclus' class of encosmic and hypercosmic gods): the pious acts of these people are concerned with asceticism and ethical rectification. I am grateful to Theoklitos Babouris for reminding me of this Iamblichean issue.

things which could be expressed using an appropriate analogy. The art of an exegete is just to find an analogy which is proper, that establishes the correct scale and frame of the terms.⁶⁵

An iconic relationship consists of notions which are in more or less direct relation. For example, the relation between model and copy is for Neoplatonists the fundamental relationship in ontology and is based on qualified similarity. The icon is like but also unlike its paradigm: if it was not unlike, it would be identical with the archetype.⁶⁶ For the exegete, the most obvious analogy would be a correspondence on a term-to-term basis. In the case of the symbol, by comparison, dissimilarity dominates the relationship of the sign and the thing symbolized. The analogy relation here is not immediate, but hinted at. The more enigmatic a symbol is, the more powerful it is, meaning that it is alluding to more transcendental things.⁶⁷ With a σύνθημα, the secret sign of recognition, we have a symbol which in the extreme case is totally opaque. If symbols work in an enigmatic way, showing by veiling, then synthema is the enigma itself. Actually, it is not to be understood, but experienced. An analogy relation is still there, as seen, for example, by the fact that σύνθημα operates in a theurgic context, but it is not rationally explainable.⁶⁸ Σύνθημα, which is utterly dark, totally black on black, comes closer to the symbol proper and hints at the existence of an underlying analogy by an inversion of outer significance. We have a meaningful, lofty referent hidden by a monstrous, unnatural, and absurd outward form.⁶⁹

65 See Dillon (1991), 247-263.

66 See Sheppard (1980), 249.

67 See Coulter's appendix on the term "symbol" in Proclus' usage where he writes "Symbolon, as its etymology suggests, originally denoted a fragment - usually a half - of a whole object, such as a die, which could later be joined with (symballein means 'to join') the other half in order that each of "two xenoi (i.e. 'guestfriends'), or any two contracting parties "might" have proof of the identity of the other ... There is thus present in the word, from the very outset, two notions which later proved of great importance: that, first, of a suggestive incompleteness, i.e. the condition of being a single entity which yet hints at some preexisting whole or other larger entity of which it is a part, and secondly, the necessity of some prior knowledge regarding the significance of the whole. We may describe these as the hinting power of the symbol and its secret meaning.... there should be added a third attribute of the symbol, and that is that its significance, and the possibility of its interpretation, frequently rest on the mechanism of correspondence.", Coulter (1976), 61.

68 In his treatise of prayer in *In Tim.* I 209-214.13, Proclus says that synthemata are the material causes of prayer.

69 *In Remp* 1.85.16-26: "It seems to me that the grim, monstrous, and unnatural character of poetic fiction moves the listener in every way to a search for the truth, and draws him toward the secret knowledge; it does not allow him, as would be the case with something that possessed a surface probability, to remain with the thoughts placed before him. It compels him, instead, to enter into the interior of the myths and to busy himself with the thought which has been concealed, out of sight, by the makers of myth and to ponder what kinds of natures and what great powers they introduced into the meaning of the myths and communicated to posterity by means of such symbols as these", Coulter's translation.

4.1.2 An Example of Exegesis: *In Remp.* 1.108, 1-109,7

Introductory note

Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Republic is not a typical line-by-line commentary such as his great systematic commentaries on the dialogues of Plato which were part of the obligatory study material according to the Iamblican plan observed in the Athenian school. The book consists of the seventeen treatises, of which sixteen expound the content of the dialogue following fairly faithfully its original structure; the last one deals with Aristotle's objections to this work of Plato. Sheppard argues convincingly that Proclus' Platonic essays are divided into two different groups.⁷⁰ Dissertations 1-5, 7-8 and 10-15 form material for an introductory course on the dialogue. The rest of the work consists of special treatises: the sixth is on the defense of Homer and poetry, the ninth is about the Socratic discussion on the equality of men and women, the tenth (known as Melissa) concerns the speech of the Muses in the Republic, and sixteenth is the myth of Er.

A reader seeking political theory from Proclus' commentary does not find much. Proclus' reading of the Republic is mainly theological. Bastid's estimation may be typical of the earlier reception: "In total, this discontinuous commentary on the Republic tells us much less about the literal meaning of an often difficult text, but generally provides extended and arbitrary metaphysical notions, which unfold Proclus' abstract imagination and his frenzy for religious complications."⁷¹ In more recent times the sixth essay has aroused slightly more sympathetic scholarly interest as a sophisticated monograph about the allegorical interpretation of myths and Plato's attitude towards Homer.

Proclus owes much to his master Syrianus and does not leave the debt without recognition. The sixth treatise begins with an eulogy of Syrianus, where he describes his teacher as a hierophant of Plato and sets himself the task to transmit as exactly as his strengths permit Syrianus' teaching.⁷² In the conclusion of the treatise Proclus again refers to the memory of Syrianus and ends with these solemn words: "these are things that I could tell you, but you must not reveal them to the vulgar multitude."⁷³ However, here Proclus is hardly claiming that his treatise literally has the status of esoteric wisdom, since he has made it clear that, after all, he is not telling every detail; one who wants to follow the subject in more detail could familiarize himself "with the teachings of our Master, who reveals many admirable doctrines in his (work) Solutions for Homeric Problems".⁷⁴

70 Sheppard (1980), 203.

71 Bastid (1969), 65.

72 *In Remp.* 1.71-21-27.

73 *In Remp.* 1.205-23: ταῦτα, ὧ φίλοι ἐταῖροι, μνήμη κεχαρίσθω τῆς τοῦ καθηγεμόνος ἡμῶν συνουσίας, ἐμοὶ μὲν ὄντα ῥητὰ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ὑμῖν δὲ ἄρρητα πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς

74 *In Remp.*, 1, 95,27-30. Buffiere saw this as a title of a written work, (1956), 542, and Festugière translates it as a title, 113. In effect, it resembles the typical title of the Neoplatonist monograph dedicated to the solution of a specific philosophical and exegetical problem. Compare, for instance the title of Damascius' *magnum opus* (*De*

The myths on Aphrodite which traditionally were felt to be the most problematic are all brought into discussion in this Commentary, including those in which she is among the leading protagonists -- the story of Paris, the adultery with Ares and her participation in the struggle of gods around Ilion --and those in which she is decisively an acting partner -- the life of Helen and Hera's trick on Zeus. The first of these exegetical pieces is dealt here as a detailed example of Proclus' exegesis, and it comes from the first part of the sixth essay and concerns the Judgment of Paris.

Text and translation

Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τὴν θρυλουμένην κρίσιν τῶν θεῶν, ἣν παρὰ τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ γενέσθαι φασὶν οἱ μῦθοι κατὰ τὴν παλαιὰν φήμην, οὐ δεῖ νομίζειν αὐτῶν ὄντως εἶναι τῶν θεῶν ἔριν τε πρὸς ἀλλήλας καὶ ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς βαρβάρου κρίσιν, ἀλλ' ἠγητέον ὅτι καὶ αἱ τῶν βίων αἰρέσεις, ἃς δὴ πολλαχοῦ παραδίδωσιν ὁ Πλάτων, ὑπὸ θεοῖς ἐφόροις γίνονται τῶν ψυχῶν. καὶ τρυτο δῆπου καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν Φαίδρῳ διδάσκει σαφῶς, τὸν μὲν βασιλικὸν βίον Ἥρας εἶναι λέγων, τὸν δὲ φιλόσοφον Διός, τὸν δὲ ἐρωτικὸν Ἀφροδίτης. ὅταν οὖν αἱ ψυχὰι πολλῶν αὐταῖς ἐκ τοῦ παντὸς προτεινομένων βίων κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν κρίσιν τούσδε μὲν ἀσπάζονται, τούσδε δὲ ἀποσκευάζονται, τῆνικαῦτα οἱ μῦθοι μεταφέροντες ἐπ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς θεοὺς τὰς τῶν βίων ιδιότητας κρίνεσθαί φασιν ὑπὸ τῶν αἰρουμένων τοὺς βίους τοὺς ἐφόρους τῆς κατ' εἶδος ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐξαλλαγῆς. καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον δὴ τὸν λόγον καὶ ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος καταστήναι λέγεται κριτῆς Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ Ἥρας καὶ Ἀφροδίτης, τριῶν μὲν αὐτῶ βίων προτεινομένων, ἐλόμενος δὲ τὸν ἐρωτικόν, καὶ τοῦτοῦ μετὰ φρονήσεως, ἀλλ' ἐπιτρέχων τῷ τῶν φαινομένων κάλλει καὶ τὸ εἶδωλον ἐπιδιώκων τοῦ νοητοῦ κάλλους. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὄντως ἐρωτικὸς νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν προστησάμενος καὶ μετὰ τούτων τό τε ἀληθινὸν κάλλος καὶ τὸ φαινόμενον θεωρῶν οὐχ ἡσρόν ἐστιν Ἀθηναϊκὸς ἢ Ἀφροδισιακός· ὁ δὲ αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μόνον τὸ ἐρωτικὸν εἶδος ἐπιδιώκων μετὰ πάθους ἀφίσταται μὲν τῶν ἀληθινῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν, ὑπὸ δὲ ἀνοίας καὶ λαίμαργίας ἐπιπηδᾷ τῷ εἰδῶλῳ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ περὶ τοῦτο κείται πεσῶν, οὐδὲ τῆς τῷ ἐρωτικῷ συμμετρου τελειότητος τυχῶν. ὁ γὰρ δὴ τελῶς ἐρωτικὸς καὶ Ἀφροδίτη μέλων ἐπ' αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον κάλλος ἀνάγεται τῶν ἐν αἰσθήσει καλῶν ὑπερορῶν· ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἐμφανοῦς κάλλους καὶ τοῦ ἐν ὕλῃ τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχοντος εἰσὶ τινες Ἀφροδισιακοὶ προστάται δαίμονες, διὰ δὴ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ τὸ εἶδωλον περιέπων συνεργοῦ λέγεται τῆς Ἀφροδίτης τυγχάνειν.

When it comes to the judgment of goddesses, about which Alexander has discussed at length, according to the myths of the old tradition one should not believe that there has actually been a dispute between the gods and the barbarian's judgments, but one has to realize that souls make their choices of lives -- as Plato has said in many places -- under the supervision of the gods. And this he surely teaches us in *Phaedrus*, clearly saying that kingly life is Hera, philosophical Zeus, and erotic Aphrodite. When the souls who are offered several kinds of lives by the Whole accept some and reject others according to their own judgments, then the myths, transferring to the gods themselves the characteristics of life, say that gods are judged by those who choose life, the gods who preside over the change of modes in these lives. According to this explanation, it is said that Alexander also is established as a judge of Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite, when three kinds of life are offered to him, and he chooses the erotic life, and this without prudence but running eagerly after the beauty of visible things and seeking phantom images of intelligible beauty. Since an authentic lover, who has taken understanding and wisdom as guides and can distinguish with the aid of these between real and apparent beauty, does not belong less to Athena than to

Principiis) "Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles".

Aphrodite. But such a one who pursues an exclusively erotic kind of life filled with passion draws himself away from the really beautiful and good things, and with unreason and gluttony grasps at the idol of beauty and falls down without achieving the perfection that is appropriate for a real lover. But the perfect erotic pursuant, who Aphrodite has taken care of, ascends to divine beauty, which itself disdains beautiful things in the sensible realm. Since there are certain Aphrodisiac demons presiding over apparent beauty and such things which have their standing in matter, therefore also one who honors an idol is said to have obtained the help of Aphrodite.

Commentary

Paris' judgment does not come from Homer's great epic works, but Proclus considers it to be genuinely Homeric⁷⁵ and as such part of the sound Greek theological tradition. He makes this stand clear by using in the title word "the Poet" and by calling Paris Alexander, just as Homer does in the Iliad.

The verb θρῦλλέω, which also means "babbling", expresses impatience towards those who are incapable or not willing to approach Homer in a way that should be applied to sacred texts, that is, reading them through symbolic interpretation. That there is no real strife among the gods is an authentic principle of the classical Platonism. Socrates in the Republic rejects traditional myths about disagreements among the gods, because such stories are dangerous from the pedagogic point of view, but also because the suggestion that gods struggle against each other is factually wrong.⁷⁶ In this there is agreement between Plato's theology and its late antique interpreters, but views differs in the valuation of the poetry, as Neoplatonists will save morally dubious stories, seeing them not as simply false but expressing theological truth through symbols.

Proclus also rejects the notion of the revelations of the goddesses before Paris, neither in a general sense, that divine epiphanies are not possible, and, in effect, nor in the sense that these deities had not revealed themselves to Paris in history. What is wrong is the notion that a divine epiphany had occurred in such a way as the inherited myth literally suggests. Proclus strongly believed in the possibility and reality of the divine epiphanies as such. His explanation for human perceptions of divine visions is that they concern lower links in the divine chains and that the gods reveal themselves to the soul's internal faculty of fantasy, which has its material part in the so-called pneumatic vehicle of the soul.⁷⁷ Visions are doubly determined, from the senders and from the receivers, who are somehow similar. This notion is based on the theory of divine signs (synthemata) and the theory of the soul's faculties, especially when it comes to the role of the imagination.⁷⁸ A mystical sign in the soul stamps that particular soul so that it now belongs to a certain

75 Lamberton (1986), 202 notes that "the Proclus of the *Chrestomathy* indicates that it was narrated in the Cypria, and the single reference in the Iliad (24.29-30) has been treated with suspicion since Aristarchus.

76 Οὐδέ γε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τὸ παράπαν ὡς Θεοὶ Θεοῖς πολεμοῦσί τε καὶ ἐπιβουλεύουσι καὶ μάχονται - οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀληθῆ, Plato, *Pol.* 378.b.8-378.c1.

77 For the theory of epiphany see *In Remp.* 1. 39, 1-40, 3.

78 There is a good discussion in Trouillard (1982), especially 30-50.

divine series. When the soul functions at its highest level, it no longer occupies itself with futile illusions deriving from the sensible, but an embodied soul has perception of the immaterial, incorporeal and invisible things through or in its figurative faculty. From the perspective of the body, the bearer of this faculty is the "vehicle"; from the perspective of the soul, fantasy is the lowest form of entheastic activity (the others being the summit of contemplation and hypernoetic cognition exercised by the flower of the intellect and flower of the whole soul). In this sense, the vehicle of the soul is for the body, what the flower of the intellect is for the soul as such (that is, the soul considered above and outside of the body).

Proclus' denies historicity of Paris' judgment in the way as mythologists say it having been happened, but not reality of divine epiphanies in principle, nor that the goddess might have appeared to historical Paris as well. Here the mythologists have presented relationships outside space and time, as an event in mythological history.

The core of Paris' story in Proclus is psychological. His exegesis is based on the doctrine of the modes of the soul's life, which he finds from Plato's *Phaedrus*. In coming to the world, souls choose, under divine supervision, a form of life which corresponds to their dispositions. A kingly life is dependent on Hera, a philosophical one on Zeus (represented by Athena in the tale of Paris), and a loving one on Aphrodite.

Proclus's refusal to take at face-value a story about a barbarian judging the gods does not only apply to this specific case, instead, it should be taken more categorically. The sheer idea of real disagreements and disputes among the gods is from Proclus's perspective untenable, since it would imply wronged and wrong-doing parties and demolish providence as something structured and hierarchically ordered, yet unique and beneficent. Setting humans above the gods would add blasphemy to this already faulty theology. Even if Proclus did not have in mind the current issues of his time when formulating this exegesis, its inherent logic, of course, rejects all stories where humans would judge gods, including that of Pontius Pilate too.

According to Proclus, the proper context for the judgment myth is the Platonic theory explaining how souls choose the mode in which they will live their embodied lives before descending "here", in the mattered realm of becoming. "Supervising gods" could mean any of the deities who function as protectors (for the person, location - like in *Phaedrus* 275b -- or activity - like god's protecting philosophy, in Syrianus *In Arist. Metaph.* 195, l. 17), but this passage refers rather to the special class of the encosmic divinities, whose task is to oversee the descent of the souls. *In Tim.* 3.166.2, Proclus makes a distinction between a supercelestial, a celestial, and a third class of gods, called "supervisors of the becoming" (ἐφόροις τῆς γενέσεως) and explains that each of these classes of gods has a corresponding retinue of angels, heroes, and demons, who hold the name of their leader (the Aphrodisiac group is here explicitly mentioned, 3.166.10). Reference to supervisors probably points to this same specific class of gods also in *In Crat.* 81.18, *In Remp.* 2.52.26, and *In Tim.* 1.133.10.

Proclus claims that Plato has expounded upon the theory of the choices of lives in many places but that he explicated it most clearly in *Phaedrus* (108.9: ἐν Φαίδρῳ διδάσκει σαφῶς). According to Lamberton, Proclus had to twist his sources here quite considerably because, although there are two applicable passages in *Phaedrus*, the episode fits better with the myth of Er, "where Plato insists that souls choose their lives and are therefore responsible for the choices they make".⁷⁹ Festugière also points out that contrary to what Proclus says, Plato does not discuss Aphrodite in the major passage (253 B 2), instead, this goddess arrives on the scene only with the discussion on the "four manias" (265 B 4). Plato makes no mention of Athena in that place either. Hermias comments on 265 B 4, and his words could be regarded as Syrianus defining the relationship between Aphrodite and Eros: "As Aphrodite belongs to beauty, Eros leads up to the beautiful, and so Eros belongs to Aphrodite and follows her, ascending to sensible and noetic beauty. So we call Eros a divine madness, derived from the grasping of sensible beauty and culminating in the recollection of the beautiful itself".⁸⁰ I will return to this idea in the chapter on Proclus' concept of primal Eros.

Proclus reminds us here that according to *Phaedrus* a philosophical life depends on Zeus. The father of the gods is not, however, present in this particular piece of mythology. Proclus clearly treats Athena as a goddess of philosophy and representative of Zeus. Athena is born from the head of Zeus and is hypostasized into a metaphysical figure representing the living thinking of Zeus. Proclus does not discuss Hermes, the fourth god traditionally linked to the judgment of Paris. Neoplatonists regarded him, too, as equated with the Egyptian Thoth, as the god of philosophy, and Proclus thought that he himself belonged to the series of Hermes. How can we reconcile that there are three different deities that are declared gods of philosophy? A plausible explanation would perhaps be that Zeus and Athena are philosophical divinities from the causal viewpoint and Hermes from the point of view of reversion, as he is the god who takes care of the return of souls. This solution would fit well with Hermes' role as a guide of souls, which he carries out here also.

This idea is not pure speculation beyond explicit text. For Syrianus and Proclus, the Homeric image of the Golden Chain (Iliad VIII.18) is a symbol of demiurgy, connecting noetic paradigms to their copies in discursive thinking and the sensible world. As Alvis Uzdavinyas aptly says, "... the Golden Chain is the same as the Hermaic Chain ... [it] is both the theophany, or manifestation, of descent and the ladder of ascent".⁸¹ Thus, what Zeus does through Athena is recuperated by the philosophical soul through Hermes. Besides being the highest philosophical god, Zeus is also the king of the world. Since the true king is a genuine philosopher, according to Plato's

79 Lamberton (1986), 202.

80 Hermias, *In Phaedr.*, 233.2-5: Ἐπειδὴ ἡ Ἀφροδίτη τοῦ κάλλους ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ Ἔρως εἰς τὸ καλὸν ἀνάγει, διὰ τοῦτο ὁ Ἔρως τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἔστι καὶ ἔπεται αὐτῇ, ἀνάγων εἰς τὸ κάλλος τὸ αἰσθητὸν καὶ νοητὸν. Λέγομεν οὖν τὸν Ἔρωτα θεῖαν μανίαν ἐξ ἀναμνήσεως τῶν αἰσθητῶν καλῶν εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ἐρχομένην τοῦ αὐτοκάλου.

81 Uzdavinyas (2004), xxii.

Republic, Syrianus' school interprets kingly qualities as deriving from the philosophical, and thus Hera as a consort of the heavenly king is appropriate to represent this property as such. Plato, of course, himself connects a kingly attribute to Hera.

What the myth is doing is transferring (μεταφέρω) modes of lives to the gods themselves. Lambertson notes that the term "from which our 'metaphor' is derived is Aristotelian and is not commonly used by Proclus to describe the ways in which discourse functions"⁸².

A key idea that Proclus wants to underline is that the soul chooses its life. Gods cannot be blamed, as they are totally free of evil. This idea is an application of the principle present everywhere in Neoplatonic thinking: the effluence of the One/Good reaches to every entity, but each receives it only according to its own capabilities.⁸³ For a modern reader, this idea raises several questions. How could primal causes have no responsibility for the existence of evil, even if such an existence were only an existence on the side? What would primal causes be like, if they were defined not as neutral forces working outside the human moral world but, on the contrary, declared as effective sources that spread goodness in the supersystem which would also be a moral order? How can a soul be responsible in the moral sense, if it is conditioned by its capacities which are formed by these very same good forces? A late antique Neoplatonist seems to truly believe that he had given satisfactory answers. Let us admit that Neoplatonic solutions are feasible to those who grant relevancy to such concepts as providence and theodicy.

Scholars who have studied this Proclean passage in a somewhat detailed manner have been in agreement that we are faced here with a plain case of allegory. Proclus' "moral allegory is so familiar in its basic claims that few of us would deny its relevance to the myth in question. Since there is conveniently no text to interpret, there is no danger of contradiction on that level," says Lambertson.⁸⁴ Kuisma also sees that the interpretation is quite straightforward, even literal, and is based on psychological determinism. Paris chose Aphrodite, and Proclus says that Paris' "personal eagerness for sensual beauty predetermined his decision. Through psychological character analysis Proclus has explained why Alexander did what he did." Kuisma opines that

82 Lambertson (1986), 203.

83 This theory does not apply only to the One and all that is derived from it in the transmission of the property of "unity" but functions also as general principle of ontology, epistemology, and of hieratic activity as well. The *Elements of Theology* introduces it in consideration of the theory of participation, often with the technical term ἐπιτηδειότης, "fitness", or receptive capacity, as in, for example, prop. 39 (42.7-10) καὶ ἡ ὄρεξις οὐκ τοῖς μὲν ἐστὶ κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι μόνον, ἐπιτηδειότης οὐσα πρὸς τὴν μέθεξιν τῶν αἰτίων, "Some things, accordingly, have appetite in respect of bare existence only, that is, a fitness for the participation of their causes", tr. Dodds. Other places in ET are props. 71, 72, 79, 140, 143, 189. See also Dodds' commentary on 223 where he emphasizes its connection with theurgy. That modes of cognition differ between themselves according to the capability or fitness of knowing agents to apprehend the object of knowledge is an application of this principle in the field of epistemology.

84 Lambertson (1986), 203.

centering on theological themes, Proclus could have produced a more symbolic interpretation.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, perhaps Proclus' interpretation is not after all totally flat. From the theological viewpoint, an interesting issue is an "overlapping" of the goddesses. Proclus points out that an authentically erotic being does not belong less to Athena than to Aphrodite (108, 22-25: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὄντως ἐρωτικὸς νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν προστησάμενος καὶ μετὰ τούτων τό τε ἀληθινὸν κάλλος καὶ τὸ φαινόμενον θεωρῶν οὐχ ἥσσόν ἐστιν Ἀθηναϊκὸς ἢ Ἀφροδισιακός). This certainly is one of the cases where Proclus' predilection for Athena comes to the surface. He is actually portraying Athena, too, as a patroness of love. If Proclus were in Paris' place, he would have given the prize to Athena. This shift would have been the philosopher's solution and especially appropriate for Proclus, who has a special relation to this goddess.⁸⁶ According to the myth, Paris' choice was conditioned as far as his task was not to choose the best but the "most beautiful". Unfortunately, Proclus does not introduce this background issue, so perhaps we can think that Paris' inner disposition conditioned him to see the most beautiful as the best. Be that as it may, the interesting idea clearly present in the passage is that the overlapping of the deities happens also from the part of Aphrodite.

Proclus does not say that the veritable erotic being, armed with reason and understanding, belongs more to Athena than Aphrodite. In effect the perfect erotic being has taken Aphrodite as guide and ascended to beauty itself, despising merely sensual objects of beauty. If Proclus is working here with the same precision as in the *Platonic Theology*, this means that the perfect erotic being, truly a follower of Aphrodite, ascends to the second member triad of the first noetic triad. This statement has a parallel in the Hieratic Art (*De sacrificio et magia* 148, 1-3) where Proclus says that lovers rise from sensible things to the unique origin of all noetic and beautiful things.

What is most important is that Proclus does not say that Paris' choice of Aphrodite determined him to fall to the world of idols. He makes a significant qualification: Paris chose the erotic life, but he chose it *without* prudence (108,20-21: ἐλόμενος δὲ τὸν ἐρωτικόν, καὶ τοῦτο οὐ μετὰ φρονήσεως). In the arithmetics of life, subtracting prudence equals adding passion. Proclus does not condemn the pursuit of earthly love as such for souls who are capable of only that. Neither should his thoughts regarding the contrast between the goddesses be interpreted in a manner that would equate Aphrodite with an amorous life driven by passion. But the goddess is more than these qualities especially when contemplated as a leading deity in her own divine series. Thus, Paris is not an archetype of the erotic soul but a mixed erotic soul marred by passion. A comparable psychological case is introduced in *In Remp.* 2.317.12-14, in the form of Agamemnon. His soul was kingly but with the addition of the passion of hate. Therefore, his life deviated from the ideal which in principle was attainable for his soul. Paris' situation is a special case of the general descending of the soul. Descent happens

85 Kuisma (1996), 101-102.

86 Marinus tells us that Athena moved to live with Proclus after her statue was removed from the Parthenon, Marinus, *Vita Procli* 30, see also 6, 9, 15, and 29.

because souls do not see what they really desire. When they cannot see the world above them, they see the corporeal and material world below and rush to catch that, because they see in it a mirror image of the intelligible. Paris pursues the idol of real beauty because passion forces him to concentrate only on erotic love without its necessary rectifier, which is Athene in Aphrodite, Athene being ultimately the thinking of Zeus. Proclus thus connects Aphrodite to the authentic erotic madness which can function as a springboard for the soul's purification⁸⁷ and is a necessary precondition for the ascent of the soul. In this sense, the soul cannot realize Athene within it without realizing Aphrodite.

In the last sentence, Proclus takes into consideration the theory of the divine series at its lowest stages, saying that Aphrodite's series also provides for the existence of those beautiful things which are perceptible on the corporeal and material realm. This idea is a concession to the Greek erotic tradition and to primordial popular religion. The important point is that Proclus finds a place for these traditions in his version of Neoplatonic theology. Those who honor idols -- by which Proclus does not mean only in the context of cult statues but all living expressions of sexuality and earthly love in the embodied world -- are also adoring Aphrodite with some justification and therefore receive help from the goddess. Proclus' limited space and wording for earth-bound love contains, of course, strong reservation, and it is mostly dedicated to demonstrating Aphrodite as an ascending power. Proclus' denial of mundane love probably goes beyond Plato's view and is due to a "Pythagorean" type of renunciative tendency clearly in ascendancy in the late ancient currents of Platonism. However, in the epoch where the idealization of virginity, sexual renunciation, and mortifying the lusts of the flesh with extreme forms of stringent asceticism were rapidly gaining a hegemonic position in ideology, Proclus' defense of Aphrodite locates him among the camp of the sober acceptance for the irresistible drives of embodied life.

87 On this salvific role of love see also, for example, *Theol. Plat.* 1.113,4-10.

5 A DEEPER LOOK AT DEFENSE'S DOSSIER

5.1.1 The Neoplatonic exegesis of *Parmenides*

In order to provide the necessary context for an attempt to understand Proclus' theology in general and his theology of Aphrodite in particular, I next try to clarify some questions related to the origin of henadology in the late Neoplatonic exegesis of *Parmenides*, then I discuss basic henadological doctrines and some terminological difficulties linked to them, such as Proclus' technical use of the word 'monad', and finally I provide a brief exposition on the ontological structure of triads in Proclus' system.

Plotinus' Neoplatonism already sets the basis for the view which identifies theology with henology, the doctrine of the One. The One is the good and the Good is the God. Divinity is the same as unity, unification means deification, and divinity is the guarantor, origin, and source of the essence for all being. Proclus, of course, completely agrees with this notion.⁸⁸ Later Neoplatonism, especially the School of Syrianus and Proclus, was the first place interested in developing from this basis the theory of the classes of the gods and the serialized procession of oneness together with the articulation of the different ontological levels of reality. This shift of interest from the Plotinian basic vision to the theology of the Athenian School could be called the move from henology to henadology.

Proclus tells us that reading *Parmenides* under Syrianus was for him like a revelation causing him to philosophically awaken. This description is surely not only a case of hyperbole in eulogizing one's teacher. Syrianus vehemently defends the idea that *Parmenides* indeed is the crown of the whole of Platonic

88 *Theol. Plat.* 1.119,9-14., *In Parm.* 641,11: τὸ ἡνωσθαι τῷ τεθεῶσθαι ταῦτόν (unifying is the same as deifying), *In Parm.* 1068,6-8: καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν ἢ τὸ μετεχόμενον ἓν (each of the gods is nothing more than a participated One), *In Parm.* 1096,28-29: ταῦτόν τὸ αὐτόεν καὶ θεός, καὶ οὐ τις ἐκεῖνο θεός, ἀλλ' αὐτοθεός. (The One itself is the same as a god, and it is not any of the gods, but the God itself).

philosophy. The dialogue was seen this way already much earlier in the tradition, but Syrianus provided to later Neoplatonism a key for the correct interpretation of Plato's enigmatic work. Modern readers of Plato have been baffled with *Parmenides*. The dialogue has often been interpreted as logical exercises or as Plato's self-criticism of the doctrine of forms. Syrianus' way of reading the dialogue as a *par excellence* theological treatise results in Proclus' ideas which could seem curious to the modern mind. But no one can deny that Proclus is consistent in his attempt to use his rule "all in all, but each appropriately" also as a hermeneutical guide. *Parmenides* forms the axis of the Platonic exposition of theology, but all Platonic dialogues are bound to support it. *Parmenides* is the survey of the gods in the intelligible realm, even a hymn to the One, as *Timaeus* is the study of the gods' presence in the visible world and a hymn to natural demiurgy.⁸⁹ But, even though they have their own theoretical topics, each of Plato's dialogues contain a theological dimension according to the Proclean view and contribute to the theory of certain divine diacosms.

Iamblichus had set rules for the order in which Plato's dialogues should be studied. Syrianus and Proclus' school essentially complied with this teaching.⁹⁰ After preliminary studies in Aristotle, which began Porphyry's introduction to his *Categories*, the Platonic canon had to be learned, and it consisted of *Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theatetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Philebus*. It is interesting that the *Republic* on which Plato's renown is currently so much based was not an obligatory part of the Neoplatonic course. It was, however, taught too, and it was extensively commented on by Proclus. *Alcibiades'* and *Philebus'* dialogues had a special place, being the first and last dialogues of the conventional primal cycle. This cycle was followed by the study of the two perfect Platonic dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*. The Platonic curriculum was completed with studies of the revelatory texts of tradition, especially the *Chaldean Oracles* and *Orphica*, in the Athenian School. Neoplatonists probably saw some deeper meaning in the fact that the conventional dialogues were ten and together with the perfect dialogues comprised twelve, the classic number of the main gods in the pantheon.

The dialogues were mapped strictly onto the virtues they were supposed to teach: *Gorgias* with political virtues, *Phaedo* with cathartic, *Cratylus*, *Theatetus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman* corresponding to theoretical virtues, *Cratylus* concerning "names" (words as linguistic objects), *Theatetus* with concepts proper (mental forms), and the rest with "things" as real entities (forms) -- the *Sophist* and *Statesman* regarding physical things and *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* with divine things. *Philebus* was the crown of the virtues, and *Alcibiades I* was an introduction to the whole of philosophy, its topic being the seeking of self-knowledge, indispensable for all virtual and theoretical education and thus the key to spiritual transformation. The

⁸⁹ The aim of Plato's *Timaeus* is to deal with nature "insofar as it is produced from the gods", *In Tim.* 1.217.18-27. This way what it provides is the theological science of nature.

⁹⁰ On the order of classical study is Festugière, (1969), some of the recent surveys include Lernould (2001), 28-29, Longo (2010 b), 616-617.

commentary tradition had given all of the dialogues an exactly defined topic. Late Neoplatonic hermeneutics demanded that each dialogue have only one topic, and Iamblichus' principle that all parts of each dialogue be related to the specific respective skopos was firmly held in the Athenian school. Notwithstanding the view that the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* were considered directly relevant for theological matters, all dialogues were mirrors of the universe, and thus each of them also had a theological dimension and provided a specific teaching concerning the respective divine order.

Thus, according to Neoplatonists from *Alcibiades I* we find a theory of the demons and especially demons present in the human soul: *Gorgias'* dogmas concerning the three demiurges, *Cratylus'* theory of the divine names, the *Sophist's* study of the properties of celestial gods, the *Statesman's* whole theory of celestial demiurgy, the cyclic movement of the cosmos and its divine causes, *Phaedrus'* theory of the noetic-noeric and some classes of hypercosmic gods, the *Symposium's* theory of demons and divine love, and *Philebus'* teaching related to the dyad of the primal principles and triad derived from them. From among the dialogues outside official school texts, the *Laws* were important in teaching providence and the existential characteristics of the gods, *Protagoras* taught the relation between mortals and gods, and the *Republic* naturally provided keys to the symbolic interpretation of myths.

Syrianus' fundamental conception was that a negative determination concerning the One in *Parmenides'* first hypothesis is a basis for a positive determination of the second hypothesis. Thus, the second hypothesis lays the foundation for the theory of henads and brings out the affirmative theology with which revelatory data of the Greek traditional theologians (Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod) as well as Chaldean and Hermetic teachings could be integrated. I think that Syrianus' hermeneutical principle that the negative is prior in value and causally primal to the affirmative was for Proclus valid not only in the sphere of higher or deep theology at the henadic level where Syrianus applied it. Proclus established it as a fundamental principle for explaining the formation of his ontological planes and divine diacosms. Following Syrianus' example, as the master had dealt with the One and the henads of being, Proclus applied the principle of the primacy of negative principles in building the theory of noetic and noeric gods. This way he provided a late Neoplatonic solution to the problems of how to interpret Plato's *Phaedrus* and find a definite place for this dialogue in theology. I think that in the realm of dogmatics, this was Proclus' main contribution to Neoplatonic thought.

5.1.2 The One and the henads

Before going into Proclus' ontological triads and the divine classes participated by them, it may be useful to briefly deal with his "deep henadology". Thus with the following schema, we can illustrate the procession of the gods on the supraessential level that is beyond the definite series of the ontic entities:

The Procession of the One on the supraessential level
 arreton (ineffable) =
 The One = the Good =
 The henad of the henads =
 hyperhenosis =
 the total of the henads(gods)

In this figure indentation depicts the internal procession in the henadic sphere and procession (declension) towards the sphere of being. In the equality statements, the loftier, more fundamental and valued theological names are on the left side. These terms are in a sense the same, and in a sense not. According to Neoplatonist thinking, there is no real difference between them, but we have to make a conceptual separation in order to grasp the relation of divine things to the world of being and becoming. "Ineffable" is a name for use in human language, a negative term, emphasizing the asymmetrical and non-reciprocating nature of the relation, where in fact the referent in itself has no relation to the things following it: actually it has no relation even to itself. It is pure non-being, but in a non privative sense, existing as the ground for and ultimate cause of supraessential divinities and the proper world of being produced and proceeded by it through and with these divinities. The "One" and "Good" are names for the primal principle seen already as somehow related to its effects. The word "One" evinces a procession and the causal dimension, the unfolding of reality as a derivation of the multiplicity from the primal source. The "Good" is a name for reversion, for the goal of inherent desire which everything has, longing to convert towards its source and to "return" to its cause. The "henad of henads" means the primal principle in its function as the root of the first supraessential series, the divinity of all gods, which in their turn are representatives of the oneness in the root members of the ontological orders. "Hyperhenosis" emphasizes the henadic unity which is as a first unity a model for all that follows it among beings and things of the world of becoming. "Total of the henads" conveys the same meaning, but instead of unity, it emphasizes wholeness as the first structured multiplicity.

This model of serialized unfolding is repeated many times in Proclus' metaphysics. In each case we have a preceding cause, precontaining and producing a manifold derived from it, but as we get to the lower stages of procession unity between the root and the manifold weakens. For Proclus the

divine multiplicity differs from the other manifolds in the fact that each henad is inseparably united to the others. They are not parts of the One but the One in a participated mode within beings, and in this sense each henad is every henad, and every henad is the One. At the same time henads possess in the pre-existent mode root qualities which are manifested at the ontic level in distinctively separated ideal forms (Platonic ideas) which in their turn are paradigms for the things of becoming. Given that the henads have different properties of being in the causal mode, they perhaps paradoxically are not only more united between themselves than any real being could be united with itself, but at the same time they are supraessential individuals, having purer individuality than any real being or thing of becoming could have. Actually, the unity and particular distinction in henads are the source and cause of the identity and difference of real beings.⁹¹

While there is no real separation between the One and the henads, in the intelligible sphere there is still a high level of unity where forms participate in each other, but nevertheless there is a division between the subject of intellection and the objects of its thought. At the level of cosmogenesis we can see at one extreme the transcendent demiurge, while at the lowest level of visible corporeal things are the products of a "younger" demiurgy. In the theory expounded in the *Commentary on Timaeus*, demiurgy is divided into three stages: that of Zeus, which brings the hypercosmic diacosm into existence, that of Dionysus, which creates the cosmic-celestial diacosm⁹², and at last that of the sublunar, which belongs to the demiurgy of Adonis.⁹³

The basic Platonic division into two worlds or two levels of reality comes to view in Proclus after the henadic domain. Proclus thinks that the procession starts from undifferentiated unity, goes through the ontic domain to form a series of entities on a declining scale of universality, and concludes with the utmost particularity. The sense-perceptible (ἄισθητός) world is the sphere of divisible essence (ὄυσία), and the noetic is that of the undivided.⁹⁴ What the henads/gods have to do in this schema is succinctly expressed by Proclus who says that separating all beings into gods and the offspring of gods equates to dividing them into supraessential monads and a procession from these.⁹⁵ This division also brings forth the difference between how the products of henadic and ontic procession come into existence. "Father" is the mythological name by which Proclus means here the first noetic triad and the One present within

91 See especially *In Parm.* 1047.24-1049.37. Edward Butler's great merit in recent studies has been shifting the interest to the henads as the ground for individuation and even to the henads themselves as unique individuals.

92 This celestial in our concrete world should not be confounded with the celestial proper, which Proclus locates in the noetic-noeric order.

93 *In Tim.* 1.29.7-14, 1.446,5ff, 2.28.1, *In Remp.* 2.8.15ff: ...εἰς τὰς τρεῖς δημιουργίας ἀναφερομένων, εἰς τὴν Δίον, εἰς τὴν Διονυσιακὴν, εἰς τὴν Ἀδωνιακὴν ...

94 See *In Parm.* 706.1 ff.

95 *Theol. Plat.* 5.53.1-5: Εἰ μὲν δὴ πάντα διαιροῖμεν εἰς θεοὺς καὶ τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἔκγονα (τοῦτο δὲ ταῦτόν τῳ διαιρεῖν εἰς τε ὑπερουσίους μονάδας καὶ τὰς τῶν ὄντων προόδους), ὁ μὲν πατὴρ τῶν θεῶν ἔσται γεννητικὸς καὶ τῶν ὑπερουσίων ἐνάδων, ὁ δὲ ποιητὴς τῶν οὐσιῶν καὶ τῶν ὄντων ὑποστάτης.

it, that is, the first henad or peras-element of the first triads (not the transcendent and imparticipable One), its infinity and mixture formed by them. It generates the gods and supraessential henads (ὁ μὲν πατήρ τῶν θεῶν ἔσται γεννητικὸς καὶ τῶν ὑπερουσίῳν ἐνάδων), whereas the demiurge (in the Greek tradition "Zeus") is the maker who produces essences and the substance-giver who brings entities into existence (ὁ δὲ ποιητὴς τῶν οὐσιῶν καὶ τῶν ὄντων ὑποστάτης).⁹⁶

The procession of the One does not end at the level of the supreme being but continues through ontological orders down to matter. Below the independent henads "Oneness" is present as an acquired quality of the participants whose own specific metaphysical status is different and "lower" in relation to the pure sphere of Oneness.⁹⁷ This thing derived could also be called a henad but only in a qualified sense differing from the self-sufficient, independent henads. Proclus calls this possessed henad also an illumination from the One and a mystical sign (synthema) or flower (highest summit of existence in something). As a possessed quality, oneness, however, is very peculiar because without it there would be no essence or existence in anything. Thus, unity as a summit and flower is the immanent god everywhere where it is present. Thus, everything is deified in proportion to its order (κατὰ τὴν εαυτοῦ τάξιν) which determines its capability of receiving the One's illumination. In *De dec. dub.* X, 63,9-15, p.132, Proclus presents the whole henadic sphere, the One and "ones", that is, the independent henads and derived henads, which I would like to call henads by illumination. He articulates them through his famous triad of cause (κατ' αἰτίαν), existence (καθ' ὑπαρξιν), and participation (κατὰ μέθεξιν). The first instance of the causative triad corresponds thus in the procession of the One to the imparticipable One, existence to the independent henads, and participation to unitary illuminations.

96 *In Tim.* 3.208.30–209.14 Proclus equates the First father with the Orphic Aether which is the first thing to proceed from the One. In this place Proclus says that the first father produces noetic, noeric, hypercosmic, and encosmic things. The second father (Orphic Phanes) produces things that are noeric, hypercosmic and encosmic, demiurge. The third father makes, hypercosmic and encosmic things. Finally, the second demiurge, Dionysus, only produces encosmic things. Thus, we have a triple schema of both fatherhood and demiurgy overlapping with their middle part: The father only (Aether), the father and the demiurge (Phanes), the demiurge and the father (Zeus), and the demiurge only (Dionysus). It is easy to see that Zeus occupies kath' hyparksin the position of demiurgy and Phanes that of father. One can ask how this model is to be reconciled with the doctrine of the triple demiurgy, articulating into Ouranos, Cronus, and Zeus and at the lower levels Zeus, Dionysus, and Adonis.

97 *In Parm.* 642.9-16: Ὅπου μὲν οὖν ὄντως εἶναι τὸ ἐν, ὅπου δὲ ὡς ἔξιν· καὶ γὰρ πᾶν εἶδος καὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν καὶ πᾶν σῶμα μετέχειν ἐνός τινος, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔτι τοῦτο θεὸν εἶναι τὸ ἐν, εἰ καὶ εἰκῶν, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἔστι καὶ τοῦτο θεοῦ, καὶ σπέρμα θεῖον, ὡς τὸ εἶδος εἰκῶν τοῦ ὄντος, ὡς ἡ γνῶσις εἰκῶν τοῦ νοῦ, καὶ ἡ ἐν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις ὡς καὶ ἡ αὐτοκίνησις ψυχῆς. So in the former case, the One truly exists, while in the latter case it exists as a character in something. For every form, every soul, and every body participates in some unity, but this unity is no longer a god; although, if I may say so, it is in an image of god, a divine seed - as form is a likeness of Being and knowledge is a likeness of Intellect, even in the lowest of things, as self-motion is an image of Soul (transl. Dillon & Morrow).

A crucial difference between the ontic and the henadic series is that ontic characteristics weaken in their procession, but henadic characteristics do not. Entities represent different modes and degrees of Being, but the presence of the One in them is the same oneness as is in the One. They exist as a mode of unity, therefore they are some other things added to oneness, some additional specific ontic characteristics, which from Proclus' perspective posit entities that are on a lower position on the scale of value than pure oneness and pure units. But what is this oneness in them that is no weaker than the pure One? It is reasonable to say that a particular intellect that is partial and participated is a weaker intellect than the Intellect itself. And this is valid to all ontic characteristics, but the One qua oneness is always full as well as imparticipable, pure participable in the independent henads, or participated in the henadic illumination present in some beings. This is so because "one" is not a property predicated to a thing but the ground of being, the first fundament, without which nothing could exist and be individuated.

Proclus' henads are always henads, or pinnacles, of something, never separate hypostases between the One and the Intellect, as has been claimed many times in scholarship.⁹⁸ Henads are the One in its relations: it means nothing to speak of henads outside the relationship between being(s) and the One. They are actualized oneness in being, mediators of the *energeia* of the One, thanks to which the unknown source of all is knowable in its effects.

When Proclus distinguishes, on the one hand, the so-called self-sufficient (self-perfected or independent) henads and, on the other hand, the rest of the henads, it seems to me that this should be understood in such a way that self-sufficient, independent henads are oneness participated by the imparticipated monads of the ontological series (with the possible exception of the hypostasis of nature, which seem to have no imparticipable monad but certainly does have the henad of nature; in this case the henad is participated directly by participated nature).

In the *Parmenides' Commentary*, Proclus explicitly calls primal henads the henads of monads: "And not in the case of these only [that is, in the different forms of cognition, mentioned immediately previous], but in every other case we would likewise discover the monads leading their proper series and the henads of the monads existing as the most sovereign principles of realities."⁹⁹ This statement also implicates the ontic series, and the others are gods by participation, mediated by this series.

Even though Proclus is perhaps the most systematic among the Neoplatonists in his use of terminology, he is not always as strict as a modern reader would like. Trouillard and Cardullo, for example, have shown that Proclus has a hierarchic theory of symbols articulated into *synthema*, symbol, and *eikon*, but nevertheless he sometimes uses these terms as synonyms.¹⁰⁰

98 Christian Guérard especially had great merit in demolishing this erroneous view.

99 *In Parm.* 1047.24-30: Καὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ τούτων μόνων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ὁμοίως ἂν εὕρομεν τὰς μὲν μονάδας ἡγουμένας τῶν οἰκείων ἀριθμῶν, τὰς δὲ τῶν μονάδων ἐνάδας ἀρχὰς κυριωτάτας τῶν πραγμάτων ὑπαρχούσας.

100 Dillon remarks on the same issue: "The sad fact is that, if one checks assiduously through Diehl's index under *eikon* and *symbolon* right through Book I of the commentary one will

We notice the same problem with his usage of *henad* and *monad*.¹⁰¹ I think that strictly speaking they cannot be synonymous. *Henad* is appropriate for discourse on oneness. *Monad* is the technical term for a root member of a series. Imparticipable Being, Life, and Intellect are monads of their series and are so called by Proclus. He speaks also about participated monads, which mean the first members of the ontic series after the imparticipable monads; these participated monads are often qualified with the epithet *divine* (such as "divine participated soul", that is, universal soul).

Dodds and others who have seen the motive for building the theory of the *henads* in defense of polytheistic religion were right in this estimation, although they underestimated the validity of this theory from the point of view philosophy as a consequent attempt to rectify Plotinus' basic *henological* view. With their concept of independent *henads*, Syrianus and Proclus were reacting against the general monotheistic tendency of Hellenistic and Imperial philosophy. Damascius' insights capture very well this dimension in the history of Neoplatonic theological thought. In an extremely important passage Damascius says:

But why do we need to multiply arguments since almost all philosophers before Iamblichus suggested in the same way that there is one supraessential god, while the other gods are essential and made by the illumination coming from the One, and the multiplicity of the supraessential *henads* are not independent hypostases but irradiations from the only god and are brought out by deification granted to essences.¹⁰²

What Damascius says here is not, *pace* Dillon, an argument demonstrating Iamblichus' paternity of the theory of *henads*, but Damascius does accurately posit the Iamblichean turn in Neoplatonism as well an instance of granting more emphasis on practical religion (*theurgy*) as a starting point for the reaction against the monotheizing tendency, a counter movement which culminated in the *henadology* of the Athenian school (and, of course, in Damascius' opinion, in his own suggestions for a modification of

find the two terms used indiscriminately of characters, events, and even words and phrases", Dillon (1991), 253.

101 *Theol. Plat.* 5.53.1-5, cited above, is one of the cases. Perhaps Proclus wants only to introduce variation into his words? That he means *henads* here but says *monads* is obvious, seeing as he qualifies *monads* with the adjective *supraessential*. Ontic *monads* cannot be *supraessential*, albeit they are transcendent *imparticipables* being.

102 Damascius, *De Princ.* 1.258.1-8 Ruelle, III 64 Combès: Τί δεῖ πολλά λέγειν ὅτε καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς οὕτως ὑποτίθενται τοὺς πολλοὺς οἱ πρὸ <Ἰαμβλίου> σχεδόν τι πάντες <φιλόσοφοι>, ἓνα μὲν εἶναι τὸν <ὑπερούσιον θεόν> λέγοντες, τοὺς ἄλλους οὐσιώδεις εἶναι ταῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἐλλάμψεσιν ἐκθεουμένους, καὶ εἶναι τὸ τῶν ὑπερουσίων πλῆθος ἐνάδων οὐκ αὐτοτελῶν ὑποστάσεων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἐλλαμπομένων ἀπὸ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ, καὶ ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐνδιδομένων θεώσεων. We should notice that Damascius' use of "hypostasis" here could be interpreted as deviating from Proclus' system, where *henadic* hypostasis includes the One and the *henads*. I think that we should read Damascius here not as assigning independent *henads* a hypostasis status that opposes them to the One but in the sense that they form the same hypostasis with the One as the *henad* of *henads*. However, how Damascius' *henadology* relates to that of Proclus is no simple question, and this question goes beyond scope of this study.

Proclus' theory). This dimension is of crucial relevance for evaluating Neoplatonic theology. It should be underlined especially now, when a whole body of recent interpretive literature, written from positions capable of and willing to discuss Neoplatonism on its own terms, nonetheless continues to put forward essentially monotheistic readings not only of Plotinian henology but also the theology of the whole movement originating with Plotinus.¹⁰³ The theoretical task of Proclus' theory of henads, and especially the distinction between independent and illuminated henads, is to vindicate the status of the independent henads as the proper existential level of real gods, gods *par excellence*, and it is aimed at purifying away monotheistic interpretations which formed an essential part of the "great confusion" in educated pagan opinion.

"And there is really a supraessential One while each of the gods is, according to its own proper existence by which it is a god, supraessential like the first but participated by being and essence. Therefore, this argument shows that the gods are henads, and henads are participated in a way that binds all beings to themselves, and through them all the following beings are connected to the One which transcends all in the same manner."¹⁰⁴

5.1.3 Proclus' system of ontological triads

Now after seeing Proclus' consideration of the emergence of reality from the perspective of the unfolding One through the henads, let us try to sketch out how his ontological structure is formed on the basis of this henadology.

The first triads of Proclus' system are the noetic (intelligible), noetic-noeric (intelligible and intellective), and noeric (intellective) triads. Noetic means object of contemplation, the eternal content of Intellect. Noetic-noeric is the sphere of self-contemplating forms, which are images of paradigms at the noetic level. Noeric is that which is contemplating, the activity of the Intellect. Nous is the primal Intellect as an agent of intellection, a faculty of contemplation, present also in the human soul as intuitive thinking. I agree with J.O. Urmson's observation that noeros is "commonly translated as 'intellectual', but since it is always used as that which thinks and not as the subject-matter, 'intellective', used by Dodds, is better"¹⁰⁵. It is helpful to

103 Siniossoglu (2008), 73: "Neoplatonic philosophical theology is essentially a monotheism *ésotérique*", Kutash (2010), 188: "Henology is monistic, or, if you will, monotheistic".

104 *Theol. Plat.* 3 (4) 17.6-12: Καὶ τὸ μὲν ὡς ὄντως ὑπερούσιον ἓν, ἕκαστος δὲ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν κατὰ μὲν τὴν οἰκείαν ὑπαρξιν, ἧ καὶ ἔστι θεός, ὑπερούσιος τῷ πρώτῳ παραπλησίως, μετέχονται δὲ ὑπὸ οὐσίας καὶ τοῦ ὄντος. Ἐνάδες ἄρα ἡμῖν καὶ ἐνάδες μεθεκταὶ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον οἱ θεοὶ πεφήνασιν, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς μὲν ἀναδησάμενοι τὰ ὄντα πάντα, δι' ἑαυτῶν δὲ τῷ ἐνὶ τῷ πάντων ὁμοίως ἐκβεβηκότες τὰ μεθ' ἑαυτοὺς συνάπτοντες.

105 J. O. Urmson (1990), 113. See, however, Dillon's notes (1987) pp. xlv-xlvi and Brian Duvick's appendix of Neoplatonic terms in his translation of Proclus (2007), 177-183.

think of noetic in opposition to the sensible and (as Dillon suggests in his notes) noeros in opposition to dianoetic, which refers to the activity of discursive thinking.¹⁰⁶ Every one of these manifests on its own level the hypostases of being, life, and intellect as they unfold from the primordial unity towards their particularized forms. The intelligible triad is arranged into three subtriads, which are goodness, wisdom, and beauty. The noetic-noeric order is divided correspondingly into triads which could be called, depending on the scope of the inquiry, by the names of faith, truth, and love or by the names, picked up from the Platonic *Phaedrus*, of supracelestial place, sky, and subcelestial vault. The noeric triad represents three levels of demiurgic action and intellect. Proclus calls the gods in the intelligible order ineffable and secret. Only the lowest of them, which he identifies as the Orphic Phanes, is nameable in a very obscure sense. The noetic-noeric triad is in the realm of Uranus and the noeric one is in that of Cronus.

Proclus' triads are dynamic structures. The first triad of the noetic triad is the passage from the henadic (divine) sphere to that of the ontological (being generated thanks to divine unity). In every sub-triad (or grade or level) of the noetic triad, being emerges as the last term.¹⁰⁷ Each of the triads divides into three factors: they are constituted by two primal causes, 1. the limit-principle (πέρας), unifying participated oneness, unity, unit (ένάς) and 2. the principle of unlimitedness or infinity (άπειρία), while their mutual result is 3. the mixed (μικτόν), or intelligible, being. At each level the mixture is differently modified. The very first being, mixed in the first triad of the noetic triad, is a root being, purely and internally united, and undifferentiated. The second being is being as a cause of life, and the third is the cause of intellect. As life and intellect are present in the first triad only causally and attain their independent existence only in a later stage of proceeding, in the forms of the noetic-and-noeric triad (pure life) and the noeric triad (pure intellect), Proclus calls life at the first triad noetic (intelligible) and he calls intellect by the name of noetic (intelligible) intellect. Correspondingly at their proper triads being is not anymore pure root being but at the triad of life living being and at the triad of intellect noeric (intellective) being.

A succinct remark in the *Platonic Theology* (3, 98) combined with the discussion of *In Parm.* (1091) crystallizes with exceptional clarity how Proclus understands the relationship between henads and ontic monads with their derived series of entities. *In Parmenidem* he points out that the henad at the first noetic triad is in effect going through three-steps of modification. As we have seen above, discussing the same triad from the perspective of *Platonic Theology*, Proclus tells us also in the *Parmenides Commentary* that the mixed things are all "beings", but the first one is the root of being as such, the second being is the primal cause of life, and third being is the ultimate root of the intellect. These three noetic beings function as monads, that is, root

106 Interestingly Trouillard renders noetic into "intelligible" and "noeric" into "noetique".

107 *Theol. Plat.* 4.116.6-11: Ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἑκάστη τριάς τὸ τρίτον μόνον εἶχε τῆς τοῦ ὄντος μοίρας· ἐκ γὰρ πέρατος ἦν καὶ ἀπειρου καὶ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, τοῦτο δὲ ἦν οὐσία μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς πρώτης, ζωὴ δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς δευτέρας νοητῆ, νοῦς δὲ νοητὸς ἐπὶ τῆς τρίτης· τὰ δὲ πρὸ τούτων ἑνάδες καὶ δυνάμεις ὑπερούσιοι συμπληροῦσαι τὰς ὅλας τριάδας.

members for the series of entities proceeding through the whole of reality and being stamped by the quality of the respective monad. Only at the level of the pinnacle of the noetic and noeric triad can we see “many” henads manifesting as unities of the articulated manifold of beings (Platonic forms).

The mentioned passages of the *Platonic Theology* is worth of quoting:¹⁰⁸

Τὰ μὲν γὰρ νοητὰ τῶν ὅλων ἐστὶν αἷτια σειρῶν, τὰ δὲ νοερὰ τῶν κατὰ γένη κοινὰ διαιρέσεων, τὰ δὲ ὑπερκόσμια τῶν κατ' εἶδη διαφορῶν, τὰ δὲ ἐγκόσμια καὶ αὐτῶν ἤδη τῶν ἀτόμων· κινούμενα γὰρ ἐστὶν αἷτια καὶ μεταβολῆς ἐξάρχει τοῖς ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν γινομένοις.

The noetic are causes of the whole series, the noeric are causes of the divisions in common genera, the hypercosmics are causes of the distinctions in kinds, and the encosmic things which are already individuals, they indeed are moved causes and principles for change in their products.

These intelligibles which are causes of the “whole series”, surely are the ontic monads of being, life and intellect. It seems to me that their causative act is the same as or is based on the three fundamental divine activities which for Proclus are producing, generating, and exercising providence. Thus, the first one corresponds to divine action at the level of being, the second to life, and the third to intellect. The actions of divine classes below the noetic are transformed more specifically step-by-step. At the level of the noetic and noeric gods, we speak no more about “whole series” but the very highest genera of being (the most universal and independent forms); at the hypercosmic level we refer to “kinds” (the species of forms); at the cosmic levels, individual entities emerge from the universal, and these for their part function as the causes of the changing things among the sensible world.

Procession is the exact process of specification and particularization, not development. The completed end result is not the most valued thing in the Neoplatonist view but, on the contrary, the beginning, the abundant source. Proclus sees the final (be)coming of atomized things as a weakening of power in beings: they transform from the pure primordial source, through the process of the addition of ontic determination, but in this process ineffability does not gain or lose anything. As Trouillard rightly says, divine characteristics are not attributes but projections of the overabundant into the world of the derived significations.¹⁰⁹

As we have seen, Proclus, following path trodden by Syrianus, sees in *Parmenides* nine hypotheses resulting in fourteen different classes of divine determinations. Every level of these determinations represents a definite divine class, and the Platonic names of their properties are philosophical names of these classes.

It is important to understand that according to Proclus the henads themselves do not have any names understandable to humans.¹¹⁰ Such words

108 *Theol. Plat.* 3.98.6-10.

109 Trouillard (1982), 25.

110 This point is clearly made by Erler (1987), 215. See also *In Tim.* 3.243.81.

as "Zeus", "Aphrodite", and so on are not the proper names of the henads; they are mythological names of gods sanctified by the Hellenic tradition. Not all mythological names are derived from traditions or coined by inspired poets; there are also divine names received from direct revelation. For instance, such names are revealed by the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Proclus mentions also others, even cases where we know two names of divinity, one used by humans, the other by the gods.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, even these divine names should not be considered as the names of the henads, because as supraessential "pre"-entities henads are above naming, situating themselves in the the realm of the divine silence.

Whereas mythological names refer to divine individuals as quasi-persons, philosophical names function like universals and refer to the properties of the classes of gods. Scientific names appeal to reason and mythological names function symbolically, but the names provided by dialectics are no better than the traditional names of the gods. The first appeal to reason and are compelling at the level of knowledge, while the second are part of the holy tradition through which divine realities are experienced. Being scientific, the Platonic names speak soberly about things which mythic names only suggest, and they are dialectically demonstrated by discursive reason (*dianoia*), which infers them from the observable effects of the divine powers on the world. Thus we have

1)"One-being" - corresponding to the first triad of the noetic gods,

2)"totality" - to the second triad of the noetic gods,

3)"multiplicity" - to the third noetic triad,

4)"multiple" - to the first triad of the noetic and noeric gods,

5)"wholes and parts" - to the second triad of the noetic and noeric level,

6)"figure" - to the third triad of the noetic and noeric level,

7)"in itself, in other" - to the first triad of the noeric gods,

8)"immobile, in movement", to the second triad of the noeric gods,

9)"identical, different", to the divine hebdomad in place of the common triad at the third level of the noeric world,

10)"like - unlike" - to the level of the hypercosmic gods,

11)"contact - separation", to the hypercosmic and encosmic gods,

12)"equal - unequal", to the encosmic gods,

13)different dimensions of "time" - to the level of the universal and divinized souls, and

¹¹¹ According to *In Tim.* 1.274.6-10 names given by gods reveal the entire essence of the named, but human-given names tell us only something particular.

14)"parts of the times" - corresponding to "higher beings" that are angels, demons, and heroes.

Classes 1-3 form the noetic triad, 4-6 form the noetic and noeric triad, and 7-9 form the noeric gods. From another viewpoint we can see classes 1-9 as the sphere of the original Plotinian hypostasis of the Intellect, and 10-14 comprises the psychic sphere, unfolding Plotinus' hypostasis of the Soul.

Other groupings are also possible, and they can be made compatible with the same basic view. We can see perhaps, for example, three repeating movements from monad to multiplicity, where the first round proceeds from the One to the noeric level and the second from the demiurge at the noeric level to the sublunar gods at the end of the encosmic level; the third mirroring movement, meanwhile, goes from the living richness of the particular soul through bodies to the indeterminate matter which in its formlessness is a kind of mirror of the One. The unfolding from the simpler principle of more multiple, caused end-results with added determinacy is to be seen as well both in motions from one hypostatic diacosm to another (like the procession from the One through henads to Being) and within each particular diacosmic level (from each monad to its multiple instantiations).

Independent henads are supraessential unities participated by the root members (imparticipable monads) of the ontological series (such as chains of beings, lives, intellects, and souls). The derived henads present unity in the secondary members of these classes of being (from a participated monad to the last member of the respective class) and also in the things of the world of becoming, mediating for them the illumination of oneness. The supraessential henads are the gods, whereas the illumination of oneness is a god in each thing and the highest peak of its existence¹¹². Unity is present on all levels of reality, however, down to the edge of pure matter, and in this sense the Neoplatonists accept the Presocratic dictum that everything is full of gods.¹¹³ The gods of Olympus find their place in the Proclean hierarchy far below the self-perfected henads, but even they, Aphrodite among them, are certain manifestations of unity and generate, produce, and exercise providence appropriate to their respective level on the scale of reality.

5.1.4 Plotinus' theology of Aphrodite

112 This theory is exposed in Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, propositions 2, 6, 64, and 113-162 and in the third book of the *Platonic Theology*. For modern research on the topic see especially the first chapter in the introduction to the latter work, Saffrey and Westerink. (1978), pp. ix-lxxxvii; Guérard(1982), and P.A. Meijer in E.P. Bos and P. A. Meijer, (1992), 65-88.

113 Proclus refers explicitly to this dictum in *De sacrificio et magia* 149, 26 ed. Joseph. Bidez, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs* 6 (Brussels, 1928).

In the Neoplatonist literature we have one brief but complete and clear exposition dedicated to the theology of Aphrodite. This piece is Plotinus' On love, treatise 50 (according to the chronological order established by Porphyry) which is also the 5th book of the third *Ennead* (according to the systematic order which Porphyry gave to Plotinus' works). This piece, a fruit of labors of the author's late period, resembles among his *Enneads* very much the commentaries which were typical form of philosophical writing of the later representatives of the Neoplatonic movement. The aim of the treatise is to answer the question: is love a god, or a demon, or a state of the soul? This question is for Plotinus not only a philosophical problem of utmost importance, but also an exegetic puzzle, since each of the alternatives could get some support from different dialogues of Plato, and the interpretator's task is to reconcile these Platonic ingredients in order to form an authentic, coherent, and non-contradictory Platonist theory. Carrying out this task, Plotinus also solves a major problem of Neoplatonist theology, mapping several deities of the traditional cults and mythology to the metaphysical layers of his system.

In this brief exposition we are mainly interested in the theological aspect of Plotinus' exegesis.¹¹⁴ However, contextualizing this, Plotinus' argument should be followed. He starts from the Platonic distinction between two loves and two Aphrodites in the *Symposium* and transforms this view into a theory of love, where he sees love as an act. Firstly, there is divine love, which is divided again into two: first, as love directed to the divine good, and second, as love which also desires the divine good, but in addition will produce good in the cosmos. These are loves at the plane of essences, and their counterparts in the world of becoming are pure love, which is satisfied with contemplating beautiful bodies, and mixed love, which directs itself to corporeal beauty but desires to produce and generate in the corporeal world. The second principal kind of love is pure passion.

This solution contains already the answer to the question of love's relationship to the divine and the demonic as states of the soul. On the first level Aphrodite and Eros, as her descendant, are gods; on the second level Aphrodite is a goddess oriented towards the intelligible but also towards the sensible, and Eros is both god-and-demon and demon by virtue of the same duplicity that is present also in her mother. The third level concerns only the embodied human soul. A corollary of this theory is that gods are themselves saved impassible entities and freed from all responsibility for evil.

Now, how do these divine entities manifest as metaphysical structures? Plotinus' basic postulate is that Aphrodites are the souls, and all souls are Aphrodites. Thus, we already have in Plotinus an incipient concept of divine series. But what Aphrodites are the two "higher" and "lower" that were distinguished originally by Plato as Ourania and Pandemia? As soul is always related to intellect, Aphrodite Ourania is for Plotinus the divine soul, whose intellect is Ouranos and who generates primal Eros as a love of the divine soul. Deviating from Plato, Plotinus never calls the second Aphrodite

114I am following here mainly Pierre Hadot (1997) and his *Plotin. Traité 50* (1990).

Pandemia, and does not link her in any way to shameful activities: to him she is a double goddess, whose superior part is the higher aspect of the world soul, directed to the intellect, and whose inferior part is the lower aspect of the world soul which is in contact with the corporeal world. As the second Aphrodite is traditionally the daughter of Zeus, the intellect at that level is Zeus, which is the normal standpoint for later Neoplatonism. Aphrodite's descendant is Eros, and he is likewise duplicated, his superior part being god and demon and lower part being the demon of the genesis.

Plotinus reconciles Eros' two birth-certificates given by Plato, one coming from the *Phaedrus*, where Eros is the son of Aphrodite and the alternative from the *Symposium*, where Eros is proclaimed to be the son of Poros and Penia. According to the Plotinian exegesis, Poros and Penia are aspects of Aphrodite. The goddess is the soul of world as such, and Poros represents the reason-principles, *logoi*, that is, ideas derived from the intellect unfolded in the soul into the plenitude of determinate forms. Penia, too, is the world soul (and thus Aphrodite) in the sense of being the receptacle of these forms, thus the famous Plotinian intelligible matter. The intelligible is the garden of Zeus where Poros has intercourse with Penia.

On the whole Plotinus' account is more rich with determinations and details than it is outlined here. However, I believe that for our purposes this exposition is now sufficient. It shows that already Plotinus was, after all, seriously engaged with the endeavor of building a systematic theology based on traditional religion, that there was a definite Aphroditology in the Neoplatonic tradition formulated by the founder of the intellectual movement, and that after Zeus Aphrodite seems to have been the most important divinity for him. I will return to this view on Proclus' comments on specific Aphrodisian passages. Plotinus' view survived in the background for introduced developments, although Proclus had to modify it thoroughly, first of all because the original henology was surpassed by henadology, and later because Neoplatonism would deepen its Platonic exegesis, for example, through the building of the theory of the noetic-and-noeric and the hypercosmic-encosmic gods on the basis of new insights into the interpretation of *Phaedrus*.

5.1.5 Proclus' theory of demons

The most comprehensive theoretical piece dealing with Proclus' demonology comes from his Commentary on Plato's First Alcibiades. We have unfortunately lost his commentaries on *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo*, but according to Westerink's conclusions based on Damascius' commentary on *Phaedo* the presentation in *In Alcibiadem* seems to be representative of Proclus' common view. Proclus' account of demons can be completed with the fairly numerous testimonies offered in *Cratylus*' commentary and occasional mentions in other

works. In all Proclus' view is consistent and the most systematic theory of demons in the entire Neoplatonic literature. The Platonic *loci* which are most fundamental for his interpretation are Socrates' report on Diotima's speech in *Symposium* (202D-203A) and *Phaedrus*' central myth of gods and their heavenly retinues. From these sources Proclus finds two most important theses which for him are the bases of the genuine Platonic doctrine on demons: demons are mediators between men and gods, and they form a most valuable group among the companions of each god proper.

Proclus proceeds in the Alcibiades commentary from general to particular, dealing first with the the general characteristics of demons (68.4.-70.18), then with demons as protectors of men (71.1.-78.6), and last with the specific question of Socrates' concept of demon. Before entering into a detailed exposition of Socrates' conception of demonic presence in souls, Proclus strongly criticizes three divergent views on demons that were traditionally supported by philosophers: that the demon is identical with the soul, that it is the leading principle of the soul, and that it is a particular intellect possessed by the soul.

Proclus proposes several kinds of classification for the demonic order. These categorizations are partly overlapping, and their difference is due to the slightly divergent approach taken regarding the question of demons in their respective contexts. The first to be dealt with concerns the problem of how to correctly use the word demon. Proclus makes distinctions according to essence, relation, and analogy. Only the first concerns demons qua demons, that is, as a specific category of the higher, superhuman kinds. The second, relation, points to individual actions which border on having supernatural status; these could be explained supposing that one who carries them out is living in close resemblance to the demon conducting them. We speak about demons by analogy every time we regard providence, relation when a thing is placed immediately above something else and is controlling that lower entity's action in a beneficent way.

Demons are manifestations of divinity in a specific mode. They are gods, but in a way, in a relative sense. In the *Platonic Theology*, Proclus says that "... the word god can refer to that which is the god in absolute meaning, that which is god by pure unity, that which is god by participation, that which is god in contact, or that which is god by similarity. Indeed, all that is beyond being is the god in the first sense, all that is intellective is the god by unity, every divine soul is the god by participation, the divine demons are gods with contact to the gods, and human souls acquire divinity by the similitude of this word."¹¹⁵ In this passage demons are seen as gods present in the secondary class of souls, that is, souls which come after in procession next to divine souls. In the same way human souls are also gods, as far as they are similar to the gods thanks to the divine illumination that is present in them.

Another dimension is the distinction between gods and humans and the sub-categorization of the demonic sphere resolving it into the scale of god - angel - demon - hero. Proclus could even provide an exact statement of

115 *Theol. Plat.* 1.115.5-116.3

proportionality stating that the metaphysical distance between god and angel is the same as that of hero and man. Perhaps the absolute distance is even greater, as the principle of the Platonic divided line requires.¹¹⁶

For Proclus it is important that we not blur the essential difference between gods and demons: gods are purely transcendental, whereas demons necessarily are more or less closely linked to the material world, as they function as its organizers under the leadership of the gods¹¹⁷. Proclus admits that in Plato the word demon several times means god and vice versa. The reason for this is that metaphysical layers overlap so that the highest level of some diacosms are named according to what properly belongs to the the diacosm above. Thus, the first and highest class of demons is called the divine demons (πρώτιστοι καὶ ἀκρότατοι θεῖοι δαίμονες).¹¹⁸ These demons are a direct continuation of the gods, and their characteristics are uniformity and divinity. In effect, it is not easy to see how they differ from the gods, but for Proclus they are necessary as a transitory class. Proclus derives this class from a vivifying goddess, who must be Rhea. Since Rhea is located in the second term of the first noetic triad, we should perhaps interpret these demonic gods actually as companions of the hypercosmic gods. Or should they even be identified with the hypercosmic gods? The procession of demons corresponds to the division of the classes of gods with whom they are companions. Thus, first we have the "independent" and hypercosmic demons (ἀπολύτοις καὶ πρὸ τοῦ κόσμου)¹¹⁹ who are the leaders of the totalities of the universe (τοῦ κόσμου τῶν ὅλων ἐξηγουμένοις), and then we encounter encosmic demons who occupy portions of the universe (ἐπιβατεύουσι τὰς μοίραις τοῦ παντός).¹²⁰ In the first case they are divided according to the dodecad of the hypercosmic gods, and in the latter they ascend according to the particular characters of the worldly gods and are thus divided into demiurgic, static or immovable (ἄτρεπτος), immaculate (ἄχραντον), and perfective demons. This is Proclus' arrangement of demons in the part on general demonology in Alcibiades' commentary.¹²¹

When he discusses demons who have the task of the surveillance of our souls he gives an alternative and overlapping classification. In effect in part of the treatise that is intended to be more specific, Proclus' pursuit of completeness of exposition leads him to make a classification which partly repeats the general portion.

In this case we have six groups of demons¹²²:

116 *In Crat.* 128.

117 *In Alc.* 74.

118 *In Alc.* 71.4.

119 *In Alc.* 68.12.

120 *In Alc.* 68.13.

121 *In Alc.* 67.19-70.17

122 *In Alc.* 71.1.-73.6

1) the highest demons, who are one-like and divine (πρώτιστοι καὶ ἀκρότατοι θεῖοι δαίμονες),

2) the demons who participate in intellectual characteristics and preside over the ascent and descent of souls, mediating the powers and actions of the gods towards lower entities (δαίμονες οἱ τῆς νοεῖας ιδιότητος μετέχοντες),

3) the demons of divine souls (οἱ τῶν θείων ψυχῶν) who guarantee the connection of the divine souls to the entities that flow out of them,

4) the demons of natural totalities (οἱ τῶν ὅλων φύσεων), whose task it is to transmit powers of the universe to beings in the sphere of generation and corruption. This piece is the where Proclus connects his ideas with the idea of pneuma, not so much used in Neoplatonism. These demons inspire, or fill with the breath of life particular living beings and give them order, reason, and perfection due to their mortal status.

5) The fifth group consists of corporal demons which ensure a connection between bodies (οἱ σωματοειδεῖς καὶ συνδετικοὶ) and manage providence for them.

6) The sixth and last group are demons (περὶ τὴν ὕλην στρεφόμενοι) associated with matter, who maintain the powers coming from above, from celestial matter (ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῆς οὐρανίας ὕλης δυνάμεων), and connect and protect earthly matter so that it can have an "illusory representation of the shadowlike forms" (καὶ τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ σκιαγραφίαν τῶν εἰδῶν φυλάττοντες). This categorization does not seem very informative, but it shows that the attempt to establish a correspondence between a procession of ideas and demons is felt to be important to Proclus.

Another classificatory dimension concerns the procession of demons from the perspective of the soul's faculties. If unity is the characteristic of divine existence, and knowledge and discursive reason are proper to human beings, this kind of demon realizes, in an exemplary way, the psychic activity permeated by the intellectual quality. This is why persons who are capable of surprising feats of intelligence are sometimes called demonic, such as Aristotle for example. I think that Proclus brings forth an interesting psychological dimension of the theory of demons in his views on the composite, that is, the human as soul and body. A human being is for Proclus primarily his soul, which is the traditional Platonic notion. In the structure of the most characteristically human being is a rational soul and its activities; discursive reason and opinion are the proper activities of a human as a human.

However, here in earthly life, a human is an embodied soul. This composite is provided and protected by a demon, which leads all forces and activities. The intellect is participated by discursive reason but not the body, and nature is participated by body but not discursive reason. Thus, finally, the rational soul commands the affective and passionate soul but does not effect chance: only demons govern and order and put our affairs in movement. "That which leads our entire lives, makes our choices before our birth and provides gifts which we receive from fate and the gods guiding the fate, that

which dispenses and determines illuminations from providence, this is the demon".¹²³ Thus, a demon present in and above the human body-soul composite, has as its task to perfect human intelligence (τὸν λόγον τελειοῖ), measure its passions (τὰ πάθη μετρεῖ), fill it with the breath of nature (τὴν φύσιν ἐμπνεῖ), maintain the souls' existence (τὸ σῶμα συνέχει), accomplish things given by fortune (τὰ τυχαῖα χορηγεῖ) fix by fate (τὰ εἰμαρμένα πληροῖ), and give that which comes from providence (τὰ ἐκ τῆς προνοίας δωρεῖται). In this way it is the ruler of all which we are and what is around us, and is the one guiding our entire lives (καὶ εἷς ἐστὶν οὗτος ἀπάντων τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ περὶ ἡμᾶς βασιλεύς, οἰακίζων ἡμῶν τὴν σύμπασαν ζωὴν).¹²⁴

Proclus deals more precisely with gods' and demons' role in providence in his *De Decem*, 16, where he says that providence in general comes from the gods, but part of the task is the responsibility of the demons. Thus, we finally have demons who protect humans, animals, different types of animals and plants, and at last the particular parts of all these.

Demons originate from the noeric level, but Proclus emphasizes that the appropriate level of the demons is the psychic. In comparison to humans, demons come into existence above and before humans but proceed further into lower levels of reality, which is consistent with the well-known Proclean rule of procession. The lowest demons are below discursive understanding; they are irrational hylic spirits of the elements and matter.¹²⁵ In *De Decem* Proclus tries to define the quality of demonic knowledge and these reflections seem to remain at tentative level. Indeed, as Proclus addresses classic questions of theodicy, his solution is to emphasize the transcendence of the gods, but this actually puts baffling well-known puzzles back in to play, now transposed into the level of demons. Proclus wrestles with these difficulties in his effort to demonstrate that on the one hand the demons are quite distinct from the other gods, and on the other hand they still do not share characteristically human weaknesses like dependence on imagination, sense-perception, and submission to the passions.

I think that the most important point in Proclus' theory on demons is their existence as a divine class connected with matter. Their origin in the noeric is not contradictory to this, because matter too is present in different Proclean metaphysical levels. Demons make divine transcendent powers a

123 *In Alc.* 77.1 ff.

124 *In Alc.* 76.20-78.6.

125 *In Alc.* II 185, *In Crat.* 72, 125, 128 *In Remp.* I 78. On the Proclean rule see *ET* 25, 28.30-1; 57, 60; *In Parm.* 904.18-2. This is admirably studied by A.C. Lloyd (1990). Lloyd remarks that the expression Proclean rule was coined "by Olympiodorus, who contrasts Iamblichus' rule that 'wherever something starts operating it will continue operating to the lowest level', 105-106.

tangible experienced in the natural and material realm. This is also why Proclus could say that real myths are divine in their unspeakable meaning and demonic in their outer form. Theologically speaking demons are the first of all servants of the encosmic gods.

The lowest layer of the encosmic gods has immaterial bodies, and they are without a direct connection to matter and the sublunary world, which is the proper realm of demons. For Proclus, demons as a divine class in regard to practical religion are primarily auxiliaries of these encosmic gods. Demons are grouped into crews serving and assisting each particular encosmic god. Every member of a divine series is correctly called by the name of the leading god, because demons are existentially stamped with the proper character of that particular god (τὴν ιδιότητα τῶν οἰκείων θεῶν ἀποτυπούμενοι). This relation is why we have a plurality of Zeuses, Artemises, and Aphrodites, and so on, diminishing in eminence and rank and originating from the firstly named divine monad until reaching the last representation of the respective gods at the lowest levels of reality.¹²⁶ The sublunar demons are the gods revealed in epiphanies, not the actual gods who are always unreachable with any kind of sense-perception. This distinction means also that numinous powers targeted by religious acts are precisely demons. Primarily the highest demons, the immediate representatives of the encosmic gods, are the objects of adoration of traditional religion. Gods do not communicate directly with humans, but every contact and conversation between the Gods and humans whether by the sanctified channels of traditional cult or in personal experience happens through demons.

Now we can see that Proclus' view on demons agrees in many respects with the notion of his Christian opponents. Both acknowledge the real existence of demons and their tremendous powers in the world. But whereas for Proclus demons are providential, for Christians demonic power is evil. Tatian, for example, saw Olympic gods originally as rebellious angels. Christian contemporaries of Proclus held essentially the same position as Tatian. The Christian notion of rebellious angels is the doctrine with which Dionysius Areopagite tries to differentiate his position from that of Proclus, whom he literally copies in the treatment of the doctrine of evil.¹²⁷

The idea of evil demons was widely accepted also in pagan opinion. But this notion is not a doctrine of Neoplatonism; especially later Neoplatonists try to play down any notions of evil demons. Gods are totally free from any suspicion of being originators of evil. Proclus explicitly disagrees with the notion of the existence of evil demons.¹²⁸ Other of his passages are more ambiguous. Naturally he also has a rebellious band among the higher kinds in the form of Titans. But their revolt against the gods could perhaps be easily

126 *In Alc.* I.91-92, 147 : the whole divine series gets its name from the henad to which it belongs.

127 See *De div. nom.* IV, 18, p. 162, 6-14 Suchla. As is well known a just comparison between these Dionysian passages with Proclus' *De malo*, lead Koch and Stiglmayr to decisively prove Dionysius' dependence on Proclus in 1895. For a discussion concerning the Dionysian transformation of Proclus' doctrine of demons, see Steel and Opsomer (2003).

128 *De malo*, 218 ff.

explained as an allegory of events taking place on the metaphysical plane without much ethical sense. However, in the Alcibiades commentary he speaks about "evil-doing causes",¹²⁹ which possibly means the demons. For Proclus, however, real causes and gods are identifiable, and, thus, the idea of an evil cause in a real sense is an anomaly in his system.

Proclus' theory of evil is construed in criticism against Plotinus' position.¹³⁰ Proclus cannot agree with a solution that equates matter with evil, nor any such idea which could open the possibility of positing substantive, primal evil in contrast to good and being and having its own, unique source. In all these assumptions Proclus sees the danger of the introduction of the dualistic principle into the system and, thus, the threat of the breakdown of the basic henological view. Proclus argues that evil is not a real existent but originates as a side-effect of the world order and at its lowest levels. Thus he calls it a parhypostasis, parasitic, accidental, or "side" existence having no causes of its own.¹³¹ As there could be no evil as such, no idea of Evil, and no unique root of the other evils, evil could be spoken about only in plurality and arising as a by-product of the interplay of the real causes producing real beings. The scope of evil comes for Proclus only at the level of the lower particularized souls and the corporeal things ontologically below them. The presence of evil in bodies means that they could not achieve perfection of their principle, that is, live according to nature. At the level of soul, evil is two-fold: it is seen in the irrational soul, when it does not obey reason above it and at the level of reason itself, when it cannot reach life according to the intellect.¹³² In all these cases, evil is a deficiency. Evil means for Proclus that something cannot reach the final goal appropriate to it. This scenario is possible only for entities in the world of becoming, which are not processing according to a pure pattern from the real causes towards intended perfection but are suffering from accidental existence. In this sense a deformed or sick body and soul incapable of rising to the highest intellectual virtues are suffering from evil, but they cannot be said to be evil in an ethical sense. That kind of evil is located at the level of the irrational soul and in the weakness of human reason to guide its life.¹³³ Thus, it seems to me that evil in the primary sense could be for Proclus only a consequence of unethical decisions of the human mind, and in the world order evil is only a relative thing from the restricted particular viewpoint. Actually demons who are seemingly doing bad things are only serving the world order: the task of Demons is to secure that all parts of the world remain in proper order.

Demons draw human souls towards matter, which in itself is not evil for later Neoplatonists (as it is at least in some passages for Plotinus).

129 *In Alc.* 171.19.

130 Two current, independently schemed, and interestingly different surveys of Proclus' theory of evil are John Phillips (2007) and Nestor Chr. Kavvadas (2009). If Phillips emphasizes the more metaphysical dimension of the theory, Kavvadas puts more weight on the ethical side. The same tension is also seen in Radek Chlup (2009).

131 A very good analysis of the concept is A.C. Lloyd (1985).

132 *De Malo*, 55. See discussion of Opsomer and Steel (2003).

133 On the relationship of virtues and parts of the soul in Proclus' Maclsaac (2009).

Olympiodorus in his commentary on Gorgias is explicit: matter is good but not beautiful and it is in this sense “indecent”. In Gorgiam, 5.1.16-17: τὸ δὲ καλὸν οὐκ ἐπὶ πάντα· ἡ γὰρ ὕλη ἀγαθὴ μὲν, οὐ καλὴ δέ, αἰσχρὰ γάρ. The position of matter beyond the sphere of the beautiful emphasizes its formlessness. Proclus nowhere produces an opinion on the question identical with that of Olympiodorus, but the latter's view is clearly compatible with Proclus' principles on primal causes going further than secondary causes (“Proclean rule”). In light of the Olympiodorian formula, matter is not so much a mirror of the One but Good, that is, its position “below” corresponds to the first intelligible triad “above”.

For Proclus the embodied state of the human is the root of ethical evil as is indicated in the fragments of the Commentary on *Chaldaean Oracles*.¹³⁴ According to this work, rational souls submit to serve bodily desires and forget their urge to try to return to the immaculate state of contemplation. Admittedly there remains ambiguity in Proclean demonology. How could a human soul be responsible for its choices, if it receives good and bad things only according to its own primal capabilities? Are these capabilities and their limits, too, somehow derived from the gods? And how could demons be exempt from any responsibility if error, separating the soul from its god's retinue, comes from human choice and demons are managers of the human act of making choices? Irrespective of the art with which the economy of theodicy is constructed, the old cracks seem to reopen.

However, regarding the situation of descended souls, Proclus can perhaps successfully explain evil away as a side-effect of the world order and represent demons in their role of coercing humans to adapt to the material world as neutral forces of this order. Thus, earthly demons carrying out their tasks are not conscious evil agents but are rather like industrial robots. On their own paths, human beings act at their own risk and could seem to demons as items waiting to be put in their proper places.

5.1.6 Proclus' theory of encosmic gods

The order of higher kinds is tied to the sensible cosmos and more or less directly to the corporeal forms and matter. On the contrary, the upper worlds of divine entities are immaterial. Among them, Proclus makes a distinction between two triads, which at the higher level are noetic, noetic-noeric, and noeric and opposed to them at the lower level are the hypercosmic, hypercosmic-encosmic, and encosmic. The gods of the latter triad are divinities belonging to the world characterized by particularity or, using Proclus' own words, “the gods of the particularized/divided worlds”¹³⁵. As the henads represent multiplicity of unity, noetic gods and the immediately subsequent triads represent universality of being and the last proper

134 *Eclogae* 3.1: Ῥίζα τῆς κακίας τὸ σῶμα, ὡσπερ τῆς ἀρετῆς ὁ νοῦς.

135 *Theol. Plat.* 6.45.17, 6.72.13.

particularized beings of the divine world. Mapped to metaphysical levels, these differing phases of procession of the gods are related to being, intellect, and soul, the soul being the proper level of the last order of divinities.

As seen previously, the higher kinds were composed "only" by divinized entities, and with encosmic gods we are dealing with the first class of the gods proper. A remark of caution is needed here. Precisely at this point we lose the systematic treatment of the issues, as Proclus' Platonic theology does not continue beyond the hypercosmic-encosmic gods. We can surely find much information about particular encosmic gods from Proclus' other works, but with the *Platonic Theology* his views concerning encosmic gods should be extracted by resorting to the passages where the main concerns are some of the higher orders, especially the hypercosmic-encosmic gods. These remarks from the *Platonic Theology* are, however, valuable because nevertheless they are more than hints. In effect, they do not only supply the Prolean context for estimating how encosmic gods relate to the other classes but after all provide the clearest available evidence of his opinions on the origin, metaphysical status, general characteristics and energies or acts of these gods.

Proclus identifies the noeric demiurge - that is, the third level of the first noeric triad, personified as Zeus (the first) - as a producer of the hypercosmic, hypercosmic-encosmic, and encosmic gods.¹³⁶ Causes following that god modify the characteristics of these divine orders, so that the hypercosmic gods resemble more noeric things than are psychic, the encosmic gods are fully psychic, and the hypercosmic-encosmic gods are characterized in between. This procession of the psychic characteristics of the gods from hypercosmic to encosmic states parallels exactly the procession of the intellectual quality of the noeric deities, where three degrees also represent phases of intellectual characteristics: the first is cached, then manifesting, and finally shining in full force, that is, having an entirely developed existential status. There are three kinds of souls corresponding to these divine classes, and they differ from each other according to which characteristics are prevailing in their creation. Souls which are co-natural with the hypercosmic gods exist according to being/essence. Those joined to the hypercosmic-encosmic gods come into existence according to identity. Lastly, encosmic souls come into existence according to otherness. The highest among the souls is the world soul, and, emanating from it, the lesser souls live more and more in a state of otherness and fragmentation¹³⁷. My interpretation is that Proclus wants to say that among the encosmic gods and in the highest beings that correspond to them the psychic quality is found in a pure and stable form, and among lesser instances of the series it is more particularized and in some sense weaker.

In the same way as the noetic gods initially have, the encosmic gods, too, have a double energy/act. One is transcendent and separated, and the

¹³⁶ *Theol. Plat.* 6.75.20.

¹³⁷ *Theol. Plat.* 6.16 80.15-81.7.

other is co-ordinated with the proper level. In the first energy/act, the encosmic gods follow the so-called independent gods, which are immediately above them on the hypercosmic-encosmic level, and they elevate themselves towards the noeric with the aid of the independent gods. This action is an ascendant movement of reversion towards the highest sources, appropriate to encosmic gods. With the second operation, they receive providence immediately from independent (hypercosmic-encosmic) gods but also from other gods above them. They also guide providentially things in the sensible world and raise them so that the latter may revert towards themselves. Proclus emphasizes that the encosmic gods receive providential illumination from all the gods above them. Exercising rule over the universe, they are imitating independent gods. But they imitate hypercosmic (hegemonic) gods too by rendering sensible (sub-lunary) things like the noeric models.

After discussing these two acts of imitation, Proclus says that the encosmic gods “likewise pour out the whole of life that is inseparable from the body, set up in advance an image of the sole source of the soul, and connect themselves to this fountain.”¹³⁸ Since mention of this “pouring out/forth” comes after two “imitations” which actually refer to the higher hierarchies, it certainly points to the even higher divine monad in a relevant context. “The sole source of the soul” is the demiurgic monad establishing the imparticipable soul – that is, it refers to the demiurgic action of noeric Zeus (with Hera?). What is poured out is the “inseparable life from the body”, which is, I think, an immanent animating force in corporeal form, otherwise called living nature, which as such without being defined into a specific particular hypostasis is indeed an “image” of the imparticipable soul and its causal monad.¹³⁹

Proclus characterized encosmic providential activity by saying that the encosmic gods make sensible beings complete their cycles, which means that they rule over sensible celestial cycles¹⁴⁰. These include the cycles of the separate planetary spheres and before them the cycles of the whole universe. One is precisely the movement which raises things from the world of becoming towards independent gods. The other cycle is that of the encosmic

138 *Theol. Plat.* 6.81.5-7.

139 Marije Martijn (2010), 40-50, argues that Proclus does not posit “imparticipable Nature” in his Commentary on *Timaeus*. Martijn thinks that in this case Proclus has an “imparticipable cause” of universal nature and participated universal Nature. Thus we have a situation which is different in relation to other hypostases concerning their monadic structure. This would be quite acceptable, as nature is the last hypostasis and is followed by particular beings of the sensible world. I, however, am not sure whether it is not simpler to posit as the imparticipable ontic cause to Nature the imparticipable Soul from which it derives. On the other hand, we know that Proclus has a henad of nature *In Parm.* 1046.5 τὸ ἐνκώτατον τῆς φύσεως ... καὶ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτῆς, καθὸ καὶ ἡ φύσις θεὸς the most one-like ... and its flower, by which nature is a god. As Proclus posits the henad of nature, we can regard it as the last independent henad that generates universal participated nature, and after that oneness is present in sensible things only as “derived henads”, for example, illumination.

140 *Theol. Plat.* 6.16 76.24-77.5.

proper which is the immediate cause for the movement of inferior things. Proclus sees the myth about youth and old age, told in *Phaedrus*, as a symbolic account of these movements. The journey from youth to old age means that we turn from the thriving and immaculate life and switch to the world of becoming. The journey from old age to youth means that we are lead to the noeric, because our bodily status is destroyed while the incorporeal and immaterial shines.

It is interesting to note that the inner structure of divine triads from noetic to encosmic is not similarly articulated. The two uppermost triads are triadic themselves, but the noeric triad is a hebdomad, whereas the appropriate internal structure of the three lower triads is a dodecad. I can deduce several reasons for Proclus making this shift. The hebdomad is a means to integrate the Neoplatonists' deep theological intuitions concerning the henadic and noetic levels with the known structure of the world, that is, with the prevailing cosmology which was based on the theory of the seven heavenly spheres. A second reason could be that Proclus felt the necessity to accommodate the lower levels of his divine worlds with the traditional number of cult gods, of which there are twelve. A bonus gained in making these theoretical moves is demonstrating that the Neoplatonic view on divine procession accords with the Pythagorean vision of unfolding numbers. Another reason to add, of course, was the abounding richness of the Greek mythological tradition valued by Proclus and the amount of scattered notions concerning it in Plato's works. Proclus had to take into account the totality of Platonic utterances and forge these into a coherent whole compatible with the views of theologians. Proclus achieved this feat with surprising success but, as we will see, not always with such a high level of system(aticity) as his outer form and self-confident style of discourse suggests.

When it comes to the internal structure of the encosmic order, we have no textual evidence that it too is dodecadic, whereas Proclus says this explicitly and argues for it in considering the previous diacosms. In his comparison of the noeric hebdomad with the number of souls¹⁴¹, Proclus mentions "encosmic beings" and "visible circles" which are precisely the seven planets. This implies that on the encosmic level the hebdomad is a major structuring symbolic principle, especially because planetary gods are one class of the encosmic diacosm and even the most important.

It is disappointing that Proclus' *Platonic Theology* only vaguely identifies individual gods in the encosmic order. From the other texts, among them the *Timaeus Commentary* holding the leading position, we can conclude that there certainly are all the planetary gods and the highest psychic gods. But are these classes actually the same? Planetary gods are not for Proclus in a primal sense planets but souls of these celestial bodies. Stars themselves are kinds of "flowers of body" in that they are corporeal but not material in the earthly sense. Proclus naturally recognizes the existence of the hypochtonic gods, who also are part of the family of encosmic divine orders.

141 *Theol. Plat.* 5.20.15-21.

If we look for illustrative examples for the theory of the encosmic gods in the field of aphroditology, we can find heavenly Aphrodite as a star-god and as the soul of the stars, but are there other encosmic Aphrodites? In dealing with the birth of Aphrodite in the *Commentary on Cratylus*, Proclus seems to allow such an interpretation, but this piece of exegesis is not easily reconciled with the structure of the *Platonic Theology*. According to *Parmenides' Commentary*,¹⁴² there is a participated intellect which is encosmic, so we can with confidence say that this participated Intellect is an encosmic god and even identify him on the basis of the testimony given by Proclus in the *Commentary on Timaeus*. There he calls Dionysius an encosmic intellect and describes his relation to Zeus and to the little-known goddess named Hipta.¹⁴³ Proclus characterizes the world-soul (at least the lower of them, if there are several) as is done in Plotinus' system, with encosmic gods, thus, ascribing to Hipta the function and place which belonged to lower Aphrodite in Plotinus.

5.1.7 Proclus' theory of hypercosmic-encosmic gods

"It is hardly necessary to emphasize the arduous and confusing character of the *Platonic Theology*. Proclus engages in acrobatics to interpret the dialogues of the master according to his own doctrine, and his determination to follow these doctrines too often prevents him from grasping the very substance of the dialogues. Also, his thoughts are far from being always logical and coherent, and he always completely fails to match the abstractions which he attributes to the living gods with the color of popular religion. Moreover, the sinewy drafting of the *Platonic Theology* is difficult to reconcile with the schematic summary of the *Elements of Theology* where so many classes of gods do not appear. The *Platonic Theology* renders itself full of incertitude and contradictions".¹⁴⁴

Thus reads the disappointed estimation with which Bastid concludes his survey of Proclus' *magnum opus*. Even if one does not agree with this judgment as a whole, one has to admit that the theory of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods which completes the story of the divine diacosms presented in the *Platonic Theology* is surely the most arid piece of the work (chapters 15-24). There are oases in the desert: some refreshing exegesis resemble the fantastic developments of the younger Proclus in the commentaries, as in the chapter dealing with the Fates led by Necessity or in the surprising reversal of customary attributes linked to gender in Proclus' treatment of the hypercosmic-encosmic Zeus and Hestia. That being said, the greater part of these chapters consists of banal specifications, easily anticipated typologies, and lists of the attributes and properties ascribed to divine orders, often seemingly on tautological grounds and lacking explanations. On the other

142 *In Parm.* 911.33-915.31.

143 *In Tim.* 1.407.21-408.27.

144 Bastid (1969), 352.

hand, one has to say in Proclus' defense that he tells us that having dealt before with some of the topics in a detailed manner in the *Commentary of Parmenides* he thinks it useless to repeat these details here. The *Platonic Theology* ends with this somewhat anticlimactic statement, and in effect it is tantalizing for us because these parts of the *Parmenides Commentary* are lost.

Proclus starts with the statement that the hypercosmic-encosmic gods, called independent or separated (from the world, in the sense of being the last class of gods without a direct connection with the sensible realm), are an intermediate class serving as a connection between the two other classes (the hypercosmic and encosmic gods). Therefore, these gods have within the cosmic realm a corresponding position with the noetic-noeric gods among the transcendent gods¹⁴⁵. These gods are immutable (ἀμετάβλητοι), steadfast (ἀκλνήτοι), and indissoluble (ἄνετοι) in their providential activity. When the encosmic gods are separated as masters of providence for the different areas of the world, and the hypercosmic gods are genuinely universal, the providence exercised by the gods at the hypercosmic-encosmic level has a simultaneous character, effecting several processions and grades. The hypercosmic-encosmic gods are free from separation, they are supracelestial (ὑπερουράνιοι), and immaculate (ἄχραντοι), and lifting (ἀνυψωτικοί). Their task is to bring the encosmic gods towards noetic-noeric summit.¹⁴⁶

The hypercosmic-encosmic gods have the property of being psychic, that is, bearing the hypostasis of soul as do the hypercosmic and encosmic gods, but this property comes to them from the common animating principle located in the noeric orders (poetically called "mixing bowls" of the souls); however, this quality is already modified by the secondary source of the assimilative, hypercosmic gods¹⁴⁷.

Proclus emphasizes that human understanding is incapable of grasping the inherent natures of the powers of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods, but these powers he names as: 1) transmitting (διαπόρθμιος), as they manifest for the lower procession of the assimilative, hypercosmic class, 2) lifting (ἀναγωγοί) as they elevate the encosmic orders to transcendent activity, 4) binding (συνδετικές), as they regulate the communication between the extremes equally, 5) immaculate (ἄχραντες), as they dispel materiality and radiate providence downwards, and 6) perfective (τελειοποιητικές), as they provide excellence to the encosmic gods, and fertile (γόνιμες), as they multiply the lower levels of beings.¹⁴⁸

The emerging activities from the above-mentioned powers are: 1) "easy" and yielding, they appear everywhere and cut out everything from the physical and material, 2) they propound immaculate, untouchable, and disembodied forms, 3) they make all inferior beings return to themselves and

145 *Theol. Plat.* 6.72.11-74.16.

146 *Theol. Plat.* 6.74.17.

147 *Theol. Plat.* 6.78.4-82.14.

148 *Theol. Plat.* 6.82.12-83.6.

raise them to the noeric light, 3) they reveal the transcendental principles of the universe, 4) they raise everything towards the noeric gods, 5) they associate with the noeric forms and present the colorless, shapeless, and untouchable essence, acting on encosmic intellects and elevating their thoughts to the very first noetic things, 6) they uplift souls towards their sole source, and 7) they guide the divine souls and oversee the "higher kinds" (that is angels, demons, and heroes) directly below the gods proper. It is easy to see that Proclus wants to preserve a formal difference in the analysis of separating between essence/existence, power, and activity, but he seems to be unsuccessful at avoiding repetition (the whole of chapter 17 is dedicated to the powers and operations of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods).¹⁴⁹

Proclus puts considerable effort into dealing with the peculiar multiplicity of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods, the heart of the discussion being that theologically the number of these gods remains unknown¹⁵⁰ but cannot be infinite, while traditionally the number twelve is their symbol. This number appears because the demiurge divides the monad into a first, an intermediate, and a final sphere, and the gods after these spheres set all things to proceed through a quaternary channel. The dodecad of the gods proceeds from above according to the triadic principle and multiplies them below according to the tetrad. It seems that we are playing here with the formula of 3×4 , where the demiurge -- noeric gods -- brings forth three levels as the first, mediating, and final; the assimilative -- hypercosmic -- gods modify the results with paternal, fertile, psychic, and guardian properties. The dyad is the symbol of the fertile power, the triad symbol of perfection. The number twelve suits the independent gods as a symbol of perfect procession because they complete the procession of the hypercosmic gods and are at the head of the celestial gods, assures Proclus.¹⁵¹

Next, Proclus dissipates the misconception that the number twelve should be at the hypercosmic-encosmic perceived as twelve monads: to him, the number twelve should be understood as the presence of the dyad and decad. (Chapter 18 is dedicated to the symbolism of dyad, triad, and dodecad).

According to Proclus, the structure of the independent gods consists of two monads: Zeus as head of the male gods and Hestia as head of the goddesses. Zeus and Hestia are themselves members of the first and second triad of the hypercosmic-encosmic divine order. The triads of the twelve gods are demiurgic (Zeus, Poseidon, and Hephaestus), guardian (Hestia, Athena, and Ares), life-giving (Demeter, Hera, and Artemis), and lifting (Hermes, Aphrodite, and Apollon). Chapter 19 deals generally with the dodecad, including a little treatise on the locating of different Zeuses, chapters 20-21 deal with the properties of monads, and chapter 22 pertains to the four triads at this level.

149 *Theol. Plat.* 6.83.6-84.5.

150 *Theol. Plat.* 6.85.6.

151 *Theol. Plat.* 6.85.6-86.12.

Proclus concludes his survey of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods in the *Platonic Theology* by complementing the theme with a short treatise of the twelve gods as gods of Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Republic*, with a treatise on the Fates (chapters 22-23), and with some remarks concerning the gods derived from *Parmenides* (chapter 24). Without engaging with these topics here, I will only explain some observations relating to Aphroditology and which are not discussed in my previous article.

The first known Neoplatonic theory of the twelve gods structured in the four triads is that offered by Emperor Julian's friend and advisor Sallustius whose triads consists of 1) Zeus, Poseidon, and Hephaestus, 2) Demeter, Hera, and Artemis, 3) Apollon, Aphrodite, and Hermes, and 4) Hestia, Athene, and Ares in that order. Sallustius' Neoplatonism was based on that of Iamblichus, so he did not have a hypercosmic-encosmic level. The first observation to be made in comparing his triads to those of Proclus, is that exactly the same gods are present in the dodecad, and the triads are the same. Both philosophers have at the first level a pure male triad and at the second an exclusive female triad. But from Sallustius to Proclus the status of the female deities in the structure has declined somewhat. This disparity happens only because the triad with Aphrodite has moved to the last rank. On the other hand, Proclus' theory of the two monads raises Hestia to the position of being a female counterpart to Zeus as a group leader, and at the same time she brings her own triad to the second level. There is an interesting dimension to Proclus' treatment of Zeus and Hestia as hegemonic monads. He says that Zeus uplifts the other gods with his transcendence, but Hestia makes them participate in her properties. Members of the decad are dependent on these deities. Zeus is the cause of movement, while Hestia is the cause of stability¹⁵². This position is the total reverse of the customary Neoplatonic view regarding the connection between gender and the attributes of movement and stability. This reversal is even more sharply expressed in 95.15-96.6 where Proclus states that stability, immutability, and uniformity belong to Hestia, while movement belongs Zeus, and other properties, such as fertility, come from the other deities of the decad.

On the other hand, this female anomaly at the hypercosmic-encosmic level is somewhat weakened in its radicalism by Proclus' view that the movement in this particular class of gods as a characteristic belonging to Zeus means movement upwards, towards the hypercosmic and noeric classes. In this case, movement could be more valued than stability. This idea, however, is still somewhat exceptional, as it seems to value more the reversion movement carried out by Zeus than the function of maintaining definite existential order belonging to Hestia.

The small victory for female divinities brought about by the ascent of Hestia's role plays nevertheless against Aphrodite. The female deities are divided into three mothers (Demeter, Hera, and Aphrodite) and three virgins (Hestia, Athene, and Artemis). Sallustius gives precedence for mother

¹⁵² Sallustius, On the gods, chapter 6, *Theol. Plat.* 6.93.27-95.1.

goddesses, Proclus for virgins. The virgin goddesses are just those three individuals who according to the already archaic Greek tradition are the only ones in the world order on whom Aphrodite's spells have no effect. In Sallustius' system, Athene is one rank below Aphrodite, while in Proclus' view she is two ranks above her. This placement accords very well Proclus' predilection for Athene observed already before. Comparing different versions of Neoplatonic dodecads, one has to conclude that Aphrodite has lost somewhat in her relative position, and this probably has something to do with a change of the general culture and prevailing values.

5.1.8 Proclus' theory of hypercosmic gods

Proclus labels the hypercosmic order of the gods as classes of "leaders" and "assimilative" deities. "Leaders" refers to their providential function as heads of the respective divine series. "Assimilative" defines their role in the demiurgy, which they derive from the noeric gods and pass to lower divinities. The task of the assimilative gods in the procession of beings is to guarantee that the sensible images are compatible with their noetic models. In that sense the assimilative gods are supervisors of the procession of the forms of Likeness and Unlikeness congenial to it. "For the factor that assimilates a bridge between that to which there is likeness and that which is likened to it (τὸ γὰρ ἀφομοιοῦν μέσον ἐστὶ τοῦ τε πρὸς ὃ ἡ ὁμοίωσις καὶ τοῦ ὁμοιουμένου πρὸς αὐτό), tr. Morrow and Dillon.¹⁵³

Proclus seems to ascribe to the assimilative gods also a related function, but it is strictly applicable only to the divine sphere as such: they have responsibility over the reversive movement (epistrofe) of the gods as henads. Thus he says: "Among the gods themselves the Assimilative Order accomplishes this [reversion] by turning the plurality of the divine henads back to their unitary causes (καὶ ἐν μὲν αὐτοῖς τοῖς θεοῖς ἡ ἀφομοιωτικὴ τάξις τοῦτο ἀπεργάζεται τὸ πλήθος τῶν θείων ἐνάδων ἐπιστρέφουσα πρὸς τὰς ἐνιαίας αἰτίαις, ἐν δὲ τοῖς εἶδεσι τὸ ὅμοιον ταύτην ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν.), and Likeness has the same function among the forms" (tr. Morrow and Dillon)¹⁵⁴. I admit that I have no clear idea how to conceive of the reversion of the divine henads through a class of gods who is dependent on or itself is a class among the independent henads. Perhaps the right interpretation would be that assimilative gods, as a class of independent henads, lift up the plurality of the illuminating henads back to their unitary causes.

The task of the hypercosmic gods in producing the sensible world is easier to understand. The classes of the gods related to the emergence of the sensible world are structured according to their position in the three-fold demiurgy. The assimilative gods have to do with the first demiurgy, which is characterized as static, unitary, and eternal. This kind of demiurgy is divided

¹⁵³ *In Parm.* 805.33.

¹⁵⁴ *In Parm.* 805.30.

into two levels: the first of them is the demiurgy of wholes holistically, and the second is the demiurgy of parts holistically (correspondingly the second demiurgy, that of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods, is related to the demiurgy of the wholes and parts partially, and the third demiurgy, the encosmic proper, concerns only particular individuals). The creations of the first demiurgy consist of all of that which is divine in the sensible world, that is, the world as a whole, its eternal parts, living celestial beings, the whole supralunar sphere, and, finally, the immortal souls of the living beings.¹⁵⁵

Proclus divides the hypercosmic class of the gods into four triads. The first three of them correspond fully with the general metaphysical schemas of being, life, and intellect, and the remaining correspond to procession and return. The first triad is paternal and is composed by Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto; the second is life-giving and is composed by Artemis, Persephone, and Athena. The third triad is uplifting and is composed by three manifestations of Helios/Apollo. The fourth triad is the supervising or protecting triad whose gods are named Corybantes or immaculate deities.¹⁵⁶ Thus, we have a hypercosmic divine structure which using mythological names of Hellenic theology has a form:

Zeus Poseidon Pluto
 Artemis Persephone Athena
 Apollo Apollo Apollo
 Corybantes

I will deal here only with the first and second triads, as they obviously are relevant to the Aphroditology.

The gods of the first triads are the three hypercosmic demiurges. Zeus is the cause of essences, and he rules fixed stars and aether. Poseidon is the demiurge of life, generation, planets, air, and water. Pluto manages beings divided into species, the cyclical return, and the sublunar sphere.

The second life-generating triad is "girlish" (Κορικὴ) and is composed by Artemis, Core (Persephone), and Athena.¹⁵⁷ This triad gets its hypostasis from the noeric Rhea (Demeter). Among the alternative names suggested by different theological traditions, Proclus chooses Orphic names for the goddesses of this triad. Let us notice that for Proclus the hypercosmic life-generating monads are female, but they are emphatically separated from the usual ways of reproduction appropriate for the lower cosmos. They are two virgin goddesses and Demeter's daughter, who according to mythology was abducted by Pluto, Core/Persephone, and who as an involuntary spouse in the Platonic tradition is also a pure virgin.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ *In Tim.* 2 443.14, 3. 242.9, 330.5-9.

¹⁵⁶ The theory of the hypercosmic gods is presented in the first part of Book 4 of the *Platonic Theology*, chapters 1-14.

¹⁵⁷ *Theol. Plat.* 4. ch 11 48.1-55.26

Artemis is the summit of the triad, Persephone is its life-producing power, and Athena is intellectual divinity gathering virtues. What is interesting is that according to this doctrine developed in the *Platonic Theology*, book four, the summit of hypercosmic life is Artemis. This doctrine is not easily reconciled with the teaching given on the hypercosmic Aphrodite in Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus* (183). In the *Platonic Theology*, Aphrodite is mentioned by name only on the level of the last triad of the hypercosmic-encosmic gods; in Cratylus' commentary, she in her highest manifestation is derived from noeric principles above Zeus. Thus, Aphroditologies of the Cratylus' commentary and of the *Platonic Theology* are incompatible. It should also be noted that Proclus does not operate in this passage of Cratylus' commentary with the same precision as in the *Platonic Theology*, as he uses no mediating hypercosmic-encosmic level in his analysis. With the replacement of Aphrodite by Artemis in the *Platonic Theology*, we also face the overlapping of deities, noticed already in the exegesis of the *Commentary on the Republic*, where Athena was permitted to encroach in Aphrodite's traditional domain.

5.1.9 Primal Eros and Primal Beauty

In chapter 25 of the first part of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* is a passage which is one of the real *loci classici* in Proclean studies.¹⁵⁹

Ἴν' οὖν συνελόντες εἵπωμεν, τρία μὲν ἔστι τὰ πληρωτικὰ ταῦτα τῶν θείων, διὰ πάντων χωροῦντα τῶν κρειττόνων γενῶν, ἀγαθότης, σοφία, κάλλος· τρία δὲ αὖ καὶ τῶν πληρουμένων συναγωγὰ, δεύτερα μὲν ἐκείνων, διήκοντα δὲ εἰς πάσας τὰς θείας διακοσμήσεις, πίστις καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἔρως. Σώζεται δὲ πάντα διὰ τούτων καὶ συνάπτεται ταῖς πρωτουργοῖς αἰτίαις, τὰ μὲν διὰ τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μανίας, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῆς θείας φιλοσοφίας, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῆς θεουργικῆς δυνάμεως, ἡ κρείττων ἔστιν ἀπάσης ἀνθρωπίνης σωφροσύνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης, συλλαβοῦσα τὰ τε τῆς μαντικῆς ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰς τῆς τελεσιουργικῆς καθαρτικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ τῆς ἐνθέου κατακωχῆς ἐνεργήματα.

In conclusion, there are three things which fill the divine and go through all kinds of higher beings: they are goodness, wisdom, and beauty. There are also again three inferior beings which gather these qualities and extend them to all the divine worlds: they are faith, truth, and love. By them everything is saved and joined together with the primordial causes, some through erotic madness, others through philosophy, and others by theurgic power which is higher than all human soundness of mind and science, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of the perfect initiation and absolutely all the operations of inspired possession.

158 *Theol. Plat.* 4.52.19-53.2. Proclus mentions alternative names provided by Chaldaean theurgists - Hekate, Psykhe, and Arete -- and by Plato -- Artemis, Pherrephatta, and Athena (51.52-18). See also *Plat. Theol.* 4.49.20, *In Crat.* 150.

159 *Theol. Plat.* 1.112,25-113,10.

This passage has aroused a lot of interest especially for its reference to "theurgic power". The mainstream interpretation sees here a powerful assertion of theurgy's primacy in Proclus' soteriology.¹⁶⁰ The passage has also often been read as a kind of formal definition of theurgy. Possibly it could be a definition not in the sense of accurately delimiting the whole area of theurgy but referring to observable common aspects in all enthusiastic practices. These are theurgic in so far as they operate with divine signs. This approach is how we can understand what Proclus means when he says, for instance in the Cratylus commentary, that telestic is operating theurgically. That all enthusiastic action is based on working with the divine signs is not explicitly stated in the passage now under consideration, but this is his line of thought, as it is, I think, sufficiently proven above in the chapter on Proclus' notion of effective symbols.

When it comes to the question of the "primacy of theurgy", even taken in isolation, these lines do not necessarily support the long-prevailing view in modern studies that later Neoplatonists put theurgy absolutely above philosophy. Emphasizing the supreme merit of "theurgic power" Proclus does not direct this against the two other anagogic ways, but, on the contrary, the passage clearly points out their parallel actions in the ascent of the human soul. Proclus explicitly speaks about "divine" philosophy (θεία φιλοσοφία) and "human" wisdom (ἀνθρωπίνη σωφροσύνη). These cannot be the same. The excellence of theurgy is not contrasted with philosophy, which at its summit is enthusiastic and "divine", attaining the Intellect's content and a union with the gods as far as is possible; rather, it is contrasted with existentially "human" endeavors, that is, such striving which is functioning at the level of discursive thinking. To Proclus, the science (ἐπιστήμη) mentioned here refers exactly to the plane of *dianoia*, discursive thinking. The term "sanity" (σωφροσύνη) here is the opposite of madness, as in a sublime sense it means divine inspiration. It seems to me that these lines of Proclus do not convey the message that theurgy is the surest means of attaining union with god in contrast to philosophy and divine love.

In the fourth part of the *Platonic Theology*¹⁶¹, Proclus emphasizes that there is an absolute step by step accord between Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Chaldaean doctrine of ascent understood in the Neoplatonic way. Both

160 The pure "deformationist" interpretation of theurgy's role in Neoplatonism can still be found in informed and relatively recent scholarly work, see for instance, John P. Anton, (1992).

161 *Theol. Plat.* 4.27.6-31.16. Proclus' locus classicus and its explanation in the fourth part of the *Platonic Theology*, has a theoretical background in the teaching of Syrianus on the interpretation of *Phaedrus*. To this points Hermeias' wording, In *Phaedr.*, 92, line 19 which is similar to that of the *locus classicus*: Προτάττεται μὲν γὰρ πασῶν τῶν ἄλλων ἡ τελεστική, ὅτι δὴ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας πάσας συλλαβοῦσα ἔχει (καὶ γὰρ θεολογίαν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν σύμπασαν καὶ ἐρωτικὴν μέντοι· δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὴν σφόδρα ἐρωτικῶς ἐξῆφθαι αὐτῶν, ἵνα καὶ κατορθωθῆ), τὴν μέντοι ἐρωτικὴν τὴν ἔξω μόνην καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἀποδιαλαβόντες οὕτω θεωροῦμεν, καὶ ταύτη φαίνεται ἡμῖν καταδεεστέρα τῆς τελεστικῆς. Here, too, the defended argument is that telestic art has priority on the human level.

traditions put the summit of theurgy and philosophy proper at the attainment of the highest level of the noetic-noeric gods.

What role is “faith” playing in the ascent? Saffrey and Westerink interpret Proclus' words (TP 4.29 : Ὁ αὐτὸς ἄρα τρόπος τῆς ἀναγωγῆς καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν ἔστι, καὶ διὰ τοῦδε πιστότερος ὁ τῆς θεουργικῆς ἀνόδου τρόπος) meaning that Proclus says that because we – Platonists – have the same notion of the ascent of the soul as theurgists, then the theurgists' view is more trustworthy, more affirmed.¹⁶² Siorvanes' translation is clearly more in accordance with Proclus' words: “Therefore the way of elevation is the same with us [Platonists], and through this is the most faithful way of theurgical elevation”¹⁶³. Proclus does not speak about “theurgists” but the “theurgical way”. Then “through this” (διὰ τοῦδε) perhaps does not emphasize the fact that Plato's and theurgists' views are identical, which Proclus often affirms above in the same passage, but refers in the concluding words to the definite stage of the soul's ascent and the determinate metaphysical level which is permeated with more “faith” (πιστότερος) in contrast to “truth” and “love”. This conception would mean also that “our” (that is, Platonic philosophers') mode of ascent is characterized more by “wisdom” than “faith”. Even if the goal attained is generally at the same level (in the noetic-noeric classes of the gods) this position would imply a certain superiority of theurgic power over human wisdom.

On a terminological level, Proclus' triads are derived from the tradition of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. This detail has been one reason why older scholarship tended to overrate the “theurgical” ring of the passage. Proclus' ideas are nevertheless completely consistent with the Platonic tradition and the internal developments in the philosophical views of the Neoplatonist school. As Hoffman points out, a similar concept of metarational faith is to be found already in Plotinus, even though in Proclus it is commonly seen as testifying mainly to the influence of the *Chaldaean Oracles* on Later Neoplatonism¹⁶⁴. Once more we see that for Proclus the function of the testimony provided by the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which according to him is revealed directly by the gods, is to corroborate the correctness of the Platonic doctrines. The Chaldean tradition with its revelatory dogmas does not condition from without, so to say, the formation of the philosophical concepts; rather, it affirms with religious authority the views already found in authentic Platonic philosophy.

In the commentary on Plato's Alcibiades, we find two places where Proclus deals with the topic of the triads that was mentioned in the enigmatic passage of the *Platonic Theology*. In chapter 29, Proclus tells us that eroticism links us to beauty, maieutics to wisdom, and the dialectics to the Good itself. In other places he has explained that there are three modes of purification: telestic, philosophy, and dialectics. The mention in chapter 29 explains why he sees philosophy and dialectics as two different modes of purification. But the problem is that this reasoning is difficult to reconcile with the relationship

162 *Theol. Plat.* 4.29.

163 Siorvanes (1996), 193.

164 *Enn.* V 3 {49} 17, 28-32, see Hoffman (2000), 469.

between goals and tools as it is depicted in the TP *locus classicus*. Eroticism has the same position and maieutics take the position of divine philosophy, but dialectics take the role which is granted to “theurgic power” in TP.

A discussion in chapter 51 sheds some more light on the triads of faith, truth, and love.¹⁶⁵ This passage seems promising for the search of a Proclean theology of Aphrodite. Proclus definitively links love as a metaphysical concept and anagogic power to Eros considered as a real god, an entity for theological reflection and adoration in the religious sense. Here, Proclus is explicitly interested in the question of the starting point of the procession of Eros, the location of the god's monad in the system of the divine classes. First Proclus tells us that Eros is not among the primal gods or the last of the gods, but among the intermediate. He states this because necessarily the object of love is higher than love itself, and it itself has to be above the lovers. Among the noetic and hidden gods are three hypostases: these are the good as a paternal monad, wisdom as a source of all intellection, and primal beauty in the noetic, as Plato has proven in his *Timaeus*. These are the three noetic causes and corresponding to them are three monads, existing in a causal and unitary mode among the noetic gods, but coming to be seen for the first time in the “unspeakable class of the gods” (ἐκφαινόμενα δὲ πρῶτως ἐν τῇ ἀφθέγκτῳ τάξει τῶν θεῶν).¹⁶⁶ These are faith, truth, and love. Faith grounds and establishes all things in the Good, truth reveals knowledge concerning all beings, and love converts all things towards the nature of beauty. In its higher place, this triad processes through all divine classes and reveals itself in each successive order differently, combining its own powers to the particular characteristics of the respective deities. So far the exposition in the Alcibiades Commentary is well in line with the locus classicus of the *Platonic Theology*. Next, Proclus goes through the divine worlds, exposing them in the manner which is in general in accordance with the system defined in the *Platonic Theology*. However, for the seeker of Aphrodite and Eros’ exact monad the

165 Proclus' theory of love is a surprisingly little-studied domain. Usually it arouses interest as a side-field of Dionysian studies. More than once these contributions have been marred by a compulsive tendency to try to demonstrate a supposed substantial difference between the Areopagite and Proclus. Cornelia J. D. Vogel came out with a paper in 1963 suggesting that ἔρωϝ was not a central concept in Proclus' theology. Answering her critics, Vogel repeated the assertion in her new paper in 1981, writing "To prevent further misunderstanding it should be remembered that I was speaking there of "theology" in the strict and limited sense of a science that uses its own technical terminology. For my judgment was based on the fact that the term ἔρωϝ, so frequently used in the Alcibiades-commentary, is absent from the *Elementa Theologiae* and hardly occurs in the *Theologia Platonica* ... Apparently Proclus is avoiding there the term ἔρωϝ. From this fact - which cannot be denied - I concluded that apparently the notion ἔρωϝ was not essential to his theology.", De Vogel (1981). This view is easily refuted by taking a look at the sources. Ysabel de Andia in her meticulous study on Dionysius provides a much more balanced account of Proclus, but even her treatment is twisted towards demonstrating Dionysius' Christian inspired originality, an attempt which is based on a maximal use of the slightest terminological variations between authors, “Le Divin amour”, de Andia (1996), 145-164. Fortunately, Timothy Riggs (2009) has currently put things to rights defending the interpretation that ἔρωϝ is most important for Proclus' theological reflections.

166 *In Alc.* 51,15.

classification provided by the *Alcibiades Commentary* is disappointing, since it lacks the precise technical terms that are present in the *Platonic Theology*. My guess is that the text represents a stage in Proclus' thought where he has not yet reached a full sophistication of the final system. The passages in the *Alcibiades* do not use the terms noetic-and-noeric and hypercosmic-encosmic orders. Proclus goes on to consider different types of lovers before stating clearly where Eros is to be found as an independent god, not causally, but in an existentially developed form.

Combining insights from the *Platonic Theology* and the *Alcibiades Commentary* we can see a theory of triple triadic characteristics which are hierarchically related with each other: first, the triad of good, wisdom and beauty, then the intermediate stage of faith, truth, and love, and lastly theurgic power, divine philosophy, and inspired erotic madness. We know that according to Proclus there are three properly divine activities. Creating, producing, and exercising providence are these fundamental actions which define the gods' relation to proceeding entities and where the gods are actually (self-)constituted as gods.¹⁶⁷ Providence is clearly linked to divine faith, and in the *Elements of Theology* (prop. 120) Proclus says that providence is the communicating of goodness towards lower orders from the primal Good, and exercising providence means "filling all with a goodness which is prior to Intellect".¹⁶⁸ Thus, we can see that the Platonic triad of good, wisdom, and beauty consists of divine properties, qualities which belong to the gods as gods, and the Chaldaean triad is formed by activities communicating these qualities to the lower orders of reality. Proclus joins faith with providence and the good¹⁶⁹ -- in the same way that he probably sees truth as an agency communicating divine wisdom understood as "producing" (παράγειν) -- because as an ontological structure reality is a plenitude of forms at the noetic and noeric levels. Correspondingly, love means the communicating of beauty and the generating (γεννᾶν) of things: the first among them being the spheres of life, soul, and nature.

The first triad (good, wisdom, and beauty) is constituted by the primal moments of a procession of the gods, and from the point of view of reversion these moments are goals. The second triad (faith, truth, and love) is comprised of the necessary virtues for attaining these goals, and third triad is composed of actions which manifest in human life as striving for the acquisition of the anagogic virtues. It is clear that the first triad consists not only of mental concepts for Proclus: actually they are member triads/sub-grades of the first noetic triad.¹⁷⁰ With the third group of the principles -- theurgy or religion, philosophy, and love -- we are dealing with the structures of the soul and its activities. The intermediate level is a level of virtues, but they too are hypostasized into metaphysical orders. From the viewpoint of

167 *Theol. Plat.* 5.108.3-5.

168 *ET* 120, esp. 7-9 (Dodds' translation, except I have replaced "intelligence" here with "intellect").

169 This connection is made in scholarly discussion by Stephen Gersh (1978), 115-9.

170 And as such they are anticipated in *Theol. Plat.* 1.100.17-109.12 and dealt with systematically in *Theol. Plat.* 3.78.15-81.20.

Proclus' mature theology, they are the levels of the noetic-and-noeric triads. Thus, Proclus equates them with the noetic-noeric triads in his conclusion of the treatise on the accordance of the doctrines of the Chaldaean theurgists and Plato.¹⁷¹ Thus, we can make a theological conclusion that primal Eros as a real god means for Proclus the third noetic-and-noeric triad. With more caution we can at least say that the logic of the system justifies seeking primordial Eros among the gods at the level of the third noetic-and-noeric triad.

However, in the third part of the *Platonic Theology* Proclus introduces the third level of the first noetic triad itself as a loving subject. The third noetic triad which is the object of love for primal Eros (the third noetic-noeric triad) is "intelligible intellect, which at the same time loves the first triad and has the object of love joined to its proper beauty, this being noetic love, which has at its object the very first beauty" (ὁ νοῦς ὁ νοητὸς καὶ ἐρᾷ τῆς πρώτης τριάδος καὶ ἔρωτα ἔχει τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κάλλει συνημμένον).¹⁷² Here, Proclus makes subtle distinctions which should be carefully dealt with. The third triad is at the same time primordial beauty and intelligible intellect, which is the first intellectual monad from which proceeds the intellectual intellect (the third triad of the noeric triad, theologically Zeus) through the intelligible-intellectual intellect (third triad of the noetic-noeric triad, theologically the first Eros). The third noetic triad feels love towards its own beauty, which is proper intelligible love, that is, the first determined monad of Eros; however, it also loves the first intelligible triad where the characteristics of beauty are present in a "secret manner". I think that Proclus does not mean that the third triad has two different objects of love, the first triad and the beauty present in itself, but that the beauty in the secret causal mode is present to the triad as its own existential "possession" on its own level. This idea is an application of the Proclean way of differentiating between that which is causal (κατ' αἰτίαν) and that which is existential (καθ' ὑπαρξιν) and parallels, for instance, the role of ideas in epistemology, where ideas are from the viewpoint of discursive reason causally in the intellect but attainable on their own level as reason-principles. Theologically, Proclus' theory leads to an interesting conclusion: Eros has actually come into existence before Zeus. This notion seems to be paradoxical, but it is acceptable for Proclus, as the Orphic writings actually equate Phanes and Eros, and Phanes is the divine name which Proclus usually ascribes to the third noetic triad (or the first named god present on this level).¹⁷³

171 *Theol. Plat.* 4.31.6-16. Proclus' wording suggests to me that this is his own theoretical innovation. Δοκεῖ δ' ἔμοιγε καὶ τὰς τρεῖς αἰτίας τὰς ἀναγωγὰς ἰκανῶς ὁ Πλάτων ἐκφαίνειν τοῖς μὴ παρέργως ἀκούουσι τῶν λεγομένων, ἔρωτα καὶ ἀλήθειαν καὶ πίστιν. Proclus has applied *Phaedrus'* model of negations and affirmations which Syrianus has used in dealing with Parmenides and with which he produced the theory of the noetic-noeric gods, something that is not to be found in Syrianus.

172 *Theol. Plat.* 3.81.7-20.

173 "He is first called Phanes (the one who appears, the one who makes appear) because his radiance causes all things to appear when he is himself appearing. Sometimes that name is joined with Phanes as an epithet, sometimes it stands alone", Brisson (2004), 95. In the

Where then is Aphrodite? As Proclus subscribes to the opinion that Aphrodite is Eros' mother, and Eros can be identified as an independent monad with (at least some entity at) the third noetic-and-noeric triad, this naturally raises some questions: why does Proclus not call the second noetic-noeric triad, or some deity located there, Aphrodite? And what is the exact relation of the first primordial divine beauty (the third noetic triad) to Aphrodite?

Robbert van den Berg, commenting on Proclus' first hymn to Aphrodite, points out that it is "logical to assume that Aphrodite's fiery court coincides with divine Beauty". He says also that although "Proclus nowhere equates Aphrodite with divine Beauty ... there is some justification for this in the fact that Proclus considers divine Beauty as the cause of the whole erotic triad". Moreover, according to van den Berg, Damascius without a doubt for his part takes the expected step and "equates Aphrodite with divine Beauty".¹⁷⁴

What Damascius is actually saying, seems to me, not to be that unequivocal: "None of the ancients identifies Aphrodite with Pleasure; how do we account for this? Because Aphrodite is the cause of union, of which pleasure is only an accompaniment; and because there is much ugliness in bodily pleasure at least, whereas Aphrodite is beauty, not only the beauty that comes from divine inspiration, but also that of nature."¹⁷⁵ We have another important passage where Damascius considers Aphrodite's relationship with the series of Erotes.¹⁷⁶ Here he raises some subtle problems concerning the notion of the divine which Proclus has overlooked, at least in the writings which have come down to us. Damascius points out that the series of Aphrodites emerging from the monad of the goddess cannot be conceptually identical with the series of Erotes proceeding from the same source: "All Aphrodites share the same form, together with some otherness, and Erotes and Aphrodites have a dissimilar form, together with some sameness."¹⁷⁷ Damascius' remarks on the transmission of dissimilar forms from the common monads, however, do not define the location of the primal sources of the deities whose respective series are used here in order to exemplify the problem of two different kinds of series.

Nevertheless, Proclus resorts to very poetic language in the *Platonic Theology* when he describes how divine beauty acts.¹⁷⁸ It inspires all kinds of love and is the leader of the whole erotic series, a notion also present in the Proclean hymn to Aphrodite and criticized by Damascius as we have just seen. Divine beauty walks on tip toes (ἄκροισι <τοῖς> ποσὶ βεβηκὸς), it raises all things to come towards itself exciting them with desire and passion (ἐφ' ἑαυτὸ πάντα διὰ πόθου καὶ ἐκπλήξεως ἀνεγεῖρον), it gives its gifts joyfully

Orphic system Phanes is a descendant of Chronus; for Proclus, however, Phanes is the first nameable and seen god, and Chronus is the first thinking god at the level of the noeric gods.

174 van den Berg (2008), 199.

175 Damascius, *In Phileb.* 21, 1-5.

176 Damascius, *De principiis*, 1.246, 28 ff.

177 Damascius, *De principiis*, 1.246 (Rappe 335).

178 *Theol. Plat.* 1.108.7-20.

and with divine ease (μετ' εὐφροσύνης καὶ τῆς θείας ῥαστώνης), bewitching and alluring (κηλοῦν πάντα καὶ θέλγον) the whole world, it lifts beings through celestial illuminations. All this imagery inevitably evokes traditional depictions of the goddess of love; Proclus' wording almost has a Sapphic ring.¹⁷⁹

However, Proclus is not willing to utter Aphrodite's name before the hypercosmic level. What are the reasons for this? Perhaps one is that Proclus does not find grounds to use it from the sacred traditions.¹⁸⁰ Or perhaps he too was under the influence of moralistic criticism to the extent that he refused to grant aphrodisiac powers their proper name at their highest metaphysical levels. Both of these motives could be seen in Damascius' quotation of above. I think that the most economic explanation is that because for Proclus Phanes is postulated as the first nameable god, not even beauty at his own level can be granted a name. Phanes as a name is apt for Proclus' metaphysics because it perfectly defines something which brings all to light and is itself the absolute first to be seen and thought. Purely by thinking him (an action of Chronus) and thinking and seeing him (which is Zeus's role) the demiurgic gods carry out cosmopoiesis. This is why Proclus on the one hand characterizes the presence of forces even above the third stage of the noetic triad in such a way that the image of Aphrodite is brought to mind, but on the other hand the rules of the system exclude any possibility for him to name those forces with her name. He can accept Phanes being called Eros, Zeus, and even Dionysus, because these names are secondary for the god whose theologically correct name is Phanes. But there can be no mention of Aphrodite, because this would imply a named deity above Phanes.

Let us also remember that Hermias, whose Commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* was dependent on Syrianus' teaching, defines the relation between the goddess and Eros saying that "As Aphrodite belongs to beauty, Eros leads up to the beautiful, and so Eros belongs to Aphrodite and follows her, ascending to sensible and noetic beauty. So we call Eros a divine madness, deriving from the grasping of sensible beauty and ascending to the recollection of the beautiful itself".¹⁸¹ The last named entity is primal noetic beauty, which in Proclus' mature system is the third noetic triad. There is symmetry in Hermias' words: "Aphrodite belongs to beauty" and "Eros belongs to Aphrodite". The latter can be read also as "Eros is Aphrodite's son".

179 Plutarch, in *De Pythiae oraculis* 6. (394d–409d), a work probably known by Proclus, uses these words together as he contrasts Pythia's voice to the grace of the songs of Sappho, charming and bewitching all who listen to them (ὄσῃν χάρις ἔχει τὰ Σαπφικὰ μέλη, κηλοῦντα καὶ καταθέλγοντα τοὺς ἀκροωμένους). The verb θέλγειν belongs to the traditional vocabulary used by poets to describe the charming force of Aphrodite and Eros. Let us remember that in Homer (*Il.* XIV, 215) Aphrodite's magic girdle included all θελκτήρια, powers capable of taking an amazing grip on a chosen victim. See Pironti (2007), 97–98, 125–126, 137, Breitenberger (2007), 74–78, 225 n. 42. Eufrosyne personified is, of course, one of the Graces and thus belongs to the circle of Aphrodite.

180 Actually a cult might have provided such grounds. According to the Orphic tradition, Chronus and Night produced an egg, whence Phanes appeared. Some statues depicting a goddess holding a cosmic egg had perhaps in ancient times been interpreted as images of Aphrodite and would thus make Aphrodite the mother of Phanes.

181 Hermias, *In Phaedr.* 233–2–5.

Can we then also read the first one meaning that "Aphrodite is the daughter of primal beauty"? Syrianus' exegesis would then be very close to Proclus. He too finds Aphrodite's first monad in the highest primordial beauty but refuses to call it Aphrodite. It is the immediate cause of the goddess and at the same time the first monad of Zeus and Eros. The difference between Proclus and his master's primal aphroditology is that Proclus posits one more mediating level between beauty itself and the named goddess, because he has a noetic-noeric diacosm of the gods, which still seems to be lacking in Syrianus' theology.¹⁸²

5.1.10 Proclus' piety and Aphrodite's role in it

Whereas the preceding chapter's focus was Proclus' theoretical views, here our discussion concerns our philosopher in his peculiar practice of religion. What we are trying to find out is the meaning of Aphrodite for Proclus on the personal level, treating him as a specific representative of late antique spirituality.

Let us first engage with the much discussed problem of Proclus the philosopher versus Proclus the devotee of the gods. I shall deal with this issue through a brief survey of the opinions of Dodds, Festugière, and Trouillard. Saffrey has written significant contributions about Proclus' spirituality too, but on this matter he seconds the opinion of Dodds, although he does have a more nuanced and sympathetic attitude for Proclus' figure in religion.¹⁸³

In Dodds' view, Proclus tried to reconcile contradictory notions, an attempt that ultimately ended in failure. Dodds characterizes Proclus' resolution as the abstract demythologization of the Greek gods in theory and

¹⁸²Sarah Klitenic Wear states (2011), 58-84 that Syrianus has a hierarchy of noetic, noetic-noeric, and noeric further divided into triads, and this structure was even further divided by Proclus. She also seems to imply a Syrianic paternity of the concept of noetic-noeric gods in the introduction of her current book (2011 b). Klitenic Wear has firmly established, in my opinion, the fact that Syrianus' reflections were the theoretical basis for the Proclean theory of the transitory gods between noetic and noeric gods. But, Syrianus, however, does not use the technical terms noetic-and-noeric anywhere in his surviving writings. Proclus finds a Platonic basis for his theory on noetic-noeric gods in *Phaedrus*, and we have in the form of Hermias' commentary a fairly extensive testimony of Syrianus' teaching on *Phaedrus*. It should be noted that nowhere in this commentary is the term noetic-and-noeric used. Saffrey and Westerink opined that Hermias' version of the notes of Syrianus' course on *Phaedrus* was the official edition of the school and possibly used by Proclus. They categorically state that the term noetic-and-noeric was introduced by Proclus and precisely for marking the distinction between his own and Syrianus' theory, Introduction for fourth part of the *Platonic Theology*, xxxx, xxxvi. Therefore, I think that we cannot ascribe the theory of this class of gods to Syrianus; it is rather to be seen as a Proclean innovation inspired by Syrianus' teaching.

¹⁸³ Saffrey (1986) = Saffrey (1990), 33-49, Saffrey (1964) = Saffrey (1990) = 51-61.

the surrender of the rational basis of philosophy for the sake of magic in practice.¹⁸⁴

Festugière sees in Proclus an austere negative theology complemented by a passionate affirmation of religious experience. Proclus' solution was not, according to Festugière's view, a leap from the solid base of philosophy to the abyss of irrationality, but Proclus achieved to some extent a philosophically satisfying integration by forging an alliance between intellectual contemplation, the mystique of the One, and the hieratic art and by establishing the latter's effectiveness on the workings of the pneumatic envelope of the soul (the doctrine of the vehicle of the soul, or astral, or ethereal body). According to Festugière, contemplative wisdom allows for an ascent to the God of philosophers, while theurgy (hieratic art) realizes a direct connection with the gods of the traditional pantheon.¹⁸⁵

Trouillard continues the line drafted by Festugière but considers that Festugière, too, is cutting Proclus into two in his essentially psychological explanation. Trouillard, however, finds that Festugière is pointing in the right direction in his insights concerning the doctrine of vehicle, and this prompts Trouillard himself to take imagination in Proclus' epistemology as a key term for explaining Proclus' piety and pursuit of *merveilleux*.¹⁸⁶

I think that Trouillard's finding that the soul's vehicle is an organ of fantasy is correct, and its ramifications for the interpretation of Proclus' theory of the soul's powers has not yet been exhaustively studied. In my opinion, imagination bridges in Proclus the transition from the body's or the soul-body composite's forces to those of the strictly psychic sphere. It would be useful to study to what extent this suggests an analogy between Proclus' theory of the senses and the soul's cognitive faculties. It seems to be that imagination functions for Proclus as the summit of the senses in similar way that the flower of the whole soul is a unitary summit of the soul's powers.

Edward Butler has pointed out that as different as these different scholars' positions are on the problem of how they relate Proclus' religiosity to his "scientific" theology, they all share erroneous assumptions deriving from essentially monotheizing readings of Proclus. "Saffrey and Westerink seem to have in mind a process in which the Gods are "metabolized" into henads; but this demythologization is the effect, rather, of their own erasure of the distinction between the ontic and supra-essential realms, rendering the Gods perfectly vacuous and otiose conceptions and thus foisting onto Proclus an utterly foreign project of the effective elimination of the Gods. Proclus' goal is manifestly to discover the roots of Being in the divine, not the dissolution of the divine into Being. This fundamental *méconnaissance* plays itself out further in a curiously patronizing account of Proclus' personal religiosity."¹⁸⁷

184 Dodds (1963).

185 Festugière (1996) and (1968).

186 Trouillard (1982).

187 Butler (2003), 386.

I agree fully with Butler that these explanations arose from the presupposition that the problem with which Proclus wrestled was to make a supreme God of intellectualized monotheism accessible to humankind and at the same time save and justify “gross” and “primitive” forms of traditional religion. In reality, Proclus, as we have seen in earlier chapters, was not working inside any project of sublime monotheism. On the contrary, he was reacting against a monotheizing tendency especially in earlier and contemporary currents of pagan philosophy and thus, by implication, the monotheism of the dominant religion as well. As Butler also points out, Proclus was not worried about the problem of the inaccessibility of the supreme God.

Proclus' highest god is not the supreme god in any ontotheological sense. Firstly, his god is, on the one hand, totally ineffable and, on the other, relates to the world as the henad of henads in the divine series. Secondly, his gods, even the most ineffable, are not inaccessible, because according to tenets of henadology they are present everywhere, first as independent henads participated by the monads of the ontic series and then as henadic illumination in the entities which are members of these series.

In addition, there is also a henadologically based explanation for *le merveilleux*, which makes interpretations of these phenomena quite different from the interpretations provided by the ontotheological framework of supreme Being. In the latter approach, all miracles are derived from the sole power of only God; all other agents, however holy they are, are ultimately intercessors and go-betweens. Since miracles nevertheless happen, according to medieval sources apparently almost on daily basis, this suggests a view of the world in a rather indeterministic state and subject to the permanent supernatural intervention by the omnipotent will. On the contrary, in the Proclean system events seen as miraculous happen, often are experienced, as Trouillard rightly points out, in the vehicle of the soul (through the organ of imagination) and are always explainable by the action related to the appropriate synthemata, the secret signs of recognition which themselves turn out to be representatives of and derived from the henads. This means that these miraculous occurrences are not miracles in the sense provided by the interventionist framework of ontotheology, but belong rather to the inherent order of things.¹⁸⁸

Everywhere the task of the gods qua gods is to generate, to produce, and to exercise providence towards the universe.¹⁸⁹ That human beings enjoy

188 John Dillon seems to think along similar lines, saying that: “The distinction commonly made between magic and theurgy is in fact, in my view, basically an unreal one. The real distinction is between magic/theurgy - and its remote descendant, the modern scientific world-view -, and religion. Behind the latter is the impulse to abase oneself before some force alien to oneself that is infinitely powerful and mysterious; behind the former is the impulse to come to terms with that force, and the physical world it has created, ... deep down he [the theurgist] knows this great truth: that if he presses the right buttons, *they will come* (italized by Dillon), J. Dillon (2007), 40.

189 *Theol. Plat.* 5.108, 3, *ET* prop. 120.

this providential activity through religious cult and prayer. For Proclus an ideal prayer presupposes precise knowledge of all the classes of gods.¹⁹⁰ We can see a model of this kind of prayer in the prefaces of the main works by Proclus, in which he has the habit of beginning with a prayer. At the beginning of the *Commentary on Parmenides* he asks for appropriate help from each divine class for the reception of Plato's mystical vision.¹⁹¹ From the noetic gods requests perfect intelligence, from the noeric uplifting power, from the hypercosmic gods free activity unconcerned with material inquiries, from the cosmic winged life, from the chorus of angels manifestations of truth, from the good demons abundant filling of divine inspiration, and from the heroes an august mind and a truly lofty attitude.

There is an interesting discrepancy between the pantheon in Proclus' metaphysical theology and that of his personal piety. The latter could be evaluated on the basis of his hymns and those provided by Marinus as well as resorting to meager evidence coming from other Neoplatonic philosophers, mainly Damascius.

We should, of course, keep in mind the question of how to assess possible distortions in the available evidence. Marinus' account is filtered through the already traditional view of pagan holy men. But there is no clear reason for why excessive suspicion towards Marinus' account should be taken. After all, he was speaking only a year after Proclus' death to an audience which knew the philosopher's habits well.

According to Marinus, deities that are not extensively dealt with in Proclus' theological treatises play a large role in Proclus' cultic life, and these include 1) Asclepius, 2) the much revered but equivocal great mother goddess, and 3) Hekate as well, who is also present in Proclus' hymns. Some of the gods adored by Proclus are not mentioned even once in his theoretical writings. Others are discussed largely in theory, such as Zeus, but do not have a prominent status in Proclus' religious life. The only divinity enjoying a first-rank role on both levels is Athena.

Marinus tells us that Proclus often used sleepless nights for pondering difficult doctrinal questions or composing hymns. This preoccupation implies that the amount of sacred texts authored by him could be considerable. In addition to seven hymns previously generally acknowledged to be Proclean, two others have recently been recognized as Proclus' authorship. The first one is the Hymn to Ares suggested by West and supported by Saffrey.¹⁹² The second one is the Hymn to the transcendent god, which some scholars already in the 19th century thought were Proclean. Werner Beierwaltes (1998) thinks that the hymn to Πάντων' επέκεινα could be attributed to Proclus or Dionysius the Areopagite. He inclines personally for the literary paternity of Proclus.¹⁹³ In any case, the hymn is heavily laden with late Neoplatonic ideas and technical terminology, and not only is henadology

190 *In Tim.* 1.209,9-11.

191 Proclus, *In Parm.* 617. Both the *In Parm.* and *Theol. Plat.* begin with a prayer to the gods and praising Proclus' teacher Syrianus.

192 See Saffrey (2000) on the fourth hymn.

193 Beierwaltes (1998).

present but also the theory of the divine signs. This surely excludes the traditional attribution to Gregorius Nazianzus. Sicherl and van den Berg see Pseudo-Dionysius a more likely candidate.¹⁹⁴ If the hymn is from Proclus, does it contradict the principle that the henads and the One should be worshiped only by silence?

That just these seven (or nine) hymns survived signifies that they resonated stylistically and emotionally most with the tastes of unknown Byzantine compilers. In this competition, Aphrodite does very well: she is the only divinity having two items in the cluster. We do not know how far the collection could be seen as a representative sample of Proclus' religious writings.

The first hymn dedicated to Aphrodite celebrates the whole "foam-born" series, beginning from the goddess of the cosmic level and praising her as the mother of the different Erotes (ἔρωτοτόκος, Love-bearer).¹⁹⁵ The second hymn worships her as a Lycian goddess, referring to Proclus' native country. In both of these hymns Proclus asks Aphrodite for freedom from unholy, earth-bound desires.

Besides Proclus' hymn, the notion of "love-begetter" is according to the TLG database mentioned seventeen times in Greek literature. Six cases belong to Nonnus of Panopolis and the rest to other poets (Dioscorus of Aphrodito, Musaeus, John the Grammarian, and Nicetas Eugenianus). Without exception, all of these belong to authors later than Proclus. Nicetas Eugenianus lived in the twelfth century, but all the other poets represent late antiquity.

A poem preceding Proclus' time is a magical papyrus where Erototkos refers to Aphrodite equated here with the Moon goddess Selene, ("you create all things over earth, you mother of the universe, love-bearer Aphrodite", γεννᾷς γὰρ σὺ πάντα ἐπὶ χθονὸς, ... καὶ ἔρωτοτόκεια Ἄφροδίτη). Therefore Proclus' use of the honorific name Erototokos for Aphrodite is not unique.

All of the poets mentioned used the epithet not necessarily in direct reference to our goddess but clearly in a general Aphrodisiac context, where Eros or some mythological figure close to him and her mother are prominent.¹⁹⁶ There is one very interesting exception: a poem, ascribed in scholarship with hesitation to Nonnus, deals with the gospel of John, and here Erototokos is referring to the Virgin Mary. Thus, we have a testimony that at least one author of the 6th century thought it appropriate to use it in reference to the Virgin Mary.

I think that Proclus used the word Erototokos in order to underline Aphrodite's character as the divine mother and very probably launched the honorific title in a conscious parallel to the Christian usage of Theotokos.¹⁹⁷

194 Van den Berg (2001), Hymns, 7.

195 *Procli hymni*. 2, 1, 13, ed. Ernst Vogt (Wiesbaden, 1957).

196 In Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4, 129 the love-begetting quality is ascribed to Cadmos' face with rosy cheeks (ἔρωτοτόκου δὲ προσώπου ὡς ῥόδα φοινίσσουσι παρηίδες).

197 Paul Friedrich points out a gap in the classical Greek pantheon as far as it lacks a mother goddess; it has Demeter, but among the most important divinities "Aphrodite is certainly the most motherly", Friedrich (1978), 149. Proclus could have had many motives to

This Christian term has old roots as well, but its tremendous significance is due to Nestorius, the archbishop of Constantinople 428-431, who tried to curb its use and thereby caused his own downfall and the sanctification of the Theotokos doctrine by the authority of the ecumenical council in Ephesus, in 431. This event was a starting point for the great Christological strife that convulsed the Byzantine world for a long time, a conflict never resolved until the collapse of imperial power in the Near East. It is certain that these debates gained the attention of pagan philosophers, who probably followed them with keen interest.

There is no use going here into a detailed exegesis of Proclus' Aphrodite hymns, since they have been recently deeply studied especially by Erler and van den Berg. In conclusion, I would only like to point out one important issue, which comes to view with the utmost vigor in the Aphrodite hymns and is common at least to two other poems of Proclus. This matter is "the dual aspects of prayer" (Alain Cameron's expression) which in the case of Aphrodite is connected to the phenomenon of the overlapping of deities, referred earlier in this essay, and Proclus' habit of asking from a deity something which seems to be a cancellation of the respective god's more traditionally understood gift.

Cameron brought out his finding in response to West concerning the question of the possible Proclean authorship of the so-called eight Homeric hymns, which he, like West, is willing to accept as Proclus' hymn to Ares. "What is so striking in Hom. h. viii is the feeling of personal weakness and sinfulness that so characterize Proclus' hymns'." Cameron links feelings in the hymn to Proclus' problems with the Christian authorities and his exile to Asia Minor.

"Most interesting of all, however, is the dual aspect of the prayer (in the Homeric hymn): dispel weakness on the one hand, but keep me from strife on the other. Not only does this suit Proclus' position very well, it is a position of many late Neoplatonists, whether revealed in their writings or in the acts. There is an interesting parallel in Simplicius' commentary on Epictetus ... , which I think alludes to Justinian's closing of the Academy in 529. Simplicius' theme is that philosophers should on the one hand not knuckle under and lose their self-respect, while on the other not to provoke the authorities by untimely παρησια, i.e. like Hom. h. viii 16-17, steer a middle course, *δυσμενέων προφυγόνται μόθον*."¹⁹⁸

I think that Cameron rightly traces the historical background and Proclus' underlying personal attitude, both aspects strongly supporting the attribution of the Ares hymn to Proclus.¹⁹⁹ My aim here, however, is not to defend a Proclean authorship of this hymn but to underline that asking from the god of war peaceful restraint before the enemy and fortitude for the soul not to be provoked is a kind of reversal of the god's customary gift, a procedure which

emphasize this dimension, but one of them was to use parallelism with Theotokos as a form of resistance.

198 West (1970), 302-303.

199 Cameron hesitated only for reasons of transmission, while West's aim in his article was just to resolve transmission history, in his mind, this would lend support to Proclus' authorship as well.

we find also in Proclus' hymn to Athena and in both of his hymns to Aphrodite. Proclus asks from Athena light coming from holy words, wisdom, and love.

κλυθί μευ, ἡ φάος ἀγνὸν ἀπαστράπτουσα προσώπου·
δὸς δέ μοι ὄλβιον ὄρμον ἀλωμένω περὶ γαῖαν,
δὸς ψυχῇ φάος ἀγνὸν ἀπ' εὐιέρων σέο μύθων
καὶ σοφίην καὶ ἔρωτα· μένος δ' ἔμπνευσον ἔρωτι
τοσσάτιον καὶ τοῖον, ὅσον χθονίων ἀπὸ κόλπων
αὖ ἔρῴσῃ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον ἐς ἡθεα πατρὸς ἐῆος.²⁰⁰

Hear me you, whose face shines in the clear light,
and a happy haven grant me, who err on the earth;
give to my soul the pure light of your holy words,
and wisdom and love, and inspire love with that much
and such a strength that from the earthly abysses
it will draw me back again to Olympus, to the abode of the powerful father.

(translation R. van den Berg)

Wisdom is quite a customary attribute for Athena to grant. The phrase “holy words” is period-specific, bringing to mind a Chaldean association, but it could also be, like the use of Erototokos, an example of the Proclean double tactic of “despoiling the Galileans”, by using formulas similar to those used in the discourse of the dominant religion and at the same time vindicating superiority of the traditional religion. When it comes to ἔρωσ this is definitely not what one would expect: asking for such qualities from a warlike, motherless, virgin goddess of rationality.²⁰¹ This peculiar nature of Proclus' Athena hymn shines an even clearer light, as the theme of love is not introduced as a complementary divine attribute but turns out to be the most important motive.

200 *Hymni* 7.31-36.

201 But for Proclus, *Hymni* 7, 23 Athena is also a mother, μήτηρ βίβλων!

In addition, there is a reference to unholy actions many times committed. This could be an undertone referring to sexuality, very appropriate for the time, but as Proclus links these zealous errors of the soul, the theme could also refer to an subsequent repented haughtiness and arrogance in a purely theoretical debate.²⁰² The emphasis of Athena as a goddess of love in Proclus' religious poetry seamlessly parallels his inclination to assign to Athena a great presence in the traditionally Aphrodisiac realm -- a tendency we have seen emerging in his theoretical writings.

Both of the Aphrodite hymns ask from the goddess of love, not conventional blessings deriving from her powers, but a release from Earth-bound impulses, that is, sexual desires. This accords well with the ascetic disposition of the age, and it is expressed with a language conveying personal sincerity and eagerness.²⁰³

ἀλλά, θεά, πάντη γὰρ ἔχεις ἀριήκοον οὔσας,
εἴτε περισφίγγεις μέγαν οὐρανόν, ἔνθα σέ φασι
ψυχὴν ἀενάοιο πέλειν κόσμοιο θεεῖην,
εἴτε καὶ ἑπτὰ κύκλων ὑπὲρ ἄντυγας αἰθέρι ναίεις
σειραῖς ὑμετέραις δυνάμεις προχέουσ' ἀδαμάστους,
κέκλυθι, καὶ πολύμοχθον ἐμὴν βιότοιο πορείην
ἰθύνοισι σέο, πότνα, δικαιοτάτοισι βελέμοις
οὐχ ὀσίων παύουσα πόθων κρυόεσσαν ἐρωήν.²⁰⁴

But, goddess, for you have a far-hearing ear everywhere,

202 *Hymni* 7.38-39: I know how often I have been torn from one to another, / by non holy actions, that I made with mindless emotion (οἶδα γάρ, ὡς πολλοῖσιν ἐρίχθομαι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαις / πρήξεσιν οὐχ ὀσίαις, τὰς ἤλιτον ἄφροσι θυμῶ). Academic vices are perhaps a more credible interpretation, seeing that θυμός has much to do with ambition, and from what Marinus tells us Proclus' propensity is to get angry (and be quickly conciliated too).

203 A good article on Proclus' personal asceticism is Yvan Bubloz (2003).

204 *Hymni* 2.14-22. Marinus tells us that as proof of Proclus giving "superiority to pleasures of the body and his outstanding love of temperance I think it sufficient to mention only his intense predilection and zeal for mathematics and everything of the kind. These pursuits do not allow creaturely and vulgar pleasure to arise even at the outset, but have the power to implant felicity in the essence of the soul", *Vita Procli*, 4.20-27, tr. Mark Edwards. Bubloz' translation says "ne permettent absolument pas que prenne naissance la moindre volupté vulgaire et bestiale".

whether you envelop the great heaven all around,
where, as they say, you are the divine soul of the everlasting cosmos,
or dwell in the aether above the rims of the seven orbits
while pouring unyielding powers forward into your series,
listen, and may you steer the toilsome course of my life,
mistress, with you most righteous arrows,
while putting an end to the chilly impulse of unholy desires.²⁰⁵
(translation R. van den Berg)

ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡμετέρεην ὑποδέχνησο, πότνα, θυηλὴν
εὐεπίης· Λυκίων γὰρ ἀφ' αἵματός εἰμι καὶ αὐτός.
ψυχὴν δ' ἄψ ἀνάειρον ἀπ' αἴσχεος ἔς πολὺ κάλλος,
γηγενέος προφυγοῦσαν ὀλοῖον οἴστρον ἔρωϊς.²⁰⁶

But do now accept our sacrifice of eloquence too,
for I myself am also Lycian blood,
And lift up my soul from ugliness back again to great beauty,
while fleeing the deadly goad of earth-bound desire.²⁰⁷
(translation R. van den Berg)

Thanks to Marinus and Damascius, we know that Proclus declined proposals of prestigious marriage twice. The first time, as he was very young,

205 Van Den Berg's translation with introduction and commentary in Van Den Berg (2001), 190-237.

206 *Hymni* 5.12-15. According to LSJ οἴστρος is concretely a gadfly, a tormenting insect, metaphorically a sting, or anything that drives one mad, thus agony, vehement passion, insane passion, and so on.

207 Van Den Berg's translation, introduction and commentary on Proclus' Hymn to Lycian Aphrodite, Van Den Berg (2001), 238-251.

his teacher Olympiodorus would have liked to see him as his son-in-law. The second time, it was no lesser man than Syrianus who proposed him marriage with a maiden of his kin. This time we know who the proposed bride was and what became of her. She was Aedesia who married Hermias, future head of the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria. Hermias was succeeded at the head of the Alexandrian school by his son Ammonius, who had studied with his brother Heliodorus for years in Athens under Proclus' guidance. Through Aedesia a personal tie links Proclus and Damascius, as young Damascius was honored with the invitation to be a speaker at Aedesia's funeral.²⁰⁸ Therefore we know that Proclus' renunciation of marriage and Aphrodite's customary gifts belonged not only in the area of theory. His ambivalent relation with Aphrodite comes forth also in the hymns where, after all, he asks for children not with the aid of Aphrodite but, once again, from Athena.²⁰⁹ Thus these children are spiritual, that is, pupils and heirs in the line of Platonic succession.

208 Damascius gives a hagiographic depiction of Aedesia's life in his *Philosophical History* (ed. and translated by Polymnia Athnassiadi, 1999), chapter 56: "She was a relative of the great Syrianus, the most beautiful and noble of the Alexandrian women. She had a similar character to that of her husband (Hermeias), simple and honorable, while caring throughout her life for justice no less than moderation. But where she was truly exceptional was in her love of God and of Man. Hence she attempted to benefit the needy in a manner beyond her means ... thinking that the one treasure of any worth as regards the life after death was the will to lighten the burdens of poverty for holy and good people, spared nothing in her compassion for the human condition. As a result, she was beloved even by the most wicked of her compatriots. She took particular care of her sons' education in philosophy, wishing to hand down to them their father's professional skill as if it were an ancestral inheritance ... And when she accompanied her sons to Athens where they studied philosophy, her virtue was admired by the entire chorus of philosophers and not least by their leader Proclus. This was the Aedesia whom as a young girl Syrianus intended to betroth to Proclus, if some god had not prevented Proclus from entering on marriage. She was so pious and holy towards God and - to tell the truth - so beloved of the gods, that she was blessed with many divine epiphanies ... I knew her as an old lady; and when she died I delivered on her grave the customary funeral oration adorned with heroic verses. I was then very young, a mere boy."

209 *Hymni* 7.48. Van den Berg (2001), 310, provides an alternative interpretation according to which Proclus did not get married because he was forbidden by a god, as told by Marinus. Then he could after all pray for the lifting of the ban and marriage. I wonder why he prayed for this from Athena. And could "children" refer to learned commentaries given that Athena is mother of the books?

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I shall recapitulate the conclusions arrived at in the five articles comprising the main part of this dissertation and summarize the results of the complementary essay. I shall also make some necessary corrections where positions taken in respective articles are now in need of rectification and raise some prospects for further research.

In the first article of this dissertation ("Proclus' Art of Referring with a Scale of Epithets") I have shown that the Neoplatonic mode of philosophizing in the form of a highly sophisticated commentary also produced an art of referring to philosophical predecessors using a set of honorific epithets. These epithets convey an impression of a well-defined order of ranks and degree of orthodoxy from the perspective of late Neoplatonic Athenian School. Proclus gives to Iamblichus a strong certificate of orthodoxy and to Porphyry a much weaker one. The values attributed to Plotinus tend to accumulate on the extremities of the scale, expressing the founding figure's ambivalence among the later representatives of ancient Neoplatonism. The idiosyncratic Theodorus of Asine receives a remarkably high rating, implying both admiration and perplexity. It is not by chance that Proclus situates his loved teacher's position above the scaled series and repeatedly calls him simply *καθηγεμών*, master (of studies and as a spiritual guide). In the whole Proclean corpus, Syrianus' name is uttered only once, in the epigram which Proclus composed for their common tomb.

Proclus' procedure shares some similarity with the practice observable in the other hierarchies of the era, as well as in the Byzantine administration and the Christian church. As a correction to the article, I would like to point out here that there was indeed an upper scale present in the honorifics in Church usage too. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon with *εὐλαβέστατος* (most devout), *εὐσεβέστατος* (most pious), *θεοφιλέστατος* (most beloved by God), *θεοσεβέστατος* (most religious), *φιλόχριστος* (Christ-loving), and so on,

provide good examples.²¹⁰ There was also a fateful omission of an honorific, which implied much the same as dropping the customary "comrade" in the Stalin era. The Neoplatonist usage is, however, far more precise than could be expected at first sight and rooted in specific metaphysical and psychological theories.

In the second article ("Hypernoetic Cognition and the Scope of Theurgy in Proclus") I point out that Proclus' hypernoetic faculties of the soul are also to be found in his highly original discussion of matter and the receptacle of Plato's *Timaeus*. "Bastard intellect" introduced here seems to refer to the same hypernoetic power which Proclus elsewhere often calls "flower of the intellect". It is also possible that "bastard opinion" corresponds to "flower of the whole soul" in Proclus' commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Thus, he was already in the *Commentary of Timaeus* forming a theory of the two hypernoetic devices, which also confirms his treatise of prayer in *Timaeus' Commentary*. Here, as Beierwaltes has shown, *synthema* of return corresponds to "flower of the intellect", which logically would imply that *synthema* of that which remains would be "flower of the whole soul".

Giving due weight to Proclus' remarks on the limit of theurgy in his commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, I argue that we have reason to modify the prevailing views on Proclus' theurgy. Proclus explicitly rejects the identification of hypernoetic cognition as a form of theurgy. Therefore, including hypernoesis in the sphere of theurgy, as is repeatedly done in modern discussions, means imposing a more rough-grained concept on Proclus in comparison to that which he actually exposes. Proclus draws a very clear dividing line separating the heights reached by both theurgy and philosophy and the hypernoetic state of the soul, which he describes as an admirable, silent contemplation of the divine henads in the noetic summit pointing to the One beyond. My findings also support the view that Proclus' conception of union with the One cannot be conceived as identification but ultimately a kind of "touching" the One, which makes the highest cognitive faculty in the soul a parallel to the lowest of the senses, demonstrating thus an interesting mirroring in the soul and soul-body composite's powers. In addition, I claim to have found an important piece of Proclus' exegesis on Iamblichus, since I read the passage in the *Platonic Theology* 4.(9)31.10-16 as a paraphrase and doctrinal rectification of the famous locus classicus concerning theurgy in *De Mysteriis* 2.11.96-97.19.

In the third article ("Henadology in the two Theologies of Proclus") I compare *The Elements of Theology* and the *Platonic Theology* showing that they share two fundamental henadological ideas: first, the henads are participated spheres of the One, and second the henads exceed ontic forms both in unity and individuality. But the theory of the classes of the gods in the *Platonic Theology* is not only an extended version of the henadology in the *Elements of Theology*; it brings forth some theoretical modifications of which some are so substantial that one must describe them as major rectifications of the theory. Two key innovations present in the *Platonic Theology* are

210 Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (ed.) *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol 1, xi.

missing in the Elements: the introduction of the noetic-noeric gods and the exact solution of the problem of the relation of the primordial principles -- the Limited and Unlimited -- to the henads. Proclus dispels the ambiguity present in the *Elements of Theology* in the *Platonic Theology*. Proclus has one consistent theory of the unfolding of reality from the One, since he, as Damascius understood, grants primordial principles the status of the first manifesting henads.²¹¹

From the two Theologies as a whole emerges a general representation of procession, in which the ineffable unity of the henads is seen as a pool of pre-existing properties for beings. The Unlimited picks up all of them, triggering a continuous loop of production, but the Limit measures this process, setting determinate breaks at certain points, and thus the interplay of the principles forms definite patterns of existence. As the Limit measures the Unlimited, there remain indeterminate potencies after each breakpoint, and the procession meets these as its matter for the next loop of the unfolding of existences. This cycle goes on so far that all the pre-existing characteristics are actualized in the ontic domain as forms of mixing totalities of essences, but even after the last loop there remains an ultimate indefiniteness, pure matter of the lowest end of all, with no impression or illumination of any particular henad and opposed to the ineffable unity - but even it is caused by the One. Proclus criticizes Plotinus' view on the Limited and Unlimited as a relation of form and matter and sees them as a relation of hyparxis and power; however, his theory of matter is complicated, as he derives matter both from the demiurge and the One. As the last form of the Unlimited is not participated by any henad, this would suggest that it actually is not only caused by the One but is the One itself as its first, most fundamental manifestation of infinite power. The relations of matter and the Unlimited would be an important theme to be addressed in a dedicated study.

In the fourth article ("Aphrodite in Proclus' Theology") Proclus' attempt to integrate his metaphysics with the traditional pantheon is studied from the privileged viewpoint of Aphroditology. According to the Proclean theory, the procession of Aphrodite begins on the first level of the noetic-noeric triad, in the supercelestial place, where the female quality of the divine reveals herself for the first time. In the second term of the noetic-noeric triad exists the depth of the sky, Uranus and his powers, among them the first monad for Rhea and Aphrodite. The third term of the noetic-noeric triad is, in the language of the *Phaedrus*, the subcelestial vault. The third triad in its totality is love (the first divine Eros) that mirrors on its level intelligible beauty (the

211 As far as I understand, Sarah Klitenic Wear (2011 b), providing an interpretation of Syrianus', comes very close to the view which I have provided on Proclus' henadology and especially the status of the protological principles as henads. She writes that after the One "Syrianus places peras (Limit) and apeiria (Unlimitedness), features of the henadic realm which filter down and pervade every level of existence", (p. 6) and "The henads are the lowest element in the realm of the One, below peras and apeiria, and constitute the link to the Intelligible" (p.8). If they are features of the henadic realm and the henads are the lowest element in the realm of the One, they surely are henads. Proclus, indeed, seems to take this logical step in the *Platonic Theology*.

corresponding triad on the intelligible level) and raises ascending souls towards it. The noeric gods are arranged into a hebdomad composed of the two triads and the demiurgic monad. On the first level, Rhea manifests herself as an identified deity mediating between Cronus and Zeus. One of the operations of the demiurge is the castration of the previous fathers, which symbolizes the birth of the internally differentiated world of forms. Through this operation Aphrodite is born as a hypercosmic and hypercosmic-encosmic principle of demiurgy and providence. In her procession, the goddess who pre-exists in her monads on the higher levels gains an articulated identity and reveals herself as a divinity whose task it is to harmonize and recuperate unity.

For Proclus, Aphrodite is greater than love. Love is the power in life, and Aphrodite is the most one-like and purest life at the hypercosmic level, the Uranic summit in Aphrodite being “the flower of life”. The theory of the divine series enables Proclus to defend Aphrodite in all the forms of her traditional cult. It is possible to pray to and to celebrate Aphrodite, even from the popular and perhaps vulgar viewpoint, as the protectress of Earthly love. But for a Neoplatonic sage who has attained Plato’s mystical vision the worship of the goddess is linked to ascent, the philosopher’s aim being an identification with the One present in the human soul, and because of this she or he asks and deserves from the immaculate Erototokos (Love-Bearer, Mother of god Eros) for even better gifts than those desired by the Trojan prince. With this paper Neoplatonic Aphroditology is not an exhausted topic, and examinations of the role of the other gods would also be rewarding.

The fifth article (“The Corpus Areopagiticum as a Crypto-Pagan Project”) considers the post-Proclean philosophers' strategies for adapting to the changed historical circumstances which required developing new and radical ways to protect the School's spiritual inheritance. I develop my version of the crypto-pagan hypothesis of the origin of the Dionysian Corpus in the form of a detailed critique of the position of Carlo Maria Mazzucchi who has attributed authorship to Damascius. My conclusion is that Mazzucchi is right in seeing the Corpus Areopagiticum as a crypto-pagan project. Much of his specific arguments, however, are untenable. István Perczel is right in seeing the Corpus as an esoteric text, but I do not think that it was Origenist – as Perczel thought at the time when my article was written. I find his current suggestion that the writer is to be found from the circle of Theodoret of Cyrillus even harder to accept²¹² – but, rather, I think it is a work which functioned as a literary pointer to Proclus' corpus. Mazzucchi’s version represents an infection or virus-thesis. According to this idea, Damascius realized that the victory of Christianity was inevitable. Then at the last moment he succeeded to inoculate a Neoplatonist notion of God into Christianity. This idea, I think, is the wrong interpretation of the later Neoplatonists’ view of the future. They could not think of their true religion in terms of defeat. They could envisage a long historical period, during which a shadow, or “confusion” as Proclus put it, would rule, but according to their view of a constant cyclical process of

212 István Perczel, (2012, forthcoming).

history victory was on their side. Things would eventually return to their natural (pre-Christian) state. Second, for the specific branch of Athenian Neoplatonism to impregnate the highest God of the monotheistic religion by apophasis and by way of mystical ascent would not result in an acceptable compromise. The reality of the divine henads as genuine gods in all their individuality and the adoration of the whole divine series within a proper cult were truly dear and unforfeitable for Athenian Neoplatonism. It could temporarily live on under forced oppression without the practice of the latter, but it could not abandon its vision of the former.

The essential pagan ingredient in the Dionysian Corpus is its Proclean-Damascian completeness. It simply contains too much of this element for a Christian project, and the author was acting at a time when the "Pauline" project of integrating Christianity with philosophy had already long been consummated. This conclusion cannot be proven, but neither are any of the alternatives demonstrable. Thus we are left with conjectures, where each reader should ponder which guess appears more plausible. One way to try to substantiate the crypto-pagan thesis would be a detailed comparative study of the literary figures of Syrianus in Proclus and Hierotheus in Dionysius.

In the complementary essay's chapters concerning henadology and the structure of Proclus' divine diacosms, I have concluded that Proclus achieved success, due to his conception of the divine series, in forging a reasonable accord between philosophical monism and polytheistic theology. All attempts to try to understand Neoplatonism in its own terms are doomed to fail without a conscious effort to free oneself from the straitjacket of the primacy of ontology. Ontology is the philosophical science of real beings, which for Neoplatonists are clearly understandable, not to us, but to the Intellect, to which our human intelligence is related through serialized participation. However, beyond this area of intelligible clarity among distinct things, "above" and "below" are the spheres of the ineffable. On the one hand, according to the Neoplatonic view, these spheres of the ineffable are informed with the Limit through the intellect's "downward" activity, but, on the other hand, "above" is a necessary cause and ground of existence. I personally find Proclus' Neoplatonism with its "mathematical" reification of the ineffable producing power as "one" the most plausible version out of the various Neoplatonist henologies. The Ineffable manifests itself as one, because there is no way to speak about something as being without it being some one-being. Wherever you look, you see the "One" and the "ones", but do you really see something as evasive as "beings", let alone something as improbable as a Supreme Being? Compared with Proclus' realism - which I admit may appear forced - all philosophical talk about beings sounds very weird to me, "metaphysical" and "mystical" in the pejorative sense.

In my interpretation of Proclus, the crucial significance of the concept of series is emphasized. The primal structural principle in Proclus is the concept of the serialized set. Use of it permeates all his metaphysics. Proclus seems to posit a first root which is totally different, or better, beyond difference and similitude in relation to the subsequent series. This ineffable root produces

through negation first a positive root member and then from this all the subsequent entities bearing the characteristic of the series come forth. The fundamental difference between the henadic and ontic series is that only ontic characteristics weaken in their serialization. Proclus' concept of a series is usually expressed in the framework of the Platonic idea of participation, articulated as a relationship of imparticipable, participated monad, and participated terms. I underline that Proclus' distinction between independent and illuminated henads should be understood in the way that independent henads are oneness directly participated by the imparticipable monads of the ontic series. All other henads represent the illumination of the One at the varying steps where the respective ontic series unfolds itself.

As for the attitude found in modern scholarship towards Proclus beyond the strictly philosophical area in the field of ancient religion and culture, we have to admit that many of these studies have largely ignored Proclus until lately, as, although they have been accomplished with a high philological standard and positivist manner, they are peppered occasionally with more or less successfully digested theoretical borrowings from the social sciences and postmodern philosophical ruminations. From the perspective of these studies, Proclus has been seen as a curious example of late antique religiosity, exuding superstitious beliefs and representing altogether too difficult Neoplatonic metaphysics to be tackled. According to this view, Proclus is a peripheral intellectual engaged in a futile resistance to Christianity, a unmanageable thinker whose reflections might offer some useful elements for Homeric interpretations and perhaps literary theory, but from whom very few relevant points can be found for the study of the Greek religion proper. There have been of course exceptions to this view, also within the prevailing mode of thought in the study of Greek religion. For example, Walter Burkert, probably the most recognized authority in the current scholarship in this area, has noted that Proclean items provide important insights into genuine Greek religion. Still, Burkert's remarks concerning the relevance of these insights has not generally been followed by others, nor has there been any serious attempt to delve into Proclean matters.

Neoplatonist reflections originated from the ideas of Plato, who in a very strong sense was a cultural reformer himself. Plato tried to systematize and rationalize the legacy which Dodds calls the "inherited conglomerate" of Greek religious ideas in an effort to combine the archaic concept of divinity as an inherent force in the world with the idea of a moral order. The activity of the gods for Plato is providential. If the archaic view saw gods as essentially morally neutral powers, for Plato the gods could not be responsible for any evil. This idea was crucial for the future path of religious thinking. It was even more significant than another Platonic innovation -- that of transforming the archaic idea of immortality and the eminence of the gods into their impassibility and transcendence, understood in terms of an intelligible order in contrast to the sensible world. Perhaps these ideas were also fatal in their consequences, but in any case during the centuries after Plato they became strongly rooted in the views of a large sector of the Greek world. Post-classical

religion is thus considerably permeated by diffuse Platonism. Hellenistic schools are clearly critical of the ancient modes of religious thinking, and the gap between the Stoic project of naturalizing and of demythologizing divinities and Hellenistic popular piety was probably very wide. Early Neoplatonism, that of Plotinus, could be characterized as a *religio mentis*. Not that Plotinus would deny the value of traditional religion, but participating in the practical forms of religious life was for him clearly secondary in comparison to the imperative for a wise soul to engage in searching for the divine in its own depth. Later post-Iamblichean Neoplatonism, on the contrary, is reluctant to separate itself from traditional piety but tries to establish a balance where religious life is philosophically based and conceptually convincing and at the same time compatible with the modes of traditional piety and mythology. I think as an indication of its success that later Neoplatonism could find and formulate many notions relevant to the understanding of traditional religions, notions which are very similar to interpretive positions in the modern research of ancient Greek religions. These ideas include the concept of divinity inherent in the world, gods as powers and forces, gods being more numinous than persons, and the view that Homer's description of the Olympian pantheon was not intended on its anthropomorphic and poetic surface as an adequate or complete depiction of the nature of the gods adored in popular piety and honored by the official cult.

My conviction is that the *metaphysica sunt, non leguntur* attitude has been harmful to the studies of Greek religion. On the contrary, reading later Neoplatonic texts would offer immense benefits for scholarship in this field, if we start from the supposition that these writings concern an explicitly developed self-understanding of the Greek religion during a phase when it was possible to express its ideal content using the rigorous structures of systematic concepts. This assertion, of course, does not imply that the Neoplatonist view on Greek religion should be identified with the Greek religion in any of its phases of development. Such an idea would be completely unhistorical; it is easy to point out differences between archaic and Neoplatonic religions. For the former, the gods are morally neutral or amoral powers and beings; they are inherent in the world and supernatural only in the sense of existing as superlative eminencies. For the latter, they are guarantors of the world order, understood also as the moral order; in this view, gods are not only supernatural but also supraessential, beyond being and not in the sense of being intensified but as the ground and cause of Being and every being, immanent in their derivation without jeopardizing their transcendence. But it is also clear that the archaic, or may I say primordial religion as far in the past as we can see it, is perhaps more compatible with the Neoplatonist view than it is with its distorted interpretation provided by its antagonist, the monotheistic movement of late antiquity. This movement read surface level mythology as a kind of explicit theology, and it created the view that the religion is about adoring personal superhuman beings as gods who act on the bases of their own whims and volition. This image the Renaissance

inherited, and it was not so long ago taken seriously in scholarship; indeed it still thrives and will continue to do so in textbooks and in conventional understanding.

I think that according to what is expounded in the previous chapters, we can conclude that later Neoplatonism after Iamblichus and certainly that of Syrianus and Proclus were not part of the universal monotheism to which the whole of Neoplatonism is so often ascribed. I do not think that this ascription is a correct estimation of Plotinus' position either. The only Neoplatonist among the first in rank who points towards monotheism and whose ontotheology is ambiguous is Porphyry. Syrianus and Proclus established that there can be no talk about God without gods, and the gods are *more* than the same by their unity - existing as the cause of identity beyond identity -- and at the same time they are definite and absolute individuals - existing as the pure cause of all individuation. Henology and henadology are therefore crucial elements of the Neoplatonic tradition, defining it apart from ontotheology and monotheism. Taking into account that this fundamental view arose from the peculiar tradition of interpreting *Parmenides* as the culmination and touchstone of Plato's authentic philosophy, we have clear theoretical and historical grounds for answering the question what is Neoplatonism. It is a philosophical current born from Plotinus' interpretation of Plato, with *Parmenides* containing Plato's authentic vision, and it has henology as its fundamental tenet. Nowadays it is fashionable to emphasize that Neoplatonism is a modern label, which of course is true as such, but it actually distorts the historical interpretation, because this tradition has a remarkably clear-cut self-definition. In effect, as we have seen, for Proclus the divine chorus of philosophers celebrating the authentic truth is formed exactly according to the above mentioned criteria. Occasionally he even comes close to using the "modern" label itself, as was seen already by Thomas Whittaker. This issue is important to note so as not to efface the borderline between, on the one hand, diffuse late ancient Platonism formed by more or less thoughtful students of Plato's writings (and users of mere Platonic tags) and on the other hand genuine Neoplatonism. Resorting to using technical terminology adopted from the Neoplatonic Schools in other contexts does not qualify a writer to be included as a Neoplatonist. Was, for instance, Cyril of Alexandria, who refers to Plotinus and uses Neoplatonic vocabulary, a Neoplatonist? In my opinion only those thinkers who subscribed to a "*Parmenides* vision" and henology-henadology are to be counted as Neoplatonist.

In my interpretation of the rise of Christianity and the resistance carried out by more or less isolated pagan pockets in 5th and 6th century Byzantine society, I underline a tremendous novelty in the formation of the universal religion, which took the form of the obligatory state religion. The significance of the birth of the confessional state cannot be overestimated. Rather provocatively I would like to call this process the root of a Western form of totalitarianism. This statement is made because I see in the current scholarship strong tendencies to dilute and wash off the element of

repression and the role of sheer violence in the process which is called rather euphemistically Christianization. Such tendencies are expressed usually by emphasizing continuity in the historical processes observable in the late ancient period. In my opinion we are witnessing a qualitative break between two different concepts of religious community and their relations to the state.

One dimension connected to this process was the shift of the value of sexuality from the sacred sphere to that of sin, even to the position of the main sin, the most feared enemy of organized religion hereafter. Among late antique asceticism there was an erotophobic attitude pleading for the total destruction and abolition of this enemy, which was personified in Aphrodite. Such a line, of course, was impossible to opt for, and Christian encratites themselves were condemned as heretics; mainstream Christianity adopted the position of Clement and others, whose view was that sexuality should be curbed, tamed, and controlled as much as possible. This process had begun long before the rise of the ascetic movement. In the Greek world, Pythagorean procreationism propounded similar ideas.

However, during the epoch when the idealization of virginity, sexual renunciation, and mortifying the lusts of the flesh with extreme forms of stringent asceticism were rapidly gaining a hegemonic position in ideology, Proclus' defense of Aphrodite situates him among the camp of those with a sober acceptance of the irresistible drifts of embodied life.

Like the classical Greek Aphrodite in her stylized form as a premarital maiden is but a thinned out version of the exuberant Mesopotamian Ištar, Hellenistic and late antique pagan philosophy, Athenian Neoplatonism comprised, could include only diluted forms of gods embodying sexual powers in their portrayals of antiquity's polytheistic religion. Because it shared so many of the same values and positions of its adversaries, especially in the idealization of virginity subsumed to the male archetype of divinity, later Neoplatonism was not able to recuperate in full the inheritance of the Greek erotic tradition or consistently vindicate the primordial concept of goddess.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöstyö käsittelee Prokloksen (412-485) johtamaa ateenalaista uusplatonismia monijumalaisen perinteisen kreikkalaisen uskonnon puolustajana. Väitöstyö koostuu viidestä kansainvälisissä lehdissä julkaistusta artikkelista ja laajasta täydentävästä esseestä.

Analysoiden kristinuskon nousua valta-asemaan varhaisbysanttilaisessa yhteiskunnassa väitöstyö korostaa universaalin, pakollisen valtiouskonnon syntyä radikaalina historiallisena katkoksenä. Ateenan koulun filosofit kuvasivat vaikuttavasti murroksen jyrkkyyttä kuvaamalla sen luomaa tilannetta "suureksi sekaannukseksi". He olivat yksi niistä enemmän tai vähemmän toisistaan erillään toimivista virtauksista, jotka halusivat vastustaa tätä muutosta.

Myöhäisantiikissa uskonnollisten arvojen muutokseen liittyi asketismin ihannointi. Sen vaikutuksesta seksuaalisuus siirrettiin pyhitetyltä alueelta selvästi kielteisesti arvotettuun. Afroditen hahmo nousi näin väistämättä aikakauden uskonnollis-poliittisten kiistojen keskiöön. Osa askeettisesta liikkeestä tähtäsi jopa seksuaalisuuden kaikenpuoliseen tukahduttamiseen ja sen vuoksi tämän katsanto asemoi Afroditeen kaikkein vaarallisimmaksi demoniksi.

Prokloksen ajattelussa Afroditelle kuuluu täsmällisesti määritelty alue jumalien luokissa ja Proklos selittää tästä näkökulmastaan jumalattaren kultin erilaiset muodot. Proklos torjuu helleeniseen uskontoon kohdistuvan arvostelun, erityisesti hyökkäykset myyttien ja rituaalien väitettyä moraalittomuutta vastaan. Vastauksena kritiikkiin Proklos kuvaa Afroditea elämän yhdenmukaisimpana ja puhtaimpana "kukkana" omistaen hänelle näin määreitä, jotka muokkasivat Rakkaudensynnyttäjän (Erototokos) paralleeliksi samaan aikaan kirkon piirissä muotoutuvalle opille Jumalansynnyttäjästä (Theotokos).

Proklos ja hänen aateveljensä ja -sisarensa olivat kuitenkin itse monilta osin tukemassa samankaltaisia arvoja kuin perinteellisen uskonnon kriitikot ja vihamiehet. Afroditen puolustus sijoittaa Prokloksen aikakautensa maltillisen ajattelun piiriin, joka osoittaa ymmärrystä ruumiillistuneen sielun intohimoille ja pyrkimyksille. Kuitenkin tietty arvojen yhtenäisyys asketismia idealisoivan virtauksen kanssa johti siihen ettei myöhempi pakanallinen uusplatonismi itsekään ollut täysin kyvykäs hyväksymään ja puolustamaan johdonmukaisesti kreikkalaisen uskonnon ja mytologian eroottista perinnettä sen täydessä mitassa.

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PROCLUS' ART OF REFERRING WITH A SCALE OF EPITHETS

TUOMO LANKILA

The purpose of the present contribution is to take a look at the way in which, in his references to his predecessors, Proclus used a peculiar practice which I would like to call "a system of scaled values of epithets". The thesis is that we are not dealing with a mere rhetorical device but rather systematic usage which served a definite purpose: its meaning was to express an appraisal of the grade of "orthodoxy" or concentration of authentic Platonism in the opinions of the philosophers referred to.

J. M. Dillon has touched on the current issue by detecting a shift from Proclus' exuberant use of references by name in the *Timaeus* Commentary to his very sparse use of the same in the *Parmenides* Commentary. "Proclus seems to have come to the conclusion that referring by name to previous commentators was something inartistic, and he reduces them to anonymity", Dillon says.¹ We can only guess why Proclus came to these stylistic decisions. Did it have something to do with the lofty subject of the theological dialogue as such, as Neoplatonists interpreted *Parmenides*? Or could it have been that the imperial legislation of 448 condemning Porphyry's works to be burned advised the Athenian school to lower its voice, at least temporarily? However, Proclus' procedure in the *Commentary on Parmenides* seems to be even more of a puzzle when we take into account his *magnum opus*, the *Platonic Theology*. In this work Proclus returns to the use of explicit references, although not so profusely as in his youthful years (with *In Tim.* we are talking about hundreds of cases, with the *Platonic Theology* dozens).

¹*Proclus' commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, tr. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, Princeton 1987, xxxvi.

A. Ph. Segonds has argued that Proclus' way of designating Aristotle as "demonic" in contrast to the "divine" Plato contains implicit criticism.² Saffrey and Westerink note that Proclus almost always called Porphyry "philosopher" and Amelius "valorous" (γενναῖος). The later Neoplatonists' manner of honoring Iamblichus with the epithet "divine" has often been noted.³ As far as I know, however, there has been no scholarly effort to go systematically through all the relevant cases in the whole Proclean corpus and to establish a connection between his use of an ordered series of referential epithets and his theological and psychological theories.

Before turning to statistics, some other points should be made clear. Firstly, I am interested in Proclus' assessment of the relative merits of his Neoplatonic predecessors. However, in order to clarify what the system of scaled values of epithets is, it is necessary to clear up to whom it is not applied, because this non-application is a means for Proclus to define his own spiritual family. He recognizes its members in a concise statement on the history of the Platonic movement in the introductory chapters of the Platonic Theology: "These interpreters of the Platonic vision, who have given us the explanations of things divine and who gained for themselves a similar godly nature as their master (i.e., Plato) had, are, as I do believe, Plotinus the Egyptian and those who have inherited the theory from him, Amelius, Porphyry, and in third place behind them, as I suppose, like statues in their perfection, Iamblichus and Theodorus and some others, who have followed them in this divine chorus as bacchants of their own intellect around Plato. Among them, he (i.e., Syrianus), who was for me after the gods the guide for all beauty and good and who had an incorruptible manner and in the depths of his soul the most authentic and pure

² Segonds' comment to *In Alc.* 237,2, Proclus, *Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon*. Tome II, Texte établi et traduit par A. Ph. Segonds, Paris 1986 416 n. 1. Segonds translates δαιμόνιος with "génial". See also E. R. Dodds' introduction in Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, Oxford 1963 xxii.

³ L. G. Westerink mentions the usage of these kinds of "traditional phrases" "as belonging to the common fund of all the Neoplatonists from Iamblichus (and in some cases Proclus) onward", L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, Amsterdam 1962, xliii. In notes on their edition of Proclus' Platonic Theology H. D. Saffrey and L. E. Westerink also thought that Proclus' aim is to mark out a hierarchical difference between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. They draw attention to Olympiodorus' explanation of "demonic" in this context and to Damascius' opinion that in spite of his ingenuity Aristotle never reached summit of the divine wisdom. Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*. Livre 1. Texte établi et traduit par H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink, Paris 1968, 141, n. 5. D. J. O'Meara deals with the same distinction between "divine" philosophers and the "demonic" Aristotle in Syrianus, D. J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived*, Oxford 1989, 123.

light of the truth, both made me a participant in the rest of all of Plato's philosophy and shared with me the secret doctrine which he had received from the elder masters and added me to the choir which sings the hymn of mysterious truth regarding the gods."⁴

The second question to be resolved is what to include and what to exclude as a relevant reference to these people. Proclus has at least four different types of references: an explicit plain reference by name; a reference by name connected to an epithet; an anonymous reference, and circumlocutory expressions such as, for example, "philosopher of Rhodes", "master", "father", "grandfather" or even some Homeric phrase. I have excluded all cases of the third type, even if we know with absolute certainty who this or that τίς is.⁵ For the periphrastic expressions I have taken into consideration only those cases where there is "master" meaning Syrianus.⁶

Now, that we have a workable idea of whom we are talking about and how, let us turn to the question of the amount of references. The overwhelming winner in Proclus' citation index is Iamblichus with 114 mentions. Porphyry gets a result of 95, Theodorus of Asine 65, Amelius 53 and Plotinus 52. Longinus receives 23 and Origen only 13 mentions.

The epithets, when they are used, are: "philosopher" (φιλόσοφος), "great" (μέγας), "valorous" or "excellent" (γενναῖος), "demonic" (δαιμόνιος) and "divine" (θεῖος).⁷

Plotinus appears without an epithet 46 times. Twice he is attributed as "divine" and once "most divine" (θειότατος), "great", "philosopher" and "the Egyptian". Porphyry is without any epithet 76 times, whereas he is "philosopher" 17 times and the "greatest philosopher" (φιλοσοφώτατος) twice. Iamblichus is "divine" almost throughout the index. He appears without an epithet 33 times, is "divine" 71 times, "most divine" once, "great" four times and "philosopher" 5 times. Theodorus is "admirable" (θαυμαστός) 4 times, "philosopher" twice, "valorous" once, great 11 times. Amelius is "valorous" ten

⁴ *Plat. Theol.* 1,6,16–7,8. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

⁵ For example *In Parm.* 1047,22 and 1080,11 refer to Plotinus' words on "intellect drunk on nectar", but Plotinus is explicitly mentioned in this context only in *Plat. Theol.* 1,67,2.

⁶ As Saffrey and Westerink (above n. 3) xiv, n. 2 show, Syrianus is "father" *In Tim.* 2,253,31, 3,35,26, *In Parm.* 1142,11, *In Remp.* 2,318,4, and Syrianus' and Proclus' teacher Plutarch "grandfather" *In Parm.* 1058,22. The Philosopher of Rhodes means Theodorus and the expression is due to a copying error as Saffrey has argued, H. D. Saffrey, *Le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Paris 2000, 121.

⁷ I am not absolutely sure that γενναῖος is superior to μέγας, but its dimension of "spirited" seems to connect it to "demonic" and so it is a more "inspired" term than μέγας.

times, "demonic" twice. Origen is always without an epithet. Longinus is called a "critic" and Proclus also reminds us of Plotinus' words that he was a philologist, not a philosopher.⁸

The cases in which a one philosopher is given an attribute and another not, or where several names are mentioned at the same time but with different epithets, are interesting.⁹ Theodorus of Asine is twice "great", also once when he appears with Plotinus who is left without an attribute.¹⁰ Porphyry is denied an epithet in two cases when he has the "divine" Iamblichus at his side. In these cases omitting an epithet certainly implies a doctrinal reproach.¹¹

The number of references surely indicates the "impact factor" of each predecessor for Proclus. However, references serve as much for praise as for criticism. It would be mistake to assume that Porphyry is so much more important to Proclus than Plotinus, which the figures alone would imply. Proclus' preferences are highlighted with more precision when the epithets are brought into the picture. So let us do some evaluation on the basis of them. First, we will turn the references into scores. We will use a scale from 1 to 6, giving one point to every mention without an epithet, two to "philosopher", three to "great" and so on, in the order mentioned above. For the sake of simplicity we will not take into account the superlatives, but count "most divine" as "divine" and so on. As local origin is irrelevant for doctrinal purity we will count Plotinus' case of "Egyptian" as a case without attribute (similarly for Theodorus' epithet of Asinaeus).¹²

Thus we get 70 points for Plotinus, 114 for Porphyry and 487 for Iamblichus. Porphyry's gain in comparison to Plotinus is now more modest, but Iamblichus' superiority to the others is demonstrated even more clearly. I equate "admirable" with "valorous", which gives Theodorus 104 points and Amelius 81. Thus, the ascending order of "orthodoxy" is Plotinus, Amelius, Theodorus Porphyry and Iamblichus.

⁸ *In Tim.* 1,86,24: οὗτος μὲν οὖν φιλόλογος, ὡσπερ Πλωτίνος εἰπεῖν περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγεται, καὶ οὐ φιλόσοφος.

⁹ For example, *In Tim.* 1,336,19: "θεῖος Ἰάμβλιχος" vs. "γενναῖος Ἀμέλιος".

¹⁰ *In Tim.* 3,333,29.

¹¹ The second of these is particularly interesting, "divine" Iamblichus criticizes Porphyry who (erroneously) thinks that his concept is "Plotinian", *In Tim.* 1,307,15.

¹² I cannot explain why Proclus emphasizes Plotinus' ethnicity in the famous passages on the history of the Platonic movement. It surely conveys a solemn tone appropriate to the context (as is well known, Egyptians were seen as one of the sacred races). It is meaningful to clarify Theodorus' origin in order to separate him from his namesake, the mathematician of Cyzicus also mentioned by Proclus.

Plotinus and Porphyry are ambivalent characters in the history of Platonism as Proclus understands it. On the one hand, Proclus explicitly recognizes Plotinus as a founder of the newer "family" of authentic Platonists,¹³ on the other hand, authentic Platonism is often defined through a sharp critique of Plotinus' positions.¹⁴ This ambivalence is reflected in the epithets associated with the names of Plotinus and Porphyry. Plotinus sometimes attains the highest scores, but Porphyry, while never getting beyond "the greatest philosopher", beats the master in general "orthodoxy". As for Iamblichus, Proclus is sometimes irritated by his defective rigor in Platonic exegesis and his visionary style, but rarely finds fault with him regarding doctrinal issues.¹⁵

Proclus' procedure allows the borders of genuine fellowship to be defined. It is used only for the assessment of insiders. The Middle Platonists are, for Proclus, at best brave exegetes and "topmost Platonists" (τῶν Πλατωνικῶν οἱ κορυφαῖοι).¹⁶ As far as I know, they are never granted the higher terms of the Proclean scale.

¹³ The term "Neoplatonism" is sometimes criticized as being anachronistic (see for example, M. Baltes, *EPINOHMATA. Kleine Schriften zur antiken Philosophie und homerischen Dichtung*, München – Leipzig 2005, 179, M. Edwards, *Culture and Philosophy in the Age of Plotinus*, Oxford 2006, 2). This criticism is well founded as it points out that what the Neoplatonists thought they were doing, was to recuperate the "authentic" thought of Plato. It should also be remembered that being truthful in any traditions – be it philosophical, mythical, religious, or literary – was for them always a part of Platonism, because truth was indivisible and always the same. Thus Orpheus, Homer, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, Parmenides and the mysterious Ammikartos were also predecessors. What was specifically Platonic was to express this common truth in the apodictic language of scientific, dialectical philosophy. This genuine task of philosophy was regained after the dark ages by thinkers who Proclus regarded as his immediate predecessors. The first of them was Plotinus as Proclus recognizes. This feeling of belonging to a defined spiritual current was divided by the successors of Proclus who were also conscious of the fundamental reorientation inside the family caused by Iamblichus. Thus Neoplatonism is more than a label coined by posterity. Thomas Whittaker has aptly remarked that Proclus even came very close to modern denomination in his expression "τῶν δὲ νεωτέρων οἱ ἀπὸ Πλωτίνου πάντες Πλατωνικοί", *In Tim.* 2,88,12. For Whittaker's views see T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*, Cambridge 1961 (orig. 1918), 232.

¹⁴ For example, *In Tim.* 3,231, 333, 334; *In Parm.* 948; *ET* 211.

¹⁵ For example, *In Tim.* 1,209,1–12. Iamblichus' and Proclus' different attitude to Plato's word is very well pointed out by P. Athanassiadi, *JRS* 83 (1993) 115–130. The same point is expressed more strongly against Plotinus *In Alc.* 227,24–228,1: "... we are the exegetes of Plato and do not cope with what he says according to our own opinions".

¹⁶ *In Remp.* 2,96,11. In this same passage Proclus praises Porphyry above all others for being the perfect exegete of the truths hidden in the myth of Er (Πορφύριος, ὃν ἐγὼ πάντων μάλιστα τῶν ἐν τῷ μύθῳ κεκρυμμένων γενέσθαι φημι τέλεον ἐξηγητήν).

There is, however, a unique character who is at the same time within the "family" and outside of it. Defining Aristotle's proper place in the philosophical tradition was a problem for later Neoplatonism. When Aristotle appears with an epithet in Proclus he is almost always "demonic", although he is once "divine", and also "wonderful" ("admirable").¹⁷ Considering the huge impact of Aristotle on Proclus the fact that he is systematically denied the highest credit and located on the same level as, say, Amelius, is very significant. Proclus and Syrianus saw in Aristotle's logic a necessary tool for all philosophical study. His contributions to psychology, political theory, and physics were valued as useful preparation for Plato's respective theories. However, Aristotle deviated from the true tradition in his critique of the theory of forms, in his rejection of the Platonic theory of the first principles and in his theology, which did not ascend higher than to the demiurgic level – according to the Neoplatonist hierarchy of the divine orders.¹⁸ Thus Aristotle was accepted as a guide to the "lesser mysteries" of the authentic – Platonist – philosophy, but he was rejected inasmuch as he was seen as a founder of the rival metaphysical – Peripatetic – school.

If we try to seek a wider context for the Proclean manner of hierarchical evaluation, we can find it from two quarters. One is Christianity going through dogmatic development under the circumstances of the Trinitarian and Christological strife. The church leaders had the same need as Proclus to administer doctrinal praise and reproach. However, they exercised their ingeniousness on rather a lower scale. This is well shown, for example, by such an intelligent and cultivated leader as Severus of Antioch, who made life easier for his readers by systematically providing labels for the authors cited, but against the monotonous "saints" (Cyril, Theophile, Gregory and Athanasius etc.) he has Nestorius "the heretic", "miserable" Theodoretus, "impious" Andreas, and so on.¹⁹ In the Neoplatonic debate, disagreements are never expressed in this way. For example, Proclus introduces intense criticism with words: "... from these things we are urged to speak openly against Plotinus and

¹⁷ *Plat. Theol.* 3,55,20, *In Tim.* 2,9,8. We find at least twenty cases of "demonic" Aristotle.

¹⁸ Proclus generally follows his teacher's evaluation of Aristotle, even though his attitude is a little more critical; see for example *In Tim.* 1,6,21–4. An excellent account of Syrianus' view of Aristotle is H. D. Saffrey, "How did Syrianus regard Aristotle?", in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed*, London 1990, 173–180; see also D. J. O'Meara (above n. 3) 123.

¹⁹ R. Hespel (ed.), *Sévère d'Antioche, Le Philalèthe*. (CSCO 133+134), Louvain 1952.

the great Theodorus ...".²⁰ Merely these tones should advise us against effacing the difference between Christian orthodoxy and Neoplatonic "orthodoxy".²¹

Another context is provided by the sophisticated grades of the early Byzantine bureaucratic and social nomenclature with all its *viri clarissimi*, *spectabiles* etc. As the heads of one of the most prestigious higher education institutions of the age, Syrianus and Proclus were well acquainted with that world too.

However, there are more intriguing aspects to this than the general cultural background. The system of scaled values of epithets emerges from the deepest assumptions of Neoplatonic thought. Theology, the theory of the soul, and the Neoplatonic concept of philosophy are all relevant here. The attributes

²⁰ *In Tim.* 3,333,29: ἀπό δὴ τούτων ὁρμώμενοι παρρησιασόμεθα πρὸς Πλωτῖνον καὶ τὸν μέγαν Θεόδωρον . . . , Proclus was not ignorant of the current debates in the Christian camp as is shown, for example, by his remark that "a malicious person could not be in accord with himself" in one of the rare passages which contains mentions of contemporary conditions, *In Alc.* 264,7–265,3 (τὸν μοχθηρὸν ὁμολογεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀδύνατον ... πᾶς οὖν ὁ κακὸς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐστὶν ἀσύμφωνος· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, πολλῶ μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ἐστὶ τοιοῦτος. καὶ πῶς γὰρ τοῖς ἐκτὸς ἑαυτοῦ τις ὁμολογήσειεν αὐτὸς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν στασιαστικῶς διακείμενος; καὶ οἱ ἄθεοι δὴ οὖν πάντες καὶ οἱ ἀκόλαστοι καὶ οἱ ἄδικοι διαφέρονται πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ οὐκ ἄν ποτε ἐναρμονίως ἔχοιεν ἀνεπιστήμονες ὄντες.), Saffrey's treatment of this passages, H. D. Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Paris 1990, 206. It is interesting to note that there is some common technical terminology in Christian and Neoplatonic controversies, Proclus criticizes Plotinus and others supposing consubstantiality (ὁμοούσιον) between human and divine souls, *In Parm.* 948,23; *In Tim.* 3,245,19–246,24.

²¹ Proclus has the term "orthodoxy" (*In Tim.* 2,309,10–13) and speaks about "life according to the most orthodox way" (βίον ... ὀρθοδοξαστικόν) (*In Alc.* 76,9). The usage of these terms is associated with traditional epistemological and cosmological questions, which have nothing to do with doctrinal purity. If we are not afraid of hair-splitting we could say that the Neoplatonists were not even interested in forming a body of "right opinions" as they tried to go further, beyond opinion, towards scientific knowledge and mystical union. The goal of Neoplatonist philosophy was to attain the philosophical truth and uncorrupted devotion towards the gods through the "correct" Platonist reading of the traditional myths and rites (Καὶ κατ' αὐτὸν ἄρα τὸν τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἔνθεον νοῦν τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα μεθαρμόζοντες εἰς τὴν περὶ τῶν ὄλων ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀποκρυπτομένην θεωρίαν ἀναπτύσσοντες τευξόμεθα τῆς περὶ τὸ θεῖον εἰλικρινοῦς θεραπείας, *Plat. Theol.* 4,132,4–8), but the Neoplatonic community was never an ideological organization of power like the Church. As Dillon rightly says: "Towards the end of antiquity, then, Platonism takes on some of the trappings of a religion, and a greater degree of organization ..., but the fact remains that the Platonic tradition attained self-definition without the aid of any regulating structure or hierarchy of accredited teachers, such as Christianity so quickly built up for itself.", J. M. Dillon "Self-definition in Later Platonism", in E. P. Sanders (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Vol. III: Self-Definition in the Greco-Roman World*, Philadelphia 1983, 60–75.

used by Proclus correlate, no doubt intentionally, with his hierarchy of the higher beings. A philosopher is one who has realized to its full extent the faculty of the soul most appropriate to human beings, that of rational thinking. The higher scale of the attributes corresponds to the levels of the superhuman beings: heroes, demons, and gods. We need not be confused by the fact that elsewhere Proclus makes different subdivisions among these classes; the important thing is that he assumes that these divisions always keep a precise proportion.

In Platonic Theology Proclus says that certain human souls are called divine because of their similarity to the gods (contrasted to the three other divine modes of existence; the proper gods exist as gods as such, divine intellects are divine by unity, and demons are divine by participation).²² Now this similarity is to be understood in a stronger than metaphorical sense. To clarify this, it is necessary to deal with the Neoplatonic theory of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls. According to Proclus, human souls come to the temporal world from eternity, where they live in blessed contemplation of real being. This idea is, of course, part of classical Platonism. For Proclus all human souls are divine in the sense that their form of life depends, however dimly, on the god they have followed in their celestial condition. That is, they belong to a certain divine series.²³ But the most perfect souls do not only choose for their incarnated life a mode of living corresponding to the qualities of the series, but actually live according to the godlike demon in their soul, which connects them on an even higher level, to the actual leader god. Thus, those souls who lead a life that brings them back to their starting point, have, up there – in celestial place – as here – in the world of becoming –, the same demon, while for the imperfect souls, the demon in essence, is another than the one according to which they live. This is Proclus' explanation for the story in the biography of Plotinus in which Porphyry states how surprised an Egyptian magician was when he conjured up an appearance of the protective deity of Plotinus, and it was seen to be not an ordinary guardian demon, as usual in these kind of sessions, but a demon-god.²⁴ Plotinus' soul belonged to the very

²² Proclus' treatise on how to define the meaning of the word "divine", *Plat. Theol.* 1,114,5–116,3.

²³ Marinus states that Proclus himself belonged to the series of Hermes and he has the same soul as the mathematician and Pythagorean Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Vita Procli* 28.

²⁴ *In Alc.* 73,4–8: διὸ καὶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος τὸν Πλωτῖνον ἐθαύμασεν ὡς θεῖον ἔχοντα τὸν δαίμονα. ταῖς μὲν οὖν ἀποκαταστατικῶς ζώσαις ψυχαῖς ὁ αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ἄνω κἀνταῦθα

special class of souls which have not come to the world of generation by the fall. On the contrary, these souls have been sent here in order to help their companions to liberate themselves from the chains of body and matter.²⁵

Foremost among these blessed souls is Proclus' master Syrianus. In the Parmenides Commentary he praises the beloved teacher in the same vein as in the passage of Platonic Theology cited above. Syrianus "came to men as the exact image of philosophy for the benefit of the souls here below, in recompense for the statues, the temples and the whole ritual of worship, and as the chief author of salvation for men who now live and for those to come hereafter".²⁶

With these eulogies we have come to the last aspect of Proclus' system of references which needs to be explained. Proclus usually refers to Syrianus with the word *καθηγεμών* (teacher, mentor, guide, leader or master). The term most often – 48 times – signifies Syrianus, and the rest of the cases refer to other teacher-pupil relationships. Syrianus is often referred to, but his name is mentioned only once – in the epigram which Proclus composed for their shared tomb.²⁷ How does this agree with the scalar reference theory and its supposed fundamentals in Neoplatonic metaphysics and psychology? It stands to reason that the "divine" Iamblichus in comparison with the humbler Porphyry, represents a higher philosophical truth, but when at the side of the "most divine" Iamblichus Syrianus appears in periphrastic mode and without an attribute²⁸, how can we explain that the case is just the opposite?

Actually, the lack of an epithet does not always imply a reproach and "divine" is not necessarily the highest credit. For Proclus the highest gods are secret and ineffable. Proclus recalls this theological truth by his gracious manner in dealing with his master. Here we can see a parallel with metaphysics,

δαίμων, ταῖς δὲ ἀτελεστέραις ἄλλος μὲν ὁ κατ' οὐσίαν δαίμων, ἄλλος δὲ ὁ κατὰ τὸν προβεβλημένον βίον. Proclus refers to Porph. *Vita Plotini* 10.

²⁵ For Syrianus' and Proclus' theory of the superior souls, see O'Meara (above n. 3) 150–151.

²⁶ *In Parm.* 618,9–13 (translation G. R. Morrow and J. M. Dillon). Incidentally, a lot of the praises which Proclus dedicates to Syrianus is used by Syrianus for the ancient representatives of wisdom; compare, for example, Proclus on Syrianus: τὸ γνησιώτατον καὶ καθαρώτατον τῆς ἀληθείας φῶς τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς κόλποις ἀχράντως ὑποδεξάμενος (*Plat. Theol.* 1,7,1–4) and Syrianus on the successors of the "divine" Pythagoras: πάντες οἱ γνησίως τάκεινον δόγματα τοῖς καθαρωτάτοις κόλποις τῆς ἑαυτῶν διανοίας ὑποδεξάμενοι (*In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria* 81,31).

²⁷ *AG* 7,341. H. Beckby, *Anthologia Graeca* (AG), Munich, 1965–1968.

²⁸ *In Tim.* 1,77,23–25.

where the highest hypostasis – the One – and its counterpart – matter – are both without determinations, the first by excellence and the second by privation.

Like so much in Proclus, the system of referring was probably a part of Syrianus' heritage. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Syrianus refers to the seventh book of "divine" Iamblichus' treatise on the doctrines of the Pythagoreans. In the same work he also mentions "divine" Plotinus (immediately after Iamblichus without an epithet).²⁹ His inheritance from Syrianus is also confirmed by Proclus' fellow student Hermias' use of the system. In his commentary on Phaedrus Hermias presents "divine" Iamblichus at the side of the "philosopher" Porphyry.³⁰ Damascius, Ammonius, Simplicius and the unknown writer of the *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* used the same system, usually referring to "divine" Iamblichus. Damascius also speaks about "great" Plotinus. For him Syrianus is a "philosopher", once at the side of "great" Iamblichus. He placed his friend Isidore, Proclus' second successor and his own predecessor as the head of the Athenian school, on the level of "great". Proclus' ranking in Damascius is "philosopher", but for the scholiast of his *Cratylus* commentary, the author of the *Prolegomena* and for Olympiodorus Proclus is "divine".³¹

"Let it be known that the philosopher Proclus, commenting on the *Enneads* of great Plotinus, says that he who wrote the answer to the letter of Porphyry was divine (θεσπέσιος)³² Iamblichus ...". With these words a scholiast presents two hundred years of Neoplatonist debate at the beginning of a treatise to which Renaissance scholars gave its current name, *De Mysteriis*. This comment has been a crucial evidence for establishing the authorship of the work; it also shows how the peculiar Neoplatonic system of referring survived.

²⁹ Syr. *In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria*. 202,4; 114,8.

³⁰ Hermias *In Phaed.* 113,25.

³¹ Damasc. *In Parm.* 256,24: θεῖος Ἰάμβλιχος; Ammonius, *In Aristotelis librum de interpretatione commentarius*. 202,4; Simplicius, *In Aristotelis de caelo commentaria*, 7,1,24, Anon. *Prolegomena philosophiae Platonicae* 26,13; Damasc. *In Parm.* 112,16: ὁ φιλόσοφος Συριανός, ... ὁ μέγας Ἰάμβλιχος, Damasc. *Vita Isidori* (ap. Photium, *Bibl. codd.* 181, 242) Fragment 12,1: ὁ μέγας Ἰσίδωρος; θεῖος Πρόκλος, Procl. *In Crat.* 154,4, *Prolegomena* 26,5, Olympiodorus, *In Aristotelis meteora commentaria* 266,37.

³² Iamb. *De Myst.*, (preliminary scholion) 1,1–5: Ἰστέον ὅτι ὁ φιλόσοφος Πρόκλος, ὑπομνηματίζων τὰς τοῦ μεγάλου Πλωτίνου Ἐννεάδας, λέγει ὅτι ὁ ἀντιγράφων πρὸς τὴν προκειμένην τοῦ Πορφυρίου ἐπιστολὴν ὁ θεσπέσιος ἐστὶν Ἰάμβλιχος.

To conclude, we have seen that the Neoplatonic mode of philosophizing in the form of a highly sophisticated commentary also produced an art of referring, of which an essential part is the system of epithets conveying an impression of a well-defined order of ranks. This procedure was probably launched by Syrianus and we see it in full bloom in Proclus. The method is far more precise than could be expected at first sight, as it turns out to be conducted within terms rooted in specific metaphysical and psychological theories. Later Neoplatonists continued the usage of it down to the time of Simplicius and Olympiodorus. It has an afterlife among the scholiasts of whom some at least were conscious of its significance.

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HYPERNOETIC COGNITION AND THE SCOPE OF THEURGY IN PROCLUS

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Introduction

The discussion on Proclus' attitude to theurgy has in the best of cases, noted, but failed to give proper consideration to his view on theurgy's "upper limit" which he puts forth in the *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*.¹ The current notion of ubiquitous theurgy in Proclus equates a supposed "higher theurgy" with the soul's hypernoetic activity through "the flower of the intellect".² However, Proclus de-

¹ Fundamental passages are *In Crat.* 71 and 113. Anne Sheppard was first in Proclean scholarship to give serious thoughts to these passages in her very influential article, A. Sheppard, "Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy", *CQ* 32 (1982) 212–24. However, she does not hold them anomalous in terms of the established interpretation of two theurgies. On the contrary, Sheppard considers them to support her move from the two-theurgy model into a model of three theurgies in Proclus. The activity of the flower of the intellect is, for Sheppard, the third mode of theurgy. The argument is based on an interpretation of the doctrine of enthusiasm of Proclus' teacher Syrianus, which has come down to us in Hermias' commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* where neither "the flower of the intellect" nor "theurgy" is explicitly mentioned. Sheppard systematically equates Hermias' telestic and erotic madness with theurgy. The problem of the scope of theurgy is not commented on in the notes of recent translations of Proclus' commentary (F. Romano, *Proclo. Lezioni sul "Cratilo" di Platone*, Roma 1989; J. M. Alvarez – A. Gabilondo – J. M. Garcia, *Proclus. Lecturas del Crátulo de Platón*, Madrid 1999; B. Duvick, *Proclus. On Plato Cratylus*. London 2007). R. Sorabji's collection of the texts includes *In Crat.* 71 and *In Crat.* 113, but unfortunately only in part so that as the "the flower of the intellect" does not yet come into focus, R. Sorabji (ed.), *The philosophy of the commentators, 200–600 AD*, I, London 2004, 385–6. R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Commentary on the Cratylus in Context*, Leiden 2008 touches upon the issue by mentioning the first passage, but not the latter.

² Varied solutions have been proposed for locating theurgy in Proclus' soteriological program. According to E. R. Dodds (*Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, Oxford [1933, 1963] and "Theurgy. Appendix II" in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Los Angeles 1951, 283–311) the

nies just this association in *In Cratylum*. Other evidence that is available does not contradict the position taken in this work. A comprehensive and close reading of Proclus shows that for him the soul's hypernoetic activity begins only after the activity of theurgy has already concluded.

Proclus' concept of hypernoetic cognition

In order to clarify how Proclus relates hypernoetic cognition to theurgy, let us begin by trying to briefly describe the nature of this highest mode of cognition accessible to the human soul. I use the word cognition here as a generic term comprehending all modes of knowing, which Neoplatonism supposes that the human soul contains, including paradoxical superignorance, which concern the divine beyond (above) being and its lower counterpart, dim guesswork regarding the matter beyond (below) forms.³ A basic tenet of the whole Neoplatonic tradition

concept of the soul's ascent in Proclus is thoroughly theurgical, and for Dodds theurgical meant the same as occult and magic. Hans Lewy saw (H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*. Nouvelle édition, Paris 1978 [orig. Cairo 1956, but Lewy's contribution was actually already written before 1945]) theurgy and philosophy as two different methods aiming at the same goal. For L. J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus. The Final Phase of Ancient Thought*, New York 1949, the theurgy is present in the Proclean project but in two different forms, as a ritual-magical "lower" theurgy and a "higher" theurgy which operates with non-ritualistic symbols. According to A. C. Lloyd "unification with the unparticipated One, is beyond the scope of intellectual virtue and accomplished by theurgy", A. C. Lloyd, "Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism", in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge 1967, 312. Jean Trouillard thought that the theology of negations call forth theurgy as a mediating element between contemplation and mystical union (Trouillard's intervention in the discussion in O. Reverdin (ed.), *De Jamblique a Proclus* [Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique XXI], Genève 1975, 101). According to Anne Sheppard (1982, note above) besides ritualistic practice, Proclus has two different kinds of non-ritualistic theurgies, the first of which reaches to the noeric realm and the second achieves unity with the One. Carine Van Lieferinge (*La théurgie. Des Oracles Chaldaïques à Proclus*, Liège 1998) adopts Sheppard's opinion with some qualifications. Robert M. van den Berg declares his allegiance, with minor reservations, to Sheppard's three-theurgy model (*Proclus' Hymns*, Leiden 2001) and it seems that his dedicated reading of the *Commentary on Cratylus* (2008, note above) does not modify that position. Sara Rappe (S. Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism. Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*, Cambridge 2000, chapter 8) offers the most theurgic reading of Neoplatonism: for her even the magnum opus of Proclus, the *Platonic Theology*, is essentially a theurgic text.

³ For Proclus the One and the matter are related with dissimilar similarity (κατὰ τὴν ἀνόμοιον ὁμοιότητα) as both of them are infinite, unknown and formless, but matter is non-beign as a

is correspondence between the levels of reality and the faculties of the soul. The genuine modes of knowledge recognized by Neoplatonic epistemology are intellectual intuition (νοῦς), discursive reason (διάνοια, λόγος), opinion (δόξα) and sensation (αἴσθησις).⁴ Proclus sees discursive reason as a better part of the normal cognitive state of the human soul and that is why the human being is defined

worse way (κατὰ τὸ χειρόν) in the mode of privation (κατὰ τὴν στέρησιν), the One is non-being as a better way (κατὰ τὸ κρείττον), by pre-eminence (ὑπεροχή) as non-being, which is a necessary ground for the existence of beings; see *In Alc.* 189,15–18; *In Parm.* 1075,33–1076,14.

⁴ Hermias sketched concisely the Neoplatonic view on the hierarchy of the soul's cognitive faculties in *In Phaedr.* 19,4: πέντε εἰσὶν αἱ γνωστικαὶ δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς νοῦς, διάνοια, δόξα, φαντασία καὶ αἴσθησις· τούτων μέσον ἢ δόξα. Proclus brings forth the same epistemological view in many varied formulations; for example *Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaica* 2,1, where the "soul's depth" is analyzed as constituted by three levels ("Ψυχῆς βάθος" τὰς τριπλᾶς αὐτῆς γνωστικὰς δυνάμεις φησί, νοεράς, διανοητικὰς, δοξαστικὰς). He does not always stick to exactly the same terminology and the varied distinctions between and within the levels depend on different exegetical needs in his reading of Plato. Thus, for instance, he introduces the discursive level in *Inst. Theol.* prop. 123 between δόξα and νόησις as ἐπιστήμη and διάνοια, *In Tim.* III 54,14 he uses for it the terms διάνοια and λόγος, stressing with the first for its synthetic, concept-building or reflexive, aspect and with the latter the calculating aspect. The apprehension of the object of knowledge is modalized so that the gods and the hypernoetic cognition peculiar to them knows the object "in a unitary way" (ἡνωμένως), intellect "totally" (ὀλικῶς), discursive reason "universally" (καθολικῶς), the imagination "figuratively" (μορφωτικῶς) and sensation "passively" (παθητικῶς). *In Tim.* I 352,18. Thus we can analyze different modes as a chain of pairs, where terms stand not as contraries, but within the relation of more perfect and imperfect (ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ὁ λόγος μετὰ τὴν νόησιν ὡς ἐλάττων νοῦς, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἡ δόξα πρὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ὡς λογικὴ αἴσθησις, *In Tim.* I 251,15–16, and also as triadic structures where the third term is a kind of shadow of the first, as in the relationship of intellect, discursive reason and the imagination, where the last one is called "schematic intellect" and analogously like bronze to gold, *In Crat.* 129,7 (Pasquali 25). Proclus treatise of *In Alc.* 135,21–136,10 is particularly important for understanding the psychological underpinnings of his epistemology because here he is trying to build a synthesis of two Platonic sources inspiring a Neoplatonist theorizing about the soul; Plato's view on the different "states" of the soul as distinct cognitive modes (*Rep.* 511e) and his classical three-part model. Proclus also deals with the issue explicitly in a series of dedicated treatises in *In Remp.* (I 213,8–235,22) including an especially interesting passage (235, 12–16) on the faculties as copies of each others (imagination as a copy of intellect, etc). *In Alc.* Proclus reads these Platonic items through familiar Neoplatonic cyclic schema of unfolding causality (μονή-πρόοδος-ἐπιστροφή) here giving to the intellect the role of the remaining, as opinion and imagination (this time he calls their area by which the soul goes downwards towards the world of becoming "imagination and soul's indetermined movement" (διὰ φαντασίας καὶ ἀορίστου τινὸς κινήσεως) represent here a moment of procession, and discursive thinking a moment of return, converting the soul again towards intelligible.

as rational.⁵ Nevertheless, in everyday life we are mostly acting on the basis of lower part, unfounded belief or the opinative faculty aided by sense perception. If the One beyond being is somehow to be apprehended, then the soul must have in itself a trace of this ultimate ground of reality as a oneness of its own essence, and thanks to its presence the soul is able to rise above (ὑπέρ) the simple and universal intuitions of the intellect (νοῦς).⁶ To Plotinus this hypernoetic device of soul was "loving intellect", a higher aspect or state of intellect,⁷ but later Neoplatonists

⁵ Being rational, the discursive soul is the existential property of a human being *qua* human, as "oneness" is for a god, *In Parm.* 1069,8–12: Ὡς γὰρ ὁ κυρίως ἄνθρωπος κατὰ ψυχὴν, οὕτως ὁ κυρίως θεὸς κατὰ τὸ ἓν· ἐκάτερον γὰρ κυριώτατον τῶν συμπληρούντων ἐκάτερον· κατὰ δὲ τὸ κυριώτατον ἕκαστον ὑφέστηκε τῶν πάντων. In his exegesis of Plato's first Alcibiades Proclus interprets the soul or human self αὐτὸ a Platonic tripartite soul (ἡ τριμερὴς τῆς ψυχῆς), but the soul in itself (αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό) as a rational soul (ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ). Each individual human is a unique singular soul (Platonic αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό ἕκαστον, Proclus' τὸ ἄτομον) living in or using a human body. See fragment 11 *In Alc.*, A. Ph. Segonds, *Proclus. Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon II*, Paris 1986, 374–5 and Segonds' note 460.

⁶ Introducing the issue of hypernoesis in the *Platonic Theology* (I ch. 3), Proclus argues that all of the reality is also in the human mind "in psychic mode" (16,16–18: Πάντα γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ψυχικῶς καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ πάντα γινώσκουν πεφύκαμεν, ἀνεγείροντες τὰς ἐν ἡμῖν δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας τῶν ὄλων) and there should also be a faculty or a part of the soul corresponding to the One and Ineffable (15,15–21: Λείπεται οὖν, εἴπερ ἐστὶ καὶ ὁπωσοῦν τὸ θεῖον γνωστόν, τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς ὑπάρξει καταληπτόν ὑπάρχειν καὶ διὰ ταύτης γνωρίζεσθαι καθ' ὅσον δυνατόν. Τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ πανταχοῦ φαμέν τὰ ὅμοια γινώσκεσθαι· τῇ μὲν αἰσθήσει δηλαδὴ τὸ αἰσθητόν, τῇ δὲ δόξῃ τὸ δοξαστόν, τῇ δὲ διανοίᾳ τὸ διανοητόν, τῷ δὲ νῷ τὸ νοητόν, ὥστε καὶ τῷ ἐνὶ τὸ ἐνικώτατον καὶ τῷ ἀρρήτῳ τὸ ἄρρητον). This passage could even be read in the sense that "the One" and "the Ineffable" are separate concepts and thus the psychic devices connected to them also could be separated. In the *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* he definitely posits two hyperintellective faculties. In separating the One and the Ineffable and the psychic faculties in contact with them, in these places Proclus anticipates Damascius.

⁷ The fundamental passage for Plotinus' view is *Enn.* 6,7,35 on the witless, loving intellect, intoxicated by nectar (19–27): Καὶ τὸν νοῦν τοίνυν τὴν μὲν ἔχειν δύναμιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν, ἣ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ βλέπει, τὴν δὲ, ἣ τὰ ἐπέκεινα αὐτοῦ ἐπιβολῇ τινι καὶ παραδοχῇ, καθ' ἣν καὶ πρότερον ἑώρα μόνον καὶ ὁρῶν ὕστερον καὶ νοῦν ἔσχε καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ. Καὶ ἔστιν ἐκείνη μὲν ἡ θεὰ νοῦ ἔμφορος, αὕτη δὲ νοῦς ἐρῶν, ὅταν ἄφρων γένηται μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος· τότε ἐρῶν γίνεται ἀπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ· καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ μεθύειν βέλτιον ἢ σεμνοτέρῳ εἶναι τοιαύτης μέθης. Plotinus' explanation of the soul's highest state is based on the *similia similibus* theory: Οὐδὲ ψυχὴ τοίνυν, ὅτι μὴδὲ ζῆ ἐκεῖνο, ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τὸ ζῆν. Οὐδὲ νοῦς, ὅτι μὴδὲ νοεῖ· ὁμοιοῦσθαι γὰρ δεῖ. Νοεῖ δὲ οὐδ' ἐκεῖνο, ὅτι οὐδὲ νοεῖ. For a detailed exposition of the Plotinian theory of the two states of the Intellects and this passage especially see, for example, P. Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*, Paris 1997, 93–7, J. Bussanich, *The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus*, Leiden 1988, 172–200.

conceived of it rather as a special faculty of the soul.⁸

To such a faculty Proclus refers with names such as "the one of the soul" (τὸ ἓν τῆς ψυχῆς), "the flower of our essence" (ἄνθος τῆς οὐσίας ἐμῶν), "the flower of the intellect" (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ), "the flower of the soul" (ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς), or (νόθος νοῦς) "spurious (bastard) intellect".⁹ The last one is introduced in an intriguing passage of the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, and I take it as an example here, because it illustrates well the doctrine of hypernoetic knowledge and is inspired by a perhaps surprising Platonic context using terms less familiar than the usual flower metaphors.¹⁰ Proclus analyses firstly legitimate modes of knowledge as two opposite pairs; the higher one constituted by intellection and discursive reason and the lower by opinion and sensation, and then continues:¹¹

⁸ A good recent review of the doctrinal history of this topic is J. Dillon, "The One of the Soul and the 'Flower of the Intellect'. Models of Hyper-intellection in Later Neoplatonism", in J. Dillon – M.-É. Zovko (eds.) *Platonism and Forms of Intelligence*, Berlin 2008, 247–57.

⁹ The relevant passages are *In Alc.* 245,6–248, 24, *De Prov.* 4,171,2, *De Prov.* 32,2, *De Prov.* 140, *In Crat.* 47, *In Crat.* 113, *In Parm.* 957,40–958, *In Parm.* 1046,2–1047,31, *In Parm.* 1071,19–1072,18, *In Parm.* 1080,36–1081,11, *In Parm.* 1082,6–10, *In Tim.* I 472,12 (schol.), *In Tim.* III 14,6, *Theol. Plat.* I 15,17–21, *Theol. Plat.* I 66,26–67,8, *Eclogae* 4,209,7–211,15.

¹⁰ David Runia and Michael Share discuss this passage briefly in three pertinent notes in their recent translation of it, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, ed. and trans. by D. T. Runia – M. Share, Cambridge 2008, 103. To the best of my knowledge Thomas Whittaker is the only modern scholar who has noticed the equivalence between "bastard intelligence" and "flower of the intellect", T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*, Cambridge 1961 (reprint of 1918), 271. In his footnote he points out an unknown Byzantine as a predecessor for himself: "The scholiast has an admiring note: τίς οὐκ ἄν σε θαυμάσειε καὶ χάριτας μεγάλας ἐς ἀεὶ μεμνήσεται, φίλε Πρόκλε. νοῦν νόθον λέγει τὸ ἓν καὶ οἶον ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς", 257–8 (n. 2). Jean-Marc Narbonne quotes Proclus' passage pointing out Proclus' source in Plato's concept of *χώρα* apprehend by bastard reason and calling Proclus' text "à vrai dire magnifique", J-M. Narbonne, "Le savoir d'un-delà du savoir chez Plotin", in T. Kobusch – M. Erler (eds.), *Metaphysik und Religion. Zur Signatur des Spätantiken Denkens* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 160), Leipzig 2002, 481.

¹¹ *In Tim.* I 257,30–258,8: ὡσπερ δὴ καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄνω δύο τὸ χεῖρον λαβῶν, οἶον τὸν λόγον, καὶ ποιήσας αὐτὸν νόθον λόγον, τῶν δὲ κάτω τὴν αἴσθησιν καὶ ποιήσας αὐτὴν αἴσθησιν ἀναίσθητον ἔξεις, πῶς οἶεται γινώσκεσθαι τὴν ὕλην ὁ Πλάτων, νόθῳ λόγῳ καὶ αἰσθήσει ἀναίσθητῳ. καὶ ἀνάλογον ἐφ' ἐκατέρων τὸ κρεῖττον λαβῶν καὶ ποιήσας νόθον κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἔξεις πῶς τὸ ἐν γνωστόν· νῶ γὰρ νόθῳ καὶ δόξῃ νόθῃ, διὸ καὶ οὐχ ἀπλοῦν κυρίως καὶ οὐκ ἀπ' αἰτίας γνωστόν· νόθῳ δ' οὖν, διότι κρεῖττόνως καθ' ἐκάτερον· δόξα γὰρ οὐκ ἀπ' αἰτίας γινώσκει, καὶ ἐκεῖνο οὐκ ἀπ' αἰτίας γνωστόν, ἀλλὰ τῷ μὴ ἔχειν αἰτίαν· καὶ νοῦς τὸ ἀπλοῦν γινώσκει, νόθος δὲ νοῦς ἐκεῖνο, διότι κρεῖττόνως τοῦ νοεῖν. τὸ οὖν κρεῖσσον νόθον ἐστὶν ὡς πρὸς τὸν νοῦν, ὡς καὶ ἐκεῖνο τοῦ ἀπλοῦν εἶναι κρεῖσσον, οἶον τὸ τῷ νῶ τῷ ὄντι νοητὸν καὶ ᾧ ὁ νοῦς ὁμόγνητος, ἀλλ' οὐ νόθος. ἐκεῖνο οὖν νοεῖ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ μὴ νῶ, τοῦτο

As you pick from the pair above the less valued thing, which is the logos, and make it a bastard logos (unauthentic logos) and from the pair below senseperception and make it a sensation which is not perceptible, we will see how Plato believes the matter to be known, that is by a bastard logos and an imperceptible perception. And now you can take in an analogous manner the better parts of the pairs and make bastards according to the better and you will see how the One is knowable. It will be known by bastard intellect and bastard opinion, since it (the One) will not be known as something primarily simple and knowable from a cause. It is known in a bastard way because it is superior to both. The opinative faculty does not know from a cause and that [the One] is not knowable from a cause. The intellect knows the simple but this intellect is bastard because it knows the way better than intellection. So the bastard is better than the intellect, because that object of knowledge is better than simple being, which is the intelligible object for the real intellect and to which object the intellect proper is a member of the same family, but the bastard is not. The intellect thinks that (object) by that which is its non-intellect that is the one in it as far it (intellect) is (also) god.

The opposition of the illegitimate mode of knowledge to the authentic is an issue already dealt by the Presocratics. For them the issue was opposition between knowledge acquired from sense perception and knowledge gained through reasoning.¹² Plato, however, did not connect dark knowledge to sense-perception but to the way of apprehending something which lies behind it. In *Timaeus* (52b) he argues that there also exists, besides the level of reality which reason contemplates and the other one which is perceptible by the senses, third level: "and a third Kind is an ever-existing Place (τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεί), which admits not of destruction, and provides room for all things that have birth, itself being apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning with the aid of non-sensation (αὐτὸ δὲ μετ' ἀναίσθησίας ἀπτόν λογισμῶ τινι νόθῳ), barely an object of belief." (tr. W. R. M. Lamb)

Plotinus (*Enn.* 2,4,10) replaces the Platonic place (χώρα) by matter (ύλη) in his interpretation of this passage. Using the *similia similibus* principle as an explanation of the relationship between the cognitive powers and the object of cognition, Plotinus posits that only indeterminateness itself in the soul could ap-

δὲ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔν, καθὸ καὶ ἔστι θεός. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

¹² Gregory Vlastos, for example, reconstructs Democritus' view "... when knowledge is nothing more than the cumulative sequence of such external impacts – and in that sense the child of chance - then it is 'bastard knowledge'. Only when fathered upon our senses by the soul's inherent power to move itself in the 'subtler' inquiry of reason, is it 'genuine knowledge'", G. Vlastos, "Ethics and Physics in Democritus", *The Philosophical Review* 55:1 (1946) 57.

prehend matter.¹³ In his exegesis Proclus, applying the Neoplatonic principle of mean terms, divides the area characterized by Plato's opposition between intelligible and genesis, realms apprehended by reason and opinion, into four different levels, which are being (intelligible), being-becoming, becoming-being and becoming. Each of them is apprehended by the respective faculty among the authentic modes of cognition.

The correspondence between a special type of cognition and its object could be interpreted in Neoplatonic epistemology from two different angles, resulting in views which may be called the "modality and reification" approaches. The first one considers that the agents' quality determines the quality of the content of each type of knowledge. Thus different types of knowledge are modalized views on the same object. This view is possibly dominant in Plotinus and always present in the Later Neoplatonism as well. However, there is an alternative, more reified reading, according to which every type of knowledge in effect has or constitutes a specific object appropriate to it. This leads to a conclusion that opinion, discursive thinking, and intellection do not differ according to their perfection but have dissimilar objects in the strictest sense because of this object's level in the ontological hierarchy.¹⁴ Most often Proclus seems to apply the modal principle, but he too has passages leaning towards a reification point of view.¹⁵

¹³ *Enn.* 2,4,10,1–11: "How can I conceive matter without quantity? How do you conceive it without quality? What could be such an intuitive thought, a concept of understanding or apprehension? It is the indetermination itself. Since similar apprehends similar, the indeterminate knows the indeterminate. A definition could be determined around this indeterminate, but the way lies through indefiniteness. Since all knowledge is attained by reason and thought, here reason tells us about matter, but desiring to be intellection it is not intellection, but more non-intellection. Rather, it forms about matter a phantasm, an illegitimate representation which comes from the other and is not from what is true, an image composed with some other principle. Perhaps this is why Plato says that Matter is apprehended by bastard reasoning", (Stephen MacKenna's translation modified).

¹⁴ Damascius transforms this tendency of Neoplatonic epistemology into an explicit theory. *De Princ.* II 149,13–17: Τὶ δὲ οὖν ἡ γνῶσις; ἄρα περιουγασμὸς καὶ οἶον προπομπεία φωτὸς ἐν τῷ γνωστικῷ τοῦ γνωστοῦ; καὶ γὰρ ἡ αἴσθησις κατὰ τὸ αἴσθημα, καὶ ἡ φαντασία κατὰ τὸν τύπον ὑφίσταται, καὶ ἡ δόξασις καὶ ἡ διανόησις ἢ μὲν κατὰ τὸ διανόημα, ἢ δὲ κατὰ τὸ δόξασμα: καθόλου τοίνυν ἡ γνῶσις κατὰ τὸ <γνώσμα>, εἰ οἶόν τε φάναι. See Cosmin Andron's enlightening article, "Damascius on Knowledge and its Object", *Rhizai. A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 1 (2004) 107–24. I think that Andron is right, at least when it comes to Damascius that he "seems to understand all the faculties of the mind in an analogous manner to sense perception. The difference between the different faculties would be due to the nature of the object, i.e. its place in the ontological hierarchy", 109.

¹⁵ See, for instance, *In Eucl.* 10–11, where instead of perception and opinion, he speaks about

The genuine modes from senseperception to intellection are all dealing the procession of Being (which is a matter of ontology) and have in this a common object which is radically different from the area of the One (dealt with theoretically by henology and henadology) for its abundant power and the realm of matter for its total privation (which is reflected only by the mind's dim conjectures about quasi-existence). Proclus renders Plato's formulation of "bastard reasoning with the aid of non-sensation" as "by bastard logos and imperceptible perception" (νόθῳ λόγῳ καὶ αἰσθήσει ἀναισθήτῳ). This, for Proclus, is the lower bastard mode, composed of the lowest terms of the two pairs of the authentic modes. It has the same function as "bastard reasoning" has in Plato and Plotinus; that is, apprehending matter outside of forms. Proclus innovation is the higher of the spurious modes, "bastard intellection and bastard opinion" (νόθος νοῦς καὶ δόξα νόθη). This is the faculty for apprehending the One.

Instead of Plato's three levels Proclus posits six-levels in his exegesis.¹⁶ Or are there even more? There are some grounds to argue rather for an eight-level model. "And" in the expression like "bastard intellection and bastard opinion" could also be interpreted to referring to two different things. If we have four levels in the area of definiteness, why not also in the area of indeterminateness? In his other and later works Proclus certainly also makes distinctions between the levels of the soul's faculties which apprehend henads and the One. That is why I see Proclus' νόθος νοῦς as an incipient form of his later concept of "the flower of the intellect". It should be noted that in the last phrases of the quoted passage Proclus describes only νόθος νοῦς. We can with confidence see in it "the flower of the intellect" because Proclus' words are almost the same as those used in the *Parmenides Commentary*: "For its part where it (the intellect) is not in itself intellect, the intellect is god, and for its part which is not god, it is intellect in the god in it. The divine intellect, which is whole, is intellective essence, which has its own summit and unity and knows itself as far as it is intellective, but being inebriated on nectar, as someone says, it generates the totality of cognition in so far as it is the flower of intellect and a super-essential henad".¹⁷ The other one, if it really is a separate faculty, νόθη δόξα, is not characterized more closely here, but

conjecture and faith.

¹⁶ See also *In Parm.* 644,4–645,6–8.

¹⁷ *In Parm.* 1047,16–24: τῷ οὖν ἑαυτοῦ μὴ νῶ θεός ἐστιν ὁ νοῦς· καὶ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ μὴ θεῷ νοῦς ἐστιν ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ θεός· καὶ ὁ θεῖος νοῦς, τὸ ὅλον, οὐσία νοερὰ μετὰ τῆς οἰκείας ἀκρότητος καὶ τῆς οἰκείας ἐστὶν ἐνότητος, ἑαυτὴν μὲν γινώσκουσα καθόσον νοερὰ, μεθύουσα δὲ, ὡς τίς φησι, τῷ νέκταρι, καὶ ὅλην γεννῶσα τὴν γνῶσιν, καθόσον ἐστὶν ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ καὶ ὑπερούσιος ἑνάς.

it could represent the supreme "flower of the whole soul" known in other works by Proclus.

When Proclus discusses on the flower of the intellect he is still using terms like thinking, albeit thinking above intellection. Bastard opinion fits well with the context when expressions of thinking and seeing are left behind for the metaphors linked to lower sensations and especially for the haptic images. The image of matter as an inverted One emerges naturally from his famous rule or law of causation, which says that primordial causes have more effects and constitute levels of realities out of the sight of the secondary causes. In the same way the most elementary modes of cognition cover a larger area of reality than the more developed modes. The intellect is simple and knows the causes of real being, while opinion is inherently plural and does not know the causes. But the merits which the intellect has at the level of knowledge concerning Being are faults at the superessential level. On the other hand, the demerits of the opinion concerning Being mirror the excellence which the divine, "henadic" level has in its relation to the intelligible. As the flower of the intellect or bastard intellect reaches the highest summit of the Being and the henads in it with a kind of supra-intellectual intellection, the flower of the whole soul "touches" the One and conceives by this touch an ineffable notion of the ultimate ground of reality.

Proclus' concept of theurgy

A Neoplatonist philosopher knows that at the level of the universal and divine Intellect absolute identity prevails with the intelligizing subject and content of its thought. But human thought has no immediate access to the eternal forms contained in the Intellect; it keeps only preconceptual innate images of them and has to express them through the temporal and consecutive labor of discursive reason. As far as philosophy is related to the divine it cannot disregard mythology and theurgy. Both of them could offer to the human soul an enlarged field of vision, without, however, replacing reason. Their symbolic operations resonate rather with the imagination.¹⁸

Proclus also uses the term theurgy in plural, for instance in *In Crat.* 176,11, but this concerns different modes of worship, and thus it is not relevant for the

¹⁸ For Proclus' views on imagination, see especially *In Eucl.* 52,20–53,1. The best study known to me is J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris 1982, 44–51. See also, among others, E. A. Moutsopoulos, *Les structures de l'imaginaire dans la philosophie de Proclus*, Paris 1985; Rappe (n. 2) 131–2.

theory of scales in the soul's ascent. In all Proclus mentions theurgy 51 times in his writings. Considering the evidence as a whole, one has to conclude that in his usage theurgy stands for a generic term of cultic practice where communicating with the gods is realized through divinely given symbols.¹⁹ Such a view is also shared in the writings of the persons who could be counted as belonging within Proclus' sphere of influence. One of these is Dionysius the Areopagite,²⁰ and another such author is John Lydus, who calls even Julius Caesar a theurge wanting to find an adequate rendition for the Greek audience of the meaning of the sacred title of *pontifex maximus*.²¹ "Divine works", used in Pseudo-Dionysian studies, would be an apt translation and Trouillard's "un symbolisme opératoire destinée à éveiller la présence divine" an appropriate definition.²²

Proclus' statement in the *Platonic Theology* may be a good starting point for more a detailed inquiry. The context of the passage is Proclus' treatment of the formation of the divine names. "Our science of theology" produces each name as an image, like a statue of a god. Proclus introduces theurgy for the sake of comparison:

¹⁹ The relevant passages where Proclus speaks explicitly about theurgy are the following: *Eclogae*, fr. 3, *In Alc.* 52,5–53,10; 92,4–15; 150,9–13, *In Crat.* sections 52, 71, 113, 122, 174, 176, 179, *In Eucl.* 136,28–139,1, *In Remp.* I 37,3–22; I 39,10–20; I 91,18–92,9; I 128,4–23; I 151,24–152,12; II 123,9–124,8; II 143,22–28 (in the context of the mystical doctrine of the sign of Helios in the soul), II 154,11–155,15; II 220,10–24; II 241,19–243,22 (divine epiphany), *In Tim.* I 214,2–4; I 274,9–18; I 317,17–318,20; II 254,26–257,8; III 25,18–26,15; III 27,3–15; III 40,17–41,3; III 42,30–43,15; III 63,19–26; III 80,5–21; III 124,20–125,4; III 131,30–132,4; III 157,22–158,3; *Theol. Plat.* I 112,1–113,10 (the famous *locus classicus*), I 124,21–125,2; IV 30,18–19 (theurgic burial), IV 101,1–15 (in the context of harmony between theurgists and Plato). These passages deal with such diverse topics as divine oracles and epiphanies and Chaldean theurgists' opinions on theology, cosmology, astronomy etc., but the only place where hypernoetic cognition and theurgy are brought to discussion at the same time is *In Crat.* 113, which testifies to Proclus' opinion that "the flower of the intellect" functions beyond the area of theurgical activity.

²⁰ With 47 mentions he is the second most theurgical writer after Proclus in ancient literature. For examples of the Christian use of the word theurgy, meaning both their own and pagan "sacraments", see John of Damascus (*Homilia in transfigurationem salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi*, 18–21) and Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam* 932,45–53.

²¹ John Lydus, *De mensibus* 102,7: ὁ τοίνυν Καῖσαρ οὐ τύχη μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱερωσύνη κοσμούμενος – καὶ γὰρ πόνטיפεξ ἦν, οἶονεὶ γεφυραῖος ἀρχιερεὺς ἢ θεουργός.

²² J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'Ame selon Proclus*, Paris 1972, 175.

As theurgy through certain symbols invokes the generous kindness of the gods to illuminate divine statues produced artificially by humans, at the same way the intellectual science of divine things also reveals the hidden essence of the gods with distinctions and combinations of sounds.²³

Theology "reveals", it is interested in language and its goal is to express the divine essence in scientific concepts. Theurgy "invokes"; it acts symbolically, and its goal is to bring out divine illumination. A passage from the *Commentary on the Cratylus* could be read as a direct continuation of this. We get to know that theurgy does not work only with concrete things like statues but also with language and especially divine names. Imitating divine symbols, "theurgy too produces them through uttered, though inarticulate, expressions".²⁴ Thus, theurgy's is not the same thing that, for instance, telestic art, consecration of divine images, but telestic art—at least, in its highest, or genuine forms, functions "theurgically". And the difference between (scientific) theology and theurgy is not that the former is concerned with language, and the latter not, but that theology relates to signification, theurgy to experience beyond discourse.²⁵

Theurgy as a practice is inherently unintelligible. Its task is to represent and invoke divine illumination with varied material figures functioning as ineffable

²³ *Theol. Plat.* I 124,25–125,2: καὶ ὡσπερ ἡ θεουργία διὰ δὴ τινῶν συμβόλων εἰς τὴν τῶν τεχνητῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἔλλαμψιν προκαλεῖται τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἄφθονον ἀγαθότητα, κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὴ καὶ ἡ νοερὰ τῶν θείων ἐπιστήμη συνθέσσει καὶ διαίρέσει τῶν ἡχῶν ἐκφαίνει τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην οὐσίαν τῶν θεῶν.

²⁴ *In Crat.* 71,65–68: τοιαῦτα δ' ἐστὶν τὰ καλούμενα σύμβολα τῶν θεῶν μονοειδῆ μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὑψηλοτέροις ὄντα διακόσμοις, πολυειδῆ δ' ἐν τοῖς καταδεεστέροις· ἃ καὶ ἡ θεουργία μιμουμένη δι' ἐκφωνήσεων μὲν, ἀδιαρθρῶ των δέ, αὐτὰ προφέρεται.

²⁵ The passages of the *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary on the Cratylus* discussed above are in the focus of van den Berg's critique of Rappe in his discussion of the status of the theory of divine names in Proclus and Rappe's claim that the *Platonic Theology* is a theurgic text: van den Berg (n. 1) 144 n 26. I think that Rappe comes out with elegance from the blind alley of "deformation theory". Rappe does not try to reconcile Proclus' rationalist and religious side with the sophisticated theories of "higher theurgy", but instead in her interpretation theurgy seems to absorb philosophy in Proclus. Thus she comes very close to the position of Dodds; however, this does not lead her to a negative assessment of Proclus, because her task is to study the interpretative and textual strategies of the Later Neoplatonism in the light of deep knowledge of modern philosophy and literary theories, and not to estimate to what extent Proclus, soaked with "magic", deviates from the Plotinian path. Stimulating and innovative as Rappe's interpretations are, her exegesis is nevertheless defective regarding our topic as she ignores Proclus' discussion of the limit of theurgy.

symbols of the gods.²⁶ These symbols are opaque to the human mind; they do their work, as such, by themselves. They are not a matter for explanation, they are for use. The intellectual science of theology, on the other hand, strives to be as intelligible as possible. It works with dialectic, using combinations and division. Thus the highest part of philosophy functions as a parallel to theurgy, revealing the secret essence of the gods.

Theurgy is a quasi-synonym for the hieratic art, rather overlapping than identical. Theurgy is surely not a plain synonym of initiation or mantic, but these could be seen as parts of common art and in this way specific theurgies. The Later Neoplatonism also applies its concept of serialized totality to hierarchies of beings, as well as to articulation of the arts and sciences. Telestic could be identical to theurgy and a part of it in the sense that theurgy is the root of the series precontaining its more or less familiar derivatives.²⁷ In the same way as mathematicians always apply some branch of mathematics, the practitioners in different branches of the hieratic arts apply different theurgies related to distinct gods, mysteries, ethnic and other traditions etc. Proclus shows that dialectics is the capstone and the unifying bond between the mathematical sciences,²⁸ while a similar capstone and bond in the varied hieratic arts is the doctrine of operative divine signs.

Proclus gives the appellation of theurgists only to such people in whom an understanding of these symbols is most fully incarnated by the grace of divine revelation. Although the Neoplatonists themselves performed theurgical acts and they recognized as valid many species of hieratic art in different religious contexts, with the term "theurges" Proclus himself seems always to refer only to

²⁶ *In Eucl.* 138,10–15: ... ἡ θεουργία τὰς ιδιότητας ἀποτυπουμένη τοῖς τῶν θεῶν ἀγάλμασιν ἄλλα ἄλλοις περιβάλλει σχήματα.

²⁷ Dominic O'Meara explains the problem of the parts of political philosophy in a treatise by an unknown author of the 6th century in similar way: "Both authors (Pseudo-Dionysius and the anonymous writer under consideration) express a fundamental theory of Neoplatonic metaphysics, the theory of series of terms in which the first member of the series precontains and produces the other members of the series. This type of series, dubbed a 'P-series' by A. C. Lloyd, is to be found, for example, in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (prop. 18–9), cf. Lloyd 1990, 76–8. In the case of the anonymous dialogue, this means that kingship or kingly science is both a part of, and identical to, political philosophy: it is a part of political philosophy, because there are other parts, such as military science; it *is* political philosophy, because it precontains, as the highest part and source of all political knowledge, the other parts.", D. O'Meara, "The Justinianic Dialogue: *On Political Science* and its Neoplatonic Sources", in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, Oxford 2002, 54.

²⁸ *In Eucl.* 42,11 (θριγγχὸν τῶν μαθημάτων, from *Rep.* 534e), 43,22 (τὸν σύνδεσμον τῶν μαθημάτων).

the Chaldeans, who, at the time of Marcus (Aurelius), received revelation from the gods in the form of famous the Oracles.²⁹ When Proclus tells us something about specific Chaldean matters beyond quoting the *Chaldean Oracles* as direct utterances of the gods, he most often deals with the theological opinions of the original theurgists and rarely about rituals. Perhaps the only specific Chaldean practice mentioned by him is the famous theurgic burial, which seems to imitate the Platonic myth of *Phaedrus*.³⁰

The original Chaldean theurgists were not primarily "founders" of some new phenomenon, which was "integrated into" Neoplatonism as an "irrational element". Their teaching has a strong appeal to Neoplatonist for three reasons. First, they offered for the use of philosophers already reading Plato theologically a body of theological truths, revealed by the gods themselves in historical time and not in some distant past. Second they coined an apt neologism for describing the practical side of religion as divine works (θεουργία) in opposition to discourse on things divine (θεολογία). And third, what seems to impress the Neoplatonists most in the theoretical legacy of the original Chaldean theurgy is their doctrine according to which authentic religious activity is mediated by the operating divine symbols (συνθήματα, σύμβολα) found in all levels of reality. The capability to find, know, and use these mystical signs is the characteristic of a real theurge, a master of the hieratic art.³¹

²⁹ *In Crat.* 122,4: καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ Μάρκου γενομένοις θεουργοῖς οἱ θεοὶ καὶ νοητὰς καὶ νοερὰς τάξεις ἐκφαίνοντες, ὀνόματα τῶν θείων διακόσμων ἐξαγγελτικὰ τῆς ιδιότητος αὐτῶν παραδεδώκασιν, also *In Remp.* II 123,12–13 καὶ ὅσα τοῖς ἐπὶ Μάρκου θεουργοῖς ἐκδέδοται πίστιν ἐναργῆ πορίζει τοῦ λόγου. The historicity of this revelation may have had strong value for Proclus, not least as a counterweight for the comparable claims of Christians.

³⁰ *Theol. Plat.* IV 30,1: Ἐν τῇ μυστικωτάτῃ τῶν τελετῶν, κελεύουν οἱ θεουργοὶ θάπτειν τὸ σῶμα πλὴν τῆς κεφαλῆς. This could imitate the charioteer's head which rises temporarily to the vision of the supercelestial place in *Phaedrus* and also has a connection to the curious idea of the human as an "inverted" and "celestial plant" whose head is rooted in the intelligible (see Festugière's translation of the final part of *In Tim.* which has survived in Arabic, A. J. Festugière, *Proclus. Commentaire sur le Timée* V, Paris 1968, 244) as henads are rooted in the One like trees (*In Parm.* 1050,12). Both images would strengthen the Neoplatonist fondness for "flower" terminology.

³¹ Σύμβολον could even mean scientific concepts for Proclus at times, but it is very often used in a mystical and religious context. Σύνθημα rarely appears outside this context. Its mystical uses originate from the *Chaldean Oracles* and it was introduced into Neoplatonism as a technical term by Iamblichus. Its usage is also common among other representatives of the Later Neoplatonism (Damascius, Dionysius Areopagite), but none uses it as profusely as Proclus (117 times). Proclus' use of the terms for symbolic relations forms a continuum moving from the most transparent term, image (eikon), to, the more opaque synthema through symbol.

Hyperintellection has common ground with theurgy in the sense that it too is based on the working of the *συνθήματα*. As the soul contains in its *νοεροὶ λόγοι* (reason-principles) images of the noetic forms (*νοερὰ εἶδη*) which are paradigms for the divine Demiurge for its action,³² it also contains divine symbols (*θεῖοι συμβόλοι*) participating in all divine signs (*πάντων μὲν μετέχει τῶν συνθημάτων*) which are derived from the One and the divine henads ("unities", the highest superessential and hypernoetic gods).³³ For Proclus such devices of the soul as "the flower of the intellect" and "the flower of the whole soul" etc., how many of them are, and however they are termed, are also divine symbols.³⁴

Eikōn (image or copy) functions on the basis of similarity, it is a more or less immediate representative of its archetype (paradigm), to which it refers. Thus the domain of an image is that of a rational understanding of different levels of ontological forms. A symbol is not an arbitrary and conventional signifier for Proclus, but, rather a means rendering an invisible content visible in an enigmatic way, revealing by veiling, at times with an outward appearance exactly opposite to the meaning of what is signified. The appropriate domain for a symbol is mythology. *Synthema* is totally beyond human understanding; it is the derived presence of supraessential, supraintellectual, henadic and godlike things. For a theory of symbolism in Proclus see J. Dillon, "Image, Symbol and Analogy: Three Basic Concepts of the Neoplatonic Allegorical Exegesis", in J. M. Dillon, *Golden Chain. Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity*, London 1991, 247–63; J. A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm. Theories of the interpretation of the Later Neoplatonism*, Leiden 1976; J. Trouillard, "Le symbolisme chez Proclus", *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 7 (1981) 287–308; L. Cardullo, *Il Linguaggio del Simbolo in Proclo. Analisi filosofico-semantiche dei termini symbolon/eikōn/synthēma nel Commentario alla Repubblica*, Catania 1985.

³² *Dianoia* expresses discursively in its concepts these *logoi*, which it knows as projections from the soul's intellectual essence. For Proclus' theory of discursive reason see, D. Gregory MacIsaac, *The Soul and discursive reason in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Notre Dame 2001.

³³ See *Eclogae*, fr. 5. É. des Places in his edition of the fragments, as an appendix to the *Oracles chaldaïques*, Paris 1971, 206–12, has *ιερωὶν λόγων* (fr. 5,15), Jahn has adopted an alternative reading of the manuscripts, which Sheppard also follows (note 1 above) reading with *νοεροὶ λόγοι*. This is more in accordance with Proclus' expected use and with the *εἰκόνες μὲν τῶν νοερῶν οὐσιῶν* a little later.

³⁴ *In Remp.* I, p. 177,18–23: Proclus calls the equivalent of the "flower of the intellect" an ineffable symbol of the gods' unitary hypostasis in the soul: *συνάπτεται τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ζῆ τὴν ἐκείνοις συγγενεστάτην καὶ δι' ὁμοιότητος ἄκρας ἠνωμένην ζωὴν, οὐχ ἑαυτῆς οὐσαν, ἀλλ' ἐκείνων, ὑπερ δραμοῦσα μὲν τὸν ἑαυτῆς νοῦν, ἀνεγείρασα δὲ τὸ ἄρρητον σύνθημα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἐνιαίας ὑποστάσεως καὶ συνάψασα τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον, τῷ ἐκεῖ φωτὶ τὸ ἑαυτῆς φῶς, τῷ ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν πᾶσαν καὶ ζωὴν ἐνὶ τὸ ἐνοειδέστατον τὴν τῆς οἰκείας οὐσίας τε καὶ ζωῆς. Similarly *Theol. Plat.* II 56,5–57,3 (below) and *In Tim.* I 210,11–14: *πάντ' οὖν καὶ μένει καὶ ἐπιστρέφει πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, ταύτην λαβόντα παρ' αὐτῶν τὴν δύναμιν καὶ διττὰ συνθήματα κατ' οὐσίαν ὑποδεξάμενα, τὰ μὲν ὅπως ἂν ἐκεῖ μένη, τὰ δὲ ὅπως ἂν**

They represent in the human psychic structure the illumination from the highest gods. This is how he comes to his peculiar late Neoplatonic answer to the question of what the soul ultimately is: "We are images of the intellectual essences and statues of unknowable signs" (καὶ ἐσμὲν εἰκόνες μὲν τῶν νοερῶν οὐσιῶν, ἀγάλματα τὰ δὲ τῶν ἀγνώστων συνθημάτων).³⁵

Ineffable signs constitute a network of reciprocal sympathy pervading the whole cosmos. At all levels entities try to identify with the highest signs present in them. This means deification as far as it is possible for entities at each level. For instance, according to Proclus, sunflower has been stamped with the symbol of the sun and belongs to a divine series which leads up to Helios as a cosmic god. A plant's conversion towards the sun and its imitation of the sun by its physical shape is for Proclus philosophically speaking an instance of metaphysical conversion, but it is also an act of worship at the vegetal level.³⁶ Proclus thinks that not only demons and angels, but even the Intellect itself and the highest gods, are pursuing contact with the first uncaused cause, renouncing their own nature in their desire to be identical with the sign of the primordial thing. In their ascent they abandon their own characteristic properties which define them as distinct beings and thus not-one (in the sense of existence different to the One itself) and they reach their purest unity in themselves, that which in their nature is a trace of supreme non-being (the one in them). We find one of the Proclus' most impressive formulations of this view in the second part of the *Platonic Theology*:³⁷

ἐπιστρέφῃ προελθόντα, where the symbol of return corresponds to "the flower of the intellect" and the symbol of remaining to "the flower of the whole soul".

³⁵ *Eclogae* (= *Chald. Phil.*) fr. 5,7–8.

³⁶ See especially Πρόκλου περὶ τῆς καθ' Ἑλληνας ἱερατικῆς τέχνης., ed. J. Bidez, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs*, vol. 6, Brussels 1928, 148–51.

³⁷ *Theol. Plat.* II 56,5–57,3: Καὶ οὐ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν μόνον καθαρεύειν προσήκει τῶν ἑαυτῆς συστοίχων ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἐνώσει καὶ κοινωνίᾳ πᾶν τὸ ἑαυτῆς πλήθος ἔξω καταλείπουσαν, καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξίν τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀνεγείρουσαν μύσασαν, φησί, προσάγειν αὐτὴν τῷ πάντων βασιλεῖ καὶ μετέχειν τοῦ φωτός, ὡς αὐτῇ θεμιτόν· ἀλλὰ καὶ νοῦς πρὸ ἡμῶν καὶ πάντα τὰ θεῖα ταῖς ἀκροτάταις ἐνώσεσιν ἑαυτῶν καὶ τοῖς ὑπερουσίοις πυρσοῖς καὶ ταῖς ὑπάρξεσι ταῖς πρώταις ἥνωνται τῷ πρώτῳ καὶ μετέχουσιν ἀεὶ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν πληρώσεως· οὐχ ἥπερ οὖν εἰσιν, ἀλλ' ἡ τῶν ἑαυτοῖς συγγενῶν ἐξήρηται, πρὸς τὴν μίαν ἀρχὴν συννεύουσι. Πᾶσι γὰρ ἐνέσπειρεν ὁ τῶν ὅλων αἴτιος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ παντελοῦς ὑπεροχῆς συνθήματα, καὶ διὰ τούτων περὶ ἑαυτὸν ἴδρυσε τὰ πάντα, καὶ πάρεστιν ἀρρήτως πᾶσιν ἀφ' ὅλων ἐξηρημένος. Ἐκαστον οὖν εἰς τὸ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φύσεως ἄρρητον εἰσδυόμενον εὐρίσκει τὸ σύμβολον τοῦ πάντων Πατρός· καὶ σέβεται πάντα κατὰ φύσιν ἐκεῖνον, καὶ διὰ τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μυστικοῦ συνθήματος ἐνίζεται τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν ἀποδυόμενα, καὶ μόνον εἶναι τὸ ἐκεῖνου σύνθημα σπεύδοντα καὶ μόνου μετέχειν ἐκεῖνου, πόθῳ τῆς

"And not only should the human soul purify itself from things appropriate to its own level in the union and community with the first principle leaving out all its multiplicity and awakening its true existence, with "closed eyes" as it is said, and to approach the "king of all things" and to participate in its light, as far as that it is allowed, but also, before us, the intellect and all divine in their highest unions and supraessential flames, join with the first principle and participate eternally in the plenitude therefrom. Thus, they unite with the unique first principle, not through what they are, but on the contrary, through that which transcends their own nature. In effect, the cause of the universe "has sown in all things" signs of its absolute superiority, and through them established around itself all things and is present in all in an ineffable way, though its is transcendent to all. Thus each entity returning into itself finds from its own nature the symbol of the Father of all things and everything worships him according to its own nature, and unites with him through appropriate mystical signs, stripping its own nature and wanting only to be one with its own sign and participate in that with the desire of unknown nature and the source of good. And having finally raised itself to this original cause, each thing becomes calm and free from the pains of childbirth and love, which all things naturally have for unknowable, ineffable, imparticipable and overabundant goodness."³⁸

Thus we also see a form of theurgy, the drive towards unity using physical motion, shapes, and figures, at levels lower than the human, and on the other hand a form of unification as a result of purification and hypernoesis at the superhuman levels too.

That hyperintellection and theurgy are both related to the doctrine of mystical signs has, of course, been an important justification for modern interpretations which assume the existence of the the higher, non-ritualistic theurgy in Proclus. As the awakening of the hyperintellective faculties of the soul is the highest point of the soul's ascent toward the divine, so their activity is undeniably the ultimate anagogic or mystagogic stage described in his theory. But theurgy does not enter here.³⁹ Proclus himself never calls the activity of the hypernoetic faculties a form

ἀγνώστου φύσεως καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ πηγῆς· καὶ μέχρι ταύτης ἀναδραμόντα τῆς αἰτίας ἐν γαλήνῃ γίνεται καὶ τῶν ὀδίνων λήγει καὶ τοῦ ἔρωτος, ὃν ἔχει τὰ πάντα κατὰ φύσιν, τῆς ἀγνώστου καὶ ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀμεθέκτου καὶ ὑπερπλήρους ἀγαθότητος.

³⁸ Similarly, as Proclus describes the highest possible identification with the One's sign in the soul as a state of peace and quiet, Plotinus depicts the ultimate result of his vision, *Enn.* 6,9,11,21–25: Τὸ δὲ ἴσως ἦν οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἔκστασις καὶ ἄπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔφεσις πρὸς ἀφήν καὶ στάσις καὶ περινόησις πρὸς ἐφαρμογήν, εἴπερ τις τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ θεάσεται.

³⁹ Concluding her 1982 article (note 1 above) Sheppard says "Proclus still thinks of the final

of theurgy. Theurgical worship of the gods is, for him, a recommended, surely loved, and probably even necessary bit of the salvific path as a living experience of authentic religion, but it does not awaken the hypernoetic faculties. These are triggered by contemplation exhausting itself in negative theology.

The problem of the primacy of theurgy

Whether theurgy or philosophy is more important to Proclus' soteriology is an issue closely tied to the question of the plurality of theurgies, but cannot be exhaustively dealt with in this contribution.⁴⁰ Let us, however, note that an interpretation which gives primacy to theurgy is generally built on three repeatedly quoted *loci classici* from Damascius, Iamblichus, and Proclus. Damascius' statement⁴¹ is used in order to demonstrate the Iamblichean turn in Neoplatonism, Iamblichus' *passus* is used to crystallize the meaning of this turn, and Proclus' passage to prove that Proclus is in full agreement with Iamblichus.

union as a 'Plotinian' mystical experience, not as some magically induced trance. He describes it as a kind of theurgy because its theoretical basis is of the same kind as the theoretical basis of theurgy: the 'one in the soul' is a σύμβολον, of the transcendent One", 224. With this we come to the crux of the question: Proclus never describes the awakening of the one in the soul as a kind of theurgy. To suppose that he is implying so in other places is hardly defensible if he explicitly denies this, as he does, in *In Cratylum*. The most important Plotinian passages on assumed mystical experiences are *Enn.* 5,8,22–23; 6,9,4,24–30; 6,5,4,18; 6,7,40,2; 6,9,9,47–58. The first two are also evidence of the Plotinian roots of Proclus' theory of "the flower of the intellect".

⁴⁰ The thesis of the primacy of theurgy seems to get apparent support from the fact that the Athenian school held the theurgical virtues to be the highest, Marinus *Vita Procli*, ch. 26–33. On the other hand, Proclus often presents a complete path of the ascent without a word about theurgy, for example in *Theol. Plat.* I 14,5–17,7 and II 61,19–64–65,26. Both passages concern the question of the grounds of theological knowledge and they relativize even the idea of the Plotinian style mystical ecstasy as an ultimate interest of the Later Neoplatonism, because Proclus, admitting the entheastic vision of the One as a supreme experience of the human soul, emphasizes its transitoriness and puts a focus on redescent, which offers to discursive reason notions to cope with the things that are seen to reveal the properties of the divine classes as far as this is possible in scientific theology.

⁴¹ Damascius in L. G. Westerink, *The Greek commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, vol. 2, Amsterdam 1977, section 172, 1–4: "Ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες.

Two considerations should be taken into account of reading Damascius' testimony which relativize its message. First, recent studies have convincingly argued that Plotinus was not totally without interest in ritualistic forms of religion.⁴² Second, Damascius' statement should also be interpreted in its proper context. No doubt the Iamblichean turn marks a major reorientation in the doctrinal history of Neoplatonism. It could also be explained with the changing environment of the Neoplatonist schools. Plotinus could ignore Christianity, which was surely known to him, but the Later Neoplatonism was engaged in an active struggle for the defense of traditional religion and naturally placed a greater emphasis on things hieratic. What Damascius is doing is to have recourse to a familiar rhetorical device in doctrinal dispute, presenting himself as the vindicator of the right balance.⁴³ Thus he introduces tension in his predecessors' views and demonstrates how his own version of Neoplatonism transcends them and is, of course, in full accord with Plato.

A famous passage of Iamblichus⁴⁴ has often been read through the lenses

⁴² See, for instance, Z. Mazur, "Unio Magica: Part II Plotinus, Theurgy, and the Question of Ritual", *Dionysius* 22 (2004) 29–55.

⁴³ Damascius continues immediately: ὁ δὲ Πλάτων τὰς ἐκατέρωθεν συνηγορίας ἐννοήσας πολλὰς οὐσας εἰς μίαν αὐτὰς συνήγαγεν ἀλήθειαν, τὸν φιλόσοφον 'Βάκχον' ὀνομάζων· καὶ γὰρ ὁ χωρίσας ἑαυτὸν τῆς γενέσεως εἰ τεθείη μέσος εἰς ταὐτὸν ἄξει τῷ ἑτέρῳ τὸν ἕτερον. πλὴν δῆλός ἐστιν ὅμως τῷ Βάκχῳ σεμνύνων τὸν φιλόσοφον, ὡς θεῶ τὸν νοῦν ἢ τῷ ἀπορρήτῳ φωτὶ τὸ ῥητόν. The simile of Plato as a Bacchic philosopher is used by Proclus to eulogize the whole Neoplatonic tradition from Plotinus to Syrianus, *Theol. Plat.* I, 6,24–7,9.

⁴⁴ *De myst.* 2,11,96,11–97,19: "Ἐστω μὲν γὰρ ἡ ἄγνοια καὶ ἀπάτη πλημμέλεια καὶ ἀσέβεια, οὐ μὴν διὰ τοῦτο ψευδῆ ποιεῖ καὶ τὰ οἰκείως τοῖς θεοῖς προσφερόμενα καὶ τὰ θεῖα ἔργα, οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεουργοὺς· ἐπεὶ τί ἐκώλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφούντας ἔχειν τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς; νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔχει τό γε ἀληθές οὕτως· ἀλλ' ἢ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἢ τε τῶν νοουμένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνον συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δύνამεις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην. Διόπερ οὐδὲ τῷ νοεῖν αὐτὰ ἐνεργοῦμεν· ἔσται γὰρ οὕτω νοερὰ αὐτῶν ἢ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἐνδιδομένη· τὸ δ' οὐδέτερόν ἐστιν ἀληθές. Καὶ γὰρ μὴ νοούντων ἡμῶν αὐτὰ τὰ συνθήματα ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν δρᾶ τὸ οἰκείον ἔργον, καὶ ἢ τῶν θεῶν, πρὸς οὓς ἀνήκει ταῦτα, ἄρρητος δύναμις αὐτῇ ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐπιγιγνώσκει τὰς οἰκείας εἰκόνας, ἀλλ' οὐ τῷ διεγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔχει φύσιν τὰ περιέχοντα ὑπὸ τῶν περιεχομένων οὐδὲ τὰ τέλεια ὑπὸ τῶν ἀτελῶν οὐδ' ὑπὸ τῶν μερῶν τὰ ὅλα ἀνακινεῖσθαι. Ὅθεν δὴ οὐδ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων νοήσεων προηγουμένως τὰ θεῖα αἴτια προκαλεῖται εἰς ἐνέργειαν· ἀλλὰ ταύτας μὲν καὶ τὰς ὅλας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρίστας διαθέσεις καὶ τὴν περὶ ἡμᾶς καθαρότητα ὡς συναίτια ἄττα προὑποκεῖσθαι χρή, τὰ δ' ὡς κυρίως ἐγείροντα τὴν θεῖαν βούλησιν αὐτὰ τὰ θεῖα ἐστὶ συνθήματα· καὶ οὕτω τὰ τῶν θεῶν αὐτὰ ὑφ' ἑαυτῶν ἀνακινεῖται, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς τῶν ὑποδεεστέρων ἐνδεχόμενά τινα εἰς ἑαυτὰ ἀρχὴν τῆς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας.

of degeneration theory; that is, arguing for an interpretation in which the Later Neoplatonism, tainted by magic and occultism, deforms the pure philosophical heritage of Plotinus.⁴⁵ This view has been contested with the results of the revival of interest in Iamblichus from the early 70's (and which has not been exhausted ever since then) and deformation theory is definitely not in fashion in Neoplatonic studies nowadays, even if it still haunts more general reflections on the history of Greek philosophy.

In order to draw a more nuanced picture of the relationship between Iamblichus and Proclus' view on theurgy, Proclus' treatise on the harmony between Chaldean and Plato's teachings (*Theol. Plat.* IV 27,6-31,16) is important. Proclus seems to echo⁴⁶ the structure and vocabulary of this famous Iamblichean *locus classicus*. Iamblichus says that we have:

theurgic unity, which is not accomplished by thinking, but using divine signs together with the best and purest states of soul, and then the divine will give from itself the desired unity.

Proclus replaces Iamblichean theurgic unity by initiation, saying that it

is not accomplished by thinking and reasoning, but the silence beyond and higher of all modes of cognition given by faith, which establish us and the universal soul into the ineffable and unknown class of the gods.

I think that we have too much parallelism between these statements not to assume that Proclus is, on the one hand, expressing his basic agreement with Iamblichus and, on the other hand trying to be more precise than him. Iamblichus' intention in the context of the controversy with Porphyry is to shed light on the question of what is really happening in the cultic intercourse between humans and gods. Proclus wants to support Iamblichus' position and at the same time relate it to the theological findings of the post-Iamblichean Athenian school. Both emphasize that what is happening will not happen by thinking, Proclus' formulation being

⁴⁵ E. R. Dodds' verdict is a classic piece of "deformation theory": "With that the whole basis of the Plotinian intellectual mysticism is rejected, and the door stands open to all those superstitions of the lower culture which Plotinus had condemned in that noble apology for Hellenism, the treatise *Against the Gnostics*", "Introduction" in his *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1933, xx.

⁴⁶ *Theol. Plat.* IV 31,10–16: Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νοήσεως οὐδὲ διὰ κρίσεως ὅλως ἢ μύησις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἐνιαίας καὶ πάσης γνωστικῆς ἐνεργείας κρείττονος σιγῆς, ἣν ἡ πίστις ἐνδίδωσιν, ἐν τῷ ἀρρήτῳ καὶ ἀγνώστῳ <γένει> τῶν θεῶν ἰδρύουσα τὰς τε ὅλας ψυχὰς καὶ τὰς ἡμετέρας.

more pedantic as he would like to underline that we are really not transcending only discursive thinking but also intellectual intuition. Acting agents are general divine signs in Iamblichus, for Proclus the most uniform silence above all forms of knowing, formulations which mean for him divine signs at the highest level of the human psychic structure, the one in the soul in its double manifestations of the flower of the intellect and flower of the whole soul. The soul's purest and best states could, of course, be embryonic modes of the same concept already found in Iamblichus. Proclus' replacement of the Iamblichean "theurgic unity" by initiation and specifying the final state as the soul's entering into contact with the specific divine class means that he will emphasize that there could never be unity with the soul and the One in the sense of identification. Proclus also speaks about faith and we know that for him this means, in the theory of the classes of gods, the same as contact (συναφή) and unity (ἔνωσις).⁴⁷ An important point is that when Proclus is speaking about the soul's changing states in the ascent he is also telling us something about the properties and levels of the divine hierarchy.

I will not go here in any detailed exegesis of Proclus' much discussed *locus classicus*⁴⁸ in the first part of the *Platonic Theology*, which surely still remains worthy of a dedicated study.⁴⁹ Given the limits and aims of this contribution, it is

⁴⁷ *Theol. Plat.* I, 112,1–3. In Proclus' treatise on prayer (*In Tim.*), συναφή and unity ἔνωσις are introduced as the highest level accessible by the soul – mediated by approach (ἐμπέλαισις). I think that Werner Beierwaltes is right in relating the moment of συναφή to "the flower of intellect" interpreted here as a σύνθημα of the return (ἐπιστροφή) to the One, W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, Frankfurt 1965, 318, which implies for me that ἔνωσις corresponds with the "the flower of the whole soul", the trace of the One in the soul and as such σύνθημα of remaining (μονή).

⁴⁸ *Theol. Plat.* I 112,24–113,10: "Ἴν' οὖν συνελόντες εἵπωμεν, τρία μὲν ἐστὶ τὰ πληρωτικὰ ταῦτα τῶν θείων, διὰ πάντων χωροῦντα τῶν κρείττωνων γενῶν, ἀγαθότης, σοφία, κάλλος· τρία δὲ αὖ καὶ τῶν πληρουμένων συναγωγὰ, δεύτερα μὲν ἐκείνων, διήκοντα δὲ εἰς πάσας τὰς θείας διακοσμήσεις, πίστις καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἔρωσ. Σφύζεται δὲ πάντα διὰ τούτων καὶ συνάπτεται ταῖς πρωτουργοῖς αἰτίαις, τὰ μὲν διὰ τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μανίας, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῆς θείας φιλοσοφίας, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῆς θεουργικῆς δυνάμεως, ἡ κρείττων ἐστὶν ἀπάσης ἀνθρωπίνης σωφροσύνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης, συλλαβοῦσα τὰ τε τῆς μαντικῆς ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰς τῆς τελεσιουργικῆς καθαρτικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ τῆς ἐνθέου κατακωχῆς ἐνεργήματα.

⁴⁹ Philippe Hoffmann offers an excellent treatment of this Proclean issue and its later history in his "La triade chaldaïque ἔρωσ, ἀλήθεια, πίστις: De Proclus a Simplicius", in A. Ph Segonds – C. Steel (eds.), *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne*, Paris 2000, 469–89. Another recent promising attempt at an in-depth exegesis of this Proclean *locus* is C. Tornau, "Der Eros und das Gute bei Plotin und Proklos", in M. Perkams – R. M. Piccione (eds.) *Proklos. Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik*, Leiden 2006, 201–29. It should be noted that similar concept of

enough to say that this text undeniably brings the chain formed by the good, faith and theurgic power into the first place. The superiority of theurgic power to human wisdom could be understood in such a way that a thing where the divine is immediately present has, quite naturally for any kind of religious thought, a higher rank than a thing which has to go through the soul's channels and the limited capacities of the human mind. In the same way a person in whom theurgic virtue is incarnated could be considered holy and thus more noble than a practitioner of the purely theoretical virtues. This text is often quoted in isolation but immediately after it Proclus says that he will return to the theme later at a better time and more appropriate place.⁵⁰ This promise refers precisely to the above-mentioned treatise on the agreement of Plato and Chaldean theurgists in the fourth part of the *Platonic Theology*. This treatment hardly counts as evidence for the primacy of theurgy but accords with the interpretation where theurgy and philosophy are two paths leading towards the same goal, the first one, external, going through the divine signs offered by nature and the whole cosmos, and the second one, internal, conducting its way through psychic circuitry. Touching the henads and the One by hyperintellection is the consummation of both.

The evidence of the *Commentary on the Cratylus*

In his *Commentary on the Cratylus* Proclus defines the location of theurgy in the ascent of the soul more clearly and exactly than anywhere else in his writings. Proclus mentions a class of gods which is the first to be named and continues:⁵¹

"... and before that every class is in silence and secret and could be known only by intellection, and for that reason all telestics acting theurgically ascend to this class and because of this Orpheus also says that this class is the first to be named by the other gods."

metarational faith, which is seen as testifying mainly to the influence of the *Chaldean Oracles* on the Later Neoplatonism, is to be found in Plotinus, *Enn.* 5,3,17,28–32, as Hoffman points out, 469.

⁵⁰ *Theol. Plat.* I 113,12: Περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων τάχ' ἂν καὶ εἰσαυθις ἐγκαίροτερον διέλθοιμεν.

⁵¹ *In Crat.* 71,98–101 (33 Pasquali): τὰ δὲ πρὸ αὐτῆς σιγώμενα πάντα καὶ κρύφια νοήσει μόνον γνωστὰ ἦν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ τελεστική πᾶσα μέχρι ταύτης ἄνεισι τῆς τάξεως ἐνεργοῦσα θεουργικῶς, ἐπεὶ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς πρώτην ταύτην ὀνόματι φησιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων καλεῖσθαι θεῶν·

Proclus regards the mode of telestic activity (consecration, initiation) as being theurgic which is to be understood as an activity based on working with signs and symbols. The border which telestics cannot cross is the ultimate limit of the area of the articulation of revealed divine names. These names as symbols are ritualistic utterances; we do not need to take account of their sense, because meanings belong to the area of intellective activity, not of theurgic. A third and very interesting point is that Proclus, who was in the not-so-distant past, often seen as a supporter of irrationalism and superstition, says here that "thinking" goes over a border which theurgy cannot pass. *Νόησις* is normally a term for intuitive thought for Proclus. Thus it could mean here contemplation or its culmination, when the intellectual summit transcends itself, that is, the activity of the flower of the intellect.⁵² But it is not excluded that it represents here discursive thinking in the process of redescending, in a *post festum* mode of descent, when reason tries using analogies to conceive of hypernoetic realities which it has seen during the ascent and having undergone the experience of entheastic union.⁵³ Whatever is the role of noesis here, this passage gives clear evidence that for Proclus the ultimate experience of contact with the One does not equate with theurgy.

The passage just considered perhaps still leaves for debate as to whether we have found the ultimate limit of theurgy in Proclus' system or if there is even higher theurgy in addition to operating by revealed names. This question seems to be resolved beyond any doubt in a subsequent passage from the same commentary:⁵⁴

⁵² Compare this to Proclus' discussion in the *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary of the Chladean Oracles* on "silence" and "unity beyond silence", which are two moments of the hypernoetic cognition and characterized as faculties of the soul in its different "flowers".

⁵³ On the moments of ascent and redescent after the experience of unity see, for instance, *Theol. Plat.* I 15,1–16,6. Perhaps the mystical experience as such is not the prevalent topic for Neoplatonists in their philosophizing? If Plotinus' interest lies in the Intellect, for Proclus the issue of redescending is particularly important, because it is ground for the purpose that is dearest to him, that is, the development of scientific theology as a theory of the classes of the gods.

⁵⁴ *In Crat.* 113,1–25 (Pasquali 65): τὸν οὖν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον, ἐφ' ὃν καὶ ὁ Οὐρανὸς ἀνατείνει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ νοερὰν ζώην, οἱ μὲν ἀρρήτοις χαρακτηρίζουσι συμβόλοις, οἱ δὲ καὶ ὀνομάσαντες ἄγνωστον ἀπέλιπον, μήτ' εἶδος αὐτοῦ μήτε σχῆμα καὶ μορφήν εἰπεῖν ἐξισχύσαντες· ἀνωτέρω δ' ἔτι καὶ τούτου προελθόντες τὸ πέρασ τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν μόνον ὀνόματι δηλῶσαι δεδύνηνται, τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα δι' ἀναλογίας μόνης, ἄρρητα ὄντα καὶ ἄληπτα, σημαίνουσιν· ἐπεὶ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς νοητοῖς τῶν θεῶν μόνος ὁ θεὸς οὗτος, ὁ συγκλείων τὸν πατρικὸν διάκοσμον, εἶναι λέγεται παρὰ τοῖς σοφοῖς ὀνομαστός, καὶ ἡ θεουργία μέχρι ταύτης ἄνεισι τῆς τάξεως. ἐπεὶ τοίνυν τὰ πρὸ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ τοιαύτην

The supracelestial place towards which Ouranos also extends its own intellectual life is characterized by others with ineffable symbols but others, calling it unknowable, leave it as such as they are incapable of saying its form, schema or figure. But going to still higher upper realms from here, they have been capable of designating by name only the lowest limit of the intelligible gods, but things beyond they designate only by analogy because these are ineffable and incomprehensible. Thus among the intelligible gods only this god, who is closing the fatherly order, is said to be nameable by men of wisdom and the theurgy ascends up to this class. Since the things before Ouranos have got a superiority of the uniform hypostasis such that they are at the same time speakable and ineffable, pronounceable or unpronounceable, knowable and unknowable for their familiarity with the One, reasonably Socrates, acting with good sense, suspends discussion of these since it is totally impossible to comprehend by names the mode of existence of these things and some kind of admirable activity is required to distinguish what is completely speakable and ineffable in existence or power in these things. That is why Socrates makes memory responsible; this is not because he would not believe in myths which put some most primordial causes beyond Ouranos or that he would consider these unworthy of mentioning (on the contrary, in the *Phaedrus* he celebrates the supracelestial place), but because it is impossible to remember or know the most primary beings by imagination, opinion or discursive reason. Our condition permits us to join them by the flower of the intellect and by the mode of existence of our essence. And through these we get a sensation of their unknown nature.

This passage shows that according to Proclus theurgy rises to a certain divine class, obviously to the last term of the intelligible triad (the supracelestial place being the first subtriad of the noetic-noeric triad⁵⁵) and the hypernoetic devices

ἔλαχεν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἐνοειδοῦς ὑποστάσεως, ὡς τὰ μὲν εἶναι ῥητὰ τε ἅμα καὶ ἄρρητα καὶ φθεγκτὰ καὶ ἀφθεγκτὰ καὶ γνωστὰ καὶ ἄγνωστα διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἐν συγγένειαν, εἰκότως ὁ Σωκράτης ἐπέχει τὸν περὶ ἐκείνων λόγον, ὡς καὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐ πάντη καταδράττεσθαι τῆς ὑπάρξεως αὐτῶν δυναμένων, καὶ ὅλως τοῦ διακρίνεσθαι τῆς ἐκείνων ὑπάρξεως ἢ δυνάμεως τό τε ῥητὸν καὶ τὸ ἄρρητον θαυμαστῆς τινος δεομένου πραγματείας. αἰτιᾶται γοῦν τὴν μνήμην, οὐ τοῖς μύθοις ἀπιστῶν τοῖς ἐπέκεινα τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ τιθεμένοις τινὰς πρεσβυτέρας αἰτίας καὶ οὐδὲν μνήμης ἀξίους αὐτοὺς νομίζων (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν Φαίδρῳ τὸν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον ἀνυμνεῖ), ἀλλ' ὅτι μνημονευτὰ καὶ διὰ φαντασίας ἢ δόξης ἢ διανοίας γνωστὰ τὰ πρότιστα τῶν ὄντων οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο· τῷ γὰρ ἄνθει τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῇ ὑπάρξει τῆς οὐσίας ἡμῶν αὐτοῖς συνάπτεσθαι πεφύκαμεν. καὶ τῆς ἀγνώστου φύσεως αὐτῶν αἴσθησιν δι' ἐκείνων λαμβάνομεν.

⁵⁵ This is definitely the view of the mature Proclus of the *Platonic Theology*. Other works may reflect a stage where he has not yet developed his final theory of the noetic-noeric triad or, more probably, that his scope of exposition does not need to deal with the "transitory" and "linking"

begin their activity only after this point. In his *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* Proclus explicitly posits two different devices of hyperintellection. His mentions in the other works, referred to above, point to the same division and it is also introduced here if we see "the flower of the Intellect" and "the mode of existence of our essence" as two different faculties. I think that the latter is the same as "the flower of the whole soul" in the fragments of the Proclean commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles* and "bastard opinion" in the *Commentary on the Timaeus*. It is fascinating to note that Proclus here characterizes as "sensation" what these loftiest faculties of the soul finally give. This, of course, is not the same as sense perception, but perception on the hypernoetic level. With this we came back to the idea of mirroring the highest with the lowest, forcefully expressed in the passage of *In Tim* considered at the beginning of this contribution.

Conclusion

To the best of my knowledge Proclus does not speak explicitly anywhere about the "higher theurgy" or describe the activity of the supra-intellectual flowers as theurgy. On the contrary we have seen that he *expressis verbis* says just the opposite and this happens, furthermore, in the sole place where he himself explicitly raises the question about the relationship between theurgy and hypernoetic cognition. In examining ancient ideas, we should not abandon a clear-cut distinction already made by an author under study and impose on him a more rough-grained concept, which is what including hypernoesis in the sphere of theurgy means. Hypernoetic activity transcends theurgy as much as discursive thinking and intellection proper. Proclus draws a very clear dividing line separating the heights reached by both theurgy and philosophy and the hypernoetic state of the soul, which he describes as admirable, silent contemplation of the divine henads in the noetic summit referring to the One beyond.

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triads (such a triad at the lower level of the classes of the gods is the hypercosmic-encosmic triad).

Henadology in the Two Theologies of Proclus

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to discuss the relationship between the *Elements of Theology* and *Platonic Theology* from the perspective of the theory of henads. I refer to these works as the two Theologies of Proclus and begin with some remarks for comparative purposes. The focus is the relation of Proclus' protology, the doctrine of the primordial principles, πέρας and ἄπειρον, Limit and Unlimited, with his doctrine of henads.

I claim that Proclus resolves, at least formally, the ambiguity of this relationship prevailing in the *Elements of Theology* when he gives protological items the status of henads in *Platonic Theology*. Then I briefly survey the views of the scholars who have earlier discussed the possible merits of this Proclean solution. Next I will argue that even after the crucial passage a certain tension persists in *Platonic Theology* between a reappearing ambiguity and the reaffirmation of the solution offered, and that the problem could not be resolved without constant recourse beyond the two Theologies, to the evidence of Proclus' *Commentary on Parmenides*.

GENERAL COMPARISON OF THE *ELEMENTS* AND *PLATONIC THEOLOGY*

On the one hand we have the *Elements*, a concise, systematic work, obviously inspired by the Euclidean model but dealing with theology, and as such unique in Greek philosophical literature. On the other, we have *Platonic Theology*, a giant work, immediately recognizable as the magnum *opus* of its author and the culmination of his life's work. It is also a novel achievement in philosophy for its design, aiming to expose the truth concerning the classes of the gods on the basis of a Neoplatonic interpretation of Parmenides and taking comprehensive account of all Plato's writings in order also to demonstrate the total agreement of Plato with the whole body of Hellenic traditional theology and the revelation of the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

As we consider these works we could get the idea that the relationship between them may be that of a more or less complete draft with a main opus that was never properly finished (approximately the same relation, as, for example, Karl Marx's *Grundrisse* has with *Das Kapital*). The theoretical scope of

Proclus' Theologies is more or less the same, that of the *Elements* being slightly larger. They begin with the transcendent One, but the *Elements* arrives at the hypostasis of the Soul, *Platonic Theology* at the supercosmic-encosmic gods.

On closer inspection, this difference in terms of scope indicates issues more complicated than degrees of completeness. Their approach to the subject matter—explicitly declared to be the same by the titles of the works—and mode of argumentation are different. The *Elements* seems to be interested mainly in causality explaining how different metaphysical levels proceed in an ordered fashion from the primal source, *Platonic Theology*, on the other hand, is interested in the specific procession of the gods. This is a procession in the sense of declension¹ inside the same hypostasis, albeit taking into account the fact that for Proclus the opposition between the procession in the strict sense and procession as declension is valid only on the ontic levels and could be applied to the orders of gods only by analogy.

The difference in terms of approach also concerns the mode of argumentation and the definition of references in which support for the arguments is to be searched for. In his commentary on Parmenides Proclus gives three sources where truth, or, to put it better, the persuasion that something is true, can be sought. These are—and the order is significant—the human mind with its discursive and intuitive faculties, wise men's consensus of opinion, and, lastly, divine revelation received through oracles.² *Platonic Theology* draws abundantly on all of these sources. The *Elements*, on the other hand, remains only at the first level. Its propositions represent innate truths of the human mind, the content of our intuitive reason, which is a plenitude of copies and images of the intelligible forms. The demonstrations exemplify the dialectic effort of the human mind, showing how dianoetic reason convinces itself.³ Thus, the theology of the *Elements* reveals itself to be of a kind at which rationally thinking human intelligence necessarily arrives. This is why the *Elements* does not need any reference to some specific pantheon or even any specific philosophy, not even apparently to that of Plato. Its systematic theology is Platonic only inasmuch as this theology is adequately expressed in the philosophy of Plato. That it was Plato who thought through the true theology is, of course, no coincidence for Proclus, but results from the fact

1. Proclus offers his most clear-cut distinction between “procession” and “procession by declension” in *In Parm.* II, 745.40–746.20.

2. *In Parm.* III 801.20–26. The specific question dealt in this passage is why we should be convinced of the truth of Plato's theory of ideas, but we can assume that the view on the sources of persuasion given here applies generally for Proclus.

3. See also Dominic J. O'Meara, “La science métaphysique (ou théologie) de Proclus comme exercice spirituel,” in *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne*, ed. A. Ph. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven, 2000), 190–227.

that Plato's philosophy was divinely inspired,⁴ and this is just the case which *Platonic Theology* tries to demonstrate.

While the *Elements* is a presentation of Platonic theology in its very own terms, a philosophical discourse revealing the epistemic structure composed of rational and intellectual concepts, *Platonic Theology* represents a system where Proclus takes account of all the modes of Plato's theology—besides scientific, also symbolic, iconic, and enthusiastic modes—which were all, according to Proclus, used by Plato.⁵

DISCREPANCIES WITHIN THE BASIC COMPATIBILITY OF THE HENADOLOGY IN THE TWO THEOLOGIES

There are two fundamental ideas in Proclus' henadology in relation to which other issues are secondary. The first is the notion of the henads as a sphere of the participated One.⁶ A persistent misunderstanding inherited from the time when the theory of the henads was explained in scholarship by the belief in Proclus' urge to pile up excessive metaphysical layers or his urge to defend polytheistic piety, regarded as something external to philosophy, is the notion of the henads as a special metaphysical hypostasis between the One and the Being. Christian Guérard dedicated an article to the refutation of this view in 1982, which is one of the best pieces of modern scholarship concerning henadology.⁷ There is a henadic hypostasis in the sense that the One, self-perfect henads and irradiations of them form a Neoplatonic serialized multiplicity, but the henads themselves and alone could not form a hypostasis just because they are the participated One. Calling the henads a hypostasis would be comparable to dividing the imparticipable Intellect and participated intellects into different hypostases. The idea, that henads-gods as self-perfect unities are sphere of participation in the One, and that their nature as a series on the superessential level is analogous to the ontic series of Being, Life, and Intellect, is the basic common claim for the *Elements* and *Platonic Theology*.⁸

4. The prefaces of *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary on Parmenides* leave no doubt that Proclus was convinced of the divine inspiration of Plato's wisdom.

5. For different modes and styles of theology see *Theol. Plat.* I 2 9.20–10.10; I.4, 17.9–23.11, *In Parm.* 646.1–647.24.

6. *Theol. Plat.* III Chapters 3 and 4, 11.17–17.12.

7. Christian Guérard, "La théorie des hénades et la mystique de Proclus," *Dionysius* 6 (1982): 73–82, especially 76. What comes to the relation between the One and the henads it could not be according to Guérard a relation of participation, but only procession, 78. The first proposition of *ET* seems though establish a this kind of relations, which very special nature is revealed in the *Commentary of Parmenides*. See also P.A. Meijer, "Participation in Henads and Monads in Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* III, chs, 1–6," in *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. E.P. Bos and P.A. Meijer (Leiden, 1992), esp. 70; Meijer, 70; and E.P. Butler, "Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold," *Dionysius* 23 (2005): 83–104, especially 102.

8. Proclus introduces his views on self-perfect (or independent or completed) henads in

The second basic tenet of henadology is the notion that the henad exceeds any ontological form both in unity and individuality. Henads are, all in all and each in all in a way that is much more unitary than the self-identity of forms and community, based on the mutual relations of the participations between them. But henads also have absolute individuality in a way to which the difference which separates ontic forms on the ground of their distinctive characters cannot compare. This notion is, of course, also present in the *Elements* and is repeatedly referred in *Platonic Theology*; however, it is not expressed in these works as clearly as in the *Parmenides Commentary* which has concentrated passages comparing the natures of henads with ontological forms.⁹

Among the other henadological tenets shared between the *Elements* and *Platonic Theology* are the equation of oneness, goodness and “godness,” causative principles according to which the procession is accomplished by the likenesses of the causes and effects, that every monad produces a series appropriate to it, that an entity nearer to the primordial causes produces more effects and goes further in the chain of effects than causes which come into play later in the procession etc.

ET propositions 2, 6, 64 and the third books of *Platonic Theology*. He clarifies the distinction between two types of henads in the fundamental passage of *In Parm.* 1061.31–1063.5 where he ascribed the theory of the henads to his teacher Syrianus. According to I.P. Sheldon-Williams, “Henads and Angels: Proclus and the ps.-Dionysius,” *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972): 65–71, Proclus posits here three levels of henads, unparticipated autonomous (self-subsistent) henads, series of henads which are at once independent and participated (χωριστῶς μετεχόμενα, a compound of words which Proclus actually does not use in this *In Parm* passage, but uses in *ET* 81), and henads which are “principles of unity in those things which are units on account of them.” If this reading is correct, then the passage of *Parmenides Commentary* in consideration would flatly contradict Proclus’ claim both in *ET* and *PT* according to which all henads are always participated. However, there is a way out of this. Actually Proclus says that every cause produces two multiplicities, one separated and similar to the cause, second which is ἀχωριστον τῶν μετεχόμενων (unseparated from its participants). Analogously to the Intellect and primal Soul, which establish some intellect separated from soul and some souls separated from bodies and some which are inseparable, the One also establishes a multiplicity of self-perfected henads which transcend their participants, and others which act as unification of other entities. Thus, there are only two different sorts of henads, self-perfect and henads as irradiations of oneness in the entities. Both *ET* and *PT* are in agreement with this distinction. That henad is a self-perfect does not mean that it is independent of participation, but that it is not immediately participated by the all members of each ontic series. In effect, only root members of the ontic series, their imparticipable monads, participate directly in henad which pre-contains the distinct characteristic of that ontic series. Thus, self-perfect henads are henads participated by imparticipable Intellect, Soul and so on, other henads are derived ones, radiations or illuminations of oneness through the participated monad of the respective series.

9. *In Parm.* VI 1047.24–1049.37.

However, it seems to me that the theory of the classes of the gods in *Platonic Theology* is not only an extended version of the henadology of the *Elements of Theology*, but brings forth some theoretical modifications. Some of these are important, such as the problem of double or “inverse” participation,¹⁰ the introduction of the concept of super-unity,¹¹ the more detailed treatment of the problem of the henadic mode of knowledge,¹² the clarification of the theory of providence, the richer treatment of the relation of the self-perfect henads to the henadic illumination, the more precise account of the supressentiality of the henads and the relativity of this concept¹³ etc. But, in addition to all these important matters, we find issues that are so substantial that one must describe them as major rectifications of theory.

In *Platonic Theology* Proclus expounds two innovations that are significant for the theory of henads. The first is the introduction of the intelligible-intellective gods. The second is the exact solution of the problem of the relation of the primordial principles—the Limit and Unlimited—with the henads, an explanation which dispels the ambiguity present in the *Elements of Theology*. In the following treatment I will concentrate only on this question, which also sheds some light on the issues of the henads’ self-perfectness and superessentiality.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND HENADS IN THE TWO THEOLOGIES

The post-Plotinian Neoplatonists had different means to fill the famous “yawning gulf”¹⁴ in their predecessors’ metaphysical legacy, that is the gap, or break between henology and ontology. Iamblichus’ means was a recourse to the poorly-known theory of the two Ones. Syrianus picked up a couple

10. *Theol. Plat.* III 15.9–14. Plato’s words force Proclus to admit that the One is not only participated in by Being but also participates in it. He explains away this anomaly to the general metaphysical rules of Neoplatonism, saying that participation does not mean the same thing in these cases. Being gets its existence by participating in the One, but the One’s participation into Being means that it is not participating in it qua a primal, transcendent One, but as a One illuminating Being.

11. Superunity (hyperhenosis) is present in *In Parm* VII 1181.39 and *Theol. Plat.* V 28, 103.17. What does this enigmatic superunity mean? Is it the same as the “unity of henads” mentioned *In Parm.* VI 1048.11–14 and “unitary manifold” *Theol. Plat.* III 3, 12.1? This concept would be worthy of special study.

12. For the henadic mode of knowledge especially *Theol. Plat.* I 97.11–98.12, where Proclus attributes to divine truth knowledge concerning everything, even contingents and matter, as opposed to the Intellect and intelligible gods, who know only universals.

13. Although many times Proclus calls all gods and henads superessential in the *kefalaion* for the fourth chapter of *Theol. Plat.* III he states that only the primal One is really superessential, *Theol. Plat.* III 1.13.

14. E.R. Dodds’ expression in his commentary section: *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963), 259.

of principles from Plato's *Philebus* and identified them with the monad and indefinite dyad, principles of Pythagorean origin. Furthermore, as Anne Sheppard says, "Syrianus distinguishes between on the one hand the $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ and the $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\delta\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ which are Forms and belong to the intelligible world, and on the other the $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\gamma\iota\kappa\eta\ \mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ and $\delta\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ which are *above* the intelligible world and are in fact identical with $\acute{\pi}\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$ and $\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\pi\acute{\iota}\alpha$."¹⁵ Syrianus's solution was the way which Proclus followed. But Syrianus most probably also had a mature theory of henads. We do not have enough of Syrianus to decide what the nature of his answer to the question of the relation between the henads and protological principles was. On the contrary, we have a lot of Proclus on these issues, but nevertheless scholars have been puzzled by where Proclus exactly situates these primordial causative principles. Do they precede the henads or do they follow after them and exist before Being? Are these principles classifying rules for henads, some kind of formal laws co-existing with the henads, or do we have to admit that there are two alternatives, even contrasting, schemes of transition between henology and ontology in Proclus?

Ambiguity in the treatment of the relation of henads and principles is reflected in the structure of the *Elements of Theology*. The core group of propositions dealing with the primordial principles (87–92), is introduced before the "general" theory of henads (113–59); there are some preliminary propositions of henads that appear earlier (6,62,64). However, discussion of Eternity also concerns the Unlimited as Infinity. Propositions 89 and 90 clearly state the existence of a primal Limit and Unlimited and the principles' primacy over Being. Proposition 159 states that "every order of gods is derived from the two initial principles," Limit and Unlimited. This would signify the primacy of Limit and Unlimited over all henads too, unless this proposition were the last of the "general" henadology and located just at the point where superessential procession turns into ontological one.

In the third book of *Platonic Theology*, on the other hand, general principles of henadology are explained in the first six chapters and the theory of primordial principles in relation to the primal Being is introduced after these in the following three chapters (7–10). This exposition gives primacy to a couple of principles, but at the same time confirms henads as the only mediating entities between the primal One and the primal Being. This result, which at first glance appears paradoxical, is possible because Proclus resolves the question by declaring the pair of principles to be henads.

In *Platonic Theology*, book three, chapter nine (36.10–16) Proclus says:

15. Anne Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen, 1980), 52.

Διὸ δὴ καὶ ὁ Σωκράτης ἐνδεικνύμενος ὅπως ἐξήλλακται τῆς ἀπογεννήσεως ὁ τρόπος ἐπὶ τε τῶν δυεῖν ἀρχῶν καὶ τοῦ μικτοῦ, τὸ μὲν πέρασ καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον δεῖξαι φησι τὸν θεὸν ἑνάδες γὰρ εἰσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑνὸς ὑποστᾶσαι καὶ οἷον ἐκφάνσεις ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμεθέκτου καὶ πρωτίστης ἐνώσεως, τὸ δὲ μικτὸν ποιεῖν καὶ συγκεραννῦναι διὰ τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν.

That is why Socrates, wishing to show how the mode of generation is different in the case of two principles and the case of mixed says that God “has revealed” the Limit and Unlimited (they indeed are henads which come into existence from the One as the manifestations of the imparticipable and first unity), whereas God “makes” the mixed and produces it as mixing through first principles (translation mine).

As far as I know, only a few exegetes of Proclus have paid attention to this most remarkable innovation, among them, of course, Damascius¹⁶ and, among modern scholars, Joseph Combès, Cristina D’Ancona, Gerd van Riel and Edward P. Butler. What is surprising is perhaps that Saffrey and Westerink indicate in their note only the Platonic phrase from *Philebus* (23, 9–10) where Proclus finds grounds for his speculation, but do not comment on Proclus’ view.¹⁷ Saffrey and Westerink do not deal with this specific issue either in their introduction to third part of *Platonic Theology*, otherwise a fundamental essay to the study of henadology.

Among the scholars who have denied the protological principles having the status of the henad, I will mention here only the position of Eduard Zeller. He deals with the question explicitly, representing henadology as a specific Proclean theory to account for the procession of reality from the One and dedicates to the Limit and Unlimited only one, but learned and lengthy footnote. This dividing of the evidence between main text and the note is symptomatic. In effect, he gives the impression that Proclus has two competing theories in the issue and the mode of discussion seems to imply that the protological stuff should be taken as secondary. The reader is left wondering how they are actually integrated to henadology. Zeller comes very close to concluding that we must assume that the Limit and Unlimited are henads, but ultimately he rejects this interpretation. What is important is that first, he does not deal with the Proclean passage which is anomalous to anyone who wants to reject the henadological status of the Limit and Unlimited, second, he overlooks the fact that Limit is introduced later explicitly as a henad in Proclus’ treatment of the articulations of the triads composing the first intelligible triad, thirdly he thinks that because Limit and Unlimited are talked

16. Damascius wonders why “recent philosophers” (οἱ νεώτεροι φιλόσοφοι, meaning Syrianus and Proclus and their followers, Damasc. *De Princ.* 3 109.17 Combès = I 285 Ruelle) in the analysis of the first intelligible triad thought the Limit and the Unlimited to be henads, but rejected this status in the case of the third triad (διὰ τί τὸ μὲν πέρασ ἑνάς, καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον πάλιν ἑνάς ἑτέρα ... τὸ δὲ τρίτον ὁ πατρικὸς νοῦς οὐχὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ἑνάς τρίτη, 3 110.4–6).

17. H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne*, Livre III (Paris, 1978), 123, note 2. Eduard Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen* III.2 (Leipzig, 1923), 854–55.

about on the level of the intelligible gods they cannot be henads. This could not be a sound refutation, because for Proclus, henads are always “henads of something,” coextensive with real entities and the first henads necessarily are brought forth in his discourse dealing with the first noetic beings.

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THE MODERN SCHOLARSHIP REGARDING PROCLUS’ SOLUTION IN *PLATONIC THEOLOGY* (III 9 36)

Let us review briefly what the scholars who have been most sensitive to this issue have to say.

Combès writes:

that according to Proclus, Limit and Unlimited are two primary modal functions of the imparticipable One, i.e., primordial henads, which, produced by the cause of the mixed (the One), are principles of being, which is the first mixed (μικτόν) and the model for all mixings.¹⁸

and a little later that all henads

are, in fact, within the One implicitly, but the first to manifest themselves are Limited and Unlimited, anticipating the whole procession, as the other henads (and there are as many of them as there are different series and functions) manifest themselves only with the first order of intelligible-intellectives, when the first otherness come to split the One-Being into the duality of the One and the substance.

This is a concise and clear description to which I fully subscribe. Combès does not treat the theme further or problematize it, because he is dealing with Proclus only briefly within the limits of his introduction to Damascius’ critique of Proclus.

Cristina D’Ancona¹⁹ is of the opinion that in Proclus we find two incompatible theories explaining how Being emerges from the One. In the first case henads are independent of the couple of the Limit and Unlimited, since they transcend any sort of otherness, being produced from the One “according to the mode of unification” (καθ’ ἐνωσιν). This theory makes henads unities “outside” the One, which forms the area of superessential gods. The second theory subordinates henads to the couple and they are derived from it, being the highest level of intelligible items. In effect, Proclus uses, according to D’Ancona, the word “henad” with two mutually exclusive meanings.

D’Ancona notes and comments on Proclus’ explicit mention of the pro-

18. Joseph Combès, “Proclus et Damascius,” in *Proclus et son influence*, ed. G. Boss and G. Seel (Neuchâtel, 1987), 226–27. My translation.

19. Cristina D’Ancona, “Proclo, Enadi nell’ordine sovrassensibile,” *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 2 (1992): 265–94.

ological principles as henads but she concludes that they cannot be henads (280, translation mine):

If the gods are intelligible henads, they are generated and distinct from the Limit and Unlimited, and the Limit and Unlimited cannot therefore be henads, at least not in the sense of the intelligible. And if the Limit and the Unlimited are henads, then they cannot be them in the same sense as intelligible gods that depend on these principles.

Perhaps one could answer this in the Proclean spirit that since the One and the intelligible henads are causes of the imparticipable Being what else can the first intelligible gods be other than the first Limit and Unlimited? There is also the first unity received from the God before the action of the Limit, which allows the other henads existing here in the secret, and ineffable state of unity to be intelligible gods before the pre-existing characteristics are manifested in a later stage of procession. There are surely also other intelligible gods, such as, for example, the Orphic Phanes, who is manifested in the third intelligible triad and who is the highest god named by mythology in Proclus' system. But are Phanes and other unnamed gods who are like him and might populate the mixtures of the intelligible triad, also self-perfect henads? I think not. And in this case they are not indeed gods in the same sense as the self-perfect henads, but they are gods as bearers of the divine property, that is, gods by participation. Limit is the philosophical name of god which is probably the same thing as the first self-perfect henad, and the first Unlimit is the potency of this god. Proclus does not give any mythological names (like Phanes) for these gods, because they have never been celebrated in a cult according to the Hellenic practice as Proclus understands it.

Gerd van Riel²⁰ tries to reconcile Proclus' postulate of the absolute simplicity of the henads (expressed forcefully in *ET* 127) and statement (made in proposition 159) according to which henads are composed by *peras* and *apeiria*. At least apparent contradiction between these assertions has puzzled Proclus' interpreters since Nicholas of Methone. Van Riel's solution is that henads are a modality of *peras*. Referring to the passage of *Platonic Theology* where protological principles are declared to be henads Van Riel says:

Given this evidence, the argument of Proclus that *peras* and *apeiria* are henads must be taken literally: *peras* is the first henad which includes in itself *apeiria* (as its generative power) without introducing thus differentiation. At lower levels this structure is repeated: $\epsilon\upsilon\nu$ is always a henad, and is present in the triad as a modality of *peras*.²¹

20. Gerd van Riel, "Les hénades de Proclus sont-elles composées de limite et d'illimite?", *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 3 (2001): 417–32.

21. Van Riel, 428. My translation.

Thus an ambiguity in the Elements of Theology is resolved on the basis of reading *Platonic Theology*. For Van Riel *peras* is a participated One, the henad, and *apeiria* its relation (σχέσις) to entities and the δύναμις of the henad. I think that Van Riel's interpretation is basically correct. The only thing left without explanation is why Proclus calls in the fundamental passage both protological principles henads and not a henad and its potency. If we think that a henad is always a composite thing in the sense of being combination of ἔνωσις and pre-existent ontic determination (ἰδιότης) we perhaps could accept that these first henads are principles of pure "oneness" ("one proper in all its purity," 31.10 "totally one in proper sense," 31.13–14) and pure potency (31.19). This kind of compositeness could scandalize only interpreters like the bishop of Methone who are demanding such an absolute simplicity from henads which in effect would efface their difference with the One and thus make vanish the whole possibility of the procession of beings.

Edward P. Butler²² notices that Proclus equates henads with the protological pair in the above mentioned passage, but seems not to be willing to regard Limit and Unlimited as real henads, characterizing them as principles of classification which do not precede the Gods and are the highest of the forms and instruments of the divine illumination of Being. He sees these principles, as he says as being "relevant for us and to us. They arise from an analysis of the nature of the Gods the ground of which is no real composition."²³ Since Butler's reading of Proclus emphasizes the affirmative pluralism of self-perfect henads and their radical individuality, he is inclined, if I have understood him correctly, to render not only the concept of the protological couple of principles but also the One itself as an analytical device for the comprehension of the unity of the Gods. In this view only the divine henads have a real existence; the One exists only as being all of the henads and each of them at the same time as each of the henads is the One. Thus there could not be a henadic series that is similar to the ontic series.

I think that in his justified effort to resist the monotheizing readings of Proclus, which dissolve the reality of the henads as gods into aspects, functions, and attributes of the primal God, he goes too far and effaces the concept of the primal God in Proclus. This surely is not in agreement with the word of Proclus and probably not with Proclus' meaning either.²⁴

22. Edward P. Butler, *The Metaphysics of Polytheism in Proclus*, dissertation, The New School University (New York, 2003).

23. Butler, *Metaphysics*, 391–92.

24. See, for example, among the many passages *Theol. Plat.* III 14.4–9. But Butler is, of course, right when he says that "to posit the One as a 'God beyond the Gods' is in no way consonant with the structure of the henadic multiplicity" (391). Butler's goal is "to restore the doctrine of the henads to its proper place at the center of our understanding of Proclus' metaphysics." Criticizing earlier theories which make "the henads vanishing into the One" (98), Butler perhaps makes

TENSIONS IN *PLATONIC THEOLOGY* BETWEEN REAPPEARING AMBIGUITY AND REAFFIRMATION OF THE SOLUTION IN III 9.36

In fact, this passage (book three, chapter nine [36.10–16]) is the only one where Proclus explicitly calls both of the principles henads. A little later, analyzing primal the Being as mixed, he says (37.21–28):

The mixed, therefore, as we have said, proceed from the prime, and it not only depends upon principles that come after the One, but it proceeds from them too, and it is triadic: first, under the action of God, it receives by participation the unspeakable unity and totality of its existence, from the Limit, it draws its essence and its uniform stability, while from the Unlimited it receives power and the hidden inclusion of all beings in it (translation mine).

The words “not only depends upon” probably refer to the moment of remaining (*μὸνῆ*) in the mixed, in the sense of Proclus’ famous triad of cyclical causation, which is valid on all levels of his system. “Proceeds” means that the mixed is no longer only the same as these causes but has moved outside of them and acquired some difference. The most interesting thing to note here is, however, a reference to the ineffable unity and the action of God. These things are introduced before the Limit. Somehow Proclus is bringing the One itself into play as causing the first imaginable form of unity. I think that for Proclus ineffable unity here is the same thing as the one to which he refers twice in *Platonic Theology* and the Commentary on Parmenides by the intriguing term superunity. This is the place and state of the henads considered unfolded “before” and beyond any manifestations on ontic levels.

In the third place Proclus says (92.20–26):

And if I must state my opinion, I would say that the One Itself is the Limit Itself at same time, in the same manner as the first multiplicity is infinite multiplicity. Indeed, it receives all of the power of the Unlimited, since it produces both all henads and all beings, and its power ceases not to be felt until among the most particular beings, and it is therefore an infinity more total than an infinity of total multiplicity and inapprehensible infinity.

Here the primal One itself is represented as a first Limit, the first Unlimited as a first multiplicity and the potency producing all the henads and beings. Instead of the action of God and the Limit—seen in the previous passages as

the One vanish into the henads. I do not say this as a merely dogmatic criticism, but admitting that Butler’s interpretation could reveal authentic Proclean intention which Proclus’ terminology and perhaps his sticking to the Platonic conception of participation made impossible to formulate more clearly. Actually, Butler goes beyond Proclean reconstruction towards positive construction of a modern polycentric theory of henads as superindividuals. This achievement is an impressive piece of systematic polytheistic theology and as such can conceive Proclus’ intention better than Proclus could express it himself within the framework of Platonist reception and conceptual tools of his time.

an independent actor—their functions are reduced, brought back, or to use a term once much used in Plotinian studies in similar situations, telescoped, to the One itself.

But is this passage a refutation of the status of henads for protological principles? Perhaps only apparently so. If the Limit is One Itself how could it be something other than a henad, because we are surely treating here One in its relation to procession of beings. Thus the henadic condition of *peras* is here affirmed and not rejected. The case with the Unlimited is trickier. Proclus' idea of the specific internal relation between the henads, that they are all in each, could justify, however, a reading that sees implied "others" in Proclus' words "all henads." Limit gives to all other henads and is in them that by which they are comparable to the One and to each other, that is unity. Unlimited gives and is in them that by which they are comparable with each other, that is having the same divine and unitary condition but being different in superindividuality as bearers of the pre-existent, preontic distinctions. We can wonder what this really means, but something like this surely is the late Neoplatonic view. At least Limit must be a henad, otherwise we have two different theories explaining same thing, procession of beings from the One, and this would seriously jeopardize the monistic structure of the Proclean thinking.

However, the mention of primordial principles as henads, is not a casual, singular choice of words. In his description of the first ontic triads in *Platonic Theology* Proclus again, and this time perhaps more coherently, returns to the solution given in *Platonic Theology* III 9 (36.10–16). Comparing the intelligible triads with the intelligible and intellectual triads in the fourth part of *Platonic Theology* (IV (3) 16.17–17.14), Proclus shows how the intelligible triads are composed in the following way: in the first triad we have limited, infinity, and being (first mixed), in the second triad henad, potency and intelligible life, and in the third triad henad, potency and intelligible intellect. Even as Proclus calls the primal component a henad only in the second and third triads and limit in the first, he is equating Limit and the henad in each case, as is proved by the passages dealing with the same metaphysical level in the *Parmenides Commentary*, where he says: "For there is one henad to each intelligible triad; a multiplicity of henads is discernible first in the first rank of the intelligible-and-intellectual."²⁵

On the whole, the mutual relationship between the primordial principles is more balanced in Proclus' *magnum opus* than in the *Elements*. Only αὐτοαπειρία is present in the *Elements*.²⁶ Proclus says that potencies are divided into groups dominated by Limit or Unlimited, but all potencies derive from

25. *In Parm.* VI, 1091.20–24. Translation Morrow and Dillon.

26. *ET* prop. 92, 82.30.

the first Unlimited. Why does there not exist the naturally corresponding proposition that all limitedness is from a primal limit?²⁷ Butler thinks that this dominance of Unlimited-Infinity in the presentation of the *Elements* is accounted for by the works' peculiar emphasis on the cluster of concepts such as power, potency, eternity and so on—in brief, with the concept which from the point of view of *Platonic Theology* belongs to the area of the second intelligible triad.²⁸ The *Elements*' project is the story of causality; the story of the *Platonic Theology* is more comprehensive and deals with the procession of gods and the articulation of divinity in the procession of beings. Let us remember that this articulation is expressed in the analysis of the intelligible triads. In the *Elements* we have, of course, triads, as structural principles, but we do not have specific concept of the intelligible triads as ontic entities. One reason for the lack of them could be that Proclus had not developed the theory of the articulated triads when he was writing the *Elements*. A feasible and more fascinating explanation, and convincing too, at least for me, is that he did not use these concepts, because they were authorized by and derived from the *Chaldaean Oracles*,²⁹ and therefore, as concepts of revelation, were inappropriate for use in discourse on pure rational and intellectual understanding that the *Elements* represents.³⁰

An alternative explanation could put more weight on the diachronic dimension in the development of the theory. Proclus' concept of the primordial principles in the *Elements* could be more akin to the view of his mentor Syrianus.³¹ In the earlier phase part of the Unlimited-Infinity was developed

27. *Theol. Plat.* III, 31.6–8, indeed says so and thus seems to be a more thoroughly thought presentation of the same topic.

28. Butler, *Metaphysics*, 220.

29. "For the intellect of the Father declared that all things be divided in threes," the famous fragment 22 of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which Proclus cites *In Parm.* VI 1091.6 and *In Tim.* III, 243,21. Translation Morrow and Dillon.

30. *The Elements* avoids some terms widely used in *Platonic Theology* (and Proclus' commentaries) which have specific Chaldaean tone. The derived presence of the higher principles is characterized in *ET* as illumination (or radiation), but never σύνθημα, mystical sign of cause. Proclus is not willing to use even less epoptic term symbolon, although in the *Parmenides Commentary* it is used also for authentic philosophical concepts of Plato's theology. *ET* agrees with *PT* that no authentic form of human knowledge, sensation, discursive reason and intellectual intuition, is capable to grasp divine things, but while *PT* (and *Parmenides Commentary*) have many references to the hypernoetic faculties of the human soul, *ET* does not speak about them. Its theory of the possibility of knowledge about the things divine is based on idea that existence of the highest principles could be inferred from their effects at the lower levels (prop. 123). The "flower of the intellect" could be a too revelatory concept for use in *ET* due to the term's origins in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, even if Proclus' theory of the hypernoetic devices is based as well on Plotinian views.

31. Besides Sheppard Concetta Luna has studied Proclus' relationship to Syrianus concerning the doctrine of the protological principles, see her "La Doctrine des principes: Syrianus comme source textuelle et doctrinale de Proclus 2e partie: analyse des textes," in *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne*, ed. A.Ph. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven, 2000), 190–227.

more, because the Limit of the superessential level was still closely tied to the One itself. We have seen an echo of this theory in one of the passages of Proclus cited above. *Platonic Theology*, however, testifies to a shift from this older theory to a more precise and novel view in the mature thought of Proclus. One of the utterances expressing his growing precision in this area emerges from Proclus' criticism of the Plotinian concept of intelligible matter. "For Unlimited is not the matter of Limit, but the power of it, nor is Limit the form of the Unlimited, but the (mode of) existence of it. But Being consists of both these, as not only standing in the One, but receiving a multitude of henads and powers which are mingled into one essence."³²

CONCLUSION

Proclus' henadological theory is expressed in somewhat different ways in the two works which have titles referring to theology. The ambiguities of the shorter work are, to some extent, solved in the longer. The crucial modifications of his views on protology and the doctrine of henads could be explained on the diachronic level as a movement from a theory dependent on Syrianus to a view which is that of Proclus in his old age. Alternatively, they can be explained from the point of view of the different designs and aims of the two Theologies. The final dispelling of the ambiguities seems not to be possible, remaining inside the area of evidence of the *Elements* and the *Platonic Theology*, but we are always compelled to seek further light from the *Commentary on Parmenides*. One difference between Theologies' versions of henadology seems to be undeniable: *ET* has not definite answer to problem of henads and protological principles, *PT* hardly could leave doubt on the fact that at least Limit is a henad according to Proclus.

From these works as a whole a general representation of procession emerges, in which the ineffable unity of henads is seen as a pool of pre-existing properties for beings. Unlimited picks up all of them, triggering a continuous loop of production, but Limit measures this process, setting determinate breaks at certain points, and thus the interplay of the principles forms definite patterns of existence. As Limit measures Unlimited there remain indeterminate potencies after each breakpoint and the procession meets these as its matter for the next loop of the unfolding of existences. This cycle goes on so far that all the pre-existing characteristics are actualized in the ontic domain as a form of mixing, totalities of essences, but even after the last loop there remains ultimate indefiniteness, pure matter or the lower end of all, without impression or illumination of any particular henad, opposed to the ineffable unity—but even it is caused by the One.

32. *Theol. Plat.* III 40.4–8. Butler's translation modified.

APHRODITE IN PROCLUS' THEOLOGY

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Abstract: The outlines of Proclus' metaphysical system are fairly well known. However, the role of the particular deities in this structure is not thoroughly examined. This article deals with the place of Aphrodite within Proclus' theology. Aphrodite has a prominent place in Proclus' thought because devotion to her had long been under moralistic attack and Proclus carried out his defence in the context of Christian intolerance. With Neoplatonic theories of the divine series and henadology Proclus can determine different modes of the Aphrodisiac presence at all levels of reality. The tales which speak about the goddess and the meaning of the rituals dedicated to her are properly interpreted according to Proclus as symbols revealing and adoring the immaculate holiness of life.

Introduction

“The God is one, the gods are many”.¹ These words of Proclus (412-485) sound like an answer directed, two hundred years in advance, at Muhammad, the prophet of consistent monotheism. Proclus' thought is a powerful synthesis of coherent philosophical monism with polytheistic theology. Anyone who ignores him would lose important evidence about how ancient religion was reflected by one of its systematically thinking insiders. Proclus' achievement can be seen as a highly sophisticated formulation of the genuine self-understanding of a threatened, but living religion.

“This is how Aphrodite is revealed; as the most uniform and purest life”,² is what Proclus ultimately tells us about Aphrodite. Has he turned the sweet goddess of Homer into an abstract concept of obscure metaphysics? Definitely not. If one has the patience to listen to what Proclus has to say, one will be surprised to find

¹ Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*. 3.14, 4, ed. Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, Proclus. *Théologie platonicienne*, vols. 1-6 (Paris, 1968-1997).

² *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria* 183, 53, ed. Giorgio Pasquali (Leipzig, 1908).

many notions similar to those that modern research has discovered. Aphrodite is not primarily a goddess of tender love, she is much more. In the first place she is a goddess of reproduction and sexual desires. For ancient worshippers she was not a person to be adored, but a manifestation of a force inherent in the world. All these themes are present in the Proclean theology of Aphrodite. What is peculiar to Proclus is that he tied these issues together within a Neoplatonic interpretative context composed of the doctrines of divine series and henadology, the theory of the unfolding One.

This essay aims at reconstructing the outlines of Proclus' theology of Aphrodite. First I will address a number of passages concerning Aphrodite in Proclus' works, their role, and how this evidence should be approached. Second, I will deal with the historical context of Proclus' intellectual endeavour, his concept of divinity and his theory of the classes of the gods to the extent necessary for the specific topic of this study. Lastly, the material will be laid out in the order suggested by Proclus' theory of divine hierarchy beginning from below, with Aphrodite as a terrestrial demon and proceeding to the goddess' higher manifestations, and the interpretation of her as a hypercosmic deity.

The sources of the theology of Aphrodite in Proclus

We do not have any systematic treatise by Proclus on Aphrodite, although he seems to have had the intention of writing one. In the preface to his main work, *Platonic Theology*, he promises to give an exposition of Plato's general theory of the gods, an enumeration of all the classes of the gods and then to discuss particular divinities celebrated in the passages of Plato's writings.³ The last part does not exist in extant form in the *Platonic Theology*. Nor is the penultimate section written according to the prescribed design, as the work ends abruptly with the discussion of the hypercosmic-encosmic order of gods. All attempts to reconstruct the Proclean theory of the cosmic and sublunar deities are therefore based on this fragmentary evidence and other works.⁴

The closest one comes to a Proclean work on Aphrodite is the fifteenth treatise of the *Commentary on the Republic*, where Proclus interprets the famous love affair between Aphrodite and Ares. In Chapter 183, of his *Commentary on the Cratylus*, he also deals with the etymology of the goddess' name. In the first case the larger context is the problem of poetry as a mode for the expression of the divine truth and a parallel to the Platonic philosophy and in the latter case in the theory of language and the accuracy of names. In the case of Aphrodite, Proclus develops his views especially through the exegesis of Orphism and of Homer. In Proclus' view these sources are complementary: Orpheus relates mainly the goddess' higher forms,

³ *Theol. Plat.* 1.9, 8-19.

⁴ I will, however, exclude from consideration the *Chrestomathy* for its dubious authorship and also the *Hypotyposis* which could be regarded as a purely astronomical work.

while Homer deals with her primarily as a cosmic deity. Proclus' hymns offer examples of what gifts should be asked for from the individual divinities. These hymns are composed according to a stable pattern; they begin with an invocation, then enumerate attributes and powers of the god being appealed to, and at the end request something that is appropriate to this deity.⁵ Two of the surviving hymns of Proclus are dedicated to Aphrodite. The first hymn celebrates the whole "foam-born" series, beginning from the goddess of the cosmic level and praising her as the mother of the different *Erotes* (ἔρωτοτόκος, Love-bearer).⁶ The second hymn worships her as a Lycian goddess, referring to Proclus' native country. In both of these hymns Proclus asks Aphrodite for freedom from unholy, earth-bound desires.

The historical and theoretical context of Proclean theology of Aphrodite

Proclus was committed to defending traditional religion, whose living space was gradually restricted, as Christianity strengthened its hold as the official ideology of the Early Byzantine state. In his time Neoplatonist philosophy had to act not only in the role of the theoretical defender of the polytheistic cults but also as a substitute for them.⁷ Proclus regarded the "great confusion" in religion (his euphemism for the situation which resulted in the dominance of Christianity) as destined to fade away, although not in the foreseeable future.⁸

This context explains why the "correct" Platonic interpretation of myths was so important to him. Proclus thought that any interpretation of the gods that remained on the surface level, where gods were depicted as active anthropomorphic beings and their doings appeared morally questionable, would undermine the foundations of true religion and provide the Christians with weapons to attack it.⁹ His radical

⁵ M. L. West, "The Eighth Homeric Hymn and Proclus," *The Classical Quarterly* 20 (1970), pp. 300-304; H. D. Saffrey, "From Iamblichus to Proclus," in Arthur Hilary Armstrong (ed.) *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality* (London, 1986), pp. 250-65.

⁶ *Procli hymni*. 2, 11, 13, ed. Ernst Vogt (Wiesbaden, 1957). It would be tempting to think that with this epithet Proclus is intentionally echoing and developing a parallel to the evolving Christian doctrine of Mary.

⁷ Proclus explicitly says so in praising his teacher Syrianus, in Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* 618, 9-13, ed. Victor Cousin, vol. 3, (Paris, 1864, repr. Hildesheim, 1961).

⁸ *In Remp* 1, 74,8-9: ... τὴν παροῦσαν ... δεινὴν καὶ ἄτακτον σύγχυσιν τῶν ἱερῶν θεσμῶν (horrible disorder in religion under present conditions). The same word with the same intention is used also *In Parm.* 954,1-2 and Proclus, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. Ernst Diehl (Leipzig, 1903-1906) 3.44, 6. See the list of the expressions referring to Christianity in the works of Proclus and Marinus in Saffrey, "Allusions anti-chrétiennes chez Proclus, le diadoque platonicien," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 59 (1975), pp. 553-63.

⁹ Possibly the reference to οἱ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωποι (men of our time) *In Remp.* 1.74, 4, as people who attribute this responsibility to the ancient myths, does not mean Christians as André-Jean Festugière thought, (in Proclus, *Commentaire sur la République I* (Paris, 1970), p. 92, n. 1). It may rather refer to pagan intellectuals, who were seeking causes for the ascendancy of the new religion,

thesis was that myth, which is most incompatible with conventional notions of justice and decency could refer through symbols to the highest divine principles. With the help of proper exegesis one can ascend from the scandalous layer of mythology, find hidden truths and forge a genuinely pure cult of the gods.¹⁰

Proclus, for whom the ideal philosopher should be “a hierophant of the whole world”,¹¹ tries to find a place for different modes of seeing divinity within a framework built on a Neoplatonic view on reality articulated in levels, grades, and degrees.

Science of divine unities as a basis of piety

Neoplatonism identifies theology with henology, the doctrine of the One. The One is good and the Good is the God. Divinity is the same thing as unity, unification means deification, and divinity is the guarantor, origin and source of essence for all being.¹² In the strict sense the gods are for Proclus only the One and its participated classes in the primal being; these are the so-called “self-perfect henads (unities)”.¹³ Unity is present on all levels of reality, however, down to the edge of

and against whose opinion Proclus wanted to rehabilitate mythology with allegorical and symbolic exegesis.

¹⁰ Regarding the theological myths in Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus see the sixth treatises in *In remp.*, especially 82,21-83,7 and *Theol. Plat.* 5.17,10-18,28, especially 5.17,25-18.1: Πάντα γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα τοὺς μὲν πολλοὺς καὶ ἀνοήτους οἴεται δι’ ἄγνοιαν τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀπορρήτων διαβάλλεσθαι, τοῖς δὲ σοφοῖς ἐνδείκνυσθαι τινὰς ὑπονοίας θαυμαστάς. (“He (Plato) believes that all (myths) of this kind deceive the ignorant multitude incapable to grasp secrets in them, while they suggest to wise people admirable hidden meanings.”) In the scholarly literature these issues are well discussed by e.g. Jean Trouillard, *La Mystagogie de Proclus* (Paris, 1982). On the Proclean interpretation of mythology see, for example, James A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm* (Leiden, 1976); Anne D.R. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus’ Commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen, 1980); Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley, 1986); Oiva Kuisma, *Proclus’ Defence of Homer* (Helsinki, 1996). Important contributions which also deal with, among other themes, the problem of Aphrodite in Proclus are Michael Erler, “Interpretieren als Gottesdienst,” in Gilbert Boss and Gerhard Seel, *Proclus et son influence* (Zürich, 1987), pp. 180-217; Robbert M. van den Berg *Proclus’ Hymns* (Leiden, 2001); and Robbert M. van den Berg *Proclus’ Commentary on the Cratylus in Context* (Leiden, 2008).

¹¹ Marinus, *Vita Procli sive de felicitate* 19, ed. R. Masullo (Naples, 1985).

¹² *Theol. Plat.* 1.114, 5-116,3 *Theol. Plat.* 1.119,9-14, *In Parm.* 641,11: τὸ ἡνωῶσθαι τῷ τεθεῶσθαι ταῦτόν (unifying is the same as deifying), *In Parm.* 1068,6-8: καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν ἢ τὸ μετεχόμενον ἓν (each of the gods is nothing more than participated one), *In Parm.* 1096,28-29: ταῦτόν τὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεός, καὶ οὐ τις ἐκεῖνο θεός, ἀλλ’ αὐτοθεός (one itself is the same as god, and it is not any of the gods, but the God itself).

¹³ Pursuing absolute purity of transcendence in the first principle, Proclus posits the absolutely imparticipable One and a derived class of the primordial unities (henads) which open themselves for participation by beings. Independent henads are supraessential unities participated in by the root members (imparticipable monads) of the ontological series (such as chains of beings, lives, intellects, and souls). The derived henads presents unity in the secondary members of these classes of being (from a participated monad to the last member of the respective class) and also in the

pure matter, and in this sense the Neoplatonists accept the Presocratic dictum that everything is full of gods.¹⁴ The gods of Olympus find their place in the Proclean hierarchy far below the self-perfected henads, but even they, Aphrodite among them, are certain manifestations of unity.

Thus the same divinity known by a certain mythological name could be present and is necessarily present on different levels of reality.¹⁵ Modern research on the Neoplatonist hierarchy of the gods has located Plato's lower Aphrodite on the level of hypercosmic-encosmic gods. Luc Brisson, for example, finds her exactly in the second term of the fourth triad of the dodecad formed by the hypercosmic-encosmic deities.¹⁶ It is more difficult to situate the first Aphrodite however.¹⁷

At every level the task of the gods *qua* gods is to generate, to produce and to exercise providence towards the universe.¹⁸ Human beings interact with this providential activity through religious cult and prayer. For Proclus ideal prayer presupposes precise knowledge of all the classes of gods.¹⁹ We can see a model of this kind of prayer in the prefaces of Proclus' main works, which Proclus habitually opens with a prayer. At the beginning of the *Commentary on Parmenides* he asks for appropriate help from each divine class for the reception of the mystical vision of Plato.²⁰ However, to understand this correctly: The One and the highest henads are not receivers of prayers linked with human language. These highest divinities should be worshiped only transcending intellect in silence and by the unification prior to silence.²¹

things of the world of becoming, mediating for them the illumination of oneness. The supraessential henads are the gods, whereas the illumination of oneness is a god in each thing and the highest summit of its existence. This theory is exposed in Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. Eric R. Dodds (Oxford, 1963), propositions 2, 6, 64, and 113-162 and the third book of *Platonic Theology*. For modern research on the topic see especially the first chapter in the introduction to the latter work, Saffrey and Westerink, *Théologie platonicienne* 3 (Paris, 1978), pp. ix-lxxxvii; Christian Guérard, "La théorie des hénades et la mystique de Proclus," *Dionysius* 6 (1982) 73-82, and P.A. Meijer, "Participation in henads and monads in Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* III, chs. 1-6," in E.P. Bos and P. A. Meijer, *On Proclus and His Influence in Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 65-88.

¹⁴ Proclus refers explicitly to this dictum in *De sacrificio et magia* 149, 26 ed. Joseph. Bidez, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs* 6 (Brussels, 1928).

¹⁵ For clear example of how to understand different stages of the series (here the series of Apollo) see *In Remp.* 1.147,6-15.

¹⁶ Luc Brisson, "Proclus et l'Orphisme," in his *Orphée et l'Orphisme dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine* (Aldershot, 1995), p. V.86 and *How Philosophers Saved Myths* (Chicago, 2004), p. 98.

¹⁷ I will not try to expound here the whole structure of Proclus' divine world. Relevant levels for the location of Aphrodite can be seen in the appended table. For a more synoptic view see the appendices in Brian Duvick, *Proclus, On Plato Cratylus* (London, 2007), pp. 173-75, and Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Paris, 1978), pp. 483-85.

¹⁸ *Theol. Plat.* 5.108, 3, *ET* prop. 120.

¹⁹ *In Tim.* 1.209,9-11.

²⁰ Proclus, *In Parm.* 617. Both the *In Parm.* and *Theol. Plat.* begins with a prayer to the gods and praising Proclus' teacher Syrianus.

²¹ *Theol. Plat.* 3.30,4-8.

Demonic Aphrodite

In his *Commentary on the Republic* Proclus gives an exegesis of the Judgment of Paris.²² He uses the alternative mythological name for Paris, Alexander, and sometimes speaks only of the “barbarian”. His interpretation has both a demonological and psychological interest. In his view the sheer idea of a real quarrel between the goddesses is monstrous and should be rejected. There has never been a verdict of a mortal barbarian on the goddesses. His explanation for the human perceptions of divine visions is that they concern lower links in the divine chains and that the gods reveal themselves to the soul’s internal faculty of fantasy, which has its material part in the so-called pneumatic vehicle of the soul.²³ Denying the historicity of Paris’ judgment Proclus in this particular case avoids taking a stance concerning the reality of divine epiphanies. As far as he is concerned the mythologists have here represented relationships outside space and time as an event in mythological history.

The core of Paris’ story in Proclus is psychological. Proclus’ exegesis is based on the doctrine of the modes of the soul’s life as found in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. When coming into the world souls choose, under divine supervision, a form of life that corresponds to their dispositions. A kingly life is dependent on Hera, a philosophical one on Zeus (represented by Athena in the tale of Paris), a loving one on Aphrodite.

Proclus’ description of Paris’ choice is typically Platonist: A blind soul cannot recognize its own good. Paris’ choice therefore is “careless, a throwing of oneself on sensible beauty and pursuing the idol of intelligible beauty.”²⁴ If he had been in Paris’ position, Proclus would of course have given the prize to Athena. This would have been the philosopher’s solution and especially appropriate to Proclus who has a special relation to this goddess.²⁵

In Remp. 1. 108, 23-109, 1: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὄντως ἐρωτικὸς νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν προσησάμενος καὶ μετὰ τούτων τό τε ἀληθινὸν κάλλος καὶ τὸ φαινόμενον θεωρῶν οὐχ ἥσσόν ἐστιν Ἀθηναϊκὸς ἢ Ἀφροδισιακός· ὁ δὲ αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ μόνον τὸ ἐρωτικὸν εἶδος ἐπιδιώκων μετὰ πάθους ἀφίσταται μὲν τῶν ἀληθινῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν, ὑπὸ δὲ ἀνοίας καὶ λαιμαργίας ἐπιπηδᾷ τῷ εἰδώλῳ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ περὶ τοῦτο κείται πεσῶν, οὐδὲ τῆς τῷ ἐρωτικῷ συμμέτρου τελειότητος τυχῶν.

An authentic eroticism, with has taken understanding and wisdom to be its guides, and can distinguish with aid of these between real and apparent beauty, does not belong less to Athena than Aphrodite ... But he who pursues exclusively and passionately only the life of love draws himself away from the really beautiful and

²² *In Remp.* 1.108, 1-109, 7.

²³ For the theory of epiphany see *In Remp.* 1. 39, 1-40, 3.

²⁴ *In Remp.* 1. 108, 20-22.

²⁵ Marinus tells us that Athena moved to live with Proclus after her statue was removed from the Parthenon, Marinus, *Vita Procli* 30, see also 6, 9, 15, and 29.

good, and with the desire and trust of the glutton grasps at the idol of beauty and remains joined to the fall without accessing the perfection appropriate to the real eroticism (translation mine).

Proclus does not condemn the pursuit of earthly love as such. Neither should his thoughts regarding the contrast between the goddesses be interpreted in a manner that would equate Aphrodite with an amorous life driven by passion. But the goddess is not only these aspects, especially contemplated as a leading deity in her own divine series. The real erotic summit belongs to Aphrodite:

In Remp. 1. 109, 1-3: ὁ γὰρ δὴ τελέως ἐρωτικός καὶ Ἀφροδίτη μέλων ἐπ’ αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον κάλλος ἀνάγεται τῶν ἐν αἰσθήσει καλῶν ὑπερορῶν.

...because a perfectly erotic being, who is taken care of by Aphrodite, ascends towards divine beauty itself, despising the beautiful things on the level of the sensible (translation mine).

Proclus thus links Aphrodite with the authentic erotic madness which functions as a springboard for the soul's purification.²⁶ However, Aphrodite's series also provides for those beauties that are perceptible on the corporeal and material levels.

In Remp. 1.109,3-7.: ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἐμφανοῦς κάλλους καὶ τοῦ ἐν ὕλῃ τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχοντος εἰσὶ τινες Ἀφροδισιακοὶ προστάται δαίμονες, διὰ δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ τὸ εἶδωλον περιέπων συνεργοῦ λέγεται τῆς Ἀφροδίτης τυγχάνειν

At the same time there exists certain aphrodisiac demons who supervise apparent beauty and that which is seen in matter and, because of that, it is said that such a person who respects an idol has gained the help of Aphrodite (translation mine).

In the *Commentary on the Republic* Proclus discusses divine possession in connection with Aphrodite.²⁷ He cites with evident approval the argument of his predecessor, the Neoplatonist Theodore of Asine, that divine possession could also happen to women. Theodore's example is Helen of Sparta. Aphrodite filled Helen with graces regarding her soul and body to such an extent that Helen was born to be like a new Aphrodite, who coming from the sky, cheated the barbarian (i.e., Paris) into thinking that he possessed something that he did not in reality. Helen with whom Paris lived was not real but some kind of idol. The Egyptians among whom Helen lived taking part in the holy rituals have kept in their memory an authentic image of Helen, but among the Greeks "men of the theater" slandered

²⁶ On this salvific role of love see also, for example, *De sacrificio et magia* 148, 1-3; *Theol. Plat.* 1.113,4-10.

²⁷ *In Remp.* 1 254,29-255,28.

her with stories that have no true basis. Proclus does not openly express himself in favour of Helen's holiness. The context in which he discusses the question is the traditional Platonist defence of the identity of the virtues of men and women. The story narrated by the philosopher of Asine offers one argument more to Proclus in this task. However it is clear that Proclus' resorting to this argument shows that he believed in the possibility of real divine possession.

In the *Commentary on the Cratylus*²⁸ Proclus expresses precise opinions on the theory of divine series, how demons acting in the material world should be seen as the extremities of these divine series. In his view terrestrial spirits and particular demons participate in the divine demiurgy as co-producers of beings of the sensible world. The myth-makers use the same names to refer both to the leaders of the series and to the lower spirits. Proclus thinks that the very last members of the divine series can in fact have intercourse with humans and thus generate heroes. This is not surprising as the lowest demons are sympathetic not only to humans, but also to other species of living beings, and this is why we have cases of nymphs joining to trees, wells, deer and snakes.

Proclus connects the question about the relation between Aphrodite and Eros to the relations of the (celestial) gods and demons. He reminds us that Plato calls Eros a demon in the *Symposium*, saying that he is a companion of Aphrodite, and originates from Poros, who is a real god, whereas in the *Phaedrus* Plato calls Eros himself a god, because he is an uplifting life force.²⁹ Thus the case of Eros also shows that the demons are companions and followers of the gods. But this is not the whole truth of the relationship between Eros and Aphrodite, as we will see in the treatment of the gods on the higher levels of the hierarchy.

Cosmic Aphrodite

Proclus' consideration of Aphrodite as a cosmic deity includes purely astronomical issues, but also such which are relevant for theology. Aphrodite and Hermes are sunny stars, because they help the Sun in its creative action and collaborate with it in order for all things to fulfil their destiny. As a cosmic monad the Sun is "miraculous, unsurpassable, a disproportionate power in itself and with all others."³⁰ We see here the Sun's relation to the visible world matching the relation of the demiurge to the cosmos, and this again mirrors the relation of the One to reality. Aphrodite and Hermes present themselves as inseparable companions of Helios in the cosmic demiurgy. They set their own movement in harmony with the creative act of this star. They bring proportion and symmetry and a happy mixing to all things.³¹ Aphrodite and Hermes depart and approach the Sun as his bodyguards.³²

²⁸ *In Crat.* 118,1-26.

²⁹ *In Tim.* 3.154,27-30.

³⁰ *In Tim.* 3. 65,30-66,2.

³¹ *In Tim.* 3.66,2-5.

Both Hermes and Aphrodite are unifying principles in the world according to Proclus, Hermes “takes part in the making of the daily and nightly phenomena and masculinizes and feminizes itself,” while Aphrodite participates in the creative acts of the solar monad “for she has the ability to bind and adjust that which has been separated.”³³

Proclus says that Aphrodite unifies and leads Hermes’ and Helios’ actions to a communion, and gives harmony to that which is in the one careless (ἀνειμένην) and in the other stretched (ἐπιτεταμένην), whatever these qualities may mean for Hermes’ and Helios’ demiurgy.³⁴ Proclus describes Sun’s celestial companions as a cosmic image of the noetic triad:

In Tim. 3.66,13-24: καὶ μήποτε ... ταῖς πρώταις τρισὶ μονάσι ταῖς ἐν προθύροις τὰγαθοῦ προῆλθον ἀνά λόγον ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἥλιος, ὡς ἐμάθομεν ἐν Πολιτείᾳ, τῆς ἀληθείας εἰκόνα τὸ φῶς ὑπέστησεν, ἡ δὲ Ἀφροδίτη κάλλους ἐστὶν αἰτία τοῖς γενητοῖς, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐκείνου μίμημα τοῦ κάλλους, ὁ δὲ Ἑρμῆς συμμετρίας πᾶσιν αἴτιος λόγος ὧν τοῖς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν πᾶσα γὰρ συμμετρία καθ’ ἓνα πρόεισι λόγον καὶ κατ’ ἀριθμόν, ὧν ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς οὗτος δοτήρ. ἐκείνων οὖν τῶν μονάδων ὄντες ἀνά λόγον μετ’ ἀλλήλων οὐσῶν εἰκότως καὶ αὐτοὶ συνεῖναι ἀλλήλοις ἐφίενται καὶ συμπεριπολεῖν.

Perhaps these stars have appeared into the cosmos in analogy with the first three monads ... these monads we find at the vestibule of the good (a reference is to Plato’s *Philebus* 64c).³⁵ And indeed, as we have learned from the *Republic* (VI 508b12) the sun produces the light as a likeness of truth, and Aphrodite is the cause of beauty for the beings in cosmos and the copy of the beautiful beings in the noetic triad. Calculating Hermes is the cause of proportion for all beings in the world of becoming ... Like the sun, Aphrodite and Hermes are also analogous to these mutually unified monads and because of this they also want with justice to come together and create their cycle in concert (translation mine).

Since Proclus returns to the analogy of the cosmic world and intelligible triads in other passages,³⁶ it is clear that the correspondence is not for him a casual result of exegetic zeal.

In this same place in the *Commentary on the Timaeus*,³⁷ where the main issue to be dealt with is the world’s body, Proclus explains that the planetary deities are

³² *In Remp.* 2.59,1.

³³ *In Tim.* 3.65,5-8. Aphrodite was represented in some statues also with beard; cf. William Sale, “Aphrodite in the Theogony,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 92 (1961), pp. 508-521. Proclus associates hermaphroditic traits only to Hermes.

³⁴ *In Tim.* 3. 67.

³⁵ It is not quite obvious where Proclus situates the vestibule of the Good. On the grounds of similarities in this passages and *Theol.Plat.* 3.64,8-12 I am inclined to think that he means the last term of the noetic triad which is characterized by the monads of symmetry, truth and beauty.

³⁶ *In Tim.* 3.69, 5-69, 14.

³⁷ *In Tim.* 3.69,15-27.

the causes of the passionate and cognitive powers of humans as far as the subject of consideration is the composite of body and soul and the soul's two lower, i. e. irrational, parts (the powers of the rational soul naturally depend on a higher place in the divine hierarchy). The moon, "the visible image of the source of nature," is the cause of physical growth, the sun produces the totality of the sensations, and Hermes is the cause of the movements of the imagination (of the movements only, Proclus specifies, since "the cause of the fantastic faculty as such is Helios, since sensation and imagination form the same faculty"). Aphrodite produces the lustful desires of the lower irrational soul, Ares the movements of anger, depending on nature. Zeus produces vital powers universally, and Cronus, in the same manner, cognitive powers.

The task of the planetary gods is to join the age period of the human being to the seven divine series. Proclus gives his most detailed description of this issue in his *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*,³⁸ in a manner which corresponds, albeit with some strain, to the theory just outlined. "The third (period) is that which belongs to the series of Aphrodite as boys begin to produce sperm and set in motion the natural powers of child-making". The role of Helios in this picture forces Proclus actually to identify the noon of life with the life epoch of a young man, and the agreement with the previously-mentioned theory in the *Commentary on the Timaeus* is not altogether successful, but unsurprising as far as the exegesis regards Aphrodite.

Once more in the *Commentary on the Timaeus* Proclus returns to the question of Aphrodite and the desiring soul when he starts to deal with the structure of the human body.³⁹ This anatomical exegesis does not advance very far, because the manuscripts break off here. Proclus sets the planetary gods in connection with the human faculties referring to what "someone has said". This expression implies perhaps a slightly reserved attitude to the theory that is expounded. The most interesting trait in this passage is that Proclus places Hermes as a discursive faculty between the *thymos* of Ares and the *epithymetikon* of Aphrodite. And how indeed could he do otherwise, seeing that he has to treat the divinities in their natural, planetary, order, going this time from top to bottom, from the sphere of the fixed stars to the level of the moon? He then continues establishing a correspondence between our pneumatic body with the sky and our mortal body with the sublunar world. But neither does this passage have anything surprising to say about Aphrodite.

With respect to the theory of the body of the world, Proclus rejects the doctrine of correspondences between divinities and elements.⁴⁰ In this doctrine, which is Pythagorean according to Proclus, the element of Aphrodite is air. Proclus says that the Pythagoreans have the correct opinions insofar as they regard Aphrodite and Hermes as gathering and unifying divinities. Their doctrine of the elements

³⁸ Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem* 1.196.2-19 ed. Alain Philippe Segonds, *Proclus. Sur le premier Alcibade de Platon* (Paris, 1985-1986).

³⁹ *In Tim.* 3.354,29-355,20.

⁴⁰ *In Tim.* 2.48,15-49, 12.

differs from the Platonic, which sees all elements as present in each planetary sphere in the same way as the sublunar elements participate in each other.

When it comes to dedicating seasons to divinities, Proclus accepts this theory.⁴¹ Cronus and Ares, winter and summer, form an opposite pair, while Zeus and Aphrodite, spring and autumn, form another. The connection between Aphrodite and autumn is easy to understand: "... autumn belongs to Aphrodite," Proclus says, "because during this season seed is thrown to earth and the task of Aphrodite is to mix fertile germs and lead them to communion with the cause of becoming."

Proclus sees Aphrodite as a demiurgic power that brings into harmony and unification the masculine and feminine, ideal forms and matter in cosmos.⁴² This is why he also interprets the office for the supervising public marriages in Plato's treatment of the ideal state as being analogous to Aphrodite.

A final Aphrodisiac item of the cosmos belongs to the area of astrology. Each star has special mutual positions which are dangerous to the development of the embryo. If Aphrodite has been in this adverse position during the conception, this destroys the seed at the 120th day of pregnancy. Proclus does not say if he held this opinion, he states it as a rule of the Egyptians.⁴³

Aphrodite as a hypercosmic-encosmic deity

On the next level up, the hypercosmic-encosmic order, Proclus posits a divine dodecad which corresponds to the twelve gods of the *Phaedrus*.

Theol. Plat. 6.85,6-12: Τοὺς τοίνυν ἀπολύτους πάντας θεοὺς ἀπερίληπτον ἔχοντας πλῆθος καὶ ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις ἐπιβολαῖς ἀναρίθμητον, ἐνταῦθα κατὰ τὸ τῆς δωδεκάδος μέτρον ἀφορίζει. Καίτοι γε οὔτε τῶν θεολόγων ὅσοι τι περὶ αὐτῶν γεγράφασιν ὀρίσαι δεδύνηγται τὸν ὅλον αὐτῶν ἀριθμόν, ὡσπερ τὸ ἀρχικὸν πλῆθος ἢ τὸ τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν ἢ τὸ τῶν νοητῶν·

The plurality of these deities is incomprehensible and impossible to enumerate for human intuition but inspired Plato defines them in *Phaedrus*' vision with the model of a dodecad. None of the theologians, who have written something about them, has been able to define the perfect number of these divinities, as opposed to that plurality which relate to the primordial principles, noeric gods, and noetic gods (translation mine).

With these previous gods Proclus probably means the first henads derived from the One — the limit and the infinite — and the noetic and noetic-noeric triads

⁴¹ *In Remp.* 2.62,6-18.

⁴² *In Tim.* 1.34,15-17.

⁴³ *In Remp.* 2.58, 20. See Festugière's note in Proclus. *Commentaire sur la République 2* (Paris, 1970), p. 167 n. 1.

mentioned above. Proclus believes that for Plato the number twelve is appropriate to these divinities, which are called “unchained”, because the dodecad is wholly perfect, being composed of primordial principles and the most perfect ingredients and covering the entire procession of being with its measure.⁴⁴ This obscure manner of expression refers to the fact that twelve is the result of the multiplication of three by four, the triad being the structure of conversion and perfection and the tetrad the structure of stability and harmony.

Thus twelve divinities are divided into four triads, of which we are interested here only in the properties of the last “uplifting” triad (Hermes, Aphrodite, and Apollo) and the last members of the immediately preceding triads, in other words the gods Hephaestos and Ares, because of the obvious mythological importance of these gods for Aphrodite. Hephaestos’ function is to install “nature in bodies and construct the abodes of the cosmic gods.”⁴⁵

The most universal and first species of life originate in the second and third terms of the uplifting triad (Aphrodite and Apollo) together with the last term of the previous triad (Ares). Souls are installed into their modes of life according to these divinities when they descend to the cosmos.

Souls ascend through the same triad. Philosophy (Hermes), love (Aphrodite), and the cult of the gods (Apollon) recuperate all that was lost in the process of becoming. Aphrodite acts as a primordial cause of loving inspiration, which permeates universally all things and orientates uplifted lives towards primal Beauty (third triad of the first intelligible triad).⁴⁶

This view of the souls’ road to salvation is at first glance in accordance with the famous passage of the *Platonic Theology* often cited as a Proclean “definition” of theurgy.⁴⁷ The highest path of ascent there links the theurgic power, faith and the good, the second salvific channel goes from philosophy through truth to wisdom, and the third from the erotic madness through love to beauty. Hermes and Apollo do not always seem to occupy the same position in the works of Proclus but Aphrodite is similar in both the first and the sixth part of the *Platonic Theology*.

The fifteenth treatise of Proclus’ *Commentary on the Republic*⁴⁸ is dedicated to the relation of Aphrodite, Ares, and Hephaestos, inquiring into the role of these divinities in cosmogony from the hypercosmic to the sensible order.

Proclus says that Hephaestos and Ares are both acting “towards” the whole of reality. Ares separates the opposing principles of wholeness and saves them as immutable and intact in order that the world should always be fulfilled by all forms. In accordance with his art Hephaestos creates the perceptible world order and fills nature with generative principles and forces. The symbols of these are the celestial tripods mentioned in the *Iliad* (18, 373). The brooches, spiral armlets, cups, and

⁴⁴ Treatise on the twelve gods, *Theol. Plat.* 6.97,1-99, 21.

⁴⁵ *Theol. Plat.* 6.97,16-17.

⁴⁶ *Theol. Plat.* 6.98, 18-21.

⁴⁷ *Theol. Plat.* 1.113,4-10.

⁴⁸ *In Remp.* 1.141,1-143,16.

chains mentioned a little bit later in the same song are, for Proclus, symbols of the forms of the sublunar world, which Hephaestus casts.

Both gods need Aphrodite for their deeds, one to bring harmony and order to opposites, the other to bring perceptible beauty and shining clarity to his creation so that this world could be made into the most beautiful of sensible things.

Aphrodite is present everywhere but Hephaestus “participates” to her in the mode of the higher realities. We find in this exegesis four different levels of demiurgy. There are two pairs: where Hephaestus manifests the higher and Ares the lower demiurgy. Hephaestus mode of participation in Aphrodite is hypercosmic and celestial, that of Ares encosmic and sublunar.

Mythology conceals and reveals Hephaestus’ mode of action, saying that he takes Aphrodite as his spouse to observe the will of Zeus. Ares’ relation to the goddess is called adultery by the myths.

In Remp. 1.141,26-142,5: τῷ μὲν γὰρ δημιουργῷ τῶν αἰσθητῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἐστὶν ἢ πρὸς τὴν καλλοποιὸν αἰτίαν καὶ συνδετικὴν κοινωνία, τῷ δὲ τῆς διαιρέσεως προστάτη καὶ τῆς ἐναντιώσεως τῶν ἐγκοσμίων ἀλλοτρία πῶς ἐστὶν ἢ τῆς ἐνώσεως χορηγὸς δύναμις· τοῖς γὰρ συναγωγοῖς τὰ διακριτικὰ γένη τῶν θεῶν ἀντιδιήρηται. ταύτην τοίνυν τὴν τῶν ἀνομοίων αἰτίων σύμπνοιαν οἱ μῦθοι μοιχείαν προσειρήκασιν.

For the maker of sensible things a coupling with the cause which creates beauty and binds things together is natural, whereas for the god, who oversees division and opposition in worldly things, for him the unifying force is somehow alien. The separating classes of the gods are directly opposed to the classes which are unifying. Because of this, the myths call a union of the different causes adulterous (translation mine).

But this kind of union is also necessary for the cosmogony, “in order to bring opposites into harmony and so that the internal war of the world will end into peace.”⁴⁹

At every level opposition is the gift of Ares. On the celestial level it refers to the mutual strife between forms when they try to oust each other, while on the terrestrial level it refers to the struggle of the elements and forces. As Helios is the companion of Hephaestus in the production of universal forms, he denounces the intercourse of Ares and Aphrodite to Hephaestus. The chains of Hephaestus, by means of which he captures Ares and Aphrodite, are forces invisible to others and in using them Hephaestus “builds from the opposites of Ares and Aphrodite’s joining virtues a unified order, since becoming needs both of them.”⁵⁰

Hephaestus’ chains are different in the celestial and the sublunar world. The former are indissoluble, while it is possible to loose the latter. Proclus also finds the word “chain” to be a uniting physical force in Plato’s *Timaeus* and this is

⁴⁹ *In Remp.* 1.141, 7-142, 7.

⁵⁰ *In Remp.* 1.142,17-19.

enough for him to equate the demiurgy presented in the *Timaeus* with that of Homer. On the celestial level the demiurge whom Hephaestos obeys is Zeus, but on the cosmic level he chains Ares and Aphrodite paying obedience to Poseidon. Poseidon is the god whose will commands that terrestrial bonds should also be released, because he is the manager of the cycle of change and sees that all which is born will be destroyed and returned to a new beginning.

The demiurge, whether celestial, like Zeus, or cosmic, like Poseidon, builds wholeness with the aid of opposing things and brings friendship to it through proportion, leading the deeds of Hephaestos, Ares, and Aphrodite to communion. Proclus usually favours a method of making divine principles into independent entities, but comes here closer to speaking on particular gods as different aspects of divinity:

In Remp. 1.143,8-10: καὶ γεννῶν μὲν τὰς ἐναντιώσεις τῶν στοιχείων κατὰ τὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ γεννᾶν Ἄρεα, φιλίαν δὲ μηχανώμενος κατὰ τὴν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης δύναμιν ἐνεργεῖν, συνδέων δὲ τοῖς Ἀρεικοῖς τὰ Ἀφροδίσια καὶ τὴν Ἡφαίστου τέχνην ἐν παραδείγματι προειληφέναι

The demiurge produces opposites from itself according to Ares in himself, he establishes amity, acting on the power of Aphrodite and he joins Aphrodite and Ares because he has beforehand as a preexisting model the art of Hephaestos (translation mine).

The demiurge is all things and acts with all the gods. The gods of the younger demiurgy imitate Zeus but their creations do not have the value of their father's work because their creations are mortal things. In the *Commentary on Timaeus* Proclus deals with the same passage of the *Odyssey*, using an allegorical interpretation: "... thanks to this harmony and (ἀναλογία) proportion, first of all emerges (ταυτότης) identity and, following it, (ἔνωσις) unification."⁵¹

This exegesis tells us that Hephaestos joins identity and otherness at the higher level, while at the lower level he joins harmony and division. Both of these pairs express communion and oppositeness, which theologians are used to talking about as Aphrodite and Ares. When Apollo, Hermes and the other gods see them in chains, they laugh and this laughter is also a demiurgic act, which, according to Proclus, provides a basis for cosmic things and gives power to their mutual bindings. In *Commentary on the Republic* Proclus provides a whole treatise dedicated to this divine laughter.⁵² He explains mythical descriptions of the gods' crying to signify their providence for the corruptible things, whereas the laughter of the gods is described as a mystical sign which refers to their activity on the universal and always in the same manner moving plentifulnesses of the world.⁵³

⁵¹ *In Tim.* 2 27, 8-10.

⁵² *In Remp.* 1. 126, 5-128, 4.

⁵³ *In Remp.* 1.128, 4-5.

Proclus provides further insights into the role of Aphrodite in the famous battle of the gods described in the *Iliad*.⁵⁴ War generally functions in tales as an image of cosmic disintegration and strife and this should also be the basis for the allegorical interpretation of this *theomachy*. The gods are arranged in five opposing pairs. Their disposition follows naturally from the Homeric text and therefore the positions held by Ares, Hephaestus, and Aphrodite depart from those presented in the exegesis of Hephaestus' chains. Only Aphrodite, interestingly, is outside the decad.

Here the pairs of opposites are analogous to the Neoplatonic hypostases of being, life, intellect, and soul, the latter seen as a discursive (Hermes) and an irrational structure (Leto), a sensible and corporal world where Hephaestus is nature, Xanthus the sensible order receiving forms. Aphrodite is below the decad, representing the connection of the whole demiurgy as a principle of harmony. Thus her opposite is the real demiurge, Zeus, who is only implicitly present in this picture. Another interesting feature of Aphrodite in this passage is that Homer, according to Proclus' explanation, sets Aphrodite apart in order for her to illuminate all things with unification and harmony, but especially in order to come to the assistance of the weaker party, because in them plurality dominates unity.⁵⁵ Proclus points out that every opposition is correctly understood only in its connection with unity. But it is interesting that the difference between unity, pre-existing in its cause, and unity as harmony of the parts, is expressed here as a theological relation between the (only implicitly present) Zeus and Aphrodite.

To this aspect refers also the only mentioning of Aphrodite in the *Commentary on Parmenides* where Proclus says that if we ascend to the gods from the realm of numbers, the hexad is sacred to Aphrodite and the heptad to Athena. "The heptad of Athena is unifying, and Aphrodite's hexad safeguards plurality in company with communion."⁵⁶

Aphrodite as helper of the weak also comes surfaces in those passages of the *Commentary on the Republic* which complement the Proclean exegesis of the *theomachy*.⁵⁷ Proclus is here particularly interested in the confrontation between Hephaestus and Xanthus. In physical opposition between bodies Hephaestus represents heat and dryness, Xanthus cold and wetness:

In Remp. 1.95,22-26.: ἐπεὶ δὲ πάσας ἀνάγκη τὰς ἐναντιώσεις εἰς τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλας ὁμολογίαν τελευτᾶν, πάρεστι καὶ ἡ Ἀφροδίτη, καθάπερ εἵπομεν, φιλίαν ἐμποιοῦσα τοῖς ἀντικειμένοις, συμμαχοῦσα δὲ ὅμως τοῖς χείροσιν, διότι καὶ ταῦτα μάλιστα κοσμεῖται σύμμετρα καὶ προσήγορα γινόμενα τοῖς ἀμείνοσι τῶν ἐναντίων.

And because every opposition is necessarily destined to end in mutual harmony Aphrodite is also here. Aphrodite establishes amity between the opposites, but she

⁵⁴ *In Tim.* 1.78,27-80,5.

⁵⁵ *In Tim.* 1.79.16-19.

⁵⁶ *In Parm.* 768,8. This translation of Morrow and Dillon is from Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton, 1987).

⁵⁷ *In Remp.* 1.95,18-95,30.

joins herself more to the weaker part, because they above all come to be ordered when they enter into a relation of proportion and reconciliation with the stronger (translation mine).

Thus there is something to be called grace, in the meaning of compassion and generosity, among the blessings of Aphrodite.

Proclus joins Aphrodite to Dionysius, besides Hephaestos and Ares, because she is an encosmic deity. In the *Commentary on the Cratylus* Proclus says that Plato celebrates Dionysus and Aphrodite as the divinities who are the makers of sweet-mindedness,⁵⁸ in opposition to the deities that perfect souls by revenge, fear, and punishment. These delightful divinities are fond of joking and favour it as a means of strengthening weak natures and uplifting difficult corporeal life. For this reason sacral statues represent them as laughing, relaxing, and dancing, in contrast to others whose images are fearful. The cultic representation corresponds to each god's cosmic domain. Aphrodite loves Dionysus and she casts Adonis as an image of Dionysus.⁵⁹ Aphrodite's love for Dionysus is providential, the love of a superior deity for an inferior.⁶⁰

Until now we have been considering Aphrodite among the hypercosmic-encosmic gods in her actions oriented "downward", i.e. as a demiurgic power. Proclus' interpretation of the goddess' magical girdle also concerns the cosmic level, but this symbolism refers to "upwards", to the monads of the goddess' series among the noetic-noeric gods. Proclus here builds his speculations upon the story from the *Iliad* of the intercourse of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida.⁶¹

Proclus explains the significance of all the ornaments of Hera with which she prepares for the event. One of the most important items among them is the girdle borrowed from Aphrodite. Proclus says that these symbols transform Hera into a likeness of Rhea. At the same time Zeus, in falling asleep, renders himself a likeness of the transcendent Cronus. The divinities are no longer functioning at their own level as cosmic deities but are returning to their own transcendental causes:

In Remp. 1.138,28-139.2: εικότως δὴ οὖν καὶ ἡ τῆς Ἥρας παρασκευὴ πρὸς τὴν ὄλην Ῥέαν ἀποβλέπει, τοῦ Διὸς κατὰ τὸν Κρόνον ἰσταμένου καὶ διὰ τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον ὁμοιότητα τὴν ἐν τῇ Ἰδῆ συνουσίαν προτιμῶντος τῆς εἰς τὸν κόσμον προΐούσης. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ κεστὸς καὶ ἡ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης σύλληψις ἐπὶ πλεον αὐτὴν ἔξομοιοῖ πρὸς τὴν Ῥέαν.

It is quite right that Hera's ornaments resembles the universal Rhea, because Zeus is behaving like Cronus, and because of this similarity (between Zeus and Cronus) Zeus prefers intercourse at Mount Ida to intercourse which goes towards the world.

⁵⁸ *In Crat.* 181,15.

⁵⁹ *In Crat.* 184.

⁶⁰ *In Crat.* 180.

⁶¹ *In Remp.* 1.138,28-140,18.

At the same way the magical girdle and the aid of Aphrodite renders Hera even more a likeness of Rhea (translation mine).

Here Proclus indicates the highest location at which we can already see Aphrodite as an articulated deity, with a primordial identity, albeit yet without her own name, preexisting in her first cause. In my opinion Proclus is referring to the gods in the second term of the noetic-noeric class. There, according to the words of Proclus,

In Remp. 1.139,3-5.: ἦν γὰρ καὶ ἐκεῖ τῆς θεοῦ ταύτης προὔφειστώσα μονάς, ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῆς συνεκτικῆς τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ θεότητος διὰ μέσου Κρόνου προελθοῦσα καὶ καταλάμψασα πᾶσαν τὴν νοερὰν ζωὴν τῷ φωτὶ τοῦ κάλλους

preexists the monad of this goddess who maintains Uranus, who makes her procession through the domain of Cronus and illuminates the whole of intellectual life with the light of beauty (translation mine).

Locating Aphrodite's first monad in this level which articulates itself again into subtriads, is consistent as we remember, that the divine love, the first Eros, is the third term of noetic-noeric triad.⁶² If Aphrodite is Erotokos, surely her monad should be on the higher level as the first monad of Eros.

Proclus furthermore analyzes the different ways in which Aphrodite and Hera bear the girdle:

In Remp. 1.139,6-13.: ἡ μὲν Ἀφροδίτη τὸν κεστόν ἐν τῷ στήθει λέγεται φέρειν, ὡς ἂν προβεβλημένας αὐτοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις ἔχουσα· ἡ δὲ Ἥρα κρύπτει πῶς αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τοῖς κόλποις, ὡς ἂν ἄλλην μὲν ιδιότητα λαχοῦσα τῆς ὑπάρξεως, ἔχουσα δὲ καὶ τὸν κεστόν, καθ' ὅσον καὶ αὐτὴ πεπλήρωται τῆς ὅλης Ἀφροδίτης. οὐ γὰρ ἕξωθέν ποθεν ἐπάγεται τὴν συνάπτουσαν αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸν δημιουργὸν δύναμιν, ἀλλ' ἐν ἑαυτῇ καὶ ταύτην συνείληφεν.

Aphrodite holds it in her bosom in such a manner that she keeps its powers exposed. Hera hides it in her chest, because her mode of existence is different, even if she too has a magical girdle in so far as she is filled with all the qualities of Aphrodite. She does not evoke the power, by which she unites with the demiurge by some external means, but she has enclosed this power in herself (translation mine).

Uneducated but pious common opinions also emphasize the connection between the two goddesses as they respect Hera as mistress of the union of consorts and protectress of marriage. She unites with the demiurge with the aid of the magical girdle, which is in herself, and creates connections in the legitimate bonds of

⁶² The common monads for all the goddesses' situate themselves higher, on the first level of the noetic-noeric triad. *Theol. Plat.* 4.16; 4.48,19 22, also 4.89,9: θηλυπρεπής ἐστι πρῶτος (first feminine being) and even on the first intelligible triad where is τὸ πρῶτιστον θῆλυ (first feminine principle) 4.92,2. which is the (ἑτερότης) first otherness.

marriage. Apparently Proclus wanted to say that the girdle in Hera is more secret, more linked to the transcendence, and joins to an indissoluble demiurgic union, while with Aphrodite the girdle shows the mode of the demiurgy of the younger gods and is exposed to the cosmos. This is the formulation in the language of the theology of love for the metaphysical principle very common in Proclus stating that every principle has two different mode of existence, (καθ' ὑπαρχιν) its own, corresponding to its appropriate level, and (κατ' αἰτίαν) a higher one, where it pre-exists in its causes. Proclus' language also evokes an image of the more secretive, marital love, appropriate to Hera, as opposed to the other genres, both legitimate and illegitimate, which belongs to the domain of Aphrodite.

Hypercosmic Aphrodite

The highest level of the theology of Aphrodite is the order where the goddess reveals herself as a hypercosmic deity. On this level Proclus resolves the Platonic question of the “two Aphrodites”. In the *Platonic Theology* Proclus reflects on the subject of what mythological talk about the “births” of the gods means for philosophy. Plato too, he says, speaks with the form of myth on the births of the gods:

Theol. Plat. 1.121, 1-5.: ἐν τῷ μύθῳ τῆς Διοτίμας ἢ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης γένεσις ὑμνηταὶ καὶ τοῦ Ἔρωτος ἐν γενεθλίοις Ἀφροδίτης ἀπογεννωμένου, δεῖ μὴ λανθάνειν ὅπως τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεται, καὶ ὡς ἐνδείξεως ἕνεκα συμβολικῆς ταῦτα σύγκειται, καὶ διότι τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν αἰτίων ἄρρητον ἔκφανσιν ἐπικρυπτόμενοι γένεσιν οἱ μῦθοι καλοῦσιν.

... as, for example, in the myth of Diotima, where Aphrodite's and Eros' births are celebrated ... but it should not be forgotten how these kinds of stories are presented, that they are composed with the aim of symbolic allusion and this is the reason why, hiding the ineffable manifestation proceeding from the primordial causes, myths call it by the word birth (translation mine).

Proclus' opinion is that Plato himself develops such stories when he narrates myths, but his normal way is to use dialectical and intellectual methods describing divine properties with the concepts of science.

In the *Commentary on the Cratylus* Proclus says that it is also possible to get to be inspired by starting from jokes regarding gods and rising thence to an understanding of realities in a more intellectual manner.⁶³ For Plato the difference between the two goddesses was without doubt the distinction between the intelligible world of forms and the sensible level. For Proclus they are hypercosmic and hypercosmic-encosmic divinities.

⁶³ *In Crat.* 183.

Proclus' handling is a masterpiece of allegorical interpretation of myths. First he states the "materialistic view" on Aphrodite's name:

In Crat. 183, 4-6.: Ἀφροδίτην τὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἀφροῦ τὴν γένεσιν ἔχουσιν, καὶ τὸν μὲν ἀφρὸν εἶναι τὴν τοῦ σπέρματος ἀπόκρισιν, τὴν δ' ἐκ ταύτης ὑφισταμένην ἐν ταῖς μίξεσιν ἡδονὴν Ἀφροδίτην εἶναι.

... Aphrodite was born from foam and this foam is the shedding of sperm and pleasure from ejaculation in intercourses is Aphrodite (translation mine).

Proclus does not simply reject this view, it is valid on its own physical level. But as the sensible world is the ultimate phase of the self-expression of the divine powers, behind the physical levels are others and so there is also need for a deeper interpretation which is to see, "before these extreme and corrupt things, the first and eternal causes." Hesiod and divine Orpheus tell the tale of the castration of Uranus. This violent image expresses "inspired notions" of how the goddess was causally produced:

In Crat. 183,12-23.: γεννᾶσθαι μὲν οὖν τὴν πρωτίστην Ἀφροδίτην ... ἀπὸ διττῶν αἰτίων. τοῦ μὲν ὡς δι' οὗ, τοῦ δὲ ὡς γεννητικοῦ τὸν μὲν γὰρ Κρόνον αὐτῆς ὡς τὸ δι' οὗ τῆ προόδῳ συνεργεῖν, ὡς τὴν γόνιμον δύναμιν τοῦ πατρὸς <προ>καλούμενον καὶ εἰς τοὺς νοερούς διακόσμους ἐκδιδόντα, τὸν δ' Οὐρανὸν ὡς ποιητὴν καὶ αἴτιον, ἐκ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γεννητικῆς περιουσίας ἐκφαίνοντα τήνδε τὴν θεόν. καὶ πόθεν γὰρ ἄλλοθεν ἔδει τὴν συναγωγὸν τῶν διαφερόντων γενῶν κατὰ μίαν ἔφρουν τοῦ κάλλους λαβεῖν τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἢ ἐκ τῆς συνοχικῆς τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ δυνάμεως; παράγει οὖν αὐτὴν ὁ Οὐρανὸς ἐκ τοῦ ἀφροῦ τῶν γονίμων ἑαυτοῦ μορίων ριφέντος εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν

the first Aphrodite was born from two causes: instrumental and generative ones ... Cronus acts as a coordinated cause in her procession; he calls the fertile power of his father and mediates it to the noeric levels, and Uranus is the producer and the cause revealing this goddess starting from his own generative abundance. What other causes does such a hypostasis need, which unify different kinds, acting on the basis of the one and same pursuit of beauty, what other if not the gathering power of Uranus? Thus Uranus generates her from the foam of his fertile organs when they were thrown down into the sea (translation mine).

The procession of the first Aphrodite is replicated in the lower level of sensible demiurgy where "the second Aphrodite flows into being from foam in the same way as the first ...," as, according to Orphic verses "conquered by great desire the lofty father (Zeus) threw foam of semen into the sea."

The two goddesses are different in their causes, order and powers, but their hypostasis — meaning in this passage innermost nature — is the same. Likewise the same is the purpose of their action, which is beauty meaning sound proportion and conformity between any being and its paradigm. The responsibility of the hyper-cosmic goddess is to secure compatibility between intelligible and sensible forms

(reason-principles in nature), the responsibility of the cosmic goddess is to participate in the actual demiurgy of the visible world (whose beings are incarnations of these principles). Actualization of the forms in nature is the same as life. Thus the higher goddess is a guardian and distributor of universal, pure, life, the lower goddess of the form of life which is appropriate to each living entity:

In Crat. 183,41-54: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ ὑπερκόσμιός ἐστιν καὶ ἀναγωγὸς ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν κάλλος καὶ ἀχράντου ζωῆς χορηγός, καὶ γενέσεως χωρίζει· ἡ δὲ ... ἐπιτροπεύει πάσας τὰς ἐν τῷ Οὐρανίῳ κόσμῳ καὶ γῆ συστοιχίας καὶ συνδεῖ πρὸς ἀλλήλας, καὶ τελειοῖ τὰς γεννητικὰς αὐτῶν προόδους διὰ τῆς ὁμοιοητικῆς συζεύξεως. συνήνωνται δ' ἀλλήλαις κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῆς ὑποστάσεως ἐκ γὰρ τῶν γεννητικῶν δυνάμεων προῆλθεν ἡ μὲν τοῦ συνοχέως ἡ δὲ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ. δηλοῖ δ' ἡ θάλασσα τὴν ἠπλωμένην καὶ ἀπεριόριστον ζῶην καὶ τὸ βάθος αὐτῆς τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶν προϊόν, ὃ δ' ἀφρὸς τὸ καθαρῶτατον καὶ φωτὸς γονίμου πλήρες καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ ἐπινηχόμενον πάσῃ τῇ ζωῇ καὶ οἷον ἄνθος αὐτῆς τὸ ἀκρότατον. πέφηνεν οὖν ἡ Ἀφροδίτη πάσης οὐσα τῆς ζωῆς τὸ ἐνοειδέστατον καὶ καθαρῶτατον.

She who is born from Uranus is hypercosmic and aims upwards to the intelligible beauty and is the distributor of the pure life. The other one, ... rules all the connected series which are in the world of Uranus and in the earth, she joins things together and perfects generative processions by unification in harmony. And they are unified among themselves for the similarity of their hypostases, since from the generative powers there proceeds, on the one hand, the gathering power, and on the other, the demiurgic power. And the sea means extended and unlimited life and its depth, which overlaps everything, and the foam signifies the most pure, light-filled, and fertile power and, much more than anything else, it expresses the whole of life and it is, like a flower, its highest summit (translation mine).

Aphrodite gets her name first at the hypercosmic level and Proclus concludes with the description of this goddess. “Flower” and “summit” are quasi-technical terms of later Neoplatonism, meaning highest unification and divinity present in every being. “Flower” is in fact a poetic synonym for “supraessential henad” and the One’s mystical sign, which is the highest illumination of oneness in entities enjoying participation in the One through henads.⁶⁴

Conclusion

Let us summarize the main steps in the procession of Aphrodite according to Proclean theory: On the first level of the noetic-noeric triad, in the supercelestial place, the feminine quality of the divine reveals herself for the first time. In the second term of the noetic-noeric triad exists the depth of the sky, Uranus and his powers,

⁶⁴ For this doctrine see, for example, *In Parm.* 1046,2-1047,31; *Theol. Plat.* 1.15,17-21; *In Crat.* 47,12-19:

among them the first monad for Rhea and Aphrodite. The third term of the noetic-noeric triad is, in the language of the *Phaedrus*, the subcelestial vault. The third triad in its totality is love (the first divine Eros) that mirror in its level intelligible beauty (corresponding triad in the intelligible level) and raises ascending souls towards it. The noeric gods are arranged into a hebdomad composed of the two triads and the demiurgic monad. On the first level Rhea manifests herself as an identified deity mediating between Cronus and Zeus. One of the operations of the demiurge is the castration of the previous fathers, which is the symbol for the birth of the internally differentiated world of forms. Through this operation Aphrodite is born as a hypercosmic and hypercosmic-encosmic principle of demiurgy and providence. In her procession, the goddess who pre-exists in her monads on the higher levels, gains an articulated identity and reveals herself as a divinity whose task is to harmonize and recuperate unity. For Proclus Aphrodite is greater than love. Love is the power in life, and Aphrodite is the most uniform and purest life at the hypercosmic level, the Uranic summit in Aphrodite being “the flower of life”.

The theory of the divine series enables Proclus to defend Aphrodite in all the forms of her traditional cult against the “great confusion”. It is possible to pray to and to celebrate Aphrodite, even from the popular, and even vulgar, viewpoint, as the protectress of earthly love. But a Neoplatonic sage, who has attained Plato’s mystical vision, connects the worship of the goddess to the philosopher’s aim of identifying with the One present in the human soul, and because of this she or he asks and deserves from the immaculate Erototokos even better gifts than those desired by the Trojan prince.

Tables

Table 1. Exegesis of the theomachy (*In Tim.* I,79.1-23, *In Remp.* 1,95.23-30)

Zeus – the Demiurge

Poseidon	Apollo	the demiurgy of the whole
totally	particularly	
Hera	Artemis	producers of life
intellect	physical	
Athena	Ares	causes of opposites
reason	passion	
Hermes	Leto	powers for soul's perfection
cognition	vitality	
understanding	will	
Hephaestos	Xanthus	producers of bodily order
actively	passively	

Aphrodite – giver of unity and harmony

Table 2. Exegesis of the Ares-Aphrodite affair

Two pairs of demiurgy

Hephaestos	Ares
hypercosmic	encosmic
insoluble “chains”	
celestial	sublunar
releasable “chains”	
marriage	adultery

Table 3. The divine scope of Aphrodite

Area out of scope (by super-excellence)

One and the Henads

Intelligible gods / noetic triad: goodness, wisdom, beauty
 first otherness / first feminine principle

Area of pre-existence

Intelligible-intellective gods / noetic-noeric triad /

First noetic-noeric triad hyperuranios topos / faith
 the place of the first feminine quality of the divine

Second noetic-noeric triad / truth

“depth of sky” = place of the first monad for Aphrodite

Third noetic-noeric triad / subcelestial vault /primordial Eros

Noeric gods

noeric triad

separative monad: produces “foam as a flower of life”

Area of existence

Hypercosmic gods: Aphrodite I

Hypercosmic-encosmic gods

fourth triad, second term: Aphrodite II

Encosmic gods

second triad, second term Aphrodite III

Sublunar “gods” (demons)

Aphrodite as a demon

on the highest level as an Olympian god

on the lowest level as a guardian of certain people

(Julius Caesar for example)

Area of Aphrodisiac illumination

Aphrodite as a power and sign in souls, nature, body, and elements

Out of scope (by privation)

pure matter

THE CORPUS AREOPAGITICUM AS A CRYPTO-PAGAN PROJECT*

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Abstract: Summing up current discussion this article presents a detailed critique of Carlo Maria Mazzucchi's suggestion that Damascius, the last head of the pagan Neoplatonist school of Athens, was the author of the enigmatic Pseudo-Dionysian corpus. Mazzucchi's approach grasps better the probable context of the emergence of the Dionysian Corpus than mainstream interpretation, which accepts the author's overt claim of Christianity, resorts too easily to rather twisted theories of pseudonymic writing and overrates the autonomy of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* in relation to Proclus. Contrary to the opinions that dismiss speculation about the identity of the writer as meaningless in the absence of new data this article considers such attempts necessary and useful. The article agrees with Carlo Maria Mazzucchi's general thesis that the *Corpus* was a creation of pagan philosophers in the Neoplatonic academy of Athens after Proclus. However, it argues that Mazzucchi misjudged the perspective regarding the future that prevailed in the Athenian school and in particular Damascius' willingness to accept a compromise with Christianity at the cost of polytheism as articulated in Proclus' theology of the classes of the gods. As a result a more credible version of the crypto-pagan hypothesis could be developed, namely to see the *Corpus Dionysiacum* as a purely instrumental stratagem aiming to protect Proclus' works in order to resurrect more easily the polytheistic religion in better times, which according to the Neoplatonists' cyclic view of history were destined to return one day.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss how far and in what ways the "crypto-pagan hypothesis" of the origin of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* could be defended. By the term "crypto-pagan" I do not mean that the Christian content of the *Corpus* is damaged due to Dionysian thinking being so saturated with pagan Neoplatonism (nobody could seriously nowadays deny in scholarly debate that the *Corpus* is thoroughly permeated with Neoplatonic ideas). No one is in possession of the measure with which to state what "genuine" Christianity is and then judge how

* I would like to thank all who have commented on earlier versions of this article, especially Edward Butler, Mika Perälä, Timothy Riggs and Ben Schomakers.

Dionysius is possibly falling short of this standard. I use the phrase “crypto-pagan hypothesis” in a stronger sense, meaning a claim that it would be fruitful to view the *Corpus* not as a theoretical attempt at synthesising Christian and Neoplatonic ideas but as a purely instrumental historical document, evidencing a stratagem forged for the service of the self-defence of the Athenian School of Later Neoplatonism.

Approving, without critical reflection, of an overt claim regarding the intention of the pseudonymous discourse contradicts the fundamental requirement of caution in historical analysis. There are some tendencies in Dionysian studies to overestimate the space for free philosophical discussion during the fifth and sixth centuries and to underestimate the role of persecution.² Other contributing factors to these tendencies are the view that it is meaningless to investigate the classic question of authorship (on the grounds that it is unsolvable) and the emphasis on the independence, originality, and profundity of the Dionysian project in its relation to pagan Neoplatonism, and especially to Proclus.

A Crypto-Pagan Tale

To convey the issues involved, I will begin with a tale. At the beginning of the sixth century there was an extremely clever, well-educated, and, as is inevitable in a tale, exceptionally beautiful woman, who was originally of non-Christian birth and a very staunch supporter of traditional piety. Maybe she was Theodora, to whom Damascius dedicated his “Philosophical History”, and thus she was a descendant of the divine Iamblichus and priestly-king Sampsigeramos.³ – Or maybe she was of some other ancestry, descended perhaps from Aglaophemus or even Ammikartos—who knows.

² I think that Anthony Kaldellis’ view of the period is basically true: “.. there was no freedom of expression in sixth-century Constantinople, for imperial ideology was backed by the punitive powers of the state. There may have been actual freedom of thought, more so, perhaps, than in our own age, but that is another matter. The main point is that if one disagreed with the basic principles of imperial rule, or with a specific policy, one had to tread very carefully in expressing dissent. Certain things simply had to be said and other things could never be said openly, no matter what one believed.” A. Kaldellis, “Republican theory and political dissidence in Ioannes Lydos”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 29 (2005), pp. 1-16 at 10.

³ All that we know about Theodora comes from Damascius through the patriarch Photius, who says in his *Bibliotheca* (cod. 181 p. 125b 32 Bekker (= Henry II p. 189): “Read Damascius the Damascene’s ‘On the Life of Isidore the Philosopher’. The book is long, comprising some sixty chapters. Having decided to write the Life of Isidore, he dedicated the composition to a certain Theodora, Hellene too by religious persuasion (Ἑλληνα μὲν καὶ αὐτῇ θρησκευεῖαν τιμῶσῃ), not unacquainted with the disciplines of philosophy, poetics and grammar, but also well versed in geometry and higher arithmetic, Damascius himself and Isidore having taught her and her younger sisters at different times. She was the daughter of Kyrina and Diogenes, the son of Eusebius son of Flavian, a descendant of Sampsigeramus and Monimos who were Iamblichus’ ancestors too, all of them first prize winners in idolatrous impiety. Damascius dedicates Isidore’s biography to her; it was her exhortation, together with that of certain others who joined in her request, that was responsible for the author’s efforts, as he himself testifies”, tr. Polymnia Athanassiadi.

She was well versed in mathematics, philosophy, and theurgy, and a hierophant of all the modes of divinity. But these were fateful times. Agapius, the youngest of Proclus' pupils, who was teaching in Byzantium, was alarmed. He sent desperate warnings to the Platonic academy in Athens about the situation developing in the capital.⁴ There was an imminent danger that the old emperor might be forced to give in to militant Monophysites; or, even worse, after him, as a reaction to his religious policy, some Latin-speaking adherents of the synod of Chalcedon might take power; both groups were united only in their hatred of the cult of the gods.⁵ Wise Damascius tried to be prepared for all twists of fate. Aware of the abilities of his assistant, he convinced her of the importance of carrying out a very special task. Taking the example of divine Iamblichus in his manifesto for the defence of theurgy (a work known today by the title *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*), two centuries before, she had to operate under a pseudonym, not this time adopting the identity of a venerable Egyptian prophet as Iamblichus had done, but of one of the ancient leaders of the adversaries. And so she did and produced, in an impressively short time, a collection of four books and ten letters. These writings alluded to other more sacred ones. By accomplishing these feats, she built a fortification around the hidden doctrine in order that the happier future generations need not reinvent all the truth concerning the classes of gods but could enjoy the Platonic vision of the great Proclus.

If this tale sounds provocative and “non-academic”, let us remember that similar stories are repeated many times in Dionysian studies by impeccable scholars.⁶ Like

⁴ Lydus, *De Mag.* 3.26, John the Lydian says that Agapius was his teacher in Constantinople, not in Philadelphia, when at the age of 21 he moved to the imperial city. Damascius also mentions Agapius and his school in Constantinople, *Philosophical History*, fr. 107.

⁵ The Monophysite leaders Severus and Philoxenus had a strong influence on the emperor Anastasius (491-518), especially in the years between 508 and 512. With Justin's accession in 518 the Chalcedonian victory followed.

⁶ See, e. g., S. Klitenic Wear and J. Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist tradition*, (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 131-32, who seem to be developing Saffrey's original profiling story, which follows (translation mine). H. D. Saffrey, “Le lien le plus objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus,” in *Roma magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1998), pp. 791-810 = H. D. Saffrey, *Le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris, 2000), p. 236: “Before Hellenism is sentenced to death by the orders of Emperor Justinian, forbidding pagans to teach, there is a young Christian who becomes, by some chance, a reader of Proclus. We must believe that he is captivated and allowed to be imbued by the fervour of Proclean theology. This young Christian enters into a monastery, where he also finds an environment of prayer and study. He reads the Fathers of the Church, especially Origen and the Cappadocians. In his own century the great theological lights had become rare. But, like these doctors, he also wants to express his faith in the context of his time. Our young monk becomes a mature man and is recognized as a personality in his time; he becomes a hegumen of his monastery, and he will be soon chosen to be a bishop. Naturally he thinks about the problems in terms of philosophy, which has seduced him, and these are Proclean terms. This approach should absolutely not be surprising, if we remember that the Greek pantheon, i.e., the traditional enemies of Christianity, have a very inferior rank in this system, and therefore there is room for a Christian interpretation on the part of the Proclean divine hierarchy... When he writes his treatise he is also aware that this is something new, and he wonders how his thoughts will be received. But he has a precedent in the Neoplatonist school: Iamblichus who answered Porphyry under the pseudonym Abammon, an Egyptian priest. His master

those stories, this tale too refers to possible settings, portrayable people and a definite historical period that all together form a plausible context for the birth of the *Corpus*. This story has no unheard of quality in itself. It only differs from the old tales in two respects. First, it does not assume that the *Corpus* is Christian in nature. Second, it offers a palpable, concrete and easily understood motive for what may have turned out to be one of the most successful literary frauds in the world's history. This point should be tested by surveying the historical circumstances at the time of the *Corpus*' gestation.

Fraud – That Terrible Word

Dealing with the pseudepigraphic nature of Pseudo-Dionysius E.R. Dodds once wrote that “it is for some reason customary to use a kinder term; but it is quite clear that the deception was deliberate”.⁷ This was in 1933. More recent scholarship tends to prefer the “kinder” option. The authoritative *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states in its online entry on Dionysius that “‘forgery’ is a modern notion”.⁸ According to this entry Dionysius had not claimed to be an innovator and by adopting a pseudonym he had merely been applying a fairly common rhetorical device. Yet Late Antiquity did know the phenomenon of literary forgery as well as the ambition and the methods of detecting and exposing it.⁹

Innovation would have been a strange idea for most of the writers on divine things in Pseudo-Dionysius' time. Placing Dionysius on the same level with Plotinus and the Cappadocian fathers, as the authors of the entry to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* have done, is as amazing as considering Origen, Athanasius, Cyril and Augustine as equals to Dionysius in their general relation between philosophy and religion, as John Rist has endeavoured to do.¹⁰ In both cases Dionysius is the only one who is hiding his true identity. Iamblichus' procedure in *De Mysteriis* comes closer to that of Dionysius. Whether Iamblichus goes beyond literary trickery could be debated. Dionysius certainly does. Charles M. Stang tells us that “the scholarly consensus here is that in the late antique Christian imagination the distance between the historical

Proclus is just the one who had revealed this subterfuge. So he also writes under a pseudonym, that of Dionysius, an Athenian priest. The real Dionysius, a member of the Areopage and converted by the apostle Paul, had become the first bishop of Athens. Should he not take the identity of this bishop of Athens, if he wants the pagans in the late fifth or the beginning of the sixth century to hear about God's prodigies?”

⁷ E.R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963), p. xxvii, note 1.

⁸ K. Corrigan and L.M. Harrington (2004) “Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (website: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite/>). Last accessed 7th Oct 2010.

⁹ See W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum – ein Versuch ihrer Deutung* (München, 1971).

¹⁰ J.M. Rist, “Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism and the Weakness of the Soul,” in H. Westra (ed.), *From Athens to Chartres* (Leiden, 1992), p. 159.

past and present can be collapsed or ‘telescoped’, such that the apostolic (and sub-apostolic) age and the contemporary world may be fully present to one.”¹¹ The holy man was transforming himself into an “‘extension’ of the personality of the ancient authority”, in the fury of writing understood as “a devotional exercise” (ibid.).

In the light of these more recent pronouncements Dodds’ statement that “[i]t is for some reason customary to use a kinder term, but is quite clear that the deception was deliberate,”¹² takes on a new significance. Someone with a mindset imbued by the spirit of *laïcité* may begin to suspect that the explanation for Dodds’ inclusion of the phrase “for some reason” is simply that fakes should not be customarily called fakes in historiography, if they appear to be inspired by Christian motives. Stangs’ theory could, after all, explain quite well how hagiography and Christian pseudepigrapha were produced. But even then the Areopagite confronts us with a different kind of phenomenon, one that cannot be reduced to holy men constructing “holy lies”. The Dionysian case cannot be explained in this way because the author of the Corpus did not identify himself as some saint of bygone days who lacked particular inspired prose. Dionysius was cutting and pasting, tampering and modifying specific contemporary collections of texts whose genuine origin was very well known to him as well as to his intended readers. He claimed that the ideas in these texts and much of the actual wording were hundreds of years old and belonged to the ideal treasure of a religious movement (Christianity) which the actual creators of these ideas (Proclus and the pagan Neoplatonic school at Athens) regarded as a catastrophe for their world.

From an early date in the transmission two scholia were customarily appended to the manuscripts between the Dionysian text itself and the commentaries of John of Scythopolis. The first of these tries to soothe the uneasiness which someone who has the opportunity to read Dionysius and Proclus side by side may feel:¹³

It should be known that some of the pagan philosophers, and above all Proclus, make frequent use of the doctrines of the blessed Dionysius and often literally with his own

¹¹ C.M. Stang, “Dionysius, Paul and the Signification of the Pseudonym,” in S. Coakley and C.M. Stang (eds) *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Chichester, U.K., 2009), p. 19. Beate Suchla, in her recent book which recapitulates for wider audience results of life-long work dedicated to Dionysian research, opines that there is no forgery, no lie and coverage in the Corpus, we are simply dealing with the literary figure, an implicit author with a specific literary program. The question of fraud rose up only later when Dionysian writings were introduced as weapons for Christological struggle. Suchla even says that the name is not pseudonym. I have to admit that I am unable to understand this line of argument. Are we not dealing with the tautological circle? Dionysius could not be a forger, because he is Dionysius and we could convince ourselves of this by reading Dionysius? See B.R. Suchla, *Dionysius Areopagita. Leben - Werk - Wirkung* (Freiburg i. Br., 2008), p. 20.

¹² Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, p. xxvii, note 1.

¹³ Hathaway cites this scholion but he assumes that the commentator was George Pachymeres (d.-1310), R.F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague, 1969), p. 12, note 45. In contrast, Saffrey, following Suchla’s findings, points out that these scholia are joined to the *Corpus* already in the most ancient manuscripts which originate from the 9th century. Saffrey, *Recherches*, p. 242. See also the discussion in his study on the survival of Proclus’ Platonic Theology, Saffrey, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne, VI* (Paris, 1997), pp. li-lvii.

words. This justifies the belief that the older philosophers of Athens had appropriated Dionysius' works, as the author relates in the book here, and held them hidden in order to appear themselves as the fathers of the divine discourse of Dionysius. And it is evidence of divine providence that this book has appeared to the public for convicting their vainglory and laziness. And the divine Basil teaches that the pagans have the habit to usurp our doctrines in his homily on "In the beginning was the Word", which states that: "I know very well that most of those who were alien (to truth) admired this formula: 'In the beginning was the Word,' and they were not afraid to place it in their writings, as the devil is a thief, and he discloses to his henchman our teachings." So much for Basil. And with regard to the words of Numenius the Pythagorean, he says openly: "What is Plato but a Moses who speaks Greek?" which no one can deny, because he is not one of ours but is one of our opponents, as is evidenced by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, who taught that it is not only now that the representatives of alien wisdom steal from us but so it was even before the coming of Christ.¹⁴

The second scholion states that the *Corpus*' author must have been a genuine pupil of the apostle Paul because otherwise his claims—to have seen a supernatural eclipse during the time of Christ's passion when Dionysius was in Heliopolis (with a friend, Apollophanes, who remained a pagan), to be present at the dormition of Saint Mary (where his teacher Hierotheus was the main speaker after the apostles), and to have been a correspondent with apostle John—would make him a liar and a lunatic outcast from society.¹⁵

In this scholion the real chain of influences and events is reversed. I am unable to state whether or not these remarkable scholia should be read as part of the deception or as some of the earliest pieces of evidence of its efficacy.

The Cycle of Rebellions against Proclus and the Proclean Re-conquest in Dionysian Territory

A systematic and decisive critique of nineteenth century scholars culminated with the works of Koch and Stiglmayr¹⁶ who irreversibly demolished the image of Dionysius as an apostolic writer and put the Dionysian *Corpus* as an object of scientific study into a Proclean context. After that shift, a peculiar spiral movement has prevailed in Dionysian studies. On the one hand, Dionysius' dependence on Proclus has been demonstrated again and again in an ever-increasing range of topics, and more and

¹⁴ Provisional critical edition and French translation in Saffrey, *Recherches*, p. 240; the English translation is mine.

¹⁵ Saffrey, *Recherches*, pp. 240-42.

¹⁶ These classic works are H. Koch, "Proklus als Quelle des Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen," *Philologus* 54 (1895), pp. 438-54; and J. Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Uebel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895), pp. 253-73 and 721-48.

more Proclean treatises have been shown to have influenced Dionysius. On the other hand, as each turn of findings has been completed, the supposed radical difference between the writings of Dionysius and those of Neoplatonism has again and again been asserted on a slightly modified basis.

In the first round of Dionysian studies the Areopagite was more or less seen as an orthodox Christian who incorporated some Neoplatonic details. In the meantime it has become common informed opinion that Dionysius was decisively inspired by Neoplatonic ideas, but, for all that, his thinking constitutes an autonomous body of work, a kind of Christian transformation of ancient Neoplatonism. Referring to *DN* 816C-817A, Eric D. Perl comments:

This repudiation of Proclus' polytheism is often regarded as one of Dionysius' most significant "Christianizations" of Proclus and one of the most profound differences between them. Instead of positing a multiplicity of productive divinities subordinate to the One, Dionysius regards the constitutive perfections of all things as the immediate differentiated presence of God himself. But is the difference really so great? ... All perfections of all things are modalities of unity, and hence all reality, for Proclus, no less than for Dionysius, is the presence of the One, in differing modes and degrees.¹⁷

One can add that Proclus and Dionysius share not only a common fundamental approach, but in practice Dionysius has transposed all of Proclus' henadological and theophanic teachings, which were articulated in ontic triads, into dimensions of the doctrines of trinitarian Thearchy and angelology. But is it the case that just because Dionysius makes no explicit mention of Proclus' classes of gods as gods, he cannot be viewed as a pagan? Naturally he has to omit all overtly polytheist prose because otherwise he would destroy the Christian surface that is indispensable for his project.

We still encounter in scholarship tenacious efforts to minimize the Neoplatonic element in Dionysius. Sometimes the very same doctrines which were earlier thought to depict a radical difference between Dionysius and Proclus are now seen to share common traits, for example, their theories of love.¹⁸

Dionysian *agnosia* and "apophatic anthropology", cited by Stang in his study, are in effect both Proclean tenets belonging to Proclus' theory of divine interfaces, that is, henadology and the doctrine of the hypernoetic cognition. I find it puzzling how Ysabel de Andia, who has refuted in her monumental study so many claims made in previous scholarship concerning there being a radical difference between Dionysius and Proclus, can resort to a categorical statement such as this: "If it is undeniable that the explanation [for the *Corpus*] is that Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite's texts derive from Proclean sources, the intention – and therefore the significance – of the texts is [nevertheless] Christian."¹⁹

¹⁷ E.D. Perl, *Theophany* (Albany, 2007), p. 67.

¹⁸ Compare repeated statements in earlier studies distinguishing Dionysian *agape* and Neoplatonic *eros* with the modern treatment of the Dionysian theory of love in Ysabel de Andia, *Henosis. L'Union à Dieu chez Denys l'Aréopagite* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 145-64.

¹⁹ De Andia, *Henosis*, p.168. The translation is mine (TL).

Can it really be held that we can derive the significance of a literary work from the assumed intention of its author? Certainly, in the case of Pseudo-Dionysius we cannot consider the question of his intention without reflecting on some actual facts derived from history such as the seriousness of the author's self-proclaimed denominational allegiance. This could offer some explicit hypothesis on the historical context of the birth of the *Corpus*. One has to wonder about the origins or reasons for the tendency in Dionysian studies to interpret possible theoretical differences between Dionysius' and Proclus' views as differences between pagan Neoplatonic and Christian thought. Why not ask first, for example, whether this assumed difference perhaps mirrors the deviating positions of Proclus' and Damascius' circles? This question points to the fact that in practice Dionysian and Proclean studies have often taken divergent paths. And perhaps there is also an explanation here why the technical terminology of pagan Neoplatonism is sometimes effaced in modern translations of the Dionysian Corpus.

Colm Luibheid's translation, for example, is a valuable work that makes Dionysian texts more accessible to a contemporary English reading public, but it is, as Eric D. Perl says, "almost a paraphrase rather than a translation".²⁰ Gregory Shaw points out that this translation systematically ignores the term theurgy and its cognates.²¹ This *de facto* standard English translation is read usually with Rorem's commentary, which, although it is in principle fair in its portrayal of pagan Neoplatonism, ignores most of the pertinent Proclean material. Thus an innocent reader might get the impression that concepts that have crucial importance in Dionysius' thought, as, for example, the symbolism of dissimilar similarities, where the highest divine truths are revealed by the most incongruous and insulting symbols,²² are Dionysian innovations, when in fact they were established devices of the hermeneutics of the Athenian school.²³

The ever resurgent rebellion against acknowledging the Proclean foundations of the Dionysian ideas is nowadays resorting to ingenious theories concerning pseudonymity and is emphasizing especially Pauline inspiration for Dionysius. Christian Schäfer argues that Dionysius' aim was to recreate the Pauline situation, the first encounter between philosophy and Christian faith with the difference that pagans formed Paul's audience, while Dionysius' aim was to reassure Christians of the rational grounds of their doctrine. Schäfer criticizes strongly those who read Dionysius according to the "Proclus-caveat", that is, those who see in Dionysius "a diluted version of Proclean

²⁰ Perl, *Theophany*, p. ix.

²¹ G. Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 7 (1999), pp. 573-99 at 573. Shaw also convincingly refutes Rorem's and Louth's attempts to prove that there is a fundamental difference between Iamblichean and Dionysian theurgy. For a current detailed study of theurgy in Pseudo-Dionysius see M.-W. Stock, *Theurgisches Denken: zur kirchlichen Hierarchie des Dionysius Areopagita* (Berlin, 2008), especially pp. 152-71.

²² P. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York, 1993), pp. 53-57.

²³ In effect, *The Elements of Theology* is the only work of Proclus included in Rorem's bibliography. Rorem has dedicated to these issues an influential monograph, P. Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto, 1984). However, even in this study the use of the Proclean corpus seems to be minimal.

thought” and so “are proverbial fools that would stare at the finger when the finger points at the moon.”²⁴

Schäfer points out that for Dionysius the cyclical triad of causation is systematically present in a non-Proclean order (procession, remaining, return), and thus the moment of “remaining” expresses an existential and ontic “stand-still”, where the theophanic creation-process comes about on different levels, and these “halt”-points should be understood as God’s images in creation. The Divine Names in Dionysian discourse are terms for these different phases. Since God is unknowable, they cannot tell us about God as God itself (*καθ’ αὐτό*), but only *καθ’ ἡμᾶς*, that is, from the viewpoint of a created thing or rather only knowing what God permits us to know about him. Schäfer seems to think that this “shift of perspective from an interpretation *per se* to an agent-relative perspective”²⁵ marks an innovation in Dionysius and is somehow derived from Pauline positions. That Dionysius turns to the problem of evil in the middle of his discourse on divine names is surprising only at first glance, argues Schäfer, because it is a natural consequent from the adopted viewpoint. “After all, ‘evil’ is not a theonym; the philosophical question of evil must be addressed in order to develop a credible and consistent explication of the world *καθ’ ἡμᾶς*.”²⁶

Schäfer’s discussion has great merits; however, at least two points are problematic. First, the demand that in regard to this enigmatic author we should suspend the usual principles of historical criticism, since “in Dionysius’ case the author is so completely absorbed in his fictitious self that he basically forces an acceptance of this fictitious self upon the interpreter”.²⁷ Second, it seems that most of the areas which Schäfer claims to be independent Dionysian territory should be returned to Proclus. Proclus too, in a very similar manner as Dionysius, discusses evil in the midst of a discourse on divine attributes.²⁸ We find an emphasis on the *καθ’ ἡμᾶς* theory of divine names in him too. We cannot name an unknowable primal principle, Proclus says, but we have two names through which to refer to it because they are adopted by secondary realities as images of the primal: these are the Good and the One.²⁹ In general it seems to me that the model for Dionysius’ doctrine on divine names are Proclus’ discussion of the Platonic divine attributes and its conclusion concerning divine names, especially in the *Platonic Theology* (part I, chapters 13-29. Although one of the main topics of Schäfer’s treatise is to ponder the relationships between Dionysius and Proclus, we find in it surprisingly little Proclus (see his *index locorum*). The *Platonic Theology*, directly relevant to the themes dealt with, is mentioned only once and even then it is only concerning Salvatore Lilla’s findings regarding the use of irenic categories in the *Platonic Theology*.

²⁴ C. Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 169-70.

²⁵ Schäfer, *Philosophy*, p. 90.

²⁶ Schäfer, *Philosophy*, p. 172.

²⁷ Schäfer, *Philosophy*, p. 170.

²⁸ *Theol. Plat.* I 18, 82.8-88.10.

²⁹ *Theol. Plat.* II 42, 16-24, see also 64, 1-9.

The most “Proclean” Dionysius in current research is that of Werner Beierwaltes, whose fine article carries the title “Dionysius the Areopagite – a Christian Proclus?”³⁰ Beierwaltes criticizes “apologetic intention, which would make Dionysius a ‘Proclus in Christian clothing’, in the manner that Proclus’ language is seen only as external borrowing”. Instead, Beierwaltes is himself of the view that Dionysius’ “theology is the most extreme example of a ‘hellenization of Christianity’”.³¹ But I think that not even Beierwaltes’ formulation, written in 1998, is radical enough considering all that we know today about the extent of Proclus’ paraphrased presence in the Dionysian Corpus and the methods that Dionysius used.

In his analysis of the relationship between the first books of Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* and the Dionysian *Divine Names*, Istvan Perczel summarizes Dionysius’ technique as follows:³²

- 1) Heathen references are changed into Christian ones, gods to Trinity, etc.
- 2) Dionysius changes practically all of Proclus’ words to synonyms, while preserving the structure and sometimes even rhythm of the sentence.
- 3) Some characteristic words are retained, but their place in the structure of the sentence is changed.
- 4) Whole passages are broadened and filled with additional elements.

Dionysius’ theoretical debt to general Neoplatonist principles as well as his direct dependence on Proclus in many specific issues has been shown many times. Yet the inventory that exists is far from exhaustive. As a minor suggestion for an additional aspect that has not yet been considered but may merit a special examination I would like here to point out that a concise exposition in Dionysius’ 9th letter on how to read Scriptures symbolically derives from Proclus’ theory in his *Commentary on Plato’s Republic* and *Platonic Theology*. Perczel claims that there are at least nine cases of textual correspondences between the 9th letter and chapters 4 to 6 of the first part of Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*. If one were to look more closely at Dionysius’ exegesis of the “house of wisdom”, the “mixing bowl”,³³ spiritual food and drink, and the holy

³⁰ I have used here the Italian version, W. Beierwaltes, “Dionigi Areopagita – un Proclo cristiano?” in *Platonismo nel Cristianesimo*, trans. Mauro Falcioni (Milan, 2000), pp. 49-97. The translations from this work are mine (TL).

³¹ Beierwaltes, *Platonismo*, p. 56.

³² I. Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology: A Preliminary Study,” in A.P. Segonds and C. Steel (eds), *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne* (Leuven, 2000), pp. 491-532 at 503. See also examples by which Saffrey completes the image of Dionysius’ dependence on Proclus, analysing his methods and conclusions: “Citing Proclus in this way, Denys reveals in what school he was trained and naturally he tried to hide this dependency by citation of Saint Paul combining it with that of Proclus. This method is typical for him.” Saffrey, *Recherches*, p. 246.

³³ “... immediately preceding his interpretation of the mixing bowl, Ps.-Dionysius had mentioned that not only scriptures but the whole perceptible world order (κόσμος) also revealed the things of God, an unmistakable hint at the meaning of the mixing bowl symbol, which for Proclus and his students could mean only one thing, the mixing bowl (κρατήρ) in which Timaeus says that the intelligible world order was combined.” Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, p. 110. Following Dodds, Hathaway

banquet, I suspect that even these would turn out to be completely Proclean. In this particular case the model is Proclus' exegesis of Phaedrus in the fourth book of the *Platonic Theology*, where Proclus speaks about the "plain of truth", the "manger" (of the horses of soul-chariots), ambrosia and nectar, and the banquet of the gods.³⁴ This is typical of Dionysius. He introduces his treatment with allegories from the Bible and gives the impression that he is interpreting "The Scriptures", but in reality he is paraphrasing Proclus.

Carlo Maria Mazzucchi's Version of the Crypto-Pagan Hypothesis

It may be surprising that notwithstanding over a hundred years' debate on Dionysius, a debate full of accusations against Dionysius as being "too Neoplatonist" and thus "objectively" not a "genuine" Christian (and thus consequently a pagan?), only one scholar has clearly claimed that what the author of the *Corpus* did was effectively carrying out a fully intentional crypto-pagan stratagem. This scholar is Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, and his position deserves for this very reason a detailed exposition and criticism.³⁵

Not that there were no attempts at all to follow the crypto-pagan track. Some time ago Ronald Hathaway (1969) and Rosemary Griffith (1997)³⁶ proposed that the author of the Dionysian *Corpus* should be looked for in the circle of Damascius. In the case of Hathaway it seems that eventually Heraiscus became the strongest candidate for being the author of the *Corpus*. However, the appetite to follow through this path to its conclusion seems limited. Opinions like that of Rosemary A. Arthur, as expressed in her recent book of 2008, are more typical. According to Arthur the crypto-pagan hypothesis has to be abandoned on the grounds that "[y]et here and there in the text,

suggests also that a Dionysian interpretation of symbols of liquids implies a connection to pagan libation rituals (ibid. p. 114).

³⁴ In his commentary on the letter, Rorem says that "both explicitly and implicitly, Dionysius presents God in the Neoplatonic language of 'remaining, procession, and return (or reversion)'" ; Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, p. 27; but Rorem seems to be unaware of the specific Proclean background of this concrete piece of Dionysian exegesis. Proclus' crater passages are relevant here, but even more *Theol. Plat.* IV, especially 46, 7 – 48, 9, which seems to me to be the context inspiring Dionysius.

³⁵ Robert Lamberton in his *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist allegorical reading and the growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1986) comes very close to the crypto-pagan hypothesis in his comments on Hathaway's position. However, for Lamberton, too (ibid. p. 249), the "deliberate masquerading" carried out by the author of the *Corpus* means ultimately "a christianization (or more properly a de-paganization)" of Proclean thought. Lamberton thinks that Dionysius was most probably "in fact an Athenian Neoplatonist, and he may well have been a Christian student of Proclus himself" (ibid. p. 232. Stock (*Theurgisches Denken*, 2008) in her study otherwise providing one of the best current discussions of the status of the Dionysian studies and especially authorship question unfortunately ignores Mazzucchi's contribution.

³⁶ See Hathaway, *Hierachy*; and R. Griffith, "Neo-Platonism and Christianity: Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius," *Studia patristica* 29 (1997), pp. 238-43.

like granules of gold in a muddy river bed, are passages which could only have been written by a devout Christian”.³⁷

In Mazzucchi’s view Hathaway’s opinion is based on a happy intuition, while he sees his own contribution as a “motivated proposal.” (He seems not to be aware of that of Griffith.)³⁸ Mazzucchi feels so certain about the force of his arguments that he would like to transfer the burden of proof to those who deny Pseudo-Dionysius being Damascius.³⁹ According to Mazzucchi, the Dionysian *Corpus* is literary fiction, made up by Damascius, and “represents an extreme counter-offensive of paganism against the already dominant Christian thought”. The purpose of the false writings “would, therefore, be to transform Christianity into Neoplatonism in all respects”. Giovanni Reale represents Mazzucchi’s findings as a working hypothesis which, however, still requires, “in order to be accepted, [some form of] analytical control of the linguistic and conceptual concordance and correspondence between the *Corpus* and the *De principiis*, Damascius’ masterpiece...”⁴⁰

Mazzucchi begins his treatment by listing the persons mentioned in the *Corpus*. He thinks that persons who are known only from this source are most probably literary fictions. He introduces the problem of Hierotheus with the famous description of Dionysius and his master’s presence in the dormition of the Virgin and points out that Dionysius’ testimony was actually one of the main sources in the development of the dogma of κοίμησις.⁴¹

In his listing of the surviving and lost Dionysian works, Mazzucchi proposes that the latter group never existed. “This system of self-quotations does not only allow Dionysius to redirect to another location (which does not exist) a reader who wants to know his thoughts on two key issues, such as sin and redemption, but it also helps us to determine the succession of his bibliography, which is constituted - as it happens! - by twelve works, five surviving and seven lost.” Mazzucchi thinks that these numbers are not accidental but have symbolic value, but he says that he has not found so far a persuasive explanation for what that might be.⁴²

Mazzucchi does not see Dionysius as a defender of Monophysitism but thinks that the author’s starting-point is (Chalcedonian) affirmative theology, and he ends with a (Neoplatonic) apophatic and mystical vision. He summarizes the *Corpus* system into a set of five principles:

³⁷ R.A. Arthur, *Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist: the development and purpose of the angelic hierarchy in sixth-century Syria* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. x-xi.

³⁸ C.M. Mazzucchi, “Damascio, autore del *Corpus Dionysiacum*, e il dialogo Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης,” *Aevum* 80 (2006), pp. 299-334. The article is reprinted as an “integrative essay” (pp. 707-62) concluding with the new Italian version (with Greek text) of the Dionysian *Corpus* in P. Scazzoso and E. Bellini (eds, with introduction by Giovanni Reale), *Dionigi Areopagita. Tutte le opere* (Milan, 2009). Translations from this text are mine (TL).

³⁹ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” p. 753.

⁴⁰ G. Reale, “Introduction,” in *Dionigi Areopagita*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” pp. 714-17.

⁴² Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” pp. 717-19.

- 1) All proceeds from God as emanation without God's (personal) thought and will,
- 2) there is no evil,
- 3) God is absolutely unknowable,
- 4) the role of Christ, human-god, is to prompt humanity to ascend to and unite with God, with the ascending process opposite from the derivation of reality from the primal cause,
- 5) the Church is constituted according to a strict hierarchy as an image of angelic hierarchy, and it could not be otherwise because a gradual hierarchy is a godly norm for Being and Truth itself.⁴³

According to Mazzucchi there is no room in Dionysian thinking for a personal God, i. e. “for the terrible mystery of liberty, for the Creator, or for evil and sin which have required redemption through the Cross ... Indeed, one might even wonder where the space is for Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴

In his treatment of the reception of the *Corpus* in Byzantine ecclesiastical culture in the 6th and 7th century, Mazzucchi also presents the famous inverse thesis of the scholiast, who made Proclus a plagiarist of Dionysius. Referring to Suchla’s opinion, Mazzucchi thinks that the author of the scholion could be John Scythopolis.⁴⁵

Mazzucchi’s opinion is that there was a radical difference between Dionysius’, the apologists’, and the Church Fathers’ use of “Platonism”. These latter representatives of early Christian thought regarded Platonism as an incomplete anticipation of some Christian tenets, which Christianity superseded. Contrary to this view, the *Corpus* made Neoplatonism the substance of Christianity, and all the rest (dogmas, rituals, and so on) are only accidents. Earlier attempts to introduce “Platonism” to Christianity had no need for such a meticulously crafted fiction as that which Dionysius produced. For this reason Mazzucchi concludes that the *Corpus*

“...seems to be the ultimate weapon in the battle against the Christian struggle, which was going to end in certain defeat, unless a stroke of genius, a painstaking effort, and the coldest confidence could succeed at the last moment to turn the winners into losers. I think that precisely this happened, and the great man who carried out this undertaking was the philosopher Damascius, in the years when he lived in Athens as the last head of the Academy.”⁴⁶

According to Mazzucchi, Damascius had lost all hope for the restoration of paganism through political action, and this is seen in his famous passage of the “attempts” after Julian in Damascius’ *Philosophical History*. The Neoplatonic circle was capable of creating Christian fiction because it had sufficient acquaintance with the Christian traditions. Damascius was the right man to carry out such a bold action,

⁴³ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” pp. 721-23.

⁴⁴ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” p. 724.

⁴⁵ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” pp. 727-29.

⁴⁶ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” p. 736.

if we trust the description of his psychological character noted by Photius and seen in his style, argumentation, and even in some of his explicit statements, which portray his most outstanding traits: “absolute, unwavering self-confidence” and “sense of superiority”.⁴⁷

Analysing more closely Damascius’ attempt to absorb Christianity into Neoplatonism, Mazzucchi returns to the image of Hierotheus. The interpretative key to explaining how the *Corpus*’ fictive characters and enigmatic stories reveal Dionysius’ own life is the idea that they correspond to real persons and real events in Damascius’ life. The story of Apollophanes and Dionysius bearing witness to an eclipse in Hieropolis of Egypt corresponds to what Asclepiades told about celestial appearances witnessed by him and later Damascius and Isidorus themselves in the Heliopolis of Syria.

Mazzucchi also sees the same kind of isotonic symmetry between the names of Apollophanes and Asklepiades. The dormition of the Virgin corresponds in Damascius’ personal life to the funerals of Hermeias’ spouse Aidesia, on which occasion Damascius had the honour of making a speech. Mazzucchi finds striking similarities in the words with which Damascius describes how Proclus and the Athenian philosophers paid respect to Aidesia during her visit to Athens (ὁ τε ἄλλος χορός τῶν φιλοσόφων καὶ ὁ κορυφαῖος Πρόκλος) and the Dionysian tale of the company of the Apostles and leading hierarchs who were present at the last terrestrial moments of Mary (Πέτρος and) ἡ κορυφαία καὶ πρεσβυτάτη τῶν θεολόγων ἀκρότης. Then Mazzucchi concludes that Hierotheus refers to Damascius’ teacher, Isidorus. “There is no doubt that in the life of Damascius, Isidorus and Proklos had analogous roles (with the apostle Paul). Παῦλος – Πρόκλος; Ἱερόθεος – Ἰσιδώρος; Διονύσιος – Δαμάσκιος. They share the same initials, finals, isosyllaby, and isotony.”⁴⁸

Mazzucchi points out that the name “Hierotheus” is otherwise unknown to Greek sacral and profane literature, that it does not appear in the papyrology, and that the few cases of its appearance in Medieval times are derived from the personality invented by the Areopagite. In principle, this name could, according to Mazzucchi, possibly be formed following the model of φιλόθεος. Is it by pure chance, asks Mazzucchi, that the only known occurrence of Hierotheus comes from the honorary epigraph for the fallen heroes of a battle in 409 BC, which was raised on the side of the road from the city to the site of the Academy? The name of Proclus’ *Elements* given in plural to the cited work of Hierotheus is, according to Mazzucchi, Damascius’ provocative way of expressing contempt for the credulity of the Christians.⁴⁹

One more argument for the Damascian origin of the *Corpus* could be found even in *De divinis nominibus* which according to Mazzucchi is the only work of Dionysius for which it is not easy to find a equivalent in the Neoplatonic traditions. There is

⁴⁷ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” pp. 738-47.

⁴⁸ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” p. 748.

⁴⁹ Mazzucchi, “Damascio,” pp. 748-49.

however one precedent, Porphyry's work *Περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων*. Dionysius refers to "Father" in many places of his works, but just here in his list of the divine names, this single and most important name for God in the Christian tradition is not to be found. Dionysius' position could be defended on the ground that he is not interested here in dealing with the names of God regarding the different persons of the Trinity but rather in the sense that they refer to the Trinity as such. However, the facts remain that the concept of God-Person, acting as a subject of will (volition) *θέλημα*, is faint and almost imperceptible in Dionysius. In his Mystical theology Father and Son are replaced by the abstract Fatherhood and Sonship (*πατρότης, υἱότης*).⁵⁰

Before concluding, Mazzucchi adds two more arguments. He refers to Procopius, who tells us of a man named Arsenius, a Samaritan by religion, but nevertheless so well versed in Christian thought, that he could play the role of theological councillor to the emperor and compose writings supporting Justinian's Christological views. This seems to be for Mazzucchi some kind of parallel to Damascius as a person, who, though a non-Christian, had sufficient knowledge of Christian theology to formulate an opinion about it.

The second argument is congruity of style. Mazzucchi spaciouly quotes Photius' assessment of Damascius' style and points out that the characteristics mentioned by Photius are not in effect to be found in the surviving fragments of the *Vita Isidori* but instead describe aptly the Dionysian *Corpus*; they also have some similarity with the most elated passages of Damascius' *De principiis*. These characteristics are:

- 1) Writing in an authoritative (and authoritarian) tone,
- 2) Use of extended periods without reasonable measure,
- 3) Construction of phrases which are not well articulated but dense and strange,
- 4) Continuous increase in the use of *ὑπέρ* and analogous decorations.⁵¹

Mazzucchi believes that Damascius did not enter his forgery into circulation in Athens because the manoeuvre would have been easily revealed in that small city. Instead, he used his contacts in Alexandria and indirectly in Emesa for dissemination, thus bringing about the emergence of the Syriac translation of the *Corpus* by Sergius of Reshaina and the exegesis of John of Scythopolis.⁵²

Finally, Mazzucchi produces some fanciful speculations about what Justinian, who according to Mazzucchi was aware of the affair through his secret services, might have thought about this operation. The article concludes with reflections about an interesting anonymous treatise on political theory (*Περὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιστήμης*). Its author was very keen on the ideas of hierarchy and ideology representing an imperial system as an image of divine order, and for this reason Mazzucchi seems to deal with him as a representative of parallel ideas to those of Damascius, but it escapes me why

⁵⁰ Mazzucchi, "Damascio," p. 753.

⁵¹ Mazzucchi, "Damascio," pp. 756-57.

⁵² Mazzucchi, "Damascio," p. 759.

this topic should be necessarily raised with the issue of the Damascian origins of the Dionysian *Corpus*.⁵³

The Problems with Mazzucchi's Position

The first point in my critical remarks is that Mazzucchi's summary of the Dionysian principles is unpersuasive. The question is much more nuanced, both with regard to Dionysius as with pagan Neoplatonism, than Mazzucchi allows for. There are also passages in Dionysius which resemble the traditional view of creation in the spirit of mainstream Christianity. Then again, it could be argued that there are elements to do with "thought" and "will" also in the pagan Neoplatonist assertions concerning the highest divinity. That Plotinus ascribed some kind of noetic life for his primal One is, I assume, a widely held opinion in scholarship, and even Damascius could attribute some kind of volition to the One.

Nor is Mazzucchi's position regarding Dionysius' whole-sale denial of the existence of evil convincing. Even if Dionysius had held this opinion, it would not have been Neoplatonic. In fact Dionysius' concept of evil is very similar to that of Proclus. For Proclus the problem of evil arises naturally from partial points of view on reality, and evil is not non-existent but a parasitic side-effect of the real causes.

That God is absolutely unknowable is not a concept which should define one who holds it as a Neoplatonist. For example, the Cappadocian Fathers subscribed to such an idea. In pagan Neoplatonism this question has nuances as well. For Damascius the ultimate ineffability of the first principle is a basic tenet, but at the same time he held the view that the second principle, corresponding to that of the original Neoplatonic One, is in some sense knowable.

Mazzucchi's explanation of why Dionysius refers to his own and to Hierotheus' (fictitious) works I find basically correct. There is no sectarian fury in the Dionysian *Corpus*. Dionysius did not take a clear stand on the Christological controversy: if he was a Monophysite, this trait was so mild that the Neo-Chalcedonian John could have easily turned him into an adherent of Orthodoxy. Whenever he approaches problematic discrepancies in the contemporary debate, he refers to an inexistent further discussion of inexistent works. Thus his partisanship will ultimately remain without definitive corroboration. As a consequence, the fact that he rather avoids than transcends the controversy of Christ's nature seriously weakens interpretations which construe his principal motive as an attempt to resolve this controversy.

Mazzucchi's emphasis on Christ's absence in the Dionysian *Corpus* seems to be in line with Vanneste's critique,⁵⁴ but this interpretation has been strongly challenged by

⁵³ Mazzucchi, "Damascio," pp. 761-62. Mazzucchi's title suggests a comparison between Damascius and the author of the anonymous dialogue, but the latter is dealt with only in the two last pages of the study, which as a whole comprises of more than sixty pages.

other scholars. Both Mazzucchi and Vanneste, and many others, seem to think that somehow they have at their disposal an adequate concept of “genuine” Christianity with which to compare and judge Dionysius’ works. In effect, this kind of measure is after all very difficult to define.

Mazzucchi puts far too much weight on his argument regarding the isosyllaby and isotony of names: this argument seems to me to be particularly weak. However, pondering Hierotheus’ role in the *Corpus*, he comes very close to a solution which I admit is plausible. A forged book of Hierotheus was known in the Syriac monastic communities in the sixth century. Its connection to a person invented by the author of the Dionysian *Corpus* is not clear. Perczel in his contribution from 2008 thinks that the *Corpus* was originally born as an esoteric work among the Origenists.⁵⁵ Sheldon-Williams suggests that Dionysius introduced Hierotheus in order to cover his pagan sources.⁵⁶ This explanation is not quite satisfactory. Why would he need Hierotheus when he was a man of wisdom himself? Even more difficult is the explanation for why he would render Hierotheus a master on Christian issues as well. Why is the apostle Paul not enough? Dionysius refers to and also quotes Hierotheus’ book, the *Elements of Theology*. The title in itself is significant because it alludes to Proclus’ systematic treatise.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ J. Vanneste, *Le mystère de Dieu* (Bruges, 1959).

⁵⁵ A.L. Frothingham JR, *Stephen Bar Sudhaili. The Syrian mystic (c. 500 A.D)* (Leiden 1886, repr. Amsterdam, 1981). See also I. Perczel, “The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius,” in Coakley and Stang (eds), *Re-thinking*, pp. 27-41.

⁵⁶ I.P. Sheldon-Williams, “Pseudo-Dionysius,” in A.H. Armstrong (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 457, introduces Hierotheus as “possibly” being a fictive character. In an earlier article originating from 1963, Sheldon-Williams, “The pseudo-Dionysius and the holy Hierotheus,” *Studia Patristica* 8.2 (1966), pp. 108-117, was still defending the interpretation according to which Hierotheus was a historical person and most probably a bishop. Sheldon-Williams’ attempt to link Dionysius’ thought to that of the predecessors of Proclus was influenced by the first wave of “revanchist” readings, culminating in the late 1950s (Pera, Turolla, Elorduy), and was hardly convincing then and is certainly out-of-date today. Because of the striking similarity between the Proclean doctrine of love and that which Dionysius attributes to his master, Ysabel de Andia (*Henosis*, p. 153) says that “one could ask whether Hierotheus is Proclus”.

⁵⁷ “The book attributed to this fictive teacher carries a name which calls to mind Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*”, says also René Roques in his introduction to Maurice de Gandillac’s *Denys l’Aréopagite* (my translation, TL): *La Hiérarchie céleste* (Paris, 1958), p. 103. Equally intriguing is the name of the other work attributed by Dionysius to his mentor: *Erotic Hymns*. As we know, Proclus was also a great hymn writer and among his surviving poetry we have two hymns celebrating Aphrodite. In contribution to the speculation about the chosen identity of the author I agree with the view that the placeholder offered by St. Paul was almost destined to be filled by some contemporary in need of apostolic authority, but from the view point of the crypto-pagan hypothesis it can be argued also that Dionysius is a very appropriate name. One of the main theories of the *Corpus* is the doctrine of divine love, and for Proclus Aphrodite was ἐρωτοτόκος, “Love-bearer” (Procl., *Hymni*. 2.11.13) and goddess in the providential love of a superior deity for Dionysus (*In Crat.* 180). The Areopagite dedicated his works to Timotheus, Paul’s disciple from Asia Minor. Suchla sees here one more argument for her theory of the *Corpus* being Neoplatonic philosophy subsumed under a Pauline view (*Dionysius*, p. 19). Let us remember

My suggestion is that Hierotheus' passages are consciously worked out in a way that they closely resemble the passages where Proclus repeatedly praises his mentor Syrianus and recognizes his debt to him. Thus we have in Proclus a chain of the gods, Plato, Syrianus, and Proclus himself; in Dionysius we have a chain of Christ, Paul, Hierotheus, and the Areopagite himself. I claim that the literary figure of Hierotheus is produced intentionally in order to evoke the image of Syrianus in Proclus.⁵⁸

Mazzucchi's notion of the exceptionality of the *Divine Names* in the Neoplatonist tradition is not completely true because we find in Proclus similar studies, e. g. in the *Platonic Theology* and in his commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*.

A sufficient explanation is lacking for Mazzucchi's claim that Damascius tried to portray Neoplatonism as a substance of Christianity. Defence of the traditional Greek religions was the *raison d'être* of the Athenian school. Helping to transform the Christian view of the highest god from an "ontological-creationist-voluntaristic" conception to a "henological-emanative-transcendental" one would not have been enough for them. But Neoplatonists were naturally concerned about the direction in which Christianity was developing. Thus why should falsifiers not introduce themes that could help the state religion to assume a more pleasant form? There are places where Dionysius seems to advocate genuine toleration. What is most remarkable is that he does not deride or aggressively criticize pagan cults.⁵⁹ Pagan Neoplatonists would have found the idea of "defeat" difficult to grasp considering their cyclical view of history and culture. Nevertheless, they would have valued the survival of the Neoplatonist texts in anticipation of a future recovery after a temporary "defeat" in their medium- to long-term view of the future.

Mazzucchi's findings on the parallels of Dionysius' autobiographical data in his *Philosophical History* and in tales told in the *Corpus* are important and significant, but they do not prove that Dionysius was Damascius. They only show that the author of the *Corpus* was aware of Damascius' work.

that Proclus dedicated his *Platonic Theology* to Pericles, whose hospitality he enjoyed during his self-imposed exile in Lydia. Could this too be a crypto-pagan pointer?

⁵⁸ See CH 20A, EH 376D, EH 392A, EH 424C, DN 648C-652A, DN 680A-684, DN 713A-713, and DN 865B. DN 681A especially comes very close to what Proclus says about Syrianus and his predecessors in *Theol. Plat.* I 6.16-21. Here the holy chorus of the Platonic exegetes is described as truth's bacchantes, that is, ... dionysiases. For Sheldon-Williams, Dionysius' explanation that he is expounding Hierotheus' thought in order to redeem the promise given to a certain Timothy "rings true". He is also of the opinion that "the vividness of language in which Hierotheus is described seems to preclude the possibility that he is a symbolic or type figure" and "such language could surely be used only of a real person" (*Pseudo-Dionysius*, p. 110). Rist ("Pseudo-Dionysius") deals interestingly with the figures of Hierotheus and Apollonophanes, but he also ignores a connection between Dionysius' Hierothean and Proclus' Syrianic passages. Klitenic Wear and Dillon have observed reminiscent terms but do not develop further possible implications of the issue (*Dionysius*, pp. 9-10). We have now an excellent new study of Proclus' eulogies by Syrianus: Angela Longo, "L'elogio di Siriano e i proemi dottrinali procliani," *Ktema* 35 (2010), pp. 137-144.

⁵⁹ Dionysius' conciliatory tone is noted among others by Schäfer, *Philosophy*, p. 109.

The earliest unequivocal mentioning of the Dionysian *Corpus*, as Mazzucchi points out, was made when Severus referred to *De divinis nominibus* in his polemics against the apothartodocetist Julian of Halicarnassus. Severus' writing bears the exact date of the year 839 in the Seleucid era (= 528 AD). Four years later, the Monophysite party turned to these writings in preparation for the discussion between the Severians and the Chalcedonian Diophysites under the aegis of the emperor Justinian.⁶⁰ In these discussions the Chalcedonians raised doubts about the authenticity of the *Corpus*. Dionysius is mentioned as well in one of Severus' letters which dates either in the same year, 532, or possibly as early as 510. According to René Roques "one can say without temerity that the Areopagitica must have been written either before 525 or before 510."⁶¹ The first known scholiast to comment on Dionysius in detail was John of Scythopolis, who was active in this work already in the 530s.⁶² He tried not only to demonstrate the authenticity of the *Corpus* but also its doctrinal compatibility with the Synod of Chalcedon.⁶³

István Perczel has recently proved Dionysius' great dependence on Proclus' *Platonic Theology*.⁶⁴ The transmission of the *Platonic Theology*, according to its authorities, Father Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, tells us that⁶⁵

"The *Platonic Theology* was almost unquestionably Proclus' last work. It was definitely edited long after Proclus' death, during the last years of the Athenian Academy (that is to say not long before 529, possibly by Simplicius), and the magnum opus of Proclus

⁶⁰ Zacharias Rhetor, *HE*, IX 15. For an English translation of the document see W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 362-66.

⁶¹ R. Roques, "Denys l'Aréopagite," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique* 3 (1957), cols 244-429 at 249. Generally forgeries of late antiquity, whether used in an intra-Christian battle or in a struggle between Christianity and paganism, were not left to linger but were used immediately. A Christian collection of false oracles, in which, for example, Apollo declares his defeat in the hands of Saint Mary, was compiled in the reign of Emperor Zeno (474-491) and refers to the oracles supposed to be revealed as recently as during the period of Leo I (457-474); see F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 22-23. The Oracle of Baalbek produced 502-5, was directed against Monophysites and the emperor Anastasius and was also intended for immediate use, see Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, pp. 140-141. Thus The Dionysian *Corpus*, too, was probably not produced long before its first public use. Rosemary Arthur (*Pseudo-Dionysius*, p. xi) is of the opinion that "round about 530" would be better dating than the customary "round about 500".

⁶² For I.P. Sheldon-Williams, the probable date for John's scholia is 529: "The reaction against Proclus," in Armstrong (ed.) *Cambridge History*, pp. 473-78. Rorem and Lamoureux defend with good grounds a later date, ca. 540, P. Rorem and J.C. Lamoureux, "John of Scythopolis on Apollinarian Christology and the Pseudo-Areopagite's True Identity," *Church History* 62 (1993), pp. 469-82.

⁶³ John wanted to convince fellow Chalcedonians that the Dionysian *Corpus* was not one of the forgeries of the adversary party. See the references under note 61 and P. Rorem and J.C. Lamoureux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford, 1998).

⁶⁴ See Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology."

⁶⁵ Saffrey and Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne*, I, especially cl-clvi and VI, especially xliv-liv.

was never explicitly cited by and possibly not even known to the Neoplatonists of Alexandria and Gaza.”

In fact, along with Damascius and Simplicius, Dionysius is the only late-antique philosopher who extensively utilizes Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*. No work of Proclus was as important for Dionysius as the *Platonic Theology*, Perczel writes.⁶⁶ Damascius assumed his position as head of the school at the latest in 515.⁶⁷ Dionysius could not have done without the *Platonic Theology*, and yet this text was then available only to insiders at the Academy. Mazzuchi’s argument about the relations between Damascius’ *Philosophical History* and Dionysius, and my own readings thus far, convince me to think that the *Corpus*’ author was aware of the Damascian works. If these findings are connected to Perczel’s findings regarding the importance of the *Platonic Theology* for Dionysius and to Saffrey’s and Westerink’s on the editorial history of that work, then for me the obvious conclusion is that the author of the *Corpus* was someone who belonged to the inner circle of the Academy during the time of Damascius.

There is – to state it in a Dionysian manner – a superabundant amount of technical terminology in the Dionysian *Corpus*, which is typical of Athenian Neoplatonism. In fact, Dionysius is the most theurgical writer after Proclus, as can be seen if one counts his explicit mentionings of the term “theurgy” and its derivatives (48 in Dionysius, 51 in Proclus).⁶⁸ This is even more significant if we take into account the different size of the two *corpora*. Dionysius also frequently uses the term *synthema* in a peculiar mystical sense, a usage which originated in the *Chaldaean Oracles* and was later re-introduced to the kernel of the Neoplatonist doctrine by Iamblichus after which it faded away.⁶⁹ The compound *ἐρὰ συνθήματα* occurs only in Damascius and Dionysius.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Platonic Theology*,” p. 496. Saffrey also sees the *Platonic Theology* with Proclus’ *Commentary of Plato’s Parmenides* as background of the entire Dionysian work, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne*, VI li.

⁶⁷ Thus Combés in his introduction, L.G. Westerink and J. Combés, *Damascius, Traité des Premières Principes*, I, (Paris, 1986), p. xix.

⁶⁸ I will not now go into the issue of the relationships between Neoplatonist and Dionysian theurgy, which have been in recent times a topic of many excellent studies; note especially Shaw, “Neoplatonic Theurgy”, and Stock, *Theurgisches Denken*, mentioned above note 20; and D. Burns, “Proclus and the Theurgic Liturgy of Pseudo-Dionysius,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004), pp. 111-32, but it would be worthwhile to be reconsidered. It is enough to recall here that Saffrey points out that Dionysius and his commentator John of Scythopolis subscribed also to one of the most enigmatic dimension of understanding the goal of theurgy: that of “making themselves god(ly)”, which goes clearly beyond the traditional Christian theory of deification (of the soul): *Recherches*, p. 244. But on the most generic level, theurgy simply means the practical, sacramental, and liturgical aspects of religion. In the 6th century, terminology did not necessarily have the strange, magical aura of modern studies. Thus John the Lydian (*De mensibus* 102.7-14) could call Julius Caesar a theurgist, when he tried to explain in Greek terms what the Latin word *pontifex* signifies.

⁶⁹ Most of the uses of this term in Dionysius are to be found in *Ep.* 9.

⁷⁰ *Ep.* 9 1.43, *Damasc. In Parm.* 94.18. For other possible dependencies of Dionysius on Damascius’ style, terminology, and concepts, see Griffith, “Neoplatonism and Christianity.”

That Athenian Neoplatonism is the spiritual home of the author of the *Corpus* is undeniable. But if we are trying to locate more precisely the author's position within this tradition, it seems to me that Dionysius is a post-Proclean parallel to Damascius rather than a follower of distinctly Damascian ideas. The Dionysian *Corpus* shares Damascius' pursuit of enhancing the transcendence of the first principle and uses some common terms as well. As is shown above, its biographical passages seem to suggest that they have been modeled on Damascius' works. But the doctrinal content clearly shares no reformulation or rectification of the Proclean system which were peculiar to Damascius. Its style and modes of presentation are not, as Mazzucchi argues, similar to those of Damascius. He too has elated chapters but much less than Proclus, for example, in his polished prefaces. Damascius' difficulty does not lie in his language or style but comes from the very specific context of his effort which is an aporetic dialogue with the Proclean system. In my view, Damascius is actually a lucid but uncompromising writer who is unwilling to simplify topics in order to analyse them; rather, he examines them with hypercritical thoroughness. Since his whole thought and mode of presentation is inherently joined with his predecessors' teachings, he requires from the reader a deep knowledge of the Proclean system.

Then again, Dionysius has a very modest amount of proper philosophical argument too, as he states dogmas and tries to keep his wording in a constantly inspired tone. This pompous, hyperbolic language and preciousness permeates the work throughout and causes for some readers (including myself) a feeling of strangeness and general sense of affectation.⁷¹ But these are subjective experiences of reading; others may with good grounds think differently seeing in the Dionysian style an example of the mystical language of unsaying, an attempt to go to the outer limits of language in order to capture the transcendent. *Gustibus non est disputandum*: we cannot use the style of this writer as an argument to judge the authenticity of his discourse.

The basic weakness of Mazzucchi's approach is shared by all other attempts to prove Dionysius' partisanship (whether it is Chalcedonian, Monophysite, Origenist, or whatever). Dionysius' works were after early misgivings enthusiastically accepted by all contending parties of the Christological controversy, and he was destined to be hailed as a master of Christian apophatic theology and mysticism.

The Dionysian *Corpus* is Christian by its reception and its overt claim. But we can only guess at its intention on the basis of its content and our knowledge of the historical context of its birth. Vanneste's guess that the intention was a personal project without a definite audience is as defensible as, for example, Schäfer's that it was an attempt directed at the Christian audience in order to assure Christians of the rational basis of their doctrines. But it cannot be denied that the intention might have been crypto-

⁷¹ He even has *αὐτοῦπεραγαθότης* (DN 820E). Some of his best formulations belong to the most effective and touching literary pieces of Later Neoplatonism, and some are so soaked with hyper- and privative language that they are touching on parody. Among the first group, for example, DN 869C-D and among the latter MT 997A-B.

pagan. Stating that this specific crypto-pagan intention was an attempt to smuggle pagan Neoplatonism into rival spiritual currents and transform its “substance”, as Mazzucchi does, is in my opinion claiming too much. I think that a more plausible version of the crypto-pagan hypothesis is to assume that the operation was carried out in a situation where the school was preparing to go underground and was pondering the best possible conditions of recovery in the medium-long term perspective of the future.

For Whose Benefit was the Corpus Created? – The Later Neoplatonist Predicament

Let us now deal with the last question of this inspection: *Qui prodest, cui bono*. What were the real motives behind this forgery? Saffrey says that Dionysius wanted to give Christians the best of the philosophy of his times, that he wanted to express Christian truths within the philosophical concepts of the age. A secondary motive according to Saffrey was to convert pagan intellectuals. Dillon’s and Klitenic Wear’s explanation could be called a radicalized version of Saffrey’s. In their view Dionysius’ immediate motive was to overcome the Chalcedonian-Monophysite controversy by producing a solution that would have been acceptable to both parties; but the real motive was his will to return to and claim back for Christians the philosophical wisdom that had its primitive roots in the Logos of the Christian God. This “philosophy” was exclusively Christian. This wisdom and truth really belonged to the Christians only. Klitenic Wear and Dillon refer to this project as “despoiling the Hellenes”, and they see Dionysius, as far as this project is concerned, as a successor of Clement of Alexandria.⁷²

Maybe it was so. Never can we irrefutably establish the real motives of the author of the Dionysian *Corpus*. Against Saffrey’s explanation, however, one can say that there was no longer a need for trying to convert pagans with a new form of Christian Neoplatonism. There was such a thing that worked remarkably well, the Platonism of the Cappadocian fathers, which was compatible with Plotinus and, paradoxically, also with Porphyry. If Dionysius was really infatuated with Proclus’ system, is his blatant mode of expropriation psychologically credible? Criticising the second explanation, it is one thing to state, as did Clement, that God’s truth is the same as the original pagan wisdom, which later (post-Christian) paganism deviated from, and it is quite another thing to consciously dissect a concrete body of text, disguise sources of information, and pretend to be its legal owner. Unnamed citation is not the main point here, but the

⁷² Klitenic Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius*, pp. 130-33. Vanneste, *Le mystère*, p. 180, thought that Dionysius was his personal project, and Ben Schomakers is of the opinion that we are dealing with a marvelous demonstration of inter-textual playfulness with no aim to mislead anyone, in his “The Nature of Distance: Neoplatonic and Dionysian Versions of Negative Theology,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 82 (2008), pp. 593-618.

fact that the author's sources were contemporary and that he was transposing "truths" from the "enemy territory" and presenting them as his own.

Fortunately, we need not seek a more complex explanation if the phenomena are explicable by a simpler interpretation using the same evidence. Let us remove futile epicycles. The Neoplatonists had a very concrete motive and tangible need to perform this fraud. Using Tacitus' expression, theirs was not such a "rare age when one can choose his opinions and speak about them".⁷³

The young Proclus aroused astonishment for his courage among his future teachers by openly displaying his fidelity to the old religion when he first arrived in Athens.⁷⁴ Only a decade earlier Christianity had for the first time demonstrated its power in Athens, when severe restrictions were introduced for local pagan cults. There was a serious wave of persecutions at imperial level in the 430s, and the temples of Athens were closed some time before the year 460.⁷⁵ Philosophy had to act not only in the role of the theoretical defender of the traditional cults but also as a kind of substitute for them. Life under the dominant and actively persecuting Christian religion explains why the more esoteric modes were adopted in later Neoplatonism, which reflects the circumstances prevalent at the time.

In 448 an imperial edict decreed Porphyry's treatise *Against the Christians* to be burned.⁷⁶ It is hardly by chance that the most explicit hints at Christianity in Proclus' writings were in his earlier works including his commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus* and the *Republic*. However, Proclus remained confident. He did not feel as though he was living in "an age of anxiety" or at the edge of an abyss, as older scholarship may have sometimes assumed.⁷⁷ Proclus regarded the "great confusion", a phrase with which he alluded to Christianity, as dangerous and powerful, but in his view it was destined to fade away, albeit not in the foreseeable future.⁷⁸ He was thinking in long periods. On the largest scale there was an inevitable cyclical destruction and resurgence of human culture and population, and in the shorter duration of memorable history Platonic

⁷³ Studies that address various dimensions of the predicament of the Later Neoplatonism under Christian dominance, without however raising the question of the Areopagite in this context, include P. Athanassiadi, "Persecution and Response in Late Paganism: The Evidence of Damascius," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993), pp. 1-29; E. Kutash, "The Prevailing Circumstances: Theological Rhetoric and the Athenian School," chapter 2 in *Ten Gifts of the Demiurge: Plato on the Timaeus* (London, 2010); E.J. Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* (Los Angeles, 2010).

⁷⁴ Marinus, *Vita Procli* 11.

⁷⁵ E.J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley, 2006), pp. 96-110.

⁷⁶ *Cod. Iust.* i. 1. 3.

⁷⁷ E.R. Dodds saw in post-Iamblichean Neoplatonists an example of "a despairing intelligentsia which already felt la fascination de l'âbime": "Theurgy and its Relationships to Neoplatonism", p. 59.

⁷⁸ Already a classical study: H.D. Saffrey, "Allusions antichrétiennes chez Proclus, le diadoque platonicien," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 59 (1975), pp. 553-65 = Saffrey, *Recherches*, pp. 201-212.

philosophy too had experienced dark periods and seemingly disappeared in the period between immediate successors of Plato and Plotinus.⁷⁹

The perspective of the immediate future turned darker for Neoplatonists after the suppression of the revolt against Emperor Zeno in the 480s, the last years of Proclus' life. Pamprepius the grammarian, an active figure in the revolt, had been a pupil of Proclus, although not in the inner circle. He tried to add to the power intrigues a dimension of pagan resistance. People of his kind were considered adventurers, if not provocateurs, by the successors of Proclus; for example, Damascius thought that Pamprepius' actions had served only the adversaries.⁸⁰

After the revolt there was a new wave of repression in 488-89, which also affected Neoplatonists in Alexandria. On the side of the monks and fanatical mobs emerged a new group of enemies, the *philoponoi*, who harassed pagan professors working in higher education. They did not want to physically destroy their pagan enemies but pursued their moral surrender with forced conversion. In Alexandria and Gaza they developed a method using an element of provocation to escalate the conflict. Both approaches proved successful: the clandestine pagan shrines were violated and the authorities were reminded of their responsibility to behave as a "secular branch", the clerical authority was reinforced, and pagan intellectuals were terrorized into being baptised. The famous Horapollon of Alexandria and Leontius of Gaza converted in order to return securely home to their teaching.⁸¹ It is even possible that Ammonius, the son of Proclus' companion Hermeias adopted the state religion. Whether or not that was the case Damascius accused him of a shameful compromise and addressed him with the statement "he who has the care of the prevailing religion" (that is the patriarch of Alexandria).⁸² From Ammonius himself we have the assertion, "though the soul may be forced by tyrants to profess an impious doctrine, she can never be forced to inner assent and to belief."⁸³ Simplicius, writing probably not much later,

⁷⁹ For example, Proclus believed in the historicity of the war between the Athenians and the people of Atlantis, he was convinced that Assyrians had observed the stars for 270 000 years and that Egyptian traditions had even longer roots (*In Tim.* I 100.29). From the Neoplatonist point of view humanity could temporarily blind itself and abandon the cult of the gods; however, the defeat could only be of a short or medium duration, and in the great cycle of times all things would return to their natural state.

⁸⁰ Damascius on Pamprepius in his *Philosophical History*, ed. and trans. P. Athanassiadi (Athens, 1999): "Being ambitious and wishing not to appear inferior to anyone, he competed with everybody except Proclus and the other philosophers..." (fr. 112) "Pamprepius was an effective instrument of that Necessity which opposes the good." (fr. 113).

⁸¹ Zacharias, *Vita Severi* 20-26.

⁸² Damascius, *Philosophical History* Fr. 118.

⁸³ The citation has come down to us through Philoponus, *De Caelo* 104.21-23; see Westerink's discussion of it in his introduction: L.G. Westerink (ed. and tr.) *Anonymous prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962), p. xii.

expressed similar thoughts, such as, “under the circumstances of the current tyranny”, when seeking consolation by studying the Stoics.⁸⁴

One additional feature of the situation was the theoretical attacks against Proclus launched by Christian intellectuals which culminated in John Philoponus’ famous work.⁸⁵ These attacks were ominous because Proclus was stamped as an equal to Porphyry, an arch-anti-Christian polemicist. We have an echo of this in the Suda which speaks about how Proclus “used an insolent tongue” against Christianity.⁸⁶ Philoponus’ *Against Proclus* was published in 529, which was the fateful date of Justinian’s legislation, and when Damascius saw his school forcibly closed, he preferred exile to baptism, although he later returned, probably thanks to the good services of the Persian king.⁸⁷ The period of the gathering storm, beginning with events in Alexandria, was also the period of the birth of the Dionysian *Corpus*. The writings of the Areopagite were born not only in constant reference to Proclus but with the precise aim, understandable in these historical conditions, of preserving and protecting the Proclean heritage, securing the survival of Proclus’ writings, especially his main work, the *Platonic Theology*. There is no doubt that the Neoplatonists knew quite well what was going on in the Christian camp, and Damascius especially, who was keenly interested in something which could be called “comparative study of religion”, was familiar with all things Christian, even concerning detailed questions of rites. Dionysius dosed his ingredients well, offering Proclean conclusions without lengthy Proclean argumentation and flavouring with Scriptural citations instead of Orphic materials and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Nothing was served which could have allured pagans versed in Neoplatonic doctrine; the intended consumers were obviously Christians, not pagans. He had only as much Christian doctrine as was needed for claiming minimal credibility and only some hints of the direction which he hoped the Church would take (toleration and the adoption of dogmas not too distasteful to the pagan mind). This meagre doctrinal consideration was presented carefully in the best irenic spirit, avoiding offence to the factions in the intra-Christian struggle without

⁸⁴ Simplicius, *In Enchiridion* 138.19.

⁸⁵ See H. Chadwick, “Philoponus the Christian Theologian,” in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (Ithaca, NY, 1987), p. 42: “The date of his *de Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum* (529) invites the suggestion that Philoponus saw the Athenian affair as an opportunity and a challenge whether he wrote in order to attract Justinian’s favour by an attack on the principal architect of late Neoplatonic dogmatics or to avert unwelcome attention from the Alexandrian philosophers by demonstrating that not all of them were motivated by a cold hatred of Christianity as Proclus was.”

⁸⁶ *Suida Lexicon*, IV, p. 210, Saffrey-Westrink, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne* I clv.

⁸⁷ On the end of the Athenian school see A. Cameron, “The Last Days of the Academy of Athens”, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 15 (1969), pp. 7-29; H.J. Blumenthal, “529 and Its Sequel: What Happened to the Academy?” *Byzantion* 48 (1978), pp. 369-85; G. af Hällström, “The Closing of the Neoplatonic School in A.D. 529: An Additional Aspect,” in P. Castrén (ed.), *Post-Herulian Athens. Aspects of Life and Culture in Athens A.D. 267-529* (Helsinki, 1994), pp. 141-60.

committing himself to any one point of view. His credentials regarding the Christian tradition, on the contrary, were presented with ostentation, verging on arrogance, so that he compelled them to be accepted (or totally rejected), and his general mode of presentation was calculated to contain a monkish aggression and to flatter and seduce the episcopal hierarchy. If a forgery could create the impression among the Christian clergy and authorities that there were more apostolic truths hidden in Proclus, then the master's writings had more of a chance to avoid the same destiny as Porphyry's work.

Of course, there was no constant, active persecution. There were waves of violence and times of distension. Persecution was sporadic, like the earlier persecution against the Church. This irregularity had much to do with the weakness of the repressive power of any pre-modern state. Justinian still could not have even imagined carrying out such a feat as Philip Le Bel was able to do with a simultaneous mass arrest of the Templars in his regime. However, the destruction of books under the vigorous early Byzantine rule turned out to be quite effective after all. In the year 537 Justinian banned the works of the Monophysite leader Severus, and as a consequence none of his Greek manuscripts remain extant. The important point is that if we underestimate the reality of persecution, then we easily slide to the apologetic Christian view according to which the decline of traditional religion was due to its inherent weakness and not to persecution. The function of persecution was to impose silence, then conformism would do its work without active violence. This is how repressive regimes have acted ever since.

Conclusion

Thus, my conclusion is that Mazzucchi is right in seeing the *Corpus Areopagiticum* as a crypto-pagan project. Much of his specific arguments, however, are untenable. Perczel is right in seeing the *Corpus* as an esoteric text, but I do not think that it was Origenist but rather a work which functioned as a pointer to Proclus. Mazzucchi's version represents an infection- or virus-thesis. According to it Damascius realized that the victory of Christianity was inevitable. Then at the last moment he succeeded to inoculate a Neoplatonist notion of God into Christianity. This, I think, is a wrong interpretation of the later Neoplatonists' view of the future. They could not think of their true religion in terms of defeat. They could envisage a long historical period, during which shadow, or "confusion", as Proclus put it, would rule, but according to their view of a constant cyclical process of history victory was on their side: Things would eventually return to their natural (pre-Christian) state. Second, for the specific branch of Athenian Neoplatonism to impregnate the highest God of the monotheistic religion by apophasis and a way of mystical ascent would not result in an acceptable compromise. The reality of the divine henads as genuine gods in all their individuality and the adoration of the whole divine series with a proper cult were really dear and

unforfeitable for Athenian Neoplatonism. It could temporarily live on under forced oppression without the practice of the latter, but not abandon its vision of the former.

The essential pagan ingredient in the Dionysian *Corpus* is its Proclean-Damascian completeness. It simply contains too much of this element for a Christian project, and the author was acting in a time when the “Pauline” project of integrating Christianity with philosophy had already long been consummated. Playing with the duplicated pseudo-identities (Hierotheus and Dionysius) could be easily explained by pointer theory. This conclusion cannot be proven, but neither are any of the alternatives fully demonstrable. Thus we are left with conjectures, where each reader should ponder which guess appears more plausible. What is needed is further investigation of such topics as, for instance, the image of holy guide and master – Syrianus in Proclus and Hierotheus in Dionysius, the relationship of Dionysian monotheism and Christology to Proclus’ henadology, and more detailed comparative studies between Dionysius and pagan Neoplatonists.

It should also be asked what a conscious crypto-pagan hypothesis would mean for evaluating the *Corpus* and its influence philosophically. Even if we concede that the *Corpus* was originally a crypto-pagan project, this does not deprive it, of course, of its afterlife specifically in the Christian mystical tradition. In its reception the *Corpus* was accepted as a Christian source and fulfilled its function as such, and this is also an indisputable historical fact, even though there may be some irony in this. Even if the motive of the author of the *Corpus* was an ulterior one, the theoretical positions in it are still expressed philosophically and deserve to be analysed as such. Keeping this in mind research might benefit in particular from comparing the *Corpus* with the earliest authentic Christian Dionysian tradition beginning with John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor.