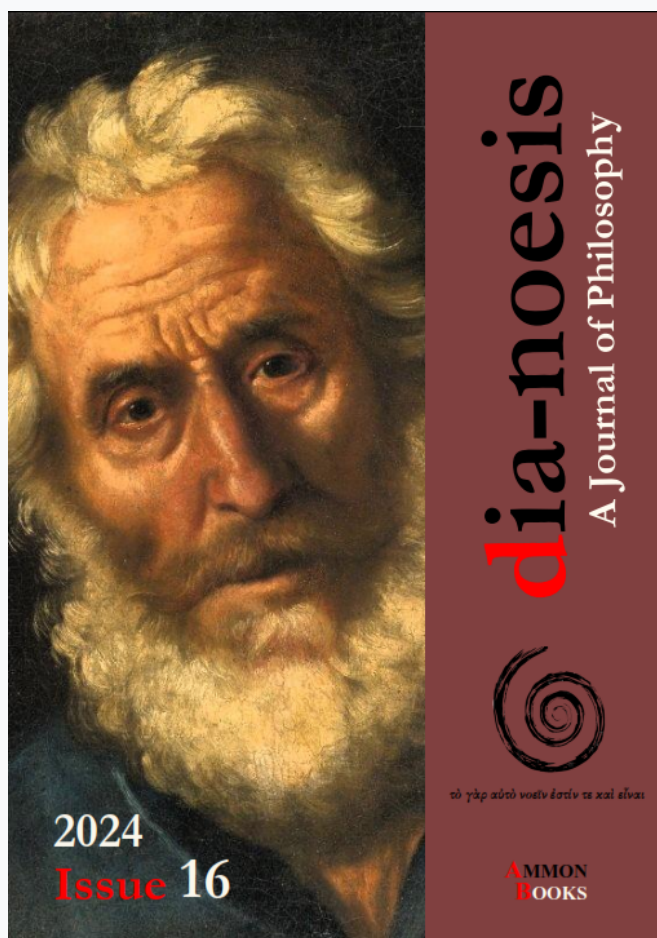


## dianoesis

Vol 16 (2024)

Philosophy in Late Antiquity Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism



### The concept of immutability in Proclus

Lydia Petridou

doi: [10.12681/dia.39534](https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.39534)

#### To cite this article:

Petridou, L. (2024). The concept of immutability in Proclus: Theoretical approaches based on the first book of *Theologia Platonica*. *Dianoesis*, 16, 91–110. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.39534>

## The concept of immutability in Proclus: Theoretical approaches based on the first book of *Theologia Platonica*

Lydia Chr. Petridou,  
*Doctor of Philosophy,*  
*Academic Staff of the Hellenic Open University*  
petridoulydia@yahoo.gr

### Abstract

In this article we examine the concept of “immutability” in the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus. Our reference text is the first book of *Theologia Platonica* and, in particular, the chapters, ιθ' (88.12-94.9) and κζ' (118.10-119.30). This is an eclectic approach on the part of the Neoplatonic thinker, in which he draws material mainly from the *Timaeus* and the *Respublica*. In the context of a clearly hierarchical metaphysical system with deities ontologically and evaluatively situated, the “immutable” is primarily associated with divine simplicity, self-sufficiency and incorruptibility. For this connection, Proclus grounds his reasoning in a series of explanations, which concern metaphysical orders from the hierarchically higher to the hierarchically lower. Furthermore, “immutable” is linked to the concepts of “uniform”, “indissoluble” and “unchangeable”, which also move in the metaphysical domain. The main conclusion that emerges is that it is a concept which is exclusively located on the divine level and is passed on from order to order as a property by analogy. That is, it is related to the process of divine emanation.

**Key-words:** Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*, immutability, simplicity, self-sufficiency, incorruptibility

## Introduction

Proclus the Neoplatonist (412-485), a disciple of Syrianus and head of the Platonic Academy, was active as a writer at a time when philosophical reflection had been restricted as an autonomous and authentic presence<sup>1</sup>. This restriction, however, does not necessarily mean degradation but integration into a new condition of theoretical relations. He composes his theory at one of the most crucial, but also interesting, periods in the history of Philosophy, that is, when the millennia-long enterprise of ancient Greek Philosophy to interpret existence, life, man and the relationship between the natural and metaphysical worlds begins to expire. It is the historical moment when Christianity, with its particular spiritual quests and a familiar worldview, is in the first, but now stable, steps of its maturity.

However, we should not only follow Proclus as a child of his time, but also in terms of what he contributed to all levels of thought. One of his main contributions is that he elevates the transcendent being to the capital principle and target of any philosophical (and theological) analysis, without also criticizing the fundamental formulas of metaphysics, even as regards its epistemological function. By implication, his attitude towards the relevant predicates will be analogous, a matter, however, that requires a thorough reading. The question is this: to what extent is objective attribution of names possible at the moment when the metaphysical paradigm is non-negotiable? In his writings, however, metaphysics is taken to its extreme peaks and is presented as constituting the set of normative principles for any theoretical discipline and for any human activity, while also from a strictly ontological point of view its role in the constitution of the natural system, which appears as permanently

---

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the life and work of the Neoplatonic philosopher, cf. Kroh P., *Dictionary of ancient Greek and Latin writers*, transl. in Greek by Lypourlis L. - Tromara L., University Studio Press, Thessaloniki 1996, pp.402-404; Lesky A., *History of ancient Greek literature*, transl. In Greek Tsopanakis A. G., Kyriakidis Press, Thessaloniki 1981, p. 1208. Rosán L. J., *The philosophy of Proclus. The Final phase of Ancient Thought*, Cosmos, New York, 1949, pp. 11-35.

heteronomous, becomes dominant. Here, the principle of causality plays a dominant role, which constitutes the basic axis of the foundation of traditional Metaphysics, both ontologically and epistemologically<sup>2</sup>.

Attempting to preserve a tradition of research and reflection, his work has an astonishing breadth and systematicity of analysis, combining the historical and the systematic factor and applying the rules of formal Logic<sup>3</sup>. He restores almost the entire literary output of ancient Greek thought - as early as the Homeric epics - to the historical and cultural foreground of his time. In this attempt, his dominant aim was the revival of Platonic Philosophy, which he reconstructed - in some cases radically - according to his own criteria of theoretical foundations, some of which derive from Plotinus<sup>4</sup>. Above all, however, he undertakes a reading of Plato, in whose texts he tests both his own familiar theoretical proposals and those of his time. In this way he indicates how the individual eras will come into dialectical encounter with each other and build the unified diachronic age of the spirit.

---

<sup>2</sup> On the concept of causality in Proclus, cf. books III-VI of his *Theologia Platonica*. Cf. Romano P., «L' idée de causalité dans la Théologie Platonicienne de Proclus», in: Segonds A. Ph. et Steel. C., (eds.), *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, Leuven University Press-Les Belles Lettres, Leuven- Paris 2000, pp.325-337.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for instance, Breton S., «Âme spinoziste, Âme néoplatonicienne», *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 71, 1973, p. 211, where it is pointed out that the Neoplatonic philosopher on a permanent scale consistently delineates concepts and structures his theoretical analyses, giving his arguments a constant course of perspective. As such, we are justified in placing him in the context of the delimitations of epistemological precision, which can be characterized as anything but rigid or museum-like.

<sup>4</sup> On this, cf. Moutsopoulos E., «Ο Πρόκλος ως δεσμός ανάμεσα στην αρχαία και τη νεότερη φιλοσοφία», *Η επικαιρότητα της αρχαίας ελληνικής φιλοσοφίας*, transl. Dragona-Monachou, M., Ελληνικά Γράμματα, Athens 1997, pp.372-385. Cf. Festugière A. J., «Modes de composition des commentaires de Proclus», *Museum Helveticum*, 20/2, 1963, pp.77-100. Also, for Proclus' method, cf. Siassos L., *Recherches sur le méthode et la structure de la stoicheiôsis théologikè de Proclus*, Paris 1983.

His monumental study entitled *Theologia Platonica* summarizes the above and builds a system of Knowledge.

With the above in mind, in the following article we will attempt to approach the concept of “immutability” in the way it is presented in chapter ιθ’ (the title of which is «Τί τὸ ἀμετάβλητον τῶν θεῶν», “what is immutability of gods”) of the first book of Proclus’ treatise entitled *Theologia Platonica* (88.12-94.9), with certain conceptual combinations which are presented in chapter κζ (the title of which is «Τί το μονοειδές, τί τὸ ἀδιάλυτον, τί τὸ ὡσαύτως ἔχον ἐπὶ των θείων ληπτέον», “how should we understand the “uniform”, “indissoluble” and “unchanging” in the divine things” (118.10-119.30) of the same treatise. It should be noted that the Neoplatonic scholar draws his relevant syllogisms here - as he does with the rest of them as a whole - from various Platonic dialogues. That is, it is an eclectic approach on his part, in which in the context here he focuses mainly on the *Tmaeus* and the *Respublica*. Our main aim is to highlight the way in which Proclus structures his metaphysical system, which consists of clearly hierarchical, both ontologically and evaluatively, divine entities, each of which depends directly on its prior cause and indirectly on any prior ones, and ultimately on the One. Correspondingly, each effect is produced in an inverse manner to the above, that is, in the direct and indirect ways which we have mentioned. Clearly, it is also to come to the fore how the status of ontological gifts is constituted, which, on the one hand, are found in a more perfect state in the cause, while, on the other hand, on their way to the effect, they are ontologically transformed, and actually to a lower degree. As a general presuppositional statement, we could contend that in the passages we will investigate, Proclus fruitfully intertwines the metaphysics of transcendence with the metaphysics of immanence, but within a strictly transcendental realm. And his choice is validated in that he not only preserves the immutability of the first ontological state, but also proceeds to give particularly detailed descriptions of the process of the production of new divine entities, which do not differ ontologically from their causes, but reveal the absorptive

mode of their manifestation. Also, they do not intervene as causes, in their productive “procession”, in a diminishing way in the essence of their causes. “Procession” in the metaphysical universe is carried out in terms of hyper-completeness<sup>5</sup>.

### 1. The connection of immutability with divine simplicity, self-sufficiency and incorruptibility

For Proclus, the notion of “immutability” is linked to the gods and to the simplicity of their nature, which consists in their self-sufficiency, their incorruptibility and their identity, qualities which ensure complete self-references<sup>6</sup>. This is a syllogism which the Neoplatonic philosopher will establish as follows: Concerning, first, self-sufficiency, Proclus bases his reasoning on goodness, noting that the gods, being independent of anything and, rather, being the providers of goods, can be defined as all-good («πανάγαθοι»): «Οὐκοῦν ἐξήρηνται μὲν οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ὅλων, ταῦτα δὲ πληροῦντες ὥσπερ εἵπομεν ἀγαθῶν, αὐτοὶ πανάγαθοι τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες»<sup>7</sup>. (“The Gods, therefore, are exempt from the whole of things. But filling these, as we have said, with good, they are themselves perfectly good”<sup>8</sup>). The ultimate term («πανάγαθοι») actually defines the relationship with the absolute good, which, however, each god possesses in a particular way and according to his own hierarchical order. From the reasoning that develops, it emerges that the

---

<sup>5</sup> As a general remark, we would note that the term “procession” describes the successive emanation of hypostases of reality from the One, which also have the inherent tendency to reverse to their source. Cf, for example, cf. *Institutio theologica*, pr.25-39, 28.21-42.7. For an approach to the term, as well as for its connection with the terms “remainings” and “reversion”, cf. the emblematic work of Trouillard, J., *La mystagogie de Proclus*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1982, pp.53-115. Cf. Gersh S., *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1978, pp. 223-225.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Respublica*, II, 380d.1- 381e.7.

<sup>7</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 88.16-18.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor Th., (transl.), *The Theology of Plato*, The Prometheus Trust, 1995, p.103.

absolute good is not divisible («πάλιν δὲ καὶ ἀνταῦθα παραιτησόμεθα τοὺς μεριστῶς ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς τὸ ἄριστον...»<sup>9</sup>) (“but here again, we must oppose those who interpret in a divisible manner that which is most excellent in the Gods...”<sup>10</sup>), so that the assertion according to which what is produced is inferior to the being that produces applies to the whole contained in the series of causes, whose members are not to be confused with each other. But with regard to the case of goodness, for which it is pointed out that each god has received a primordial and all-good supremacy on the basis of the idiom of his ontological position, the question must move primarily to modes of possession and then to those of dependence. That is, first of all, it is of interest that goodness is circulated, while how determinations are performed is a next level of discussion.

In a highly eclectic way, in relation to the Platonic texts, the Neoplatonic philosopher argues, on the one hand, that the first Demiurge is the excellent of causes and, on the other hand, that the goodness of each god is possessed to an absolute degree. With regard to the second remark - which does aurally cause interpretative difficulties - we have to note that, although reference is made to states which are not absolute in character, nevertheless the examination is made with regard to the possession in absolute degree of the relevant property. In our view, the main thing is to show that the good exists absolutely in a divine-archetypal property, but as to the degree of absoluteness which the same must have. So, this absoluteness shows that every god, as to the very thing it is, neither transitions to its higher cause nor exchanges the degree in which it is found for a lower one. By this line of reasoning, it is established that the good is possessed by each god according to his own order and, at the same time, by the whole genus of gods, with the gradations which they alone and exclusively define «καὶ ἕκαστος αὐτῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν ἔχει τὸ ἄριστον καὶ πᾶν ὁμοῦ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος τὸ πρωτεῖον ἔλαχε κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν

<sup>9</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 88.20-22.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 103.

περιουσίαν»<sup>11</sup> (“each of them according to his proper order possesses that which is most excellent; and the whole genus of the Gods is at once allotted predominance according to an exuberance of good”<sup>12</sup>). Provided that, each divine is immutable and remains in itself in the manner appropriate to its ontological texture.

Out of this reference emerge stability and the preservation of the hypostatic identity. We may well argue, in accordance with Proclus, that there is no lack of any of the goods in the metaphysical realm. This affirms that the gods possess the absolute good – each of them in a special way - and, furthermore, that they do not move to any other level as regards their per se state, so that the stability of their unity is ensured as regards the particularity of their status. So, the divine name of “good” is univocal as to its per se state and multivocal as to each individual divine property which it identifies (and accordingly emits)<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. The question of immutability in the physical world, in divine souls, in the intellectual world and in celestial bodies

Specifically on the concept of self-sufficiency, Proclus provides certain clarifications, which are related to the meaning attributed to this term on a case-by-case basis and which we consider necessary to quote at this point, in order to further explain the multi-level nature of his system, based on the assumption that divine self-sufficiency constantly

---

<sup>11</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 88.18-20.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 103

<sup>13</sup> On this, cf. for instance, *Institutio theologica*, pr. 12, 14.1-2, where it is precisely written: «Πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία πρωτίστη τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν». “All that exists has the Good as its principium and first cause” [Dodds E. R. (trans.), *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1963]. The analogous in Christian texts –where polytheism is of course excluded- is that the concept of “goodness” defines in its entirety the divine energies, an issue that is discussed, for example, in the fifth chapter of the *De divinis nominibus* by Dionysius the Areopagite. Cf. for example, *De divinis nominibus*, P.G.3, 816 A-825 C.



relies on purity and hypostatic stability. Approaching this subject, the Neoplatonic philosopher mentions that the natural world can also be described as “self-sufficient” because it is a perfect totality of perfect parts, precisely because it has arisen from the goods granted to it by its demiurge, according to the *Timaeus*<sup>14</sup>: «Ὁ καὶ ὁ Τίμαιος ἡμῖν ἐνδεικνύμενος ἄριστον τῶν αἰτίων τὸν πρῶτον συνεχῶς ἀποκαλεῖ δημιουργόν (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τῶν αἰτίων ἄριστος, ὁ δὲ τῶν γεγονότων κάλλιστος)»<sup>15</sup> (“And Timaeus indicating this to us, continually calls the first demiurgus the best of causes. For the world, says he, is the most beautiful of generated natures, and its artificer is the best of causes”<sup>16</sup>). But it is a perfection which is divided into many, which are gathered into one and completed by their participation in independent causes, in relation to their own presence: «Λέγεται μὲν οὖν καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτάρκης, ὅτι τέλειος ἐκ τελείων καὶ ὅλος ἐξ ὅλων ὑπέστη καὶ συμπεπλήρωται τοῖς οἰκείοις ἅπασιν ἀγαθοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ γεννήσαντος αὐτὸν πατρός· ἀλλ’ ἡ τοιαύτη τελειότης καὶ αὐτάρκεια μεριστὴ καὶ ἐκ πολλῶν εἰς ἓν συνιοῦσα λέγεται καὶ κατὰ μετοχὴν ἀποπληροῦται τῶν χωριστῶν αἰτίων»<sup>17</sup>. (“The world then is said to be self-sufficient, because its subsistence is perfect from things perfect, and a whole from wholes; and because it is filled with all appropriate goods from its generating father. But a perfection and self-sufficiency of this kind is partible, and is said to consist of many things coalescing in one, and is filled from separate causes according to participation”<sup>18</sup>). Therefore,

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bλ. 32d.1-c.7.

<sup>15</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 89.8-11. Note that Proclus does not attribute to the Demiurge the same ontological weight that Plato does. He places him in the last order of the intellectual gods or of the Intellect as the head of the individual creative gods. See in this connection the fifth and sixth books of *Theologia Platonica*. Cf. Dillon, J., “The Role of the Demiurge in the Platonic Theology”, in: *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 339-349; Opsomer J., “Proclus on Demiurgy and Procession: a Neoplatonic Reading of the *Timaeus*”, in: Wright M. R. (ed.) *Reason and Necessity. Essays on Plato’s Timaeus*, Duckworth and The Classical press of Wales, London 2000, pp. 113-143.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 90.14-19.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 104.

here self-sufficiency does not denote independence to an absolute degree, but arises through the relational connection of cause and effect, with the predominance of the former being a given. Under this requirement, we would contend by extension that the materiality of the world, a concept which is associated with the corruption and movement in becoming, cannot be directly related to self-sufficiency in its literal sense, for such an assumption would probably indicate self-creation of the universe.

Accordingly, Proclus moves on to the divine souls, a level dominated by what we would define as unperceivable as matter. Here self-sufficiency is associated with the fullness of the virtues. Again, however, we cannot refer to possession of absolute degree, since a lack of powers is detected. More to the point, divine souls do not possess mental energies and act within time: «Λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὁ τῶν θείων ψυχῶν διάκοσμος αὐτάρκης ὡς ἂν δὴ πλήρης τῶν οἰκείων ἀρετῶν καὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ μακαριότητος τὸ μέτρον ἀεὶ φυλάττων ἀνεκδέξῃ· ἀλλὰ κἀνταῦθα τὸ αὐτάρκες ἐκδέξῃ ἐστὶ δυνάμεων, οὐ γὰρ πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ νοητὰ τὰς νοήσεις ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ χρόνον ἐνεργοῦσι καὶ τὸ παντελὲς τῆς θεωρίας ἐν ταῖς ὅλαις κέκτληται περιόδοις· ἢ τοίνυν αὐτάρκεια τῶν θείων ψυχῶν καὶ τελειότης τῆς ζωῆς οὐχ ὁμοῦ πᾶσα σύνεστι»<sup>19</sup>. (“The order of divine souls also, is said to be self-sufficient, as being full of appropriate virtues, and always preserving the measure of its own blessedness without indulgence. But here likewise the self-sufficiency is in want of powers. For these souls have not their intellections directed to the same intelligibles; but they energize according to time, and obtain the complete perfection of their contemplation in whole periods of time. The self-sufficiency therefore of divine souls,

---

<sup>19</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 90.19-91.1. For a systematic approach of the topic of soul in Proclus, cf. Trouillard J., *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1972; Terezis Ch.- Petridou L., “ Ontological and Epistemological Approaches of Proclus in the Process of Psychogony”, *Philotheos: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology*, 18/1, 2018, pp. 26-50; Finamore J. F - Kutash E., «Proclus on the *Psychê*: World Soul and the Individual Soul», in: D'Hoine P. – Martijn M., (eds.), *All from One: A guide to Proclus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, pp. 122-138.

and the whole perfection of their life is not at once present”<sup>20</sup>). Thus, they are related - but only energetically - to the world of becoming, which, as discussed above, is subject to corruption and, therefore, cannot ensure complete self-sufficiency. As to their substance there is obviously no question, since they maintain their presence in the metaphysical realm. In fact, it is a question that Proclus deals with at length in the first book of his treatise *On Plato's Timaeus*, where he elaborates the connection of souls with time.

In a third approach to this ascending reduction, the Lycian philosopher speaks of the self-sufficiency of the intellectual world, which expressed specifically the universal good within eternity and in which no lack is found. In this case, too, however, self-sufficiency is related to the particular grade to which the intellectual world belongs: «Λέγεται δὲ αὖ καὶ ὁ νοερός κόσμος αὐτάρκης ὡς ἐν αἰῶνι τὸ ὅλον ἀγαθὸν ἰδρυσάμενος καὶ πᾶσαν ὁμοῦ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μακαριότητα συλλαβὼν καὶ μηδενὸς ὦν ἐνδεής, τῷ πᾶσαν αὐτῷ παρεῖναι ζώην, πᾶσαν δὲ νόησιν, ἐλλείπειν δὲ μηδὲν μηδὲ ποθεῖν ὡς ἀπὸν· ἀλλὰ καὶ οὗτος αὐτάρκης μὲν ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ τάξει, τῆς δὲ τῶν θεῶν αὐταρκειᾶς ἀπολείπεται»<sup>21</sup>. (“Again, the intellectual world is said to be self-sufficient, as having its whole good established in eternity, comprehending at once its whole blessedness, and being indigent of nothing, because all life and all intelligence are present with it, and nothing is deficient, nor does it desire anything as absent. But this, indeed, is sufficient to itself in its own order, yet it falls short of the self-sufficiency of the Gods”<sup>22</sup>). In particular, and on the basis of what follows, each intellect may partake of the idea of goodness, but we cannot claim that it is the absolute goodness, nor, of course, the primary Good<sup>23</sup>. But as has

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 104.

<sup>21</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 91.1-7.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 104.

<sup>23</sup> On Proclus' theory on Ideas, cf. for instance, Rosán L. J., *The Philosophy of Proclus*, pp. 158-163. D'Hoine P., «Four Problems Concerning the Theory of Ideas: Proclus, Syrianus and the Ancient Commentaries on the Parmenides», in: Van Riel G., - Macé C., (eds.),

been pointed out, it possesses in the sense of a property absolute goodness. Furthermore, each god who possesses the idiom of henad, authentic being and goodness, in his particularity differentiates the “procession” of each goodness, since one is the perfecting goodness, another the cohesive and another the centralizing goodness. Each, moreover, by being precisely in identity with himself, and not by participation or by illumination, possesses absolute goodness and is self-sufficient.

In other terms, the absolute self-sufficiency of the intellect, soul and universe is rejected, since the first realizes the “by participation”, the second the “by illumination” and the third the “in the divine likeness”, while the god-henads are self-sufficient to an absolute degree, since they fulfill themselves on the one hand and the goods on the other. The hierarchical paradigm is again diffuse, so that the degree of attribution of the same name-predicate is also differentiated. Note parenthetically that such signs of hierarchical polysemy are excluded from the texts belonging to the Dionysian tradition. It is simply that each divine energy absolutely possesses goodness as to its property, but without being in the least superior or inferior in such possession to the others. And certainly the same will be the case with the divine Persons.

But the relation of “self-sufficiency” to “immutability” refers to the concept of the “unchangeable”, which is also found in celestial bodies and the circular motion they perform: «Ἄρ’ οἷον τὸ τοῦ κυκλοφορητικοῦ σώματος; Οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτο παρὰ τῶν χειρόνων οὐδὲν εἰσδέχεσθαι πέφυκεν, οὐδὲ τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ μεταβολῆς ἀναπίμπλαται καὶ τῆς ἐνταῦθα παρεμπιπτούσης ἀταξίας· ἄυλος γὰρ καὶ ἀμετάβλητος ἡ τῶν οὐρανίων σωμάτων φύσις»<sup>24</sup> (“Is it such as that of a [naturally] circulating body? For neither is this adapted to receive anything from inferior natures, nor is it filled with the mutation arising from generation, and the disorder which occurs in the sublunary regions. For the

---

*Platonic ideas and concept formation in ancient and medieval thought*, Leuven University Press, 2004, pp.9-29.

<sup>24</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 91.22-92.1.

nature of the celestial bodies is immaterial and immutable”<sup>25</sup>). Although they are metaphysical properties, they are also found in the natural world. In particular, celestial bodies by nature, that is, because they are immaterial and unchanging, are not subject to any influence from the lower ones. Therefore, they remain unaffected by the degeneration that the world of becoming undergoes. As has already been seen, their incorruptibility, however, is not so much due to their intrinsic nature as to a cause prior to it. Therefore, even in this case, too, we cannot speak in terms of absoluteness, but only in terms of condition, on the basis of the data accompanying the process to which they are subjected and the state in general in which these bodies find themselves, as heteronomously determined by their superior divine entities.

### 3. Explanations for the foundation of immutability in the divine realm

If, again, according to the Proclean syllogism, we consider the immutability with regard to souls, it again emerges that it is interpreted differently from that of the god-henads. In particular, we should keep in mind that souls also participate - as superior, of course - in bodies, so that they are in fact the intermediate between the unseparated and the separated essence: «καὶ γὰρ αὐταὶ κοινωνοῦσί πως σώμασι καὶ εἰσι μέσαι τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριζομένης οὐσίας»<sup>26</sup> (“For these communicate in a certain respect with bodies, and are the media of an impartible essence, and of an essence divided about bodies.”<sup>27</sup>). Even with a minimal participation in material world excludes absolute immutability, which is the term we attempt to prove here as to its integrity on the basis of the rationale analysed. The following is an example clearly indicative of the way in

<sup>25</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 92.6-8. Cf. *Timaeus*, 35a.1-3. Also, for instance, *Institutio theologica*, pr. 20, 22.1-3.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 105.

which the metaphysical domain operates. Specifically, with regard to intellectual substances, the Lycian philosopher notes that upon union with the god-henads, the intellect becomes immutable, hence unified. On the other hand, however, it preserves its complexity, since it keeps in itself a higher and a lower aspect – which provides with elements the lower entities.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, by this line of reasoning too, it is validated that only the gods are primarily immutable and incorruptible, since there is nothing within them that is not one and being in an absolute degree: «Μόνοι δὲ οἱ θεοὶ κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ὑπεροχὴν τῶν ὄντων ἰδρυσάμενοι τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἐνώσεις ἄτρεπτοι κυριώτατα καὶ πρώτως εἰσὶ καὶ ἀπαθειῆς»<sup>29</sup> (“But the Gods alone having established their unions according to this transcendence of beings, are immutable dominations, are primary and impassive”<sup>30</sup>). So, the henads as sources of their lower gods compose all complexity and they lead to the opposite state everything that is led to dispersion and complete separation, while, correspondingly, they deify everything that participates in them, without suffering any effect as to their ontological integrity and without degrading their own unity when they are participated in by the other divine entities.<sup>31</sup> As a result of the above: «Διὸ δὴ καὶ πανταχοῦ παρόντες οἱ θεοὶ πάντων ὁμοίως ἐξήρηνται, καὶ πάντα συνέχοντες ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς κρατοῦνται τῶν συνεχομένων, ἀλλ’ εἰσὶν ἀμειγῆς πρὸς πάντα καὶ ἄχραντοι»<sup>32</sup> (“Hence also the Gods being present everywhere, are similarly exempt from all things, and containing all things are vanquished by no one of the things

---

<sup>28</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, I, 92.8-13. Cf. *Institutio theologica*, pr. 169, 146.24-25.

<sup>29</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 92.13-16.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 105.

<sup>31</sup> On the position of the henads in Proclus’ system, the most important, in our view, analysis is made by Saffrey H. D. and Westerling L. G. in their introduction in the third book of *Theologia Platonica* (*Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne*, v.III, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1978, pp.LI-LXVII). We should also mention that Proclus discusses exhaustively, in the manner of theoretical axioms, the theory of the henads in his treatise *Institutio theologica*, pr.113-165, pp.100.6-144.8.

<sup>32</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 92.25-93.2.

they contain; but they are unmingled with all things and undefiled.”<sup>33</sup>). That is, this is the reason why the gods, while being present everywhere, retain their particularity and, although they function as restraining causes, they are not subordinate to what is restrained, but are pure and unadulterated by anything belonging to the metaphysical universe. Hence, on a permanent scale, each term finds itself in a variety of internal differentiations, according to the region to which it refers.

Regarding the Neoplatonic philosopher’s positions about the sensible world, we have to note that it is not without changes as it is linked to the form of the body: «Τὸ δὲ τρίτον λέγεται μὲν καὶ ὁ κόσμος οὗτος ὡσαύτως ἔχειν καθ’ ὅσον ἄλυτον αἰὲν κρατουμένην ἔλαχε τὴν ἐναύτῳ τάξιν· ἀλλ’ ὅμως ἐπεὶ σωματοειδὴς ἐστὶ, μεταβολῆς ἄμοιρος οὐκ ἔστιν»<sup>34</sup> (“In the third place, this world indeed is said to subsist with invariable sameness, so far as it is allotted an order in itself which is always proved indissoluble. At the same time however, since it possesses a corporeal form, it is not destitute of mutation”<sup>35</sup>). The psychic world, which is part of it, is, on the one hand, indestructible in essence, but, on the other hand, corruptible, as it has its energies extending into time, so it is subject to the effects of becoming. This is a topic that Proclus elaborates mainly in the second book of his commentary on the *Timaeus*<sup>36</sup>. In particular, according to his metaphysical discussion, each time it conceives different intelligibles and takes a different form by turning around the Intellect. It is even said that the Intellect on a perpetual scale exists and acts upon intellection as an ontological state, placing within eternity together essence, powers and energies, in the context of a clear holism<sup>37</sup>. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that no inflexibilities emerge. So, it is mentioned that

<sup>33</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 106.

<sup>34</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 93.3-6. Cf. *Timaeus*, 32c.3 and *Respublica*, 269e.1.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> For a systematic approach of the topic, cf. Terezis Ch., *Η έννοια του χρόνου στον Πρόκλο: Επιστημολογικές θεμελιώσεις*, Ennoia, Athens 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Phaidrus*, 246b7.

because of the multiplicity of intellects and the variety of intellectual species and genera, there is not only identity but also otherness in the Intellect. In this view, there is not only wandering of bodily movements and mental peregrinations, but also of Intellect, since it extends the intelligible by its intelligible energy. Hence, it follows that the Soul extends the Intellect, and the Intellect extends itself<sup>38</sup>. Whatever constitutes a state of the natural universe, is “transferred” to the metaphysical, by analogy, since, apart from the other parameters, in the metaphysical world self-references and self-realizations are given. Therefore, once again it is validated that to maintain an ontological reality always the same and similar is appropriate only for the most divine of all. So, by reduction to the supreme only the god-henads depend themselves on the causes of this identity and preserve on a permanent scale their own existence on the basis of their unity.

#### 4. The connection of “immutable” with the concepts of “uniform”, “indissoluble” and “unchanging”

Having approached, to a certain extent, the concept of “immutability” in Proclus’ thought and, if we wish to be -as precise as possible-, we could not overlook its conceptual connection with «μονοειδής» (“uniform”), «ἀδιάλυτον» (“indissoluble”) and «ᾧσαύτως ἔχον» (“unchanging”), expressions which represent absolute integrity both at the highest level of the per se condition and in the individual absolute states of a property. In chapter κζ’ of the same treatise<sup>39</sup>, Proclus notes that the «μονοειδής» or, otherwise, the «ἐνιαιῖον», as the supreme condition of reference for the whole of the existent, is appropriate to the divine Monad, from which the Being also appears primarily. The participated genus of the henads results in its substance in a

---

<sup>38</sup> On the relation of the Intellect with the Soul in Proclus but under the prism of the theory of henads, cf. Grondijs L. H., *L’âme, le nous et les hénades dans la théologie de Proclus*, Amsterdam 1960.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 118.10-119.30.



reversing way, since the One is found before their presence as their precondition<sup>40</sup>. Similarly, as a concept it is followed by «ἀδιόλυτον», which maintains cohesion and connects the ends in the divine union<sup>41</sup>. Finally, the «ὡσαύτως ἔχον» or, in other words, “the preservation of identity” is eternal and, rather, complete from the eternity of the gods. Moreover, it is the source of participation in immortality and eternal identity<sup>42</sup>. According to the above reasoning, the Neoplatonic philosopher emphasizes that the «ἐνιαῖον» is identified with the divine, the «ἀδιόλυτον» with the immortal, and «ὡσαύτως ἔχον» with the intelligible<sup>43</sup>.

### Conclusions

Based on what we have examined, we can draw the following conclusions:

For Proclus, the concept of immutability can be connected under any perspective only with the divine realm because of the fact that the gods are fully self-sufficient, good and independent even of the goods which they grant as an expression of their providence.

Divine goodness refers to the concept of the absolute, which indicates the whole and rejects divisive versions, without of course excluding those distinctions which reveal its self-evident being. In fact, in this sense, immutability is reduced to every divine entity, which, in addition to its transcendence, manifests itself in its creative projections.

In the chain of divine causes and effects, immutability is transmitted from one order to another and in this way to the whole scale of divine beings, depending, however, on the ontological texture of each order. This parameter of gifts by analogy links the immutable to the hypostatic identity of the gods, which is permanently independent of any manifestation of the gods.

<sup>40</sup> *Theologia Platonica*, I, 118.20-25.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 118.25-119.1.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 119.4-7.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 119.8-9.

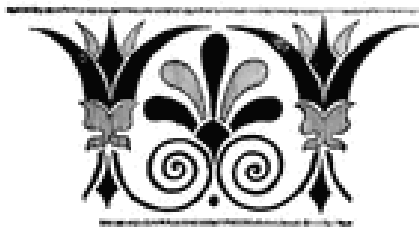
For its part, the natural world, as perishable, is causally subject to the divine domain, a parameter which excludes its ontological independence and, consequently, its direct and absolute self-sufficiency. In a similar way, it is excluded from souls as well as from heavenly bodies.

On the basis of the above, the Neoplatonic thinker establishes immutability according to the unitary character of divine entities, on which the divine immortal identity is substantiated and internally justified.

As a general assessment, we could say that the concept of immutability is an issue that is also related to divine emanation. This issue is subordinate to the way in which the metaphysical domain is structured, on which the creation of the sensible world fully depends. Materiality excludes immutability, which is preserved to an absolute degree exclusively in the divine orders and obviously in the elemental cores which form and ensure the continuity of the presence and evolution of the physical world.

From the point of view of textual data, we have to mention that what we have elaborated is inscribed in the general character of the first book of *Theologia Platonica* in which Proclus attempts to remain on the axis of the positions Plato had formulated in his dialogues. It is no coincidence that Proclus refers, in this book, to most of Plato's dialogues and attempts to highlight their theological orientation. But the question about immutability and the situations related to its content will find its systematic readings in the second book of this treatise, which can be argued to be the leading expression of the theological elaborations of Proclus, the disciple of Syrianus. It is a book which epistemologically establishes his Theology, based mainly on the first hypothesis of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* in its proclean meta-interpretation. Also, in this book Proclus is more himself than the schoolmaster who follows the leader of the Academy. From the third to the sixth book of this monumental work, the Neoplatonic philosopher further highlights his familiar way of thinking, fully codifies in a new way the concepts he uses in the first book and constitutes a philosophical system which attempts, indirectly or directly, to highlight its original

specificity and to assume the character of a coherent system of knowledge, which has a complete orientation. Nevertheless, immutability does not cease to remain one of the fundamental principles of the treatise in question throughout its entire structure. It should be noted, however, that immutability does not imply immobility and the absence of creative projections. To bring to the fore once again an earlier point we made (see footnote n.5) From the third book of the treatise onwards, immutability is inscribed in the dialectic between “remaining” and “procession”, with the former term denoting initial sources and the latter the modes of their manifestations. That is, the metaphysical paradigm adopted by the philosopher is in every respect dynamocratic (in an actually apeirostic way, as Kojève Al. points out in his study, *Essai d’une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, vol. III, “Gallimard”, Paris 1973). The relevant introductions and commentaries by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink continually validate the presence of this ontological situation, with their historical and systematic references.



## References

- Breton S., «Âme spinoziste, Âme néoplatonicienne», *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 71, 1973, pp.210-224.
- D'Hoine P., «Four Problems Concerning the Theory of Ideas: Proclus, Syrianus and the Ancient Commentaries on the Parmenides», in: Van Riel G., - Macé C., (eds.), *Platonic ideas and concept formation in ancient and medieval thought*, Leuven 2004: University Press, pp.9-29.
- Dillon J., "The Role of the Demiurge in the Platonic Theology", Segonds, A. Ph. et Steel. C., (eds.), *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, Leuven University Press-Les Belles Lettres, Leuven- Paris 2000, pp. 339-349.
- Dodds E. R. (trans.), *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, Oxford 1963: Clarendon Press.
- Festugière A. J., «Modes de composition des commentaires de Proclus», *Museum Helveticum*, 20:2, 1963, pp.77-100.
- Finamore J. F - Kutash E., «Proclus on the *Psychê*: World Soul and the Individual Soul», in: D'Hoine P. – Martijn M., (eds.), *All from One: A guide to Proclus*, Oxford 2017: Oxford University Press, pp. 122-138.
- Gersh S., *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, Leiden 1978: E. J. Brill.
- Grondijs L. H., *L'âme, le nous et les hénades dans la théologie de Proclus*, Amsterdam 1960.
- Kojève Al., *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, vol. III, Paris 1973: Gallimard.
- Kroh P., *Dictionary of ancient Greek and Latin writers*, transl. in Greek by Lypourlis L.- Tromara L., Thessaloniki 1996: University Studio Press.
- Lesky A., *History of ancient Greek literature*, transl. In Greek Tsopanakis A. G., Thessaloniki 1981: Kyriakidis Press.
- Moutsopoulos E., «Ο Πρόκλος ως δεσμός ανάμεσα στην αρχαία και τη νεότερη φιλοσοφία», *Η επικαιρότητα της αρχαίας ελληνικής φιλοσοφίας*, transl. Dragona-Monachou, M., Athens 1997: Ελληνικά Γράμματα.
- Opsomer J., "Proclus on Demiurgy and Procession: a Neoplatonic Reading of the Timaeus", in: Wright M. R. (ed.) *Reason and Necessity. Essays on Plato's Timaeus*, London 2000: Duckworth and The Classical press of Wales, pp. 113-143.
- Romano P., «L' idée de causalité dans la Théologie Platonicienne de Proclus», in: Segonds A. Ph. et Steel. C., (eds.), *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, Leuven University Press-Les Belles Lettres, Leuven-Paris 2000, pp.325-337.
- Rosán L. J., *The philosophy of Proclus. The Final phase of Ancient Thought*, , New York 1949: Cosmos.

- Saffrey H. D. - Westering L. G. *Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne*, v.III, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1978, pp.LI-LXVII.
- Siassos L., *Recherches sur le méthode et la structure de la stoicheiôsis théologikè de Proclus*, Paris 1983.
- Taylor Th. (transl.), *The Theology of Plato*, The Prometheus Trust, 1995.
- Terezis Ch.- Petridou L., "Ontological and Epistemological Approaches of Proclus in the Process of Psychogony", *Philotheos: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology*, 18:1, 2018, pp. 26-50.
- Terezis Ch., *Η έννοια του χρόνου στον Πρόκλο: Επιστημολογικές θεμελιώσεις*, Athens 2018: Ennoia.
- Trouillard J., *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus*, Paris 1972: Les Belles Lettres.
- Trouillard J., *La mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris 1982: Les Belles Lettres, pp.53-115.

