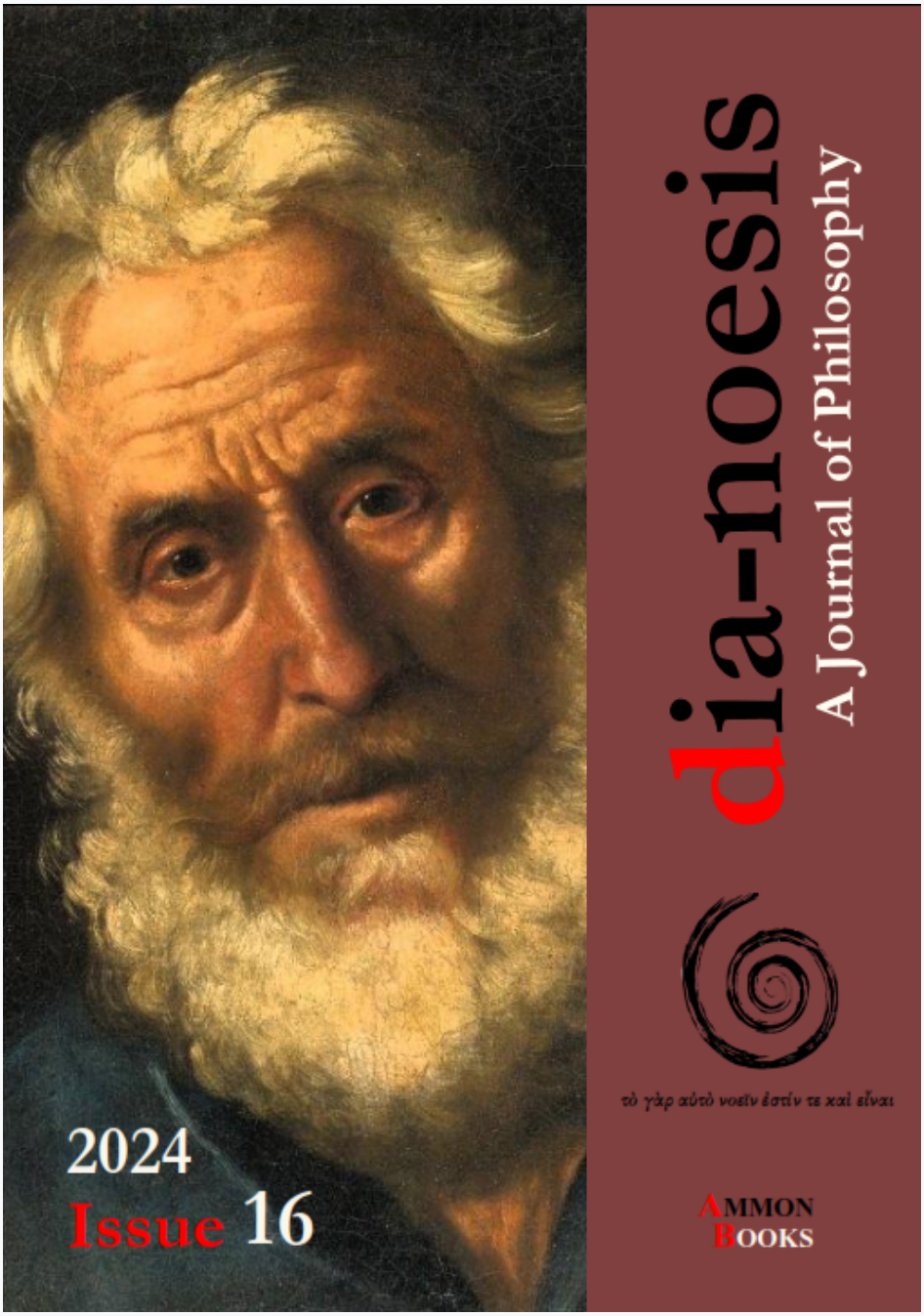
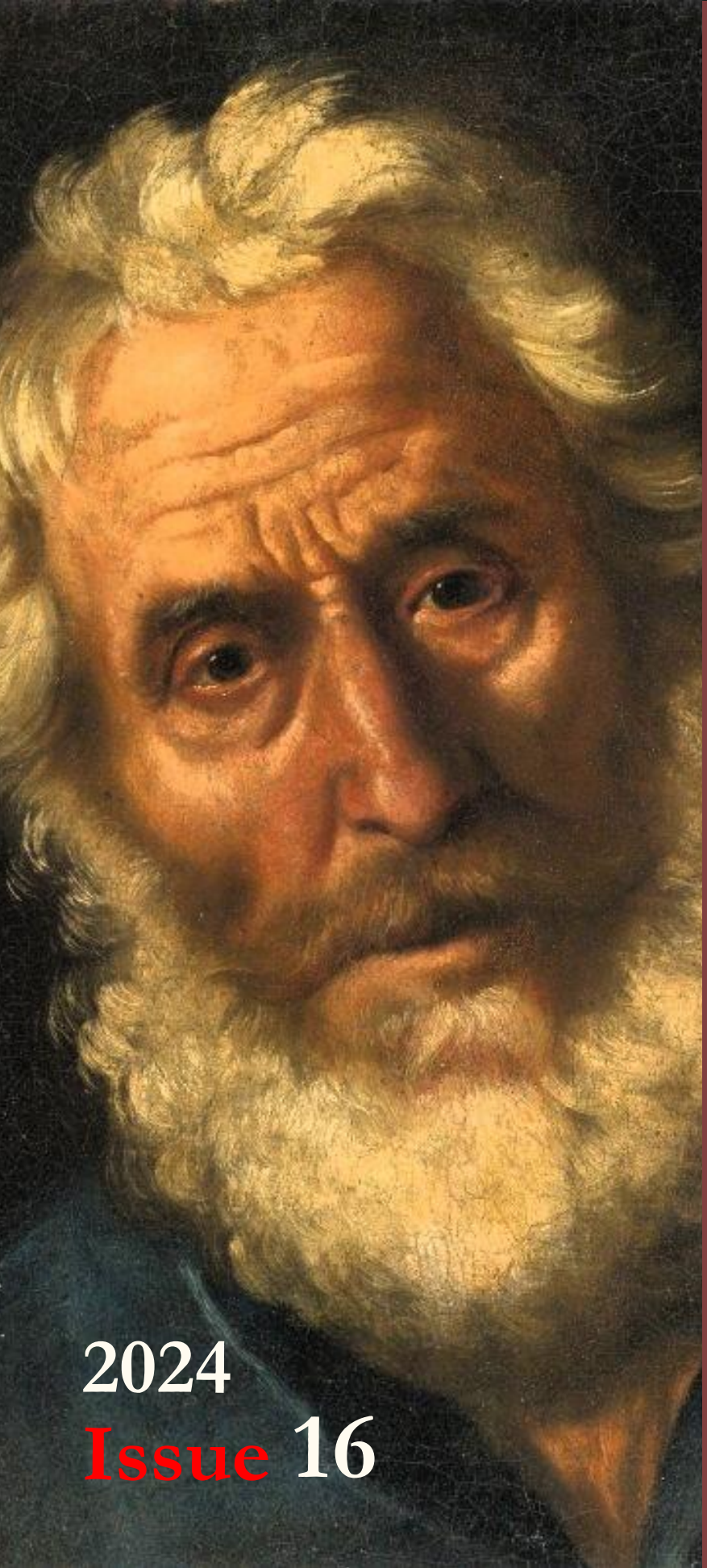
Dia-noesis: A Journal of Philosophy

Vol 16 (2024)

Philosophy in Late Antiquity Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism





dia-noesis

A Journal of Philosophy

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι

2024
Issue 16

AMMON BOOKS

dia-noesis

A Journal of Philosophy

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι
(Parmenides, Fr. B. 3 DK)

https://dianoesis-journal.com/
ISSN: 2459-413X (print)
ISSN: 2732-7507 (on-line)

Scopus®

NATIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN MACEDONIA

AMMON
BOOKS
www.ammonbooks.gr
email: info@ammonbooks.gr

dia-noesis

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι
(Parmenides, Fr. B. 3 DK)

https://dianoesis-journal.com/
https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/dianoesis/index

Editorial Board

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι
(Parmenides, Fr. B. 3 DK)

dia-noesis

A Journal of Philosophy

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι
(Parmenides, Fr. B. 3 DK)

Philosophy in Late Antiquity

Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism

Issue 16

2024

AMMON BOOKS

CONTENTS

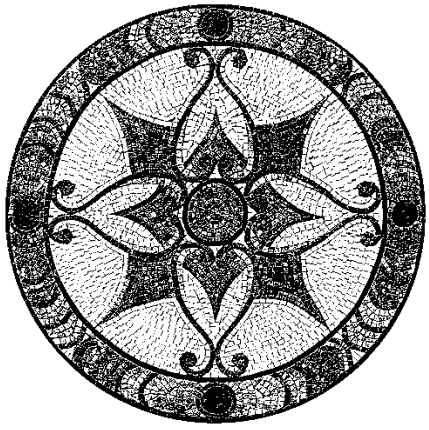
Articles on

Philosophy in Late Antiquity

Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism

Articles

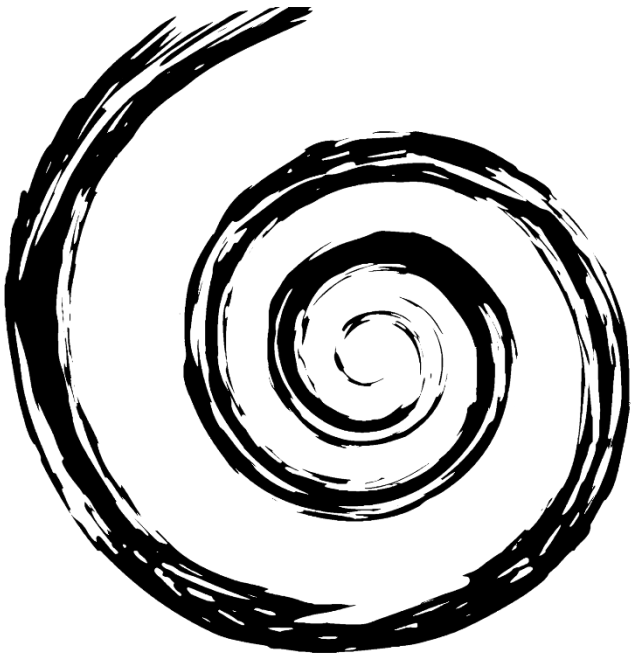
Philosophical Notes



Articles

Philosophy in Late Antiquity

Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism



Preface

This is a special volume dedicated **to Philosophy in Late Antiquity** and, more specifically, to **Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism**. It includes articles that focus on philosophical concepts and theories that emerge during this particular period of time, which can relate to any philosophical branch.

John Dillon, in the first article, entitled **"Can Theurgy Save the World? Some Thoughts on the 'Divinisation' of Matter in the Philosophy of Iamblichus"**, explores on the basis of the concept of "theurgy" the issue of matter and how it is approached by Iamblichus. Through this particularly interesting question he lays the foundations for an "ecological" approach to the environment in contemporary reality.

The next article, entitled **"Rivers, Tides and Currents. A Note on the History of Ancient Hydrology"**, written by **Eugene Afonasin**, is devoted to the history of the accumulation of scientific knowledge about natural phenomena in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, especially in the works of representatives of Stoic Platonism and Middle Platonism. Above all, it concerns the question of adapting the classical scientific terminology, dating back to the metaphysics of the Ancient Academy and early Peripatetics, to the new methodological principles, which came to the fore only in the context of the comprehensive systematisation of scientific knowledge in the period of late antiquity.

Stavros Dimakopoulos, in his article, entitled **"Between Chaos and Cosmic Order: The Ambivalent Disposition of Matter in Middle Platonism"**, discusses the question of matter in Middle Platonism. He specifically investigates the three divergent conceptions of it as they can be derived from Plato's *Timaeus*, focusing especially on Plutarch as well as Numenious, Alcinous, and Apuleius.

Apostolos Kaproulias, in the next article, entitled **"The 'intentional' benevolent self-sufficiency of the One according**

to Plotinus", investigates the One in Plotinus' worldview and how as a reality, while enclosed in itself, it operates simultaneously and on the basis of its free will in order to produce the natural world within the framework of a clearly monistic system where pantheism is excluded.

In the next article, entitled **"The concept of immutability in Proclus: Theoretical approaches based on the first book of *Theologia Platonica*"**, I focus on the theoretical reflections of the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus. Specifically, I investigate how immutability is located exclusively at the divine level and is related to the process of divine emanation.

Alexios Petrou, in his article, entitled **"Pythagorean Philosophy and Theurgy on Friendship"**, discusses the concept of friendship and the way in which Pythagorean concepts are commented upon, especially by Iamblichus, moving along both the historical and systematic axes.

Christos Terezis, in the last article, entitled **"Syrianus' critique of Aristotelian antiplatonism: general remarks"**, approaches a passage from Syrianus' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in order to highlight both the criticism of the founder of the Lyceum on the Platonic theory of Ideas and the Platonic reading of this criticism by Syrianus.

At this point, I would like to express my gratitude first and foremost to the exceptional scholars who submitted remarkable articles, which compose a volume that aspires to be a true contribution to the international literature and to inspire fruitful discussions.

Furthermore, I owe special thanks to the editor of the ***Dia-noesis:*** *A Journal of Philosophy*, **Elias Vavouras**, who assigned me the editing of this volume and trusted my judgment on scientific issues that refer to such a critical period of the human spirit from a philosophical point of view.

Lydia Christ. Petridou
Guest Editor of Special Issue

Can Theurgy Save the World?

Some Thoughts on the 'Divinisation' of Matter in the Philosophy of Iamblichus

John Dillon,
Professor, Trinity College, Dublin
dillonj@tcd.ie

Abstract

The occasion for this paper has been the reading over a projected new edition of Proclus' treatise *On the Hieratic Art*, which is a commendation of theurgy. The premise behind theurgy, as I take it, is that the physical world has in fact been sown by the gods with a great variety of *symbola*, or 'clues', which, if put together correctly and respectfully, can draw down the power of gods or daemons, and achieve many practical advantages. What I wish to argue here is that an increased respect for the way the world is put together should prove the basis for a properly 'ecological' approach to our environment, and that would equate to a modern version of theurgy. I argue that the 'theurgic' attitude to Matter, largely adopted by Iamblichus, is in stark contrast to that adopted by Platonism in general, and indeed by the Christian tradition following on from it, into the 'scientific' mind-set of the modern world.

Keywords: Theurgy, Iamblichus, Proclus, Divinisation, Matter, Platonism, World

I have been provoked to these reflections by the circumstance of being asked by my esteemed colleague Eleni Pachoumi to check through her recent, and as yet unpublished, edition of Proclus' treatise *On the Hieratic Art.* Reading through this little treatise of Proclus – or at least its surviving remains – stimulates me to return to a theme which I addressed some time ago, in relation to Iamblichus, namely, the 'divinization' of matter in the theurgic tradition. My title, of course, is deliberately provocative, but behind it is the conviction that our current problems with our relation to our environment at least partly stem from a contemptuously utilitarian attitude to our physical surroundings, arising ultimately from a Platonist, and also Christian, estimation of the physical world. Such an attitude, while rather gloomy, at least, in its original form, in the ancient or mediaeval world, was not harmful to the environment, but, as – largely unconsciously, I think – inherited by the modern, scientific or utilitarian, approach to the world's natural resources, it can become very dangerous indeed.[1]

Now I should clarify that I do not regard modern scientists and entrepreneurs as having a consciously *contemptuous* attitude to the environment, but, in regarding the physical world as simply a source for extracting from its depths a vast range of useful minerals, and from its surface an endlessly increasing amount of timber and other produce, animal or vegetable, at great cost to both forest and arable land, I see them as unconsciously inheriting the Christian, and to an extent also Platonist, view of the world as a sort of cess-pit of matter, in which we are condemned to spend a while, before passing on, to heaven or to hell, ideally having turned our backs on its superficial lures and attractions, in favour of a spiritual reality.

[1] Having made these rather negative remarks about the Christian attitude to the physical world, I had occasion, recently, to attend the funeral of a neighbour, at which two very positive-minded hymns were sung, which I should have borne in mind: first, *All Things Bright and Beautiful,* and then *O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder.* Both these well-known hymns actually express a much more positive appreciation of Nature and its products than I was allowing for!

I do not, of course, wish to deny or dismiss the spiritual reality, but I wish to argue here that our aspiring to it need not necessarily involve a rejection or demeaning (if only by reckless exploitation) of our physical surroundings – and it is here, I think, that the *theurgic,* or *hieratic,* attitude to matter and the physical world can be seen to take on a certain relevance.[2]

Let us, by way of introduction, consider the first surviving fragment of Proclus' treatise:

> "Just as lovers proceed methodically from the beautiful things perceived through the senses and attain the one principle of all good and intelligible things, in the same way the leaders of the hieratic art (proceeding) from the *sympathy* (which exists) in all apparent things to one other and to the invisible powers, having understood that all things are included in all things, established the hieratic science, because they were amazed to see the last in the first, and the first in the last; in heaven the earthly in a causal and heavenly manner; and in the earth heavenly things in an earthly manner. Otherwise, how do the *heliotropes* move together with the sun, and the *selenotropes* with the moon, going around as far as possible with the (heavenly) luminaries (i.e., sun and the moon) of the cosmos? Hence all things pray according to their own order, and recite hymns to the leaders of all the chains either intellectually, or logically, or naturally, or sensibly. For indeed the *heliotrope* is also moving toward that to which it easily opens and, if anyone was able to hear it striking the air during its turning around, he would have been aware of it presenting to the king

[2] In fact, I have recently come across a most interesting book, *The Patterning Instinct,* by a thinker called Jeremy Lent, who, among many other stimulating insights, flags the philosopher René Descartes as one chief villain in this plot. At pp. 235-8, he identifies Descartes' rigid division between mind and body, downgrading animals to the level of machines, and portraying the realm of nature as something merely to be exploited by human beings for their own purposes, as granting a licence for the reckless exploitation of natural resources that we have experienced in the modern era.

> through this sound the hymn that a plant can sing." (trans. Pachoumi)

I must say I find this a fine statement of the theurgic view of the material world. Proclus actually compares our intelligent, 'theurgic' contemplation of physical reality to the philosophical lover's ascent from the contemplation of beautiful bodies to the 'great sea' of Beauty in Diotima's Ladder of Ascent in Plato's *Symposium,* and I think that that is a very well-taken comparison. What I would like to do in the rest of this paper is to examine the rather distinctive view of the status of Matter taken up by the Neoplatonic philosopher Iamblichus, particularly in his treatise *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians*[3]*,* as it contrasts interestingly with the 'standard' view of Matter in the Platonic tradition as a whole, and seems to me to provide a much more promising basis for a properly respectful approach to then physical world, such as might help to save us from the extinction towards which we are currently headed.

One may start, perhaps, from a brief overview of the position of Iamblichus' predecessor Plotinus on matter, since it takes us some way from earlier Platonist (particularly Middle Platonist) dualism, and demonising of matter, to at least the suggestion of a more positive view. Plotinus, in fact, takes up a firmly monist position, according to which matter, like every other level of existence, is ultimately generated by the first principle, the One. This does not, certainly, prevent him from taking up on occasion a strongly adversative attitude to matter – as, for instance, in his treatise On Matter, II 4 [12], chs. 6-16, though even here he is concerned to present it as, above all, privation (*sterêsis*) and negativity. The main thing, nonetheless, is that, in Plotinus' system – again, despite some rhetoric on occasion (e.g V 1. 1) about 'daring' (*tolma*) and 'falls' – there is no question but that the physical world is a necessary development, and thus essentially *good,* and there is no

[3] This title, of course, is that given to the treatise by the Renaissance philosopher Marsiiio Ficino,

who first translated it into Latin. Its real title is simply *The Reply of the Philosopher Abammon to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo*, which is very clumsy, and in need of explaining!

adverse force in the universe striving for chaos and disorder. The imperfections of the physical world are irreducibly bound up with its three-dimensionality, its 'solidity': things just get in each other's way, and cut across each other, on this level of existence, in a way that they do not in the intelligible realm.[4] Matter, however, is here far from being 'divinized', or in any way exalted.

When we turn, on the other hand, to the world of the Greco-Roman (or, for that matter, Egyptian or Jewish) magicians, things are far otherwise. Here we find a very different attitude to matter and material substances, of a sort that has been acutely discerned to be akin rather to a 'scientific' view of the world than to a religious or philosophical one.[5] The objective in magical circles is not to deplore one's presence in the physical world, nor yet to escape from it, but rather to make use of its resources for one's practical purposes. The properties of material substances are to be catalogued and studied, and then to be applied, in various notionally effective combinations, to achieve a variety of practical outcomes, benign and otherwise. Let me adduce an example or two, just from magical texts which I happen to have had a hand in translating (as part of the team carrying out the Chicago translation of the Greek Magical Papyri, under the leadership of Hans-Dieter Betz, back in the late 1970s). The first is a formula for 'remembering what is said' – something that I would happily avail of these days! – apparently, though, in connection with the seeking of a revelation from Apollo (*PGM* II 17-21):

> "*In order to remember what is said.* Use the following compound. Take the plant wormwood, a sun opal, a 'breathing stone' (sc. a magnet), the heart of a hoopoe. Grind all these together, add a sufficiency of honey, and

[4] There is a nice passage on this topic in the last chapter of his large treatise *On Providence* (*Enn.* III 2-3), III 3, 7, where he presents the physical world as resembling a vast and tangled bush, springing from a single root, but with branches, and even twigs, getting in each other's way and causing trouble to each other.

[5] See on this the useful discussion of Georg Luck: *Arcana Mundi*, Baltimore/London 1985, in his first chapter, 'Magic'.

> anoint your lips with the mixture, having first incensed your mouth. with a grain of frankincense gum."

We may note here the use of a set of substances comprising animal, vegetable and mineral classes, that is to say: hoopoe, wormwood, opal and magnet (i.e., magnetic lodestone), put together to generate what one might term a 'power compound', with the purpose here of constraining a god, through harnessing the force of cosmic sympathy. Each of these components has various powers attached to it by itself: the hoopoe is a sacred bird in Egypt, wormwood has curative and stimulative powers (among other things, it stimulates the imagination!), the opal was thought to increase mental capacity, and the magnet likewise; in combination they would be expected to set up a compelling chain reaction.

Again, we have a spell to gain control of one's shadow (*PGM* III 612-32) – though exactly what the advantage of this might be is left unstated!:

> "If you make an offering of wheaten meal and ripe mulberries and unsoftened sesame and uncooked *thrion* and throw into this a beet, you will gain control of your own shadow, so that it will serve you. Go, at the sixth hour of the day, towards the rising sun, to a deserted place, girt about with a new male palm-fibre basket, and on your head a scarlet cord as a headband, behind your right ear the feather of a falcon, behind your left ear that of an ibis. Having reached the place, prostrate yourself, stretch out your hands, and utter the following formula: "Cause now my shadow to serve me, because I know your sacred names and your signs and your symbols, and who you are at each hour, and what your name is."

The spell goes on to prescribe the recitation of an address to the Sun, given earlier (III 494-536), in which all his names, signs and symbols for each hour of the day are listed, with the purpose of gaining power over him. This will induce the Sun to cause your shadow to serve you.

Here we have the combination of the right material objects, joined together in the right way,[6] with the correct magical formula, to bring about an advantageous change in the physical world. It is out of this magical milieu, rather than from any part of the Platonist tradition itself, that arises the much more positive evaluation of matter characteristic of theurgy.

What we find when we turn to the philosopher Iamblichus of Chalcis, then, I would suggest, is an attitude to matter characteristic of the magical – or what one might charitably term the 'scientific' – tradition, but with a significant degree of distancing from that tradition in respect of its attitude to the gods, and to divine and daemonic intervention in the physical world. What Iamblichus would particularly disavow, as indeed he does explicitly in the *De Mysteriis* (IV 1-4), in response to the gibes of Porphyry,[7] is the suggestion that the theurgist is in any way concerned to *compel* the gods to do his will. He is simply, by virtue of his expertise with the manipulation of matter and his knowledge of the appropriate formulae, enabling the gods to exercise their benevolent power, as they are perfectly happy to do. He is not constraining them; he is merely facilitating them:

> "The gods and the classes of being superior to us, through a wish for the good, and with an ungrudging fulfillment of benefits, bestow with benevolence towards the saints (*hoi hagioi*)[8] what is fitting to them, exhibiting compassion towards the labours of priestly men, and

[6] How exactly one was intended to wear the palm-fibre basket is not made clear: presumably round one's middle. That, together with a large feather protruding from behind either ear, should have produced a comical effect sufficient to attract the notice of the Sun himself.

[7] Porphyry's gibe on this occasion is as follows (181, 2-3): "A thing that very much troubles me is this: how does it come about that we invoke the gods as our superiors, but then give them orders as if they were our inferiors?"

[8] A nice characterization of the practitioners of theurgy, probably deliberately mirroring the normal contemporary Christian characterization of their holy men.

> embracing their own offspring, nurselings and pupils" (181, 6-9).

As I say, these theurgical procedures rely on the premise that, from the divine perspective, matter is not something to be despised or shunned; it is rather an integral part of the universe, to be availed of by the gods and other higher beings, when properly organized and presented to them by an expert, for the providential ordering of the physical world.

To illustrate this position, let us consider a passage from *De Myst.* V 23: 233, where Iamblichus is concerned with the theory and practice of sacrifice. In this connection, he addresses the question of the status of matter (*hylê*):

> "And let there be no astonishment if in this connection we speak of a pure and divine form of matter; for matter also issues from the Father and Creator of all[9] and thus gains its perfection, which is suitable to the reception of gods (*epitêdeia pros theôn hypodokhên*). And at the same time nothing hinders the superior beings from being able to illuminate their inferiors, nor yet, by consequence, is matter excluded from participation in its betters, so that such of it as is perfect and pure and of good type is not unfitted to receive the gods; for since it was proper not even for terrestrial things to be utterly deprived of participation in the divine, earth also has received from such participation a share in divinity, such as is sufficient for it to be able to receive the gods. Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them, the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle (*hypodokhên holotelê kai katharan apergazetai*)."

[9] This thoroughly Platonic pair of epithets, *patêr* and *dêmiourgos* (Tim. 28c; 41a) refers in Plato to the Demiurge, who by the Neoplatonic period would not be understood as a supreme deity, but Iamblichus, in his persona as the Egyptian high-priest Abammon, chooses to take them as referring to such a deity here.[9]

I think that we can conclude from such a passage as this that these *symbola* have been sown by the gods in matter eternally, and that it is part of the divine dispensation, consistent with the operations of fate and providence, that certain privileged persons, the priests of old and the theurgists of Iamblichus' own day, should be able to ferret them out and make proper use of them. Their presence is therefore not to be regarded as inconsistent with an eternally ordered universe.

He continues, with a glance in the direction of those philosophers (such as Porphyry) who professed a generally low view of matter (234):

> "One must not, after all, reject all matter, but only that which is alien (*allotria*) to the gods,[10] while selecting for use that which is akin to them, as being capable of harmonizing with the construction of dwellings for the gods, the consecration of statues,[11] and indeed in the performance of sacrificial rites in general. For there is no other way in which the terrestrial realm or the men who dwell here could enjoy participation in the existence that is the lot of the higher beings, if some such foundation be not laid down in advance. We must, after all, give credit to the secret discourses (*aporrhêtoi logoi*)[12] when they tell us how a sort of matter is imparted by the gods in the course of blessed visions (*makaria theamata*);[13] this is presumably of like nature with those who bestow it. So, the sacrifice of such

[10] It is interesting that Iamblichus here recognises that not all matter is amenable to the purposes of the gods, but it is not quite clear what exactly he has in mind. Perhaps just mud and rubbish. I doubt that he intends any seriously dualist implications.

[11] This is of course a recognised theurgical practice, sometimes gaining a tangible response from the statue. The Emperor Julian's spiritual master, Maximus of Ephesus, the pupil of a pupil of Iamblichus, was especially adept at this; cf. Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 474-5.

[12] Presumably those secret books of Hermes, mentioned at the beginning of Book VIII, to which I will turn in a moment.

[13] There are numerous examples of this sort of phenomenon in the magical papyri, but a good example occurs at *PGM* I 1-42, right at the outset of the collection, where, as part of the conjuration of a *paredros daimon*, a falcon brings to the officiant an oblong stone which is plainly of supernatural origin.

> material rouses up the gods to manifestation (*ekphansis*), summons them to reception, welcomes them when they appear, and ensures their perfect representation."

This last remark presumably means that the use of proper material provides the gods with a suitable medium in which to manifest their characteristic natures. The whole passage constitutes a strong assertion of the positive view of matter characteristic of the magical tradition on which Iamblichus is basing himself.

Iamblichus is, however, after all, not a magician but a Platonic philosopher, and we may expect to see in him some attempt to subsume this higher valuation of matter into his general philosophical system. This we in fact find later in the *De Mysteriis* (VIII 3), where he is, in his persona of Abammon, purporting to present the philosophical principles of the Egyptians, as recounted in 'the books of Hermes'. As it turns out, the Egyptians profess a set of principles closely resembling those of Pythagoras:[14]

> "And thus, it is that the doctrine of the Egyptians on first principles, starting from the highest level and proceeding to the lowest, begins from unity (*hen*), and proceeds to multiplicity (*plêthos*), the many being in turn governed by a unity, and at all levels the indeterminate nature (*hê aoristos physis*) being dominated by a certain definite measure (*hôrismenon metron*) and by the supreme causal principle that unifies all things (*heniaia pantôn aitia*). As for matter, God1[15]derived it from substantiality (*ousiotês*), when he had abstracted from it materiality (*hylotês*)[16]; this

[14] Hardly surprising, Iamblichus would say: that is where he got them from!

[15] These titles, 'God' and 'Demiurge' just below, if we relate this passage with what has been revealed just above (VIII 2:262), seem to refer, not to the first principle, the One, but rather to a secondary, demiurgic deity, characterized as 'self-father' (*autopatôr*) and 'father of essence' (*ousiopatôr).*

[16] Both these terms, we may note, are to be found in surviving treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (8. 3; 12. 22), though there is nothing precisely corresponding to the doctrine set out here.

> matter, which is endowed with life, the Demiurge took in hand and from it fashioned the simple and impassible (sc. heavenly) spheres, while its lowest element (*eskhaton*) he crafted into bodies which are subject to generation and corruption."

Here matter is put more properly in its place, from a Platonist point of view, as the lowest manifestation of a plurifying and generative force that makes its appearance as the highest level of the universe as the Indefinite Dyad, or Multiplicity, deriving directly from the One – as indeed it does in Plotinus' system.[17] Even here, though, we may note a higher grade of matter, used by the Demiurge for the crafting of the heavenly bodies, which are eternal and unchanging. What the precise relationship between *ousiotês* and *hylotês* may be is not quite clear from the rather tortuous syntax of Iamblichus' prose here, but he seems to envisage this archetype of matter as being somehow 'split off' (*hyposkhistheisê*) from substantiality, thus establishing its exalted origins.

At any rate, we can see matter here being treated of in a philosophic context, and, albeit consigned to a lowly status, yet with the reminder that it is the offshoot of a force that pervades the universe from its highest level.[18] We can observe the realm of matter being portrayed in its normal Platonist mode, though with a distinctly 'monistic' and positive emphasis, in various passages of his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (e.g., Frs. 9; 46 Dillon), where the chief characteristic of matter is the introduction of diversity and 'otherness' (*heterotês*); but even here the continuity of the universe, in its various levels, is emphasized, and the incidental nature of evil, as the result of instances of 'falling away' from natural norms. There is nothing really wrong with matter as such; it is simply a manifestation, at the lowest level, of the Indefinite Dyad, the

[17] Cf. e.g., Enn. V 1, 5; VI 6, 1-2.

[18] Of course, one can also adduce from the *De Mysteriis* itself numerous passages where matter is referred to in what one might term its 'normal' Platonist role; e.g. I 10:36, where there is reference to the soul "becoming enmeshed in the indefiniteness and otherness of matter (*to aoriston kai tên heterotêta tês hylês*); or I 11:39, where he speaks of "the absence of beauty which is characteristic of matter."

principle of Otherness, which is an essential element in the composition of the universe.

The connection of matter with nature, and both of them with the realm of fate (*heimarmenê*) is stressed also in a fragment of Iamblichus' *Letter to Sopater on Fate* (Letter 12 Dillon-Polleichtner)[19]:

> "That life, therefore, which relates to body and the rational principle which is concerned with generation (*logos genesiourgos*), the forms-in-matter (*enula eidê*) and matter itself, and the creation that is put together out of these elements, and that motion which produces change in all of these, and that Nature which administers in an orderly way all things which come into being, and the beginnings and ends and creations of Nature, and the combinations of these with each other and their progressions from beginning to end – all these go to make up the essence of Fate."

What I have sought to argue, then, in this brief paper, is that an important consequence of Iamblichus' preoccupation with theurgy is that he is driven to take over from the magical and alchemical tradition a positive view of the material world that has a certain resemblance to that of at least the more positive aspects of the modern scientific tradition. According to such a tradition, in the hands of the properly trained and disciplined expert, material objects can be made to serve as instruments of divine beneficence, and these objects have intrinsic power, even independent of the expertise of the practitioner. This does not involve a denial that the material world is a messy and impermanent place, and should ultimately be transcended by the human soul, but it does assert that it has certain positive features, and these should be duly respected.

There is a fine defence of the theurgic position to be found at the end of Book II of the *De Mysteriis* – as so often, in response to a gibe of Porphyry's (II 11: 96-7), and we might end with that:

[19] Sopater was his chief pupil, and probably patron, in his school in Apamea.

> "Granted, then, that ignorance and deception are faulty and impious, it does not follow on this that the offerings made to the gods and divine works are invalid, for it is not pure thought that unites theurgists to the gods. Indeed, what then would hinder those who are merely theoretical philosophers from enjoying a theurgic union with the gods? But the situation is not so: it is the accomplishment of acts not to be divulged and beyond all conception, and the power of unutterable symbols, understood solely by the gods, which establishes theurgic union. Hence, we do not bring about these things by intellection alone; for thus their efficiency would be intellectual, and dependent upon us. But neither assumption is true. For even when we are not engaged in intellection, the symbols (*synthêmata*) themselves, by themselves, perform their appropriate work, and the ineffable power of the gods, to whom these symbols relate, itself recognises the proper images of itself, not through being aroused by our thought."

In a word, then, the gods themselves have sown *symbola* or *synthêmata* in the material world, as instruments of their providence, and it therefor behooves all of us, theurgists or not, to accord matter a proper respect. And that in turn might help to save us from extinction.

Illustrative Passages

> 1."Just as lovers proceed methodically from the beautiful things perceived through the senses and attain the one principle of all good and intelligible things, in the same way the leaders of the hieratic art (proceeding) from the *sympathy* (which exists) in all apparent things to one other and to the invisible powers, having understood that all things are included in all things, established the hieratic science, because they were amazed to see the last in the first, and the first in the last; in heaven the earthly in a causal and heavenly manner; and in the earth heavenly things in an earthly manner. Otherwise, how do the *heliotropes* move

together with the sun, and the *selenotropes* with the moon, going around as far as possible with the (heavenly) luminaries (i.e., sun and the moon) of the cosmos? Hence all things pray according to their own order, and recite hymns to the leaders of all the chains either intellectually, or logically, or naturally, or sensibly. For indeed the *heliotrope* is also moving toward that to which it easily opens and, if anyone was able to hear it striking the air during its turning around, he would have been aware of it presenting to the king through this sound the hymn that a plant can sing." (Proclus, *On the Hieratic Art,* Fr. 1, trans. Pachoumi)

2."*In order to remember what is said.* Use the following compound. Take the plant wormwood, a sun opal, a 'breathing stone' (sc. a magnet), the heart of a hoopoe. Grind all these together, add a sufficiency of honey, and anoint your lips with the mixture, having first incensed your mouth. with a grain of frankincense gum." (*Greek Magical Papyri,* II 17-21)

3."If you make an offering of wheaten meal and ripe mulberries and unsoftened sesame and uncooked *thrion* and throw into this a beet, you will gain control of your own shadow, so that it will serve you. Go, at the sixth hour of the day, towards the rising sun, to a deserted place, girt about with a new male palm-fibre basket, and on your head a scarlet cord as a headband, behind your right ear the feather of a falcon, behind your left ear that of an ibis. Having reached the place, prostrate yourself, stretch out your hands, and utter the following formula: "Cause now my shadow to serve me, because I know your sacred names and your signs and your symbols, and who you are at each hour, and what your name is" *PGM* III 612-32).

4."The gods and the classes of being superior to us, through a wish for the good, and with an ungrudging fulfillment of benefits, bestow with benevolence towards

the saints (*hoi hagioi*)[20] what is fitting to them, exhibiting compassion towards the labours of priestly men, and embracing their own offspring, nurselings and pupils" (*De Myst.* IV p. 181, 6-9).

5. "And let there be no astonishment if in this connection we speak of a pure and divine form of matter; for matter also issues from the Father and Creator of all[21] and thus gains its perfection, which is suitable to the reception of gods (*epitêdeia pros theôn hypodokhên*). And at the same time nothing hinders the superior beings from being able to illuminate their inferiors, nor yet, by consequence, is matter excluded from participation in its betters, so that such of it as is perfect and pure and of good type is not unfitted to receive the gods; for since it was proper not even for terrestrial things to be utterly deprived of participation in the divine, earth also has received from such participation a share in divinity, such as is sufficient for it to be able to receive the gods. Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them, the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle (*hypodokhên holotelê kai katharan apergazetai*)" *De Myst.* V 23, p. 233).

[20] A nice characterization of the practitioners of theurgy, probably deliberately mirroring the normal contemporary Christian characterization of their holy men.

[21] This thoroughly Platonic pair of epithets, *patêr* and *dêmiourgos* (Tim. 28c; 41a) refers in Plato to the Demiurge, who by the Neoplatonic period would not be understood as a supreme deity, but Iamblichus, in his persona as the Egyptian high-priest Abammon, chooses to take them as referring to such a deity here.[21]

6. "One must not, after all, reject all matter, but only that which is alien (*allotria*) to the gods,[22] while selecting for use that which is akin to them, as being capable of harmonizing with the construction of dwellings for the gods, the consecration of statues,[23] and indeed in the performance of sacrificial rites in general. For there is no other way in which the terrestrial realm or the men who dwell here could enjoy participation in the existence that is the lot of the higher beings, if some such foundation be not laid down in advance. We must, after all, give credit to the secret discourses (*aporrhêtoi logoi*)[24] when they tell us how a sort of matter is imparted by the gods in the course of blessed visions (*makaria theamata*);[25] this is presumably of like nature with those who bestow it. So, the sacrifice of such material rouses up the gods to manifestation (*ekphansis*), summons them to reception, welcomes them when they appear, and ensures their perfect representation" (*De Myst.* V 23: 234).

7. "And thus it is that the doctrine of the Egyptians on first principles, starting from the highest level and proceeding to the lowest, begins from unity (*hen*), and proceeds to multiplicity (*plêthos*), the many being in turn governed by a unity, and at all levels the indeterminate nature (*hê aoristos physis*) being

[22] It is interesting that Iamblichus here recognises that not all matter is amenable to the purposes of the gods, but it is not quite clear what exactly he has in mind. Perhaps just mud and rubbish. I doubt that he intends any seriously dualist implications.

[23] This is of course a recognised theurgical practice, sometimes gaining a tangible response from the statue. The Emperor Julian's spiritual master, Maximus of Ephesus, the pupil of a pupil of Iamblichus, was especially adept at this; cf. Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 474-5.

[24] Presumably those secret books of Hermes, mentioned at the beginning of Book VIII, to which I will turn in a moment.

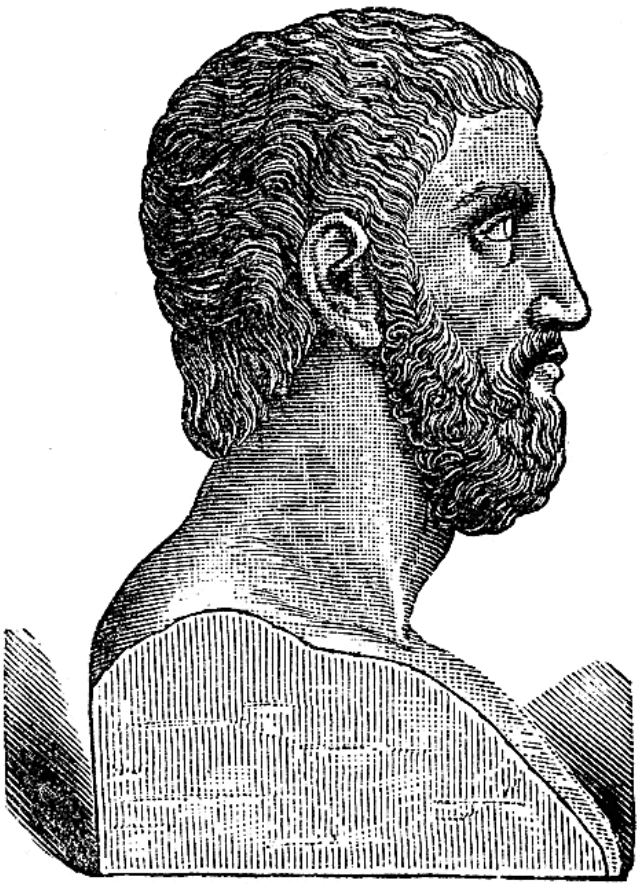
[25] There are numerous examples of this sort of phenomenon in the magical papyri, but a good example occurs at *PGM* I 1-42, right at the outset of the collection, where, as part of the conjuration of a *paredros daimon*, a falcon brings to the officiant an oblong stone which is plainly of supernatural origin.

dominated by a certain definite measure (*hôrismenon metron*) and by the supreme causal principle that unifies all things (*heniaia pantôn aitia*). As for matter, God1[26]derived it from substantiality (*ousiotês*), when he had abstracted from it materiality (*hylotês*)[27]; this matter, which is endowed with life, the Demiurge took in hand and from it fashioned the simple and impassible (sc. heavenly) spheres, while its lowest element (*eskhaton*) he crafted into bodies which are subject to generation and corruption" (*De Myst.* VIII 3: 265).

8. "That life, therefore, which relates to body and the rational principle which is concerned with generation (*logos genesiourgos*), the forms-in-matter (*enula eidê*) and matter itself, and the creation that is put together out of these elements, and that motion which produces change in all of these, and that Nature which administers in an orderly way all things which come into being, and the beginnings and ends and creations of Nature, and the combinations of these with each other and their progressions from beginning to end – all these go to make up the essence of Fate." (Iambl. *Letter to Sopater on Fate* (*Letter* 12, Dillon-Polleichner).

[26] These titles, 'God' and 'Demiurge' just below, if we relate this passage with what has been revealed just above (VIII 2:262), seem to refer, not to the first principle, the One, but rather to a secondary, demiurgic deity, characterized as 'self-father' (*autopatôr*) and 'father of essence' (*ousiopatôr).*

[27] Both these terms, we may note, are to be found in surviving treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (8. 3; 12. 22), though there is nothing precisely corresponding to the doctrine set out here.



Rivers, Tides and Currents
A Note on The History of Ancient Hydrology

Eugene Afonasin,
I. Kant Baltic Federal University
afonasin@gmail.com

Abstract

Ideally, natural scientific theories, even the most speculative ones, need empirical confirmation, which, however, is not always possible and, even when achieved, cannot always be correctly interpreted. Moreover, as practical experience accumulates, the investigators of nature with more reason reject the least successful theories, and obtain new confirmations for the most successful ones. This is the way science works, both in modern times and in antiquity. Applied to the history of ancient hydrology, this means that we can trace the development of natural scientific ideas from early thinkers such as Thales, Empedocles, Diogenes of Apollonia, Plato,v and Aristotle, to the Roman and early Byzantine period, represented by encyclopaedic authors such as Posidonius, Seneca, Strabo, and Alexander of Aphrodisias. As a result, we will see not only the evolution of natural scientific ideas, but also, in some cases, we will be able to assess the methodological and empirical acceptability of the physical ideas of late antiquity, which emerged as a result of the trial and error of ancient naturalists and their long reflection on the riddles of nature. In general, the article is devoted to the ancient concept of the circulation of water in nature. In its first part special attention is given to an analogy between natural phenomena and the processes occurring in living organisms, common to our philosophers of nature, as well as the peculiarities of their interpretation of the theory of mutual transformation of the elements. We note the place of the method of analogy in their observations and theoretical constructions. The second part of the article is dedicated to tides and sea currents. We look at the history of their observation in antiquity as well as alternative theories, designed to explain their nature. Special attention is given to ancient explanation of the phenomenon of the periodical change of the stream in Euripus' channel (Chalkida, Greece).

Keywords: ancient science, ancient astronomy, empirical method, elements, the circulation of water, seas, currents, tides, Plato, Aristotle, Posidonius, Seneca, Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Rivers and Seas

All the physical processes are organic because Nature resembles living organisms. This general attitude is shared by many philosophers of nature at least from the time of Empedocles. The idea is clearly expressed by Seneca (*Natural questions* [hereafter NQ] 3.14.3, tr. H. M. Hine), who says that the sea "...has its own veins from which it is renewed and forms tides."

This analogy is further developed in the subsequent paragraphs (3.15.1–16.1). Nature designed the earth analogously to our bodies: it supplied its surface with veins, which contain "blood," and arteries, which contain "air". The blood of the earth is water; the air of the earth is its exhalations. Moreover, as our body contains various humors, some beneficial, some malignant, in the earth "hardening" moisture creates metals, while "decayed" moisture is responsible for appearance of asphalt, naphtha, and similar substances. As in organic bodies these liquids are spoiled when shaken, exhausted, frozen, overheated, contaminated with dangerous admixtures, such as sulphur, etc. Some of these processes are long-lasting indeed, some are extremely short-lived. Periodically a sudden "purification" and "healing" occur:

> "But why are some springs full for six hours and dry for six?" ...Just as quartan fever turns up on the hour, just as gout keeps to time, just as menstruation sticks to a set day if nothing intervenes, just as childbirth is ready to happen in the right month, in just the same way waters have intervals at which they withdraw and return (Seneca, NQ 3.16.1).[1]

[1] In a similar manner Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *Natural questions* (2.23) refers to the previous students of nature, such as Diogenes of Apollonia, to the effect that even "...all metals both emit a certain moisture (ἰχμάδα) from themselves and draw it in from outside, the ones more, the others less, and that copper and iron emit the most..." (A 33 DK, T 36 Laks; cf. Empedocles, fr. 680 Bollack). In a similar manner, according to Diogenes the spontaneous births of plants occur when "the water putrefies and takes on a certain mixture with regard to the earth" (A 32 DK, T 34 Laks; ap. Theophrastus, *History of Plants* 3.1.4).

Just as blood flows from a torn vein until the wound leaks out or the wound heals, so sources, pure or containing impurities, flow out of the gaps in the ground until the gap closes (for example, due to silting). Then the gaps are tightened like a scar. Sometimes devastated veins are again filled with water, borrowing it from another place, or are restored by themselves, "gathering strength" (just as the body heals itself). What is the mechanism for such a recovery? It turns out that the earth, being diluted ("rarefied"), turns into a liquid, and the air, condensing, becomes water just as it happens in clouds (Seneca, NQ 3.15.6–7). Is it possible? Yes. If air comes from water, water from air, fire from air, air from fire, so why should water not come from the earth? – asks Seneca (id. 3.10.1). In general, "everything arises from everything": the basis of the world is four elements capable of turning into each other. Water and earth are related elements, both heavy, dense and pushed to the very bottom of the universe. Moreover, all elements have already been mixed into what they can turn into. So, the air already contains the heat inherent in the fire, and if this heat is taken away from the air, the latter will harden, condense and turn into water. In the same way, the earth can produce air and moisture, but it itself is never deprived of them. Thales considered water "the most powerful element" and the beginning of everything. However, the end of everything, Seneca develops the Stoic teaching, is fire. The fire that fills the world gradually weakens and, extinguished, gives rise to moisture, which becomes the "hope of a future world" (3.13.1). "Nothing is exhausted if it returns to itself," which is why there are still deep rivers and deep seas. The nature carefully preserves a balance (3.10.3).

So, natural phenomena are mutually consistent and due to certain reasons. When the balance of elements and processes is disturbed, various diseases and cataclysms occur. We hear about this from many philosophers, at least since Aristotle. In addition, observations made in one area can be extended by analogy to the adjacent. Earthquake, for example, is similar to urination or convulsions: the earth, like our body, is pierced by some kind of tremor caused by the movement of an exhalation (*pneuma,* Aristotle, *Meteorology* 366b18-30); the

land and the sea, "according to ancient theologians," have roots (353a35); the sea is the sweat of the earth heated by the sun, therefore it is salty (353b12, from Empedocles,[2] cf. 350a3 "the upper layers of the earth seem to be sweating"); and, in general, the earth acts as a common stomach for plants, and the stomach of animals is an internal replacement of the earth (Aristotle, *On animal parts* 650a21 and 678a31); "the interior parts of the earth have their maturity and age, like the bodies of plants and animals", though not all at once, but in parts, the sun dries them and ages, and the moisture revives (*Meteorology* 351a27 ff.). And this reverts us to the aforementioned statement that water is the beginning of the world and fire is its end (Seneca, NQ 3.13.2).

Examples can be easily multiplied and some of them have been popular since the times of the first philosophers of nature. It is important that, along with direct observations of natural phenomena, suitable analogies can be used to explain their mechanism, especially in cases where direct observation is difficult or impossible (cf., for instance, *Meteorology* 369a20). It is noteworthy that although in many cases the analogy can replace the definition (*Metaphysics* 1048a35) Aristotle nevertheless does not seek to make the argument by analogy a part of the scientific method.[3] The latter should be based on a hypothesis (for example, this of dry and wet exhalations, prominent in his *Meteorology*), confirming observations of the phenomena in question, and, whenever possible in empirical sciences, rigorous proof. So, the analogies only complement the empirical data and make it possible to clearly explain the essence of unusual or rare phenomena that cannot be directly investigated. In some cases, we can talk about experimental verification. For example, Aristotle seeks to explain the salinity of the seawater in the same way as other "meteorological" phenomena, using its main hypothesis of wet and dry

[2] Empedocles, fr. 395 Bollack (31 A 25 и 66 B 55 DK); cf. Democritus, 68 A 99 and Antiphon 87 B 32.

[3] For details, cf. Freeland 1990. A more general picture is found in Taub 2003. Aristotle's method is well contrasted with this of Theophrastus' meteorological and, in general, scientific works in Daiber 1992 and Fortenbaugh et al. 1992.

exhalations. Dry exhalation contains residues that appear because of the natural process of growth ("like waste that collects in the bladder").[4] It is these "earthy" remnants found in seawater that are responsible for its salinity. How to check it? One can, for example, strain the water through the ashes. As a result, it becomes bitter. For the same reason, salt deposits form on the pots (*Meteorology* 357b1, 358a5 ff.). The fact that the salinity is due to some admixture can be confirmed by experiments. If one makes a vessel of wax, closes it tightly and places it in seawater, the moisture that has leaked through the wax walls will be fresh. The presence of certain impurities in seawater also explains why it is heavier than fresh water; therefore, overloaded ships coming from the sea can sink in freshwater rivers. In Palestine, there is a lake where people and pack animals do not sink; indeed, if we take very salty water, then an egg sinking in ordinary water, will not sink in it (ibid 359a1 ff.), etc.

The experience with the egg is quite correct, however, the wax vessel will not work as a wonderful desalination plant: the water will not penetrate through its walls and the small amount of liquid inside clearly accumulates due to condensation. Nevertheless, Aristotle mentions this "experiment" in the *History of Animals* (590a22), and after him this mistake is repeated by other ancient authors, in particular Pliny (*Natural History* 31.37.70). We see that our natural philosophers strive to confirm their theoretical premises with empirical data, but it is clear that they do not

[4] This place is interesting from a methodological point of view. Immediately before this observation, Aristotle criticizes Empedocles' poetic expression "the sea is the sweat of the earth," noting that such metaphors are inappropriate when exploring nature (357a25). From Aristotle's point of view his predecessor took the first step in understanding the true nature of the phenomenon, but he did not have a proper theory. Therefore, Aristotle himself, first, immediately develops the analogy of Empedocles: seawater is salty for the same reason as urine in the organism of a living being. The pure water consumed by the body is mixed with various substances, which are then taken out with urine and sweat. In the same way, in the seawater, "earth" is mixed in with "moisture", which can be observed on the vessel walls in the form of a salt deposit (ibid 357a32 ff. and 358a5 ff.). Secondly, he further suggests the mechanism of this process based on his theory of two exhalations.

always verify the information transmitted, simply by collecting standard examples and opinions of their predecessors expressed on a given occasion.

Let us return to the hydrological observations of Seneca. It has long been observed that a certain water cycle occurs in nature: the moisture that rises due to evaporation falls in the form of precipitation and then a part of it seeps into the ground, and the other part flows over the surface and forms surface water bodies. So, the earth seems to be "receives back all the water it has discharged," says Seneca (NQ 3.5). Therefore, where it rarely rains, there are few rivers, as is observed in the deserts. However, not everything is so simple (3.7). Every farmer knows that after a rain the soil gets wet no more than a dozen feet, so that all moisture remains at the surface and rain water cannot feed all water flows without exception. On the contrary, it is known that water also flows out of rocks, often at a high altitude, and similar streams flow over rocky terrain, so that water cannot seep inside. Finally, it is known that even in the driest places deep wells contain abundant water. This means that the water cycle is observed under the ground: the sea "secretly" penetrates the earth and invisibly returns from it, on the way back under pressure, filtering through the thickness of the earth. It is through this process, in full agreement with Aristotle (see above), that water loses bitterness and becomes fresh (3.5), while retaining, however, some impurities that are different in taste and often useful and healing (3.1.2).

Water flows downwards, sometimes the wind drives it upwards (3.3), sometimes it rises from the ground under pressure (3.7.4), but in general, everything looks as if the sea does not feel the influx of rivers, and the land does not feels their outflow, as if there are always some "hidden reserves" of water, occupying certain underground reservoirs, "as broad as the ocean and its gulfs in our world, or rather all the broader, because deep down the earth spreads out further" (3.4, 3.8–9). In addition, underground, there are vast voids filled with heavy and stagnant air, which condenses into water (3.9), and the earth, thinning, turns into a moist substance, because, I

recall, elements can turn into each other due to the processes of condensation / rarefication and heating / cooling (3.10.5).[5]

Another natural process leading to the water cycle, Seneca describes with reference to Diogenes of Apollonia:

> "The sun attracts to itself the moisture that the dried-out land draws from the sea and also from other waters. But it cannot happen that the land is dry in one place and overflows in another: for the whole is perforated and one part communicates with another, and the dry parts take from the moist ones. Otherwise, if the earth received nothing, it would have completely dried up. Thus, the sun attracts [scil. water] from everywhere, but [scil. especially] from those regions that it most oppresses: these are the southerly ones. When the earth has become completely dried up, it attracts more moisture to itself: just as in lanterns the oil flows to the place where it is burning, so too water flows to where the force of heat and of the burning earth summons it. From where then does the latter attract it? Evidently from those regions where it is always winter: the northerly ones constantly overflow (that is why the Black Sea runs continuously in a rapid stream into the lower sea [i.e., the Mediterranean] and does not ebb and flow with alternating tides like other seas, but always flows swiftly in the same direction). For if what each one lacks were not restored to it and the excess were not discharged thanks to these passages, then everything would already be either dry or overflowing." (Seneca, NQ 4a.2.28–29, tr. A. Laks and G. Most).[6]

Unfortunately, the rest of this book of the treatise (on the flooding of the Nile) has not survived, but in conclusion Seneca expresses some doubts about Diogenes' theory: for example,

[5] Cf. Aristotle, *Meteorology* 349b20 ff.

[6] Having described this physical process, Seneca attaches to it the opinion of Diogenes on the flooding of the Nile, identical to that transmitted by John Lydus (must be borrowing from Seneca). Something similar is also repeated in a very spoiled text, a 13th cent. Latin translation, attributed to Aristotle (Fr. 248, "On the Flooding of the Nile", p. 192, 22–29 Rose).

why do droughts sometimes occur if, according to the described mechanism, the most heated parts of the earth pull the moisture most strongly?

Anyway, the described dynamic processes provide a natural balance and everything happens according to the established order: "Winter never goes astray; summer heats up at the right time; the change to autumn and spring occurs at the usual point; solstices and equinoxes alike recur on the right day" (3.16.3). But this balance is very fragile: Nature need only slightly alter the existing course of things and the world would perish (ibid. 3.27.3). What if, for example, immense rain will pour or a huge tidal wave rises from the sea?

What determines global changes in the world order? In order to approach this problem Aristotle addressed the question of the origin of the sea. The theologians, he says, invented some "sources" of land and sea, its beginnings and ends (cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 282, 785–792), but "those who were wise with human wisdom" strived to discover its true origins. In the beginning the whole region of the earth was "surrounded by moisture," and then the part of the water, dried up by the sun, turned into evaporation, while the remaining part formed the sea. This means that once time will come when the sea will dry up altogether. Next, he repeats the opinions of the philosophers about the salinity of the sea (353b7–16). As already noted, Empedocles (fr. 395 Bollack; 31 A 25 and 66 B 55 DK), Democritus (68 A 99) and Antiphon (87 B 32) called the sea 'the sweat of the earth'. Another opinion (aforementioned analogy with ashes) is found in Xenophanes (21 A 33), Anaxagoras (59 A 90), and Metrodorus (70 A 19). Alexander of Aphrodisias supplements the first of these opinions with the theory of Diogenes, who proposes a more detailed mechanism. Some philosophers, he says, indeed regard the sea as "a remnant of primary moisture," which, Alexander explains, is the cause of winds (πνεύματα) and the retrograde motion of the sun and the moon ("since they make turns as a result of this exhalation, turning around those places where there is a source of supplying them with exhalation"),

> "... and that part [of the primary moisture] which remains in the hollows of the earth is the sea, so the sea is constantly decreasing, drying up under the action of the sun, and in the end will once become dry land. This opinion, as reported by Theophrastus, was held by Anaximander and Diogenes. Diogenes, moreover, explains the reason for the salinity of the sea by the fact that the sun evaporates fresh water, and the remaining water turns out to be salty (due to remaining residue)"[7] (A 17 DK, T 32 Laks; Alexander of Aphrodisias, Commentary on Aristotle's *Meteorology*, *ad* 353a32; p. 67, 1–14 Hayduck).

The world as a whole is eternal, but its individual parts are subject to change – "the interior parts of the earth have their maturity and age, like the bodies of plants and animals" (*Meteorology* 351a26–27), therefore, those speaking about the variability of the universe, according to Aristotle, right and wrong simultaneously (352a23 ff.). They are right that some changes in the universe actually take place, but they are mistaken in making a conclusion about the variability of the universe as a whole based on the observed changes in its individual parts. The universe is subject to certain cycles and the earth (its insignificant part) undergoes not only a change of seasons, but also, as it is believed, more global changes. So, a "great winter" may come or unusually prolonged rains can be shed, but all this will in no way change the whole earth and the movement of the luminaries. As an example, Aristotle mentions the mythical "deluge in the time of Deucalion", noting that he nevertheless wore a local character and affected the Greek world only (ibid 352a30), and other more real climatic changes. Some areas, for example, Egypt, are gradually becoming the land and some of its parts that once bloomed are depleted (351b35 ff.); Mycenaean land was flourishing during the Trojan War; on the contrary, the once-swampy land of Argos dried out a little and became more livable, etc. (352a9 ff.). All these changes occur gradually, therefore it is difficult

[7] Hippocrates is of the same opinion in *On Airs, Waters and Places* (ch. 8; CMG I, 1, p. 62, 11) as well as Porphyry in his *Homeric Questions* (*ad* the *Iliad* 11.53. 54), p. 161 Schrader).

to witness them, since not only human life is short in comparison with them, but also the time allotted to whole nations. Even when migrating from place to place, the tribes do it so gradually that the memory of the movements, and how the place where the first settlers came looked like erased from the people's memory (351b9 ff.).

Still, can the sea dry out? According to Diogenes, never. Aristotle explicitly criticizes this position in 352a20 and 355a22-25 (and Alexander once again mentions it in his commentary: pp. 73, 21 ff.). However, observations show that the coastline may change due to river sediments (351b5 ff.). Libya is located below the coast, which means that this plain was once filled with water and gradually dried. A similar process is observed in the lake Maeotis, which has become noticeably smaller over the past sixty years. One can see with his own eyes the shoals on the Bosporus, which can also dry out over time (352b20 ff.), etc. So, it appears that land and sea can generally change places and where there was a sea, land will emerge over time and vice versa (351a20 ff).

And yet, according to Aristotle, the main contribution to the water cycle is the loss of water from sea spaces, because a large surface is needed for efficient and fast evaporation (355b25 ff.). In this sense, the sea is rather the "end" of the waters than its beginning: the light and fresh water evaporates from it, while the heavy and salty remains. Something similar, notes Aristotle, occurs in the body of animals that absorb fresh liquid, and secrete saline, containing all the liquid waste (355a5 ff.).[8]

It is known that periodically the floods do occur in different parts of the world, but what processes, asks Seneca, can be responsible for a real flood, which would swallow the whole earth? This seems unlikely, but still even a slight disturbance of the natural balance is capable, according to Seneca, produce catastrophic results: "when that inevitable moment arrives, fate

[8] On the contrary, it is unreasonable that Plato in the *Phaedo* (111c ff.) says about underground rivers that are supposedly interconnected by channels leading to Tartarus. Aristotle does not deny the existence of groundwater, but this theory seems fantastic to him (*Meteorology* 356a ff.). Plato himself must have talked about underground rivers in a metaphorical sense, while later authors found this colorful idea attractive.

sets in motion many causes at once; for such a change cannot occur without the world being shaken" (NQ 3.27.3). Because of the incessant rains, the earth will soften and loosen, snow will accumulate over the mountaintops (3.27.7) and a giant tidal wave will rise from the sea (3.28.2–4).

Currents and Tides

Nature is like a living organism. This general attitude was shared by many ancient natural philosophers. It is also the basis of ancient hydrology.[9] This idea, of course, is very metaphysical, but the conclusions that were drawn on its basis allowed ancient natural philosophers not only to offer an explanation for the various processes of the water cycle in the atmosphere and under the earth, but also to make assumptions about the general causes of the movement of water in the ocean. If nature is a living organism, then its processes must somehow co-ordinate with each other to ensure renewal and growth, without which there is no life. The circulation of 'juices' sustains, according to the Hippocratic physicians, organic life, from plant to man. If nature is organized in the same way, then on a global scale its existence must also be sustained by the movement of waters. Examples are easily found. Thus, sea tides, according to Seneca, are caused by the filling and emptying of underground 'veins' (NQ 3.14.3). It is remarkable that this 'biological' theory is combined in Seneca with the correct 'astronomical' explanation of the origin of sea tides, already well known at that time. Such a mention of many causes is generally characteristic of ancient authors, seeking to approach the same phenomenon from different sides, taking into account the most diverse opinions of predecessors. Thus, Seneca writes:

[9] "The sea is similar to living beings and like them breathes in and out" (Strabo, *Geography* 1.2.8). It is noteworthy that the movement of the seabed is also similar to breathing, at least so believed the Peripatetic Strato of Lampsacus, who, according to Strabo (*Geography* 1.3.5), thought that "the seabed rises and falls, and together with it the sea rises and falls". For details, cf. Fortenbaugh, Desclos 2010.

> "As of all the tides that occur during the equinox, the greatest is that which falls on the coincidence of the sun and the moon, so the tide sent by the sea to conquer the land will be much more powerful than the strongest of the tides that have happened before ..." (3.28.6).

The description is certainly inspired by information about giant tidal waves caused by earthquakes. But does the sea have its sources in the form of underground 'veins', about which Seneca (and before him Plato and some other philosophers) speaks? According to Aristotle, unlike rivers or springs, the sea does not 'flow out of somewhere' (Aristotle, *Meteorology* 353b17 ff.),[10] but even in the seas there are localized currents, like those that cause the tides, and more permanent ones, just as the Maeotis flows into the Pontus and the Pontus into the Aegean (354a1 ff.). Tidal currents are especially felt in narrow straits, where small fluctuations in sea-level must seem great, whereas they are scarcely perceptible on the expanse of sea.[11]

Currents, as Aristotle notes elsewhere, also exist underground, not only of water but also of exhalation (*pneuma*). Thus, trying to explain earthquakes by the underground movement of exhalations, he states that they are more likely to occur in calm weather, since 'the exhalation being continuous in general follows its initial impulse tends either all to flow inwards at once or all outwards' (366a7). It follows that earthquakes often occur at midday and at night, because at that time all winds usually weak, or at any time of day when different winds compensate for each other. During

[10] On the contrary, the aforementioned Peripatetic Strato believed that currents are related to the rise and fall of the seabed, that is, as Strabo says, "thought that the phenomena occurring in rivers also take place in the sea" and that "the sea current originates from high places, otherwise he would not have considered the seabed as the cause of the currents at Byzantium" (*Geography* 1.3.5).

[11] In the treatise *On Things Heard* 55 (834b3) of the *Aristotelian corpus*, for example, it is said that the water level in the strait between Sicily and Italy fluctuates depending on the phase of the moon. Herodotus (*Hist.* 7.198) notes that Xerxes marched along the Malian gulf where "all day long there are tides".

the day the exhalations rise up and move outward, like the tide, and at night they rush inward again, like the tide. This is why earthquakes are especially frequent towards dawn, for it is at this time that the morning breeze usually rises: "If the original impulse of the exhalation changes direction, like Euripus, and turns inwards, it causes a more violent earthquake because of its quantity" (*Meteorology* 366a10 ff.).

In addition, Aristotle continues, strong earthquakes occur in places where there are swift sea currents and the soil is porous and riddled with caves, through which sea water can go underground, and the heat of the earth, on the contrary, go outside. As examples, among other places, he mentions Aedipsos (modern Loutra Edipsou), a place on Euboea (modern Evia), abundant in thermal springs, located in the North Evian Gulf, into which the Euripus Strait leads (see Fig. 1.). Does this mean that Aristotle believed that the reason for the change of direction of the current in Euripus was the periodic filling of the underground caves in Aedipsus with water? As we have seen, such an explanation is found in ancient natural philosophers, which is confirmed by Seneca (NQ 3.16.1, quoted above).

The phenomenon of flow in the straits, and especially the reverse flow, intrigued ancient authors. Strabo (*Geography* 1.3.11–12), referring to Eratosthenes, says that any currents in the sea arise, as in rivers, because of the difference in water level, but their character can be very different and such phenomena as the Sicilian Strait, which changes the direction of its current twice a day, or Chalcis, which change it seven times a day, are phenomena that require more in-depth study. The tide as a direct cause of this phenomenon is not mentioned here, although such an explanation was already available, as we have just seen, to Aristotle, while Seneca[12] attributes to Herodotus a strange view that the Nile is spreading because the sun, "crossing the southern belt close to the ground, attracts the waters of all the rivers to itself "and therefore, when it begins to lean to the north, it draws the waters of the Nile behind itself. Here he also refers to Dicaearchus, a pupil of Aristotle, who thought that the Nile overflowed (ἀναχεῖσθαι)

[12] QN 4.1 is not preserved, but quoted by John Lydus.

from the Atlantic side,[13] and suggested the following mechanism for the origin of the tides. In his opinion, the seas are overflowed (πλημμύροντι) precisely under the influence of the sun, which "every time carries them (ἀποσυυυ) from the places from which it retreats, and these deviations (ἐκκλίσιες) occur in the morning and immediately after noon" (Stobaeus, *Anthology* 1.38.2; fr. 127 Mirhady). Aristotle in *Meteorology* (366a13 ff.) speaks of a "deviation" due to a change in the direction of the wind. Dicaearchus probably also associates tidal phenomena with night and day breezes.

Tides attracted Posidonius, who according to the doxographer (Aetius, *Placita* 3.17.4 = Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 1.38.4; 1.253.1; fr. 138 Kidd), wrote that "the winds are driven by the Moon; winds set the sea in motion, where this phenomenon occurs (i.e., tides)." This testimony is not very clear. According to Priscian (*Answers to Chosroes* 6.72–73 = Posidonius, fr. 219) the Stoic philosopher developed another physical analogy. Since the sun and the moon spread heat, which can heat the water, and the heat from the sun is strong and dry (it is pure fire), and from the moon is weak and moist (since the fire in it is mixed with air, Posidonius, fr. 122) it is natural to assume that the heat from the sun simply evaporates moisture, while the heat distributed by the moon creates turbulence on the surface of the water, similar to that which occurs in a pot heated over low heat. Pliny repeats the same idea (*Natural History* 2.222–223). The analogy must go back to Aristotle, who, incidentally, rejects it, along with the theory that the celestial bodies "fed by moisture" (*Meteorology* 355a25). Similar speculations are found in Epicurus, who in the *Letter to Pythocles* (Diogenes Laertius 10.110), in the context of discussing the nature of the halo around the moon, notes that it can occur either because the air rushes to the Moon (as a

[13] Cf. John Lydus, *On the Months* 4.107. The opinion that the Nile flows from the Atlantic was expressed by one of the earliest explorers of African continent Euthymenes of Massalia (NQ 4.2.22), who linked the rise of the water in the Nile with the summer northern winds (the Etesian winds), which usually begin in early July with the rising of Sirius. In addition, on the Atlantic coast of Africa, he saw the river (most likely, Senegal), in which the crocodiles lived, and concluded that they swim in the Nile. Most likely, Dicaearchus shares the opinion of this geographer.

celestial body) from all sides, or because that, encountering resistance, the air is concentrated around it by a uniform ring, or because all the outflows from the Moon itself are restrained by this ring. That is, in the first case, repulsive forces act, and in the second and third – the forces of attraction.[14] Of course, this is all rather speculative, but it is unlikely that a better physical explanation of such a complex phenomenon as the tide was possible before Newton's discovery of the theory of gravitation and Laplace's construction of the dynamical theory of tides.[15]

The observed phenomenon itself was explained more or less correctly by ancient authors, who definitely associated tidal waves with the phase of the moon and, in part, with the location of the sun and were able to give them a relatively reliable explanation. According to Strabo, Posidonius studied these phenomena most carefully, and constructed his theory on the basis of personal observations (*Geography* 1.1.9, 1.3.12, etc., Posidonius, fr. 214–229). In particular, interpreting Homer,[16] Posidonius tried to explain ocean currents by tidal phenomena, against which Strabo (1.1.7, with a reference to Crates) reasonably objects that a tidal wave, moving to the shore, is quite different from a regular current, even if it changes its direction. Therefore, when Homer speaks of the Ocean as 'flowing backwards' (*Odyssey* 20.65), he most likely means a surge in a bay or a lagoon.

The astronomical description of the tides in Posidonius is also connected with the theory of underground waters driven by *pneuma* – in the spirit of the same ancient analogy between the structure of the subterranean realm and the living organism. Strabo reports that in the temple of Hercules in

[14] The texts: Long, Sedley 1987. On cosmological background of Epicurus' meteorology, cf. Eliopoulos 2015 and, esp., Bakker 2016.

[15] For a general discussion of this complex natural phenomenon, see, for example, the following, both popular and more specialized books: Cartwright 1999 and Souchay, Mathis, Tokieda 2013 (ch. 2), McCully 2006.

[16] Homer's assertion (*Odyssey* 12.105) that 'three times a day' the ocean "belches forth" and "sucks down" water Posidonius explains by a distortion of the text. After all, it is known that the tide comes twice a day (and so does the strait of Sicily).

Gades (now Cadiz), according to Polybius (*History* 24.9.5), who visited those places, there is a spring which, strangely,

> "... subsiding at the flow of the tide, and springing at the ebb. He assigns as the cause of this phenomenon, that air rises from the interior to the surface of the earth; when this surface is covered by the waves, at the rising of the sea, the air is deprived of its ordinary vents, and returns to the interior, stopping up the passages of the spring, and causing a want of water, but when the surface is again laid bare, the air having a direct exit liberates the channels which feed the spring, so that it gushes freely" (*Geography* 3.5.7, tr. H. C. Hamilton, W. Falconer).

Posidonius, who spent much time in Gades during his sea voyage, takes the story about the spring to be false, and observes that in reality the wells at Heracleon and another in the city run dry simply because people draw water from them during the day and they fill up again at night. And since the time of low tide often coincides with the time of filling the source, the residents of Gades mistakenly link these events as if one were the cause of the other (ibid.). Strabo is inclined to accept the explanation of Polybius and, relying on another biological analogy of the disciple of Posidonius Athenodorus, according to which the tides are the inspiration and expiration of the "breath" of the sea, suggests that

> "...it is possible that some of the currents of water which naturally have an efflux on to the surface of the earth, through various channels, the mouths of which we denominate springs and fountains, are by other channels drawn towards the depths of the sea, and raise it, so as to produce a flood-tide; when the expiration is sufficient, they leave off the course in which they are then flowing, and again revert to their former direction, when that again takes a change" (ibid.).

We have already met this explanation in Aristotle. Apparently, Posidonius does not agree with him, and, as Strabo further testifies, develops an astronomical explanation of tides, complementing theoretical considerations with personal observations. Periodic movements of the ocean repeat, he says,

the periods of revolution of celestial bodies, and we can distinguish daily, monthly and annual periods:

> "... when the moon is elevated one sign of the zodiac [30 grades] above the horizon, the sea begins sensibly to swell and cover the shores, until she has attained her meridian; but when that satellite begins to decline, the sea again retires by degrees, until the moon wants merely one sign of the zodiac from setting; it then remains stationary until the moon has set, and also descended one sign of the zodiac below the horizon, when it again rises until she has attained her meridian below the earth; it then retires again until the moon is within one sign of the zodiac of her rising above the horizon, when it remains stationary until the moon has risen one sign of the zodiac above the earth, and then begins to rise as before" (*Geography* 3.5.8).

This is the diurnal revolution, corresponding to the phenomena, observable in this region. It needs not to be universally valid.[17] According to Posidonius, Seleucus of Babylon (the 2nd c. BCE) noticed the peculiarities of the diurnal tidal circles in the Persian Gulf:

> "...the regularity and irregularity of the ebb and flow of the sea follow the different positions of the moon in the zodiac; that when she is in the equinoctial signs the tides are regular, but that when she is in the signs next the tropics, the tides are irregular both in their height and force; and that for the remaining signs the irregularity is greater or less, according as they are more or less removed from the signs before mentioned" (3.5.9).

[17] См. Souchay, Mathis, Tokieda 2013, 104 fig. 3.5 (the authors: B. Simon et al.). The tide map published here shows well that in the area of Cadiz the semi-diurnal tides dominate (two maxima and two minima per day). By the way, most of the Mediterranean Sea is in an area where the semi-diurnal tide is markedly complemented by a diurnal tide (one maximum and one minimum per day), with diurnal tidal peaks being particularly noticeable in the western Mediterranean (the southern coast of Spain and the opposite African coast, especially in the Balearic Islands) and in the south-western Aegean (in the Cyclades). Tide charts in any region of the world can also be viewed on the World Tides service page (https://www.worldtides.info).

This observation corresponds to a 'mixed type' of tide, characterized by overlapping diurnal and semi-diurnal cycles.[18]

Posidonius goes on to offer an astronomical theory of the tides, noting that during the lunar month the tide clearly depends on the phase of the moon: it reaches a maximum at new moon (αἱ συνόδαι) and full moon (πανσέληνος), and a minimum at first and third quarter (διχοτόμος and διχοτός φθινάς), which is again true. Finally, referring to the observations of the inhabitants of Gades, Posidonius accepts the annual period,[19] but, as Strabo further reports (3.5.9), although our philosopher spent many days in Gades during the summer solstice, which then occurred around the new moon, he was never able to record the phenomenon:

> "Posidonius adds, that during the summer solstice and whilst the moon was full, he himself passed many days in the temple of Hercules at Gades, but could not observe anything of these annual irregularities. However, about the new moon of the same month he observed at Ilipa [Alcolea] a great change in the reflux of the water of the Guadalquiver, as compared with previous flood-tides, in which the water did not rise half as high as the banks, and that then the water poured in so copiously, that the soldiers

[18] Cf. Souchay, Mathis, Tokieda 2013, 104 fig. 3.5. The map shows that such a tide is indeed observed in some regions of the Indian Ocean, in the central part of the Red Sea and in the Gulf of Aden.

[19] According to Strabo, a one-year maximum should occur during the solstice and a minimum during the equinox. This is an obvious mistake, thanks to the independent testimony of Neo-Platonist Priscian, who reports that in fact, Posidonius assumed that the tides reach a year's maximum during the equinox: during the full moon and the new moon (*Answers to Chosroes* 6.71 and 73 = Posidonius, fr. 219). By the way, there is a longer tidal cycle: every few centuries the location of the Moon, the Earth and the Sun relative to each other is repeated, which causes long tidal cycles: approx. 300 BCE the tides were about the same as now, around 550 CE they reached a relative minimum, in 1400 they were again the maximum, and the next minimum is expected in about 2400 (Carter 1966, 11).

there dipped their supply without difficulty, although Ilipa is about 700 stadia from the sea." [20]

Similar information is given by Pliny (*Natural History* 2.212 ff.), Flavius Philostratus (*The Life of Apollonius of Tyane* 5.6) and other ancient authors. Priscian also mentions this phenomenon, adding to Posidonius' list the Rhine and the Thames, which, according to his information, can even reverse their current during the high tide. We call this phenomenon boron.[21] Strabo (again with reference to Posidonius) mentions the phenomenon on the Iber River (modern Ebro). According to Posidonius, boron happens on the river due to the fact that the north wind from the lake through which the river flows, drives the waves into the river. In addition, the tidal wave was quite able to cause a positive set-up of water at the mouth of the Ebro, since at the time of Posidonius the river did not yet have a vast delta, as is observed now. Commentators note that, to our knowledge, Posidonius himself did not visit these places, so this remark of Strabo is not very clear. However, if we remember that it is in the Ebro area that the Spanish coast is subject to anomalous diurnal tides (the only region in the western Mediterranean), it becomes clear why this report is

[20] For readers convenience, I will quote the rest this interesting and rare description: "He says, that the plains next the sea were covered by the tides to a distance of 30 stadia, and to such a depth as to form islands, while the basement of the temple in the enclosure dedicated to Hercules, and the top of the mole in front of the harbour of Gades, were not covered higher than 10 cubits, as observed by actual soundings; but if anyone should add the double of that for the occasional risings of the tide which occur, [neither] thus would he be able to estimate the violence with which the full force of the high tide rushes over the plains. Posidonius informs us that this violence [of the tide] is common to all the coasts of Spain on the Atlantic, but what he relates concerning the Ebro is unusual and peculiar to itself, for he says that it sometimes overflows after continued north winds, although there may have been neither rains nor snows. The cause of this [he supposes] to be the lake through which the Ebro flows, its waters being driven by the winds into the current of the river."

[21] The most well-known examples are: boron in the mouth of the Fuchunjiang, Amazon, Ganga and other large rivers with a wide and funnel mouth; less significant boron is observed in European rivers (Severn, Trent, etc.); note also unique "reversible waterfalls" on the St. John's River, which flows into the Bay of Fundy.

given in addition to Seleucus' observation of similar tides in the Indian Ocean (completely atypical for the Atlantic and Mediterranean).

Why does the current in the Strait of Chalcis (Euripus) change its direction? It is clear that Strabo was closest to the truth, but the final answer to this question was received only in our time. The full and accurate description was first introduced by the Greek astronomer D. Eginitis (1929). The root cause of this amazing phenomenon is indeed the tides, but its exact description is impossible without taking into account a number of local features, as well as the strength and direction of wind and waves.

At present, Euripus is a narrow and short canal (39 m wide and 40 m long) that separates the island of Euboea (modern Evia) from mainland Greece. This relatively deep (8.5 m) passage is used for shipping: the bridge connecting the coast moves apart once a day and passes through various sea transport (see Figure 3).

The phenomenon, as already mentioned, is as follows: (1) periodically the flow in the strait changes very quickly to the opposite, usually every six hours, but on some days these changes become erratic (at squaring phases of the tide); (2) the speed varies during the lunar month, sometimes it is relatively weak, sometimes reaches six or even nine nautical miles per hour, which makes it difficult to pass through the canal, especially for small vessels.

Based on the almanac issued by the port service of Chalkida, it is possible to make approximately the following table of the flow direction change in the strait depending on the phase of the moon (for a given synodical month). The table shows the typical timing of flow changes.[22] N – S means flow from north to south, and S – N from south to north.

New Moon	N–S	S–N	N–S	S–N
1	03.15	09.30	15.50	22.05
2	03.45	10.05	16.20	22.30

[22] For a clear description of the phenomenon, see the article by Antonios Antoniou (2015), an astrophysicist of the University of Athens.

3	04.10	10.30	16.40	22.50
...	...	...	...	...
6	06.00	12.00	18.10	–
7-9		Irregular	stream	
10	00.00	06.10	12.10	18.10
11	00.30	06.40	12.50	18.10
...	...	...	...	...
20	05.40	11.50	17.55	00.10
21–23		Irregular	stream	
24	00.00	06.10	12.10	18.20
25	00.30	06.40	12.50	18.50
...	...	...	...	...
28	02.10	08.25	14.30	20.40
29	02.45	08.55	15.10	21.05

Within 24 hours and 50 minutes we observe four phases of flow change, which corresponds to the interval between two successive passes of the meridian by the moon. It is clearly seen that the periods of regular change in the direction of flow alternate with two periods of relative disorder, when the flow can change direction up to 14 times a day, which corresponds to, as the table clearly shows, the time the moon is found in the first and last quarter.

It is clear that the strongest and most regularly changing currents are observed during the spring (sisygian) tide, when the gravitational forces of the Moon and the Sun, which are in line with the Earth, mutually reinforce each other, while weak and irregular currents occur during the neap (squaring) tide, when the forces of the Sun and the Moon act at right angles to each other. Small (about a foot) Mediterranean tides, which can be amplified or weakened by surge events in the northern and southern gulfs of Evia, caused by strong southerly and northerly winds, respectively, should theoretically be sufficient for a current to form in the strait.

Let us look at the map of Evia (Fig. 1). This huge and mountainous island extends one hundred and ten miles from the southeast to the northwest. The vast Southern Gulf of Evia opens from the south-west like a large horn, from which the Cyclades are like pouring out, while the North Gulf of Evia is

connected with the Aegean Sea by a narrow and relatively shallow channel, the entrance to which is closed by a group of islands (Skiathos, Skopelos, Alonissos and others). Let us now consider how the tidal wave will travel, moving across the Mediterranean from east to west. Obviously, it will reach the Southern Gulf earlier than the Northern one. As the observations show, the time difference will be 1 hour and 15 minutes. The wave that entered the South Gulf of Evia provides a rise in water level of about one foot and creates a current from south to north in the Euripus Strait. Approximately six hours later, a narrow strait reaches the oncoming wave from the Northern Gulf of Evia and the flow first stops and then its direction changes to the opposite. The exact time of passage is determined empirically and depends on a number of factors, such as the difference in depth in the bays, the outline of the coast (the North Bay connects with the sea by a narrow channel and, passing through it, the tidal wave encounters many more obstacles on its way than in the open South Bay), wind direction, etc.

Of course, ancient astronomers did not understand the physical nature of tidal phenomena, but they were quite capable of making empirical observations, accumulate them, and (to some extend) conduct experiments. The problem, as we see, is that even accurate knowledge of tidal forces alone does not explain the change of current in the strait, which must have given rise to alternative theories about the regular surfacing of underground water in the Gulf of Aedipsus.

Illustrations

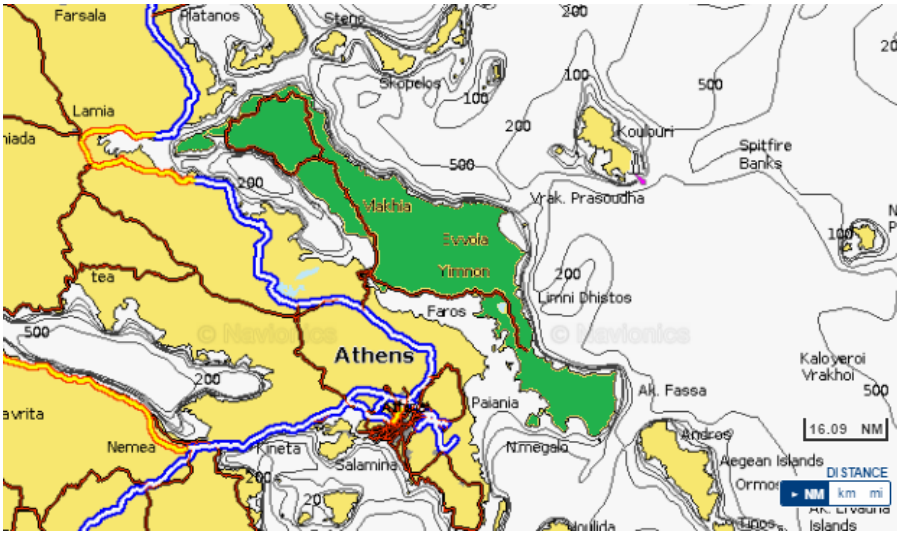


Fig. 1. Evia (marked in green). A fragment of a naval map.

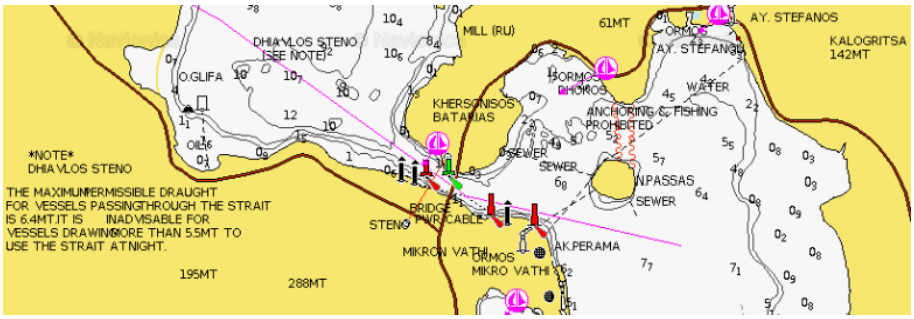


Fig. 2. Euripus. A fragment of a naval map.

Fig. 3. Euripus. A general view.

References

Antoniou, A. (2015) "Tides and the Euripus phenomenon," http://antonios-antoniou.gr/en/tides-and-the-euripus-phenomenon#.WRgWL_mLS00 [accessed 14.10.2024].

Bakker, F. (2016) *Epicurean meteorology*. Leiden: Brill.

Carter, S. (1966) *Kingdom of the tides*. New York: Hawthorn.

Cartwright, D. E. (1999) *Tides. A Scientific History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Daiber, G. "The Meteorology of Theophrastus in Syriac and Arabic Translation," in: *Theophrastus: His Psychological, Doxographical and Scientific Writings*, edited by Fortenbaugh, W. W. and Gutas, D. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992, pp. 166–293.

Eginitis, D. (1929) "The problem of the tide of Euripus," *Astronomical Notes* 236(19-20) 321–328.

Eliopoulos, P. (2015) "Epicurus and Lucretius on the creation of the cosmos," *Philosophy and Cosmology* 14, 249–255.

Fortenbaugh, W. W., Desclos, M.L. (2010) *Strato of Lampsacus: Text, Translation and Discussion*. New Brunswick / London: Transaction Publishers.

Fortenbaugh, W. W., Gutas, D., Huby, P., and Sharples, R. W., eds. (1992) *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought and Influence. I. Life, Writings, Various Reports, Logic, Physics, Metaphysics, Theology, Mathematics. II. Psychology, Human Physiology, Living Creatures, Botany, Ethics, Religion, Politics, Rhetoric and Poetics, Music, Miscellanea*. Leiden: Brill.

Freeland, C. A. (1990) "Scientific explanation and empirical data in Aristotle's *Meteorology*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 8, 67–102.

Hamilton, H., Falconer, W., tr. (2012) *The Geography of Strabo*. London: Classic Reprints.

Hine, Harry M. (1996) *Studies in the Text of Seneca's* Naturales Questiones. Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner.

Hine, Harry M., ed. (1981) *An Edition with Commentary of Seneca,* Natural Questions, Book 2. New York: Ayer Company.

Hine, Harry M., tr. (2010) *Lucius Annaeus Seneca*. Natural Questions. University of Chicago Press.

Jones, H.L. (1917) *The Geography of Strabo*. London: Heinemann.

Kidd, Ian G., ed. (1988, 1989, 1999) *Posidonius, I: The Fragments (2d edn); Posidonius, II. The Commentary (2 vols.); Posidonius, III: The Translation of the Fragments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Laks, A. (2008) *Diogène d'Apollonie. Edition, traduction et commentaire des fragments et témoignages*. Sankt Augustin.

Laks, A. and Most, G., eds. (2016) *Early Greek Philosophers*. Vol. VI, Part 1: Later Ionian and Athenian Thinkers. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Long, Anthony A., and Sedley, David N. (1987) *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCully, J. (2006) *Beyond the Moon. A Conversational, Common Sense Guide to Understanding the Tides*. London: New Scientific.

Mirhady, D. (2001) "Dicaearchus of Messana: The Sources, Text and Translation", in Fortenbaugh, W., Schütrumpf, E., eds. *Dicaearchus of Messana: Text, Translation, and Discussion*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publ., 1–142.

Souchay, J.; Mathis, S.; Tokieda, T., eds. (2013) *Tides in Astronomy and Astrophysics*. Berlin: Springer.

Taub, L. (2003) *Ancient Meteorology*. London: Routledge.

Between Chaos and Cosmic Order: The Ambivalent Disposition of Matter in Middle Platonism

Stavros Dimakopoulos,
Department of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
dimakopoulos.stavros@gmail.com

Abstract

In *Timaeus* (30a ff.), Plato presents matter as a passive principle, inherently predisposed to disorder, subject to mechanistic necessity, and apparently devoid of any volition or predisposition towards the Demiurge. This cosmological framework, however, is not uniformly embraced by Middle Platonists. Instead, three divergent conceptions of matter emerge: one aligned with Plato's notion of passivity, another in which matter resists the Demiurge with malevolence, and a third where it actively seeks union with the intelligible realm. This study pursues two primary objectives: first, to explore the ontological status and disposition of matter in relation to the intelligible within Middle Platonic thought; second, to elucidate why matter assumes such antithetical attributes.

Keywords: Middle Platonism; Demiurge; matter; Ploutarch; Numenius; Alcinous; Apuleius;

I

In the rich metaphysical landscape of Middle Platonism —spanning from the 1st century BCE to the emergence of Plotinus in the 3rd century CE— the triadic schema of three principles remains foundational: the divine, the paradigmatic Forms, and matter[1]. Following the narrative of Plato's *Timaeus*, the dialogue that exerted the most profound influence on Middle Platonic thought[2], the Demiurge is portrayed as the active agent who exerts formative influence upon matter, modeling it after the Platonic Ideas and, thus, enabling the realms of the intelligible and the sensible to engage in interaction. As a consequence of this demiurgic intervention initiated solely by the divine craftsman, disorder yields to order, and primordial chaos is supplanted by cosmic harmony, culminating in the creation of the sensible cosmos. Within this cosmological condition, matter is portrayed as a passive substrate, manipulated by the Demiurge to serve his teleological purpose. Yet, how consistent is this Middle Platonic interpretation —particularly with regard to matter's passivity and receptivity— with Plato's original depiction in the *Timaeus*? A closer examination of Middle Platonic sources reveals deviations from the original Platonic framework by certain philosophers. While the dominant view maintains matter's passivity, an alternative interpretation emerges, portraying matter not merely as a passive recipient but as

[1] For the 'standard' view of the three principles in Middle Platonism, see Dörrie H. – Baltes M., 1996; Dodds E. R. *et al.* (eds.), 1960: 205-210. Sometimes the Middle Platonic norm of the three principles can be presented more simplistically, including only two principles: God and matter. This occurs when the Ideas are considered as residing within the mind of the first principle, i.e., God, rather than as a separate ontological starting point, see Dillon J., 2019: 35-49. Alternatively, the schema of three principles is sometimes expanded to include the World Soul, thus forming a four-principle structure, see Plut. *De gen.* 591B.

[2] The survival and the immense influence of the *Timaeus*, even for many centuries after its writing, is unparalleled among Platonic dialogues, mainly because its Latin translation was the only known work of Plato in the West until the 13th century. For the influence of the *Timaeus* on Middle Platonists as well as on philosophers of later periods, see Neschke-Hentschke A., 2000; Leinkauf T. – Steel C. (eds.), 2005.

imbued with a form of volition. This volition manifests in two opposing modalities: at times, matter actively resists the Demiurge, exhibiting an active malevolence; at others, it expresses an ardent desire for union with the intelligible, initiating this alignment through its own impetus.

This paper does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of all conceivable modes of interaction between the material and noetic realms, which are varied and at times exceedingly inventive within Middle Platonism. Rather, this inquiry is focused on addressing two key questions: first, where and how does matter, in the works of Middle Platonists, exhibit a divergent disposition so as to approach the Demiurge —and, by extension, the intelligible— when contrasted with Plato's original portrayal? Second, how can we account for the starkly divergent, and at times diametrically opposed, positions found within Middle Platonic thought concerning the ontological character of matter? Through a detailed examination of *Timaeus*, this study will seek to identify the foundations upon which these interpretations rest, and further, whether, despite their Platonic origins, other philosophical or external influences contributed to their development.

II

It is fortunate that, among the extensive literature of the Middle Platonism, at least two works have survived that served as introductory manuals to the basic tenets of Platonism: Alcinous' *Didascalikos* and Apuleius' *De Platone et eius dogmate*. Their popularity and pedagogical nature suggest that the views presented in these texts were widely accepted doctrines among Platonists, regarding the central points of Platonic philosophy, particularly concerning the disposition of matter towards the craftsman during the act of creation. In the *Didaskalikos*, matter, which is identified with the concept of *chora* (*χώρα*), is characterized as entirely passive and receptive[3]. Similarly, in *De Platone et eius dogmate*, Apuleius

[3] Alcin. *Didask.* 8.3. The identification of matter with the Platonic *χώρα* or *ὑποδοχή* is prevalent in Middle Platonism; its origin can be traced back to Aristotle *Ph.* 4, 2, 209b11-16.

asserts that matter is capable of receiving forms and being shaped and molded, and furthermore, that it is the divine creator who fully imposes form upon it[4]. From both cases we deduce that matter is a wholly passive principle, entirely subject to the action of the active agent of the noetic realm.

Among the more specialized metaphysical treatises of the period, several are authored by Plutarch and offer deeper explorations of Platonic thought. Plato's *Timaeus* is the primary dialogue from which Plutarch derives his philosophical positions, and it serves as the foundation for a variety of his treatises, such as *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, which examines the genesis and structure of the World Soul, and the *Quaestiones Platonicae*, a collection of ten treatises that address various individual themes of Platonic philosophy[5]. In the fourth of these *Quaestiones Platonicae*, which explores the relationship between body and soul, Plutarch contends that the soul without intellect and the formless body preexisted eternally, having neither origin nor beginning. Moreover, it is only after the soul acquires intellect that it begins to transform matter, replacing its chaotic movements with its own orderly motions, thereby producing the body of the cosmos[6]. In this case, it is not the cosmic demiurge but another intellectual principle, the soul, that shapes matter and brings forth an orderly, compliant body. Even here, matter remains a consistently passive principle, offering no resistance to the activity of the intelligent agent. The passivity, indifference, and neutrality of matter are traits that persist in *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, where, in his examination of *Timaeus* 35a-36b, Plutarch portrays matter as utterly devoid of any inherent qualities or power and, thus, also without any capacity for desire[7].

A markedly different perspective is presented by L. Mestrius Autobulus of Chaironeia in Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*

[4] Apul. *Plat.* V, 191-192.

[5] *Quaestiones Platonicae* II, IV, V, VII and VIII concern the *Timaeus*; III and IX deal with positions from the *Republic*, I address issues from the *Theaetetus*, VI from the *Phaedrus* and X from the *Sophist*.

[6] Plut. *Quaest. Plat.* 1003A.

[7] Plut. *De an. procr.* 1014F, 1015D.

[8]. The significance of this testimony regarding matter's disposition lies in the fact that it is described not only as resistant to the imposition of geometric order and form but as actively struggling against being constrained by them. Matter is portrayed as violently opposing the imposition of determinate form, while reason compels it into submission. In a similar vein, in Plutarch's *De defectu oraculorum*, matter is depicted as a malevolent force that actively opposes the benevolent cause[9]. After characterizing matter as a state of privation, Plutarch asserts specifically that it possesses the capacity to destroy and dissolve what is created by the stronger, benevolent cause, that is, the intelligible principle. This notion of matter as inherently malevolent and thus as the cause of evil is also reflected in the thought of another Middle Platonist, Numenius. As reported by Calcidius in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*[10]:

Igitur Pythagoras quoque, inquit Numenius, fluidam et sine qualitate silvam esse censet nec tamen, ut Stoici, naturae mediae interque bonorum malorumque viciniam, quod genus illi appellant indifferens, sed plane noxiam. Deum quippe esse – ut etiam Platoni videtur – initium et causam bonorum, silvam malorum, at vero quod ex specie silvaque sit, indifferens, non ergo silvam, sed mundum ex speciei bonitate silvaeque malitia temperatum; denique ex providentia et necessitate progenitum veterum theologorum scitis haberi.

From this passage, we see that, for Numenius, matter is indeed a positively evil force, representing the opposing pole to the intelligible and divine goodness, in contrast to the Stoics, who regarded matter as a neutral nature, intermediate between good and evil (what they termed "indifferent"). Furthermore, it is implied that, if divine providence exists, so too must evil, since matter exists and is imbued with evil. And if the world is fashioned from matter, it must have been made from

[8] Autob. fr. 6 (= Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 8, 2, 3-4). For his philosophical personality, see Lakmann M.-L., 2017: 80-82.

[9] Plut. *De def. or.* 414D.

[10] Numen. fr. 52.

something that inherently possesses malevolent tendencies[11]. Thus, Numenius advances positing that not only does matter resist the good but also that it is ontologically the source of evil in the world, a *malorum fons*[12].

In stark contrast to these interpretations is the view that matter desires the good and order, possessing an innate inclination towards it[13]. Through the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, Plutarch in his *De Iside et Osiride* attempts to interpret various facets of Egyptian mythology. In this work the Demiurge is identified with the Egyptian god Osiris, while matter is symbolized by the goddess Isis[14], who is presented not as indifferent or evil but rather as possessing an intrinsic inclination towards the good and with a disposition to approach it. Thus, Isis-matter is described as follows[15]:

ἡ γὰρ Ἶσίς [...] ἔχει δὲ σύμφυτον ἔρωτα τοῦ πρώτου καὶ κυριωτάτου πάντων, ὃ τἀγαθῷ ταὐτόν ἐστι κἀκεῖνο ποθεῖ καὶ διώκει· τὴν δ' ἐκ τοῦ κακοῦ φεύγει καὶ διωθεῖται μοῖραν, ἀμφοῖν μὲν οὖσα χώρα καὶ ὕλη, ῥέπουσα δ' ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον ἐξ ἑαυτῆς καὶ παρέχουσα γεννᾶν ἐκείνῳ καὶ κατασπείρειν εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀπορροὰς καὶ ὁμοιότητας, αἷς χαίρει καὶ γέγηθε κυϊσκομένη καὶ ὑποπιμπλαμένη τῶν

[11] Numen. fr. 52 (297). Numenius' dualism is also reflected in his psychological theories. Porphyry mentions that Numenius was among the philosophers who believed in the existence of two souls, one rational and one irrational, as opposed to those who held that the sould was singular but with many parts, see Numen. fr. 44. The two souls of humans, the good and the bad, correspond to the two souls of the world, see also Numen. fr. 52.60-62.

[12] Numen. fr. 52.63-66.

[13] The concept of matter that desires order does not appear for the first time with Plutarch, but originates from earlier periods, already present in the Pre-Socratics, cf. Empedocles, 31B18 Diels – Kranz (= Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 370D).

[14] In this work, Isis corresponds both to matter and to the Receptacle of the *Timaeus*. Indicative of this attribution are the names given to Isis as the female principle of nature (*τὸ τῆς φύσεως θῆλυ*), the universal receptacle (πανδεχὴς), and the nurse (*τιθήνη*), see Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 372E-F. According to O'Brien C. S., 2015: 99, there is a difference compared to the Pl. *Ti.* 49a-b and 51a, where the Receptacle is defined as the place in which creation occurs, rather than the material out of which it occurs.

[15] Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 372E-F.

γενέσεων. εἰκὼν γάρ ἐστιν οὐσίας ἐν ὕλῃ γένεσις καὶ μίμημα τοῦ ὄντος τὸ γιγνόμενον.

Here, Plutarch elaborates on the notion that matter transcends the classification of a mere passive and inert principle; rather, it possesses an erotic longing for the intelligible realm. The concept of eros (*ἔρως*) is emphasized, with matter portrayed as yearning for the Forms and the intelligible. Isis, as the personification of matter, is depicted as passionately in love with the highest and most supreme of all things, the Good, which she desires and diligently strives to attain. She is represented as actively seeking the intelligible while simultaneously avoiding and distancing herself from evil, persistently inclining towards the better and willingly offering herself to it[16]. In addition to desire, this passage accentuates another intrinsic characteristic of matter: its perpetual inclination en route for the superior principle.

A distant echo of the allegory of matter-Isis' desire for the intelligible can be observed in one of Plutarch's later works, *Amatorius*. Although the text centers on the worldly romantic endeavors of the wealthy, respected widow Ismenodora and a young man named Bacchon, and the ensuing discussions about their potential union, the text is imbued with philosophical undertones[17]. However, a crucial distinction from *De Iside et Osiride* lies in the reciprocal nature of desire: both the intelligible-divine principle yearns for matter, and matter reciprocates this desire for the Divine. As Plutarch mentions, *the earth, which is the mother of all human beings, animals, and the cause of the generation of plants, will eventually disappear and be completely obliterated when the ardent desire or passion of the god for matter ceases and when matter itself no longer yearns for the principle and motion it receives from the Divine*[18]. Thus, here both the divine and matter are engaged in a mutual desire.

Given these contrasting portrayals of matter's disposition towards the intelligible across various metaphysical structures

[16] Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 372E-373C, 374F, 383A.

[17] The tradition of works themed around love has deep roots in Greek literature, cf. Pl. *Symp.* and *Phdr.*; Xen. *Symp.*; Ps.-Dem. *Erot.*

[18] Plut. *Amat.* 770A-B.

in Middle Platonism, one must consider why such divergent interpretations arise. This inquiry becomes even more intricate when recognizing that these contradictory positions can sometimes coexist within the same author, as exemplified by Plutarch. To address this complexity, it is imperative to commence with an examination of the *Timaeus*.

III

Plato's *Timaeus* was a work of pivotal importance for the Middle Platonists, serving not only as a foundational text for interpreting Plato's cosmology but also as a key resource in the development of their own philosophical theories. However, despite its significance, the Middle Platonists did not always adhere faithfully to its original spirit, especially regarding the nature of matter. Among the three types of causal explanations presented in the cosmological myth of the *Timaeus* —to wit, teleological, mechanistic, and a synthesis of both— the chaotic motion of pre-cosmic matter, namely the four primary elements, is associated with the mechanistic causality. In *Timaeus*, 30a and subsequent passages, matter is not depicted as entirely inert; rather, it is portrayed as governed by its own internal necessities and laws, thereby offering some resistance to the Demiurge. Nevertheless, there is no clear indication that matter possesses any volition or intentionality towards the Demiurge.

To better understand the implications of this portrayal, it is necessary to delve deeper into the characteristics ascribed to matter within its original milieu. Plato, through his methodical examination of nature's elemental components and the process of cosmic creation, conceptualizes the world as a work of art. The Demiurge's role is framed within a creative process that presupposes both a benevolent cause and a material substrate[19]. The Demiurge, identified with the benevolent

[19] Plato attributes the role of the demiurgic cause to the good god, who serves as the creator of the world. The choice of the profession of craftsman may initially seem odd, given the negative or even derogatory connotations the word could have had in Athens at the time. Plato himself placed artisans in the third class of his ideal Republic. In the *Timaeus*, yet, the

cause, is tasked with imparting form to the body of the cosmos and constructing the World Soul. His ultimate aim is to produce the best possible creation, as his initiative is driven by his inherent goodness[20].

The act of cosmic creation does not occur *ex nihilo*; instead, the craftsman imparts form upon a pre-existing material substrate, organizing it according to the eternal Ideas or Forms. His intervention in this chaotic material involves imposing order based on the optimal Paradigm, namely the Platonic Idea of the Living Creature[21]. Plato vividly illustrates this process by likening the Demiurge to a craftsman: just as a mortal artisan works with available materials and follows a predetermined design, so too does the divine craftsman act on a cosmic scale. The Demiurge fashions the body of the cosmos by utilizing the pre-existing materials of the four primordial elements (fire, water, earth, and air) and then proceeds to

creator is presented primarily as an 'artist', see Vlastos G., 1975: 26-27. The concept of the creator, although not as extensively analyzed as in the *Timaeus*, also appears in other Platonic dialogues, cf. *Soph.* 265a-265d, *Plt.* 268d-274e and *Phlb.* 23c-27c. For a detailed discussion of Plato's use of the term, see O'Brien C. S., 2015: 19-24. On the various qualities that Plato attributes to the god of the *Timaeus*, such as potter, carpenter, wax modeler, metallurgist, see Brisson L., 1974: 35 ff. In modern research, various positions have been proposed regarding what exactly the Platonic Creator represents: a central view holds that the Demiurge should be seen as a mythical representation of the Paradigm, see Algra K. *et al.*, 1996: 82. In the same direction, the Demiurge can be understood as the dynamic/creative function of the Paradigm within the Platonic universe, see Napolitano Valditara L. M. (ed.), 2007: 156-163. Other theories speak of identifying the Demiurge with the World Soul, see Taylor A. E., 1928: 71-82, or as an aspect of the World Soul, see Bury R.G., 1929, or as a representation of the mind, which is inseparable from the World Soul and the world, see Cornford F., 1937. Sometimes the Demiurge is identified with the *nous*, the rational cause, which is part of the World Soul, see Cherniss H., 1944: 605-607. Finally, there is also the view of the cosmic demiurge as *nous* but distinct from the World Soul, see Hackforth R., "Plato's Theism", *The Classical Quarterly*, 30: 1, 1936, pp. 4-9; Guthrie W. K. C., 1978; Menn S. P., 1995; Broadie S., 2012; Vázquez D. – Ross A. (eds.), 2022: 44-77.

[20] Pl. *Ti.* 29e.

[21] Pl. *Ti.* 30a ff. For Plato, the act of creation does not constitute *creatio ex nihilo*; rather, it signifies the imposition of order upon a pre-existing substratum, see Allen R. E. (ed.), 1965: 401-419, especially 404-406.

create the celestial bodies, the World Soul, the souls of the stars, and the immortal part of the human soul[22]. Central to the Demiurge's creative will is his goodness, which serves as the driving force behind his efforts[23]:

βουληθεὶς γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθὰ μὲν πάντα, φλαῦρον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν, οὕτω δὴ πᾶν ὅσον ἦν ὁρατὸν παραλαβὼν οὐχ ἡσυχίαν ἄγον ἀλλὰ κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως, εἰς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἤγαγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας, ἡγησάμενος ἐκεῖνο τούτου πάντως ἄμεινον.

The transformation undergone by the primordial material at the hands of the creator-god results in chaos giving way to order, and by imparting geometric form to the primal material, the Demiurge emerges as the final cause of the cosmos' creation[24].

The attributes that Plato ascribes to the primordial material are multifaceted. These four elemental substances are indeed visible (30a), but lack internal symmetry (69b) and are inherently imperfect (53a-b). Their motion occurs without rhythm or order (30a) and is devoid of proportion precision and symmetry (56c, 69b). Governed by necessity and contingent causes (68e), they serve as secondary, auxiliary causes in the process of the world's creation; causes that Plato categorizes as necessary (46d-e)[25]. If this material exhibits any

[22] Pl. *Ti.* 31b-32b, 40a ff. On the necessity of the creator-god in the Platonic thought, see Johansen T. K., "Why the Cosmos Needs a Craftsman: Plato, Timaeus 27d5-29b1", *Phronesis*, 59:4, 2014, pp. 297-320.

[23] Pl. *Ti.* 30a. Plato does not use the term ὑλη in the *Timaeus*; this came later, see Arist. *Ph.* 4, 2 209b11-16 ff. In this passage, Plato refers to the material substratum as "all that was visible" (*πᾶν ὅσον ἦν ὁρατὸν*).

[24] Without disorder, order cannot exist; thus, disorder must be considered as a necessary and structural element of Platonic cosmology; a factor that, along with order, both contribute to cosmic balance, see Maso S., "Providential Disorder in Plato's Timaeus?", *Peitho. Examina Antiqua*, 9: 1, 2018, pp. 47 ff.

[25] The importance of co-causes in Plato's cosmology is evident from the meticulous analysis of the works of Necessity, the forces governing them, and their natural properties. See Pl. *Ti.* 48 ff. However, it has been argued that Plato avoids, perhaps deliberately, giving a clear answer to the question of what exactly constitutes pre-cosmic matter, resorting to a purely idealistic abstraction, see Tzamalikos P., "The Concept of Ὕλη (Matter) in Plato's

resistance to the Demiurge's actions, such resistance is dictated by its intrinsic nature. The disorderly movement of primordial chaos is not the result of a rational or primary cause; rather, it is a purely physical phenomenon, as the four elemental bodies move in an automatic and mechanistic manner, a condition attributed to the *ἀνωμαλότης*, id est the irregularity of the material medium[26]. After elucidating the disorderly nature of these movements, Plato introduces the Demiurge, who intervenes by imposing proportion upon the essence of these elements. The Demiurge comprehends the natural tendencies of his material and utilizes them accordingly[27]; he neither forces them into submission nor acts against their nature, but rather collaborates with Necessity through persuasive means. A skilled craftsman, after all, understands what can be created with specific materials and judiciously selects them for his purpose[28]. Necessity, characterized as the erratic cause (*πλανωμένη αἰτία*), and its operations pertain to the entirety of mechanical interactions within nature; interactions that transpire without any teleological intent[29]. Thus, Necessity personifies contingent causes, signifying a blind, mechanistic form of causality.

Nevertheless, the absence of intentionality in the works of Necessity does not connote malevolence. On the contrary, the Demiurge collaborates closely with Necessity, leveraging the mechanistic causality of the material realm to attain the best possible result. Nowhere in the *Timaeus* does it suggest that

---

Timaeus", *Philosophia. Yearbook of the Research Center for Greek Philosophy at the Academy of Athens*, 27-28, 1997/1998, pp. 131-141.

[26] For the *ἀνωμαλότης* see Pl. *Ti.* 58c, 59a, 63e. The common Platonic injuction, to pursue intelligent causes as the first and the inanimate as the second ones, is valid only for the created world. This injuction is no valid while examining the precosmic chaos, simply because the intelligent causes cannot be as "the first", in an area which they do not exist, see Allen R. E. (ed.), 1965: 418.

[27] Pl. *Ti.* 30b-32c.

[28] Persuasion, as Plato refers to it as the means by which the divine creator manages matter, implies that compulsion is something that is excluded. For a detailed analysis of the concept of the Creator's persuasion, see Morrow G. R., "Necessity and Persuasion in Plato's Timaeus", *The Philosophical Review*, 59: 2, 1950, pp. 147-163.

[29] For the treatment of Necessity, see Pl. *Ti.* 47e-53c.

primordial chaos is inherently evil; it merely represents the result of a deficiency of goodness, a condition that ceases when the Demiurge, through persuasion, brings order out of necessity. In this manner, the mechanistic causality of *Timaeus*' Necessity is subsequently succeeded by the teleological causality of Nous. It is, rather, the personality of the Demiurge that is imbued with a sense of desire: he is benevolent and, as such, harbors no envy for anything; moreover, he desires order and persuades Necessity to cooperate for the better (*ἐπί το βέλτιστον*)[30]. In Plato's exposition, the Demiurge thus symbolizes a benevolent cause that exists independently of the natural world; he acts upon it, shaping it, yet remains unaffected by it[31].

IV

Plato's mechanistic causality in the *Timaeus* underscores the passive and neutral nature of matter in relation to the intelligible principle. This interpretation is mirrored in the principal introductory texts of Middle Platonism, such as Alcinous' *Didascalicus* and Apuleius' *De Platone et eius dogmate*, as well as in more specialized metaphysical treatises like Plutarch's *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*. Consequently, even though *Timaeus'* matter in its primordial state, as an operation of Necessity, manifests an inherent resistance to any imposition of order upon it through persuasion, this resistance does not reveal a willful lack of desire, an inherent malevolence, or an explicit antipathy. Nor can this resistance be construed as a deliberate act of malice *per se*. In fact, in Plato's cosmogony, evil emerges only with the advent of the lower gods and, ultimately, with the creation of humankind. Malevolence is a property that, in the Platonic system, is attributed primarily to the human soul, particularly when it is inevitably bound to the body, thereby losing its original alignment with the goodness of its Paradigm. Hence, humans become susceptible to the turbulent stimuli of the

[30] Pl. *Ti.* 29e-30a, 48a.
[31] Vlastos G.,1975: 25.

passions —love, fear, anger, and other bodily affections[32]. Both in the *Timaeus* and across Plato's corpus, evil is more aptly conceptualized through the perspective of cosmology as an absence of the Good rather than as an energetic, Manichean-type evil force, actively opposing or subverting the Good. Evil, in this context, means primarily the absence of cosmic order and teleology. Much as in the *Timaeus*, so in the *Statesman*, another of Plato's cosmological myths, evil is interpreted as the privation of the benevolent cause, which in turn precipitates a return to chaos and disorder within the cosmos[33]. Consequently, the notion advanced by L. Mestrius Autobulus in Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*, that matter violently opposes the intelligible, as well as the broader view, articulated by Numenius and also by Plutarch mainly in *De defectu oraculorum*, that matter is fundamentally malevolent, demand a more nuanced and compelling explanation for the manifestation of evil[34].

Plutarch staunchly advocated for a literal reading of the cosmogony presented in the *Timaeus*. In doing so, he interpreted the primordial state of the cosmos not as a mere logical possibility but as a literal pre-cosmic condition, attributing the chaotic movements of matter to a malevolent soul. As Proclus recounts in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*[35]:

---

[32] Pl. *Ti.* 42a-b. For the discussion on the various physiological and social causes of human badness in the *Timaeus*, see Jorgenson C. *et al.*, 2021: 259-273.

[33] In Plato's *Statesman* (*Plt.* 269c-273b), according to the myth, a god gives life and wisdom to a pre-existing material body governed by disorder. However, at intervals, the direction of the created world's rotation reverses, resulting in a transition from the period of divine care to the period of abandonment. The negative period is due to the temporary absence of the good cause and not to some supernatural malevolent force. In essence, matter regains its original characteristic of disorder, the "*τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας πάθος*" i.e., the ancient condition of disorder. Nonetheless, this account concerns a theoretical possibility. For more on the subject, see Mohr R. D., "Disorderly Motion in Plato's 'Statesman'", *Phoenix*, 35: 3, 1981, pp. 199-215.

[34] For the problem of evil in the Platonic tradition, see Merlini F. – Bernardini R. (eds.), 2017: 69-74.

[35] Attic. fr. 23 (=Procl. *In Ti.* 381, 26-382, 12 Diehl).

Οἱ μὲν οὖν περὶ Πλούταρχον τὸν Χαιρωνέα καὶ Ἀττικὸν λιπαρῶς ἀντέχονται τούτων τῶν ῥημάτων ὡς τὴν ἀπὸ χρόνου τῷ κόσμῳ γένεσιν αὐτοῖς μαρτυρούντων καὶ δὴ καὶ φασι προεῖναι μὲν τὴν ἀκόσμητον ὕλην πρὸ τῆς γενέσεως, προεῖναι δὲ καὶ τὴν κακεργέτιν ψυχὴν τὴν τοῦτο κινοῦσαν τὸ πλημμελές· πόθεν γὰρ ἡ κίνησις ἦν ἢ ἀπὸ ψυχῆς; εἰ δ' ἄτακτος ἡ κίνησις, ἀπὸ ἀτάκτου ψυχῆς· εἴρηται γοῦν ἐν Νόμοις τὴν μὲν ἀγαθοειδῆ ψυχὴν ὀρθὰ καὶ ἔμφονα παιδαγωγεῖν. τὴν δὲ κακεργέτιν ἀτάκτως τε κινεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ ὑπ' αὐτῆς διοικούμενον πλημμελῶς ἄγειν· ἐπιγενομένης δὲ τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ κοσμοποιΐας τὴν μὲν ὕλην μεθίστασθαι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ κόσμου σύστασιν, τὴν δὲ κακεργέτιν νοῦ μετασχοῦσαν ἔμφρονα ἀποτελεῖσθαι καὶ τεταγμένην ποιεῖσθαι κίνησιν· ἄγει γὰρ εἰς τάξιν τὴν μὲν ἡ τοῦ εἴδους μετουσία, τὴν δὲ ἡ τοῦ νοῦ παρουσία.

For Plutarch, as well as for Atticus — another key figure of Middle Platonism— a malevolent and irrational soul is held responsible for the erratic, chaotic motion of the pre-existing formless matter. Both this malevolent soul and the formless matter are posited to have existed prior to the Demiurge's intervention in the cosmic process. The malevolent soul (*κακεργέτις ψυχή*) that Plato references in the *Laws*[36] served as a foundational concept for later interpretative traditions that emphasized the ontological dimension of evil. In this pre-cosmic state, the benevolent soul is understood as the vehicle of the Good, whereas the malevolent soul assumes the role of the agent of disorder. Plutarch, therefore, ascribes to pre-cosmic matter a form of natural-ontological organization prior to the Demiurge's creative intervention[37]. In this primordial phase, *χώρα* (matter) is conceptualized as comprising two distinct aspects: on the one hand, the chaotic, erratic motion associated with the irrational, malevolent soul; on the other,

[36] The malevolent soul in *Laws*, presented in a hypothetical context, acts with effects opposite to those of the good soul, see. Pl. *Leg.* 896d-898c. However, it cannot be considered as an actual active force against the goodness of the intelligible.

[37] Ferrari F., "La generazione precosmica e la struttura della materia in Plutarco", *Museum Helveticum*, 53:1, 1996, p. 45.

the passive, receptive substrate of matter[38] which remains entirely inert and ontologically neutral. This formless material, without qualities, is the *ἄμορφον σῶμα*[39]. Evil, which cannot be a product of the intelligible Good principle or the inert matter, is attributed to the malevolent soul, which moves the formless matter in a chaotic and disorderly fashion[40]. Following the intervention of the Demiurge, matter is transformed to constitute the ordered cosmos; the malevolent soul, by partaking in the Good through the process of creation, becomes rational and its chaotic movements are brought into alignment with cosmic order[41]. In stark contrast to the inert matter of the *Timaeus*, Plutarch's conception of matter here appears as an active, dynamic force.

A parallel line of thought is pursued by Numenius, who attributes the cause of matter's disorderly motion, that is, the cause of evil, to the soul of matter. Numenius comes even closer to asserting that matter is not merely chaotic but the very source of evil. In his ontological system, matter corresponds to three different concepts: to the indeterminate Dyad, to Necessity, and to the malevolent World Soul (as indicated in Plato's *Laws*)[42]. The significance of matter, as the antithesis of the Good and the intelligible, is apparent not only by virtue of the identification with the aforementioned, but also in the vast distance that separates it from the highest intelligible principle. For Numenius, unlike the majority of Middle Platonists, the highest divine principle does not interact directly with matter. In his principal metaphysical work, *On the Good*[43], of which

[38] Plut. *De an. procr.* 1014 ff., 1015B-F. Also see Plut. *Quaest. Plat.* IV, 1003A-B.

[39] Matter and formless body, as presented by Plutarch, can be seen as logical abstractions, see Coda E. – Martini Bonadeo C. (eds.), 2014: 255-276 (and especially 263).

[40] Plut. *De an. procr.* 1015A-E. Dörrie H. – Baltes M., 1996: 399-402; Merlini F. – Bernardini R. (eds.), 2017: 69-74.

[41] Plut. *De an. procr.* 1014D-1015B; *De Is. et Os.* 370E-F.

[42] Numen. fr. 52, l. 65-67. See also Jourdan F., "La matière à l'origine du mal chez Numénius (Fr. 43 et 52 Des Places)", *Philosophie antique: Problèmes, Renaissances, Usages*, 14, 2014, pp. 185-235.

[43] Numen. fr. 1-22. For the divine triad of Numenius, see Lisi F. L., "Los tres niveles de la divinidad en Numenio de Apamea", *Cuadernos de Filosofia*, 26-27, 1977, pp. 111-130; Di Stefano E., 2010; Müller G., "La

only fragments survive, Numenius outlines a triadic hierarchy of gods, corresponding to distinct levels of reality: the highest level belongs to the first god, identified with Being and the Good. This deity exists in a state of absolute immobility and changelessness, concerned solely with the intelligible, entirely removed from any productive or creative activity. The second god is the Demiurge or craftsman, analogous to Plato's Demiurge and responsible for imposing order upon matter. Within this structure, a third god appears, viewed as either an independent deity or as a dual-aspected manifestation of the second god, possessing both a higher and lower nature. Since the first divine remains immobile and in perpetual repose, the responsibility for interacting with matter shifts to the second god, who, in his primary state, contemplates the intelligible, but when concerned with matter, exhibits a dual nature and becomes the third god. This third god is "generated" when the second god, succumbing to his desire for the material realm, is divided by the attraction exerted by matter. In this process, when matter exerts its seductive pull, the second god, neglecting his engagement with the intelligible, neglects himself (*ἀπερίοπτος ἑαυτοῦ*)[44].

This point is particularly significant, as it highlights Numenius' assertion of an ontologically elevated concept of evil, one capable of intervening in the nature of the second god and dividing him[45]. The introduction of a third divinity in this

doctrina de los tres dioses de Numenio", *Archai: The Origins of Western Thought*, 5, 2010, pp. 29-35; O'Brien C. S., 2015: 139-168. However, there is also the view that the gods of Numenius should not be considered as hierarchically arranged intellectual entities but as a progressive unfolding of the same being on the scale of reality, starting from the first god and, through the second, reaching the third and final one. In other words, it is a system with elements of modalistic theism, based on the fact that all the elements of the intelligible have the primordial being at their core, see Kenney J. P. (ed.), 1991: 72-73. For the inactive nature of Numenius' first god see Buganza J., "La metafísica de Numenio", *Studium: filosofía y teología*, 47, 2021, pp. 10-16.

[44] Numen. fr. 11.17-19.

[45] Here, the reciprocal relationship between matter and the intelligible agent takes a different turn compared to what was suggested in Pl. *Amat.* 770A-B. While Plutarch attributes the element of will to both matter and the intelligible principle, so that one desires the other, Numenius' second

theological ontology (or the dual nature of the second god) serves to clarify further the impact of the evil inherent in matter on the intelligible realm. By dividing the second god, Numenius ensures an additional intermediary stage between matter and the highest good principle. According to Numenius, matter, which is co-eternal with the intelligible realm, ceases to be evil only when it is shaped by the Ideas[46]. Thus, this ontologically elevated conception of evil, rooted in primordial matter, positions it as a force in direct opposition to the Good. However, this does not suggest that matter becomes ontologically equivalent to the Good, for the Demiurge ultimately subjugates it in the process of creating the cosmos. Nor does it imply that the cosmos itself is intrinsically evil[47].

In both Plutarch and Numenius, we must recognize that these philosophers expressed, on the one hand, a strongly dualistic tendency, and on the other hand, a profound engagement with philosophical traditions from Egypt and other regions east of the Greek sphere of influence. The ontological dimension of evil, which is emphasized in various parts of their works, could reflect influences from the philosophical systems of these regions. It is documented that Numenius was influenced by "the flourishing nations of the East"[48], Judaism, Egyptian thought, as well as ideas that emerge in Gnosticism[49]. As for Plutarch, J. Dillon even detects

god, upon contact with matter (which is identified with the dyad), grants it unity, but is simultaneously divided by it (*σχίζεται δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῆς*). In this case, the active element is distinguished, managing to affect the intelligible, resulting in the creation of a third god, see Numen. fr. 11.

[46] Numen. fr. 52.33-42.

[47] J. Dillon attempts to link Gnostic principles with Numenius' position on matter as a means of attributing to the creator god the designation "less than good, ignorant", who, due to his enthusiasm for matter, forgets his good origin and creates a world filled with errors and evil. However, he does not go so far as to attribute to the creator god the character of an inherently evil principle, see Dillon, J., 1996: 369.

[48] Numen. fr. 1.

[49] Des Places É., 1973: 21-23. For a detailed discussion of the element of evil in Gnosticism, see Jourdan F. – Hirsch-Luipold R. (eds.), 2014: 101-132.

potential Persian influences in his philosophy[50]. This background allows for a better understanding of why these two philosophers, more so than other Middle Platonists, conceived of matter as an active force opposing the Good, whereas the majority of Middle Platonists regarded matter as merely resistant to form due to its inherent nature.

However, even if we acknowledge sufficient justification for these views based on such influences, a significant challenge remains: how can we reconcile the presence of seemingly contradictory perspectives on matter within the works of the same author? Why does Plutarch describe matter as malevolent in one context and neutral or even benign in another? It has been suggested that these divergent interpretations stem from Plutarch's responses to critiques from rival philosophical schools of his time[51]. Moreover, while it may be tempting to argue that Plutarch never articulated a definitive theory of matter, the variation in his treatment may be attributed to the distinct philosophical contexts of each work. For example, in *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, Plutarch addresses the nature of the moving principle, which is separate from shapeless matter. In contrast, in *De defectu oraculorum*, where this distinction is less prominent, the author emphasizes the generally malevolent character of matter[52].

As for the portrayal of matter as favorably disposed towards the intelligible, as seen in works such as *Amatorius* and *De Iside et Osiride*, this may be attributed to the particularly unique character of these texts. *De Iside et Osiride* exemplifies a bold *interpretatio Platonica* of Egyptian mythology, wherein Plutarch endeavors to elucidate his metaphysical views, which in turn serve as an interpretation of Plato's philosophy. In his

[50] Dillon underlines that for Plutarch, Necessity (Pl. *Ti.* 48a, 56c, 68e) "cannot be taken as something simply negative and characterless, such as matter, but must be a positive force, the disorderly or 'maleficent' soul [...] open to being brought to order by the Demiurge – and in the case of Isis in the *Isis and Osiris*, positively desirous of it", see Dillon J., 2019: 32

[51] Thévenaz P., 1938: 108-111, where it is further argued that Plutarch was undecided between viewing matter as something completely devoid of quality and viewing it as a corporeal substance that, while formless, was determined to a certain degree.

[52] Boys-Stones, G., 2018: 113.

attempt to synthesize Platonic metaphysics with Egyptian mythology, Plutarch employs creative analogies and metaphors to illustrate the narrative structure of the text. The confluence of myth and philosophy in this context often happens in a somewhat convoluted manner, as many details of the myth must be incorporated and harmonized. With this in mind, it may not be an exaggeration to consider the entire work as yet another *εἰκώς μῦθος*, a plausible explanation where, by poetic license, a freer rendition is permitted —though necessary— to integrate the Platonic worldview with Egyptian mythology.

Regarding the *Amatorius*, the unconventional theme of the dialogue, which revolves around the romantic entanglement between the widow Ismenodora and the young Bacchon, may not provide the most appropriate setting for an in-depth exposition of the philosopher's metaphysical theory, especially when one considers the extensive corpus of Plutarch's writings, which includes several lost works that were purely metaphysical[53]. It has been suggested that while the *Amatorius* undoubtedly carries to a certain degree philosophical meanings, it is also a text with a dramatic structure that can be approached as a theatrical work[54]. Therefore, in a text of this nature, such minor digressions could be justified, insofar as they contribute to the facilitation of the dramatic structure.

Bibliography

I. Primary sources

Aristotle. *Physics, Volume I: Books 1-4*. Translated by P. H. Wicksteed, F. M. Cornford. Loeb Classical Library 228, Harvard University Press 1957.

Beaujeu J., *Apulée, Opuscules philosophiques (Du dieu de Socrate, Platon et sa doctrine, Du monde) et fragments*, Les Belles Lettres 1973.

[53] Apart from the exegetical works *De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo* and *Quaestiones Platonicae*, there are also titles from technical treatises by the philosopher that have not been preserved but would likely have been dedicated to these issues. See no. 66 (*Περὶ τοῦ γεγονέναι κατὰ Πλάτωνα τὸν κόσμον*) and no. 68 (*Πῶς ἡ ὕλη τῶν ἰδεῶν μετείληφεν; ὅτι τὰ πρῶτα σώματα ποιεῖ*) in the Catalogue of Lamprias.

[54] For an analysis of the work as a text with a dramatic structure, see Casanova A. (ed.), 2005: 173-205.

Des Places É., *Numénius Fragments*, Les Belles Lettres 1973.
Des Places É. *Atticus. Fragments*, Les Belles Lettres 1977.
Lakmann M.-L., *Platonici minores, 1. Jh. v. Chr. – 2. Jh. n. Chr. Prosopographie. Fragmente und Testimonien mit deutscher Übersetzung*, Brill 2017.
Pierre L., *Albinos: Épitomé (Didascalicus)*, Les Belles Lettres 1945.
Plato. *Theaetetus. Sophist*. Translated by Harold North Fowler. Loeb Classical Library 123, Harvard University Press 1921.
Plato. *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*. Translated by W. R. M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library 166, Harvard University Press 1925.
Plato. *Statesman. Philebus. Ion*. Translated by Harold North Fowler, W. R. M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library 164, Harvard University Press 1925.
Plato. *Laws, Volume II: Books 7-12*. Translated by R. G. Bury. Loeb Classical Library 192, Harvard University Press 1926.
Plato. *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*. Translated by R. G. Bury. Loeb Classical Library 234, Harvard University Press 1929.
Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume V: Isis and Osiris. The E at Delphi. The Oracles at Delphi No Longer Given in Verse. The Obsolescence of Oracles*. Translated by Frank Cole Babbitt. Loeb Classical Library 306, Harvard University Press 1936.
Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume VII: On Love of Wealth. On Compliancy. On Envy and Hate. On Praising Oneself Inoffensively. On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance. On Fate. On the Sign of Socrates. On Exile. Consolation to His Wife*. Translated by Phillip H. De Lacy, Benedict Einarson. Loeb Classical Library 405, Harvard University Press 1959.
Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume IX: Table-Talk, Books 7-9. Dialogue on Love*. Translated by Edwin L. Minar, F. H. Sandbach, W. C. Helmbold. Loeb Classical Library 425, Harvard University Press 1961.
Plutarch. *Moralia, Volume XIII: Part 1: Platonic Essays*. Translated by Harold Cherniss. Loeb Classical Library 427, Harvard University Press 1976.

II. Secondary literature

Baltes M., "Γέγονεν (Platon *Tim.* 28b7): Ist die Welt real entstanden oder nicht?", in: Algra K. – van der Horst P. W. – Runia D. (eds.), *Polyhistor: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ancient Philosophy Presented to Jaap Mansfeld on His Sixtieth Birthday. Philosophia antiqua, v. 72*, Brill, Leiden 1996.
Boys-Stones G., *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250: An Introduction and Collection* of *Sources in Translation*. Cambridge 2018: Cambridge University Press.
Brisson L., *Le même et l'autre dans la structure ontologique du* Timée *de Platon: Un commentaire systématique du Timée de Platon*. Paris 1974: Klincksieck.

Broadie S., *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*. Cambridge 2012: Cambridge University Press.

Buganza J., "La metafísica de Numenio", *Studium: filosofía y teología*, 47, 2021, pp. 5-20.

Cherniss H., *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*. Baltimore 1944: The John Hopkins University Press.

Cornford F., *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*. Indianapolis 1937: Hackett.

Diels H. – Kranz W., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch und deutsch*. Hildesheim 1952: Weidmann.

Dillon J., *The Middle Platonists. A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. London 1996: Duckworth.

Dillon J., *The Roots of Platonism. The Origins and Chief Features of a Philosophical Tradition*. Cambridge – New York 2019: Cambridge University Press.

Di Stefano E., *La triade divina in Numenio: Un' anticipazione della teologia neoplatonica. Symbolon 38*. Catania 2010: CUECM.

Dörrie H., "Die Frage nach dem Tranzendenten in Mittelplatonismus", in: Dodds E. R. *et al.* (eds.), *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 5. Les sources de Plotin*, Fondation Hardt, Geneva 1960.

Dörrie H. – Baltes M., *Der Platonismus in der Antike, 4: Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus. Einige grundlegende Axiome/Platonische Physik (im antiken Verständnis) I. Bausteine 101-124: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*. Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt 1996: Frommann-Holzboog.

Ferrari F., "La generazione precosmica e la struttura della materia in Plutarco", *Museum Helveticum*, 53: 1, 1996, pp. 45-55.

Ferrari F., "Separazione asimmetrica e causalità eidetica nel *Timeo*", in: Napolitano Valditara L. M. (ed.), *La sapienza di Timeo. Riflessioni a margine del Timeo di Platone*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 2007.

Ferrari F., "Materia, movimento, anima e tempo prima della nascita dell'universo: Plutarco e Attico sulla cosmologia del Timeo", in: Coda E. – Martini Bonadeo C. (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge: Études de logique aristotélicienne et de philosophie grecque, syriaque, arabe et latine offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 2014.

Ferrari F., "Il dibattito antico intorno all'origine del male: Platone e la tradizione platonica", in: Merlini F. – Bernardini R. (eds.), *The World and its Shadow. Eranos Yearbook 2015-2016*, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedeln 2017.

Frazier F., "À propos de l'influence de la comédie dans l'Érotikos: un réexamen de la notion de 'dialogue dramatique,", in: Casanova A. (ed.), *Plutarco e l'età ellenistica. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze, 23-24 settembre 2004*, Università degli studi di Firenze, Dipartimento di scienze dell'antichità 'Giorgio Pasquali', Florence 2005.

Guthrie W. K. C., *A History of Greek Philosophy, Volume V: The Later Plato and the Academy*. Cambridge 1978: Cambridge University Press.

Hackforth R., "Plato's Theism", *The Classical Quarterly*, 30: 1, 1936, pp. 4-9.

Ilievski V., "The Demiurge and His Place in Plato's Metaphysics and Cosmology", in: Vázquez D. – Ross A. (eds.), *Time and Cosmology in Plato and the Platonic Tradition*, Brill, Leiden, 2022.

Johansen T. K., "Why the Cosmos Needs a Craftsman: Plato, Timaeus 27d5-29b1", *Phronesis*, 59: 4, 2014, pp. 297-320.

Jorgenson C., "Responsibility, Causality and Will in the Timaeus", in: Jorgenson C. –Karfík F. – Špinka Š. (eds.), *Plato's Timaeus. Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium Platonicum Pragense; Brill's Plato Studies Series, 5*, Brill, Leiden 2021.

Jourdan F., "La matière à l'origine du mal chez Numénius (Fr. 43 et 52 Des Places)", *Philosophie antique: Problèmes, Renaissances, Usages*, 14, 2014, pp. 185-235.

Kenney J. P., "Numenius and the Degrees of Divinity", in: Kenney J. P. (ed.), *Mystical Monotheism: A Study in Ancient Platonic Theology*, Brown University Press, Hannover 1991.

Leinkauf T. – Steel C. (eds.), *Plato's Timaeus and the foundations of cosmology in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Leuven 2005: Leuven University Press.

Lisi F. L., "Los tres niveles de la divinidad en Numenio de Apamea", *Cuadernos de Filosofia*, 26-27, 1977, pp. 111-130.

Maso S., "Providential Disorder in Plato's Timaeus?", *Peitho. Examina Antiqua*, 9: 1, 2018, pp. 37-52.

Menn S. P., *Plato on God as Nous*. Carbondale 1995: Southern Illinois University Press.

Mohr R. D., "Disorderly Motion in Plato's 'Statesman'", *Phoenix*, 35: 3, 1981, pp. 199-215.

Morrow G. R., "Necessity and Persuasion in Plato's Timaeus", *The Philosophical Review*, 59: 2, 1950, pp. 147-163.

Müller G., "La doctrina de los tres dioses de Numenio", *Archai: The Origins of Western Thought*, 5, 2010, pp. 29-35.

Neschke-Hentschke A. (ed.), *Le Timée de Platon. Contributions à l'histoire de sa réception. Platos Timaios. Beiträge zu seiner Rezeptionsgeschichte. Bibliothèque Philosophique de Louvain 53*. Louvain-la-neuve 2000: Peeters.

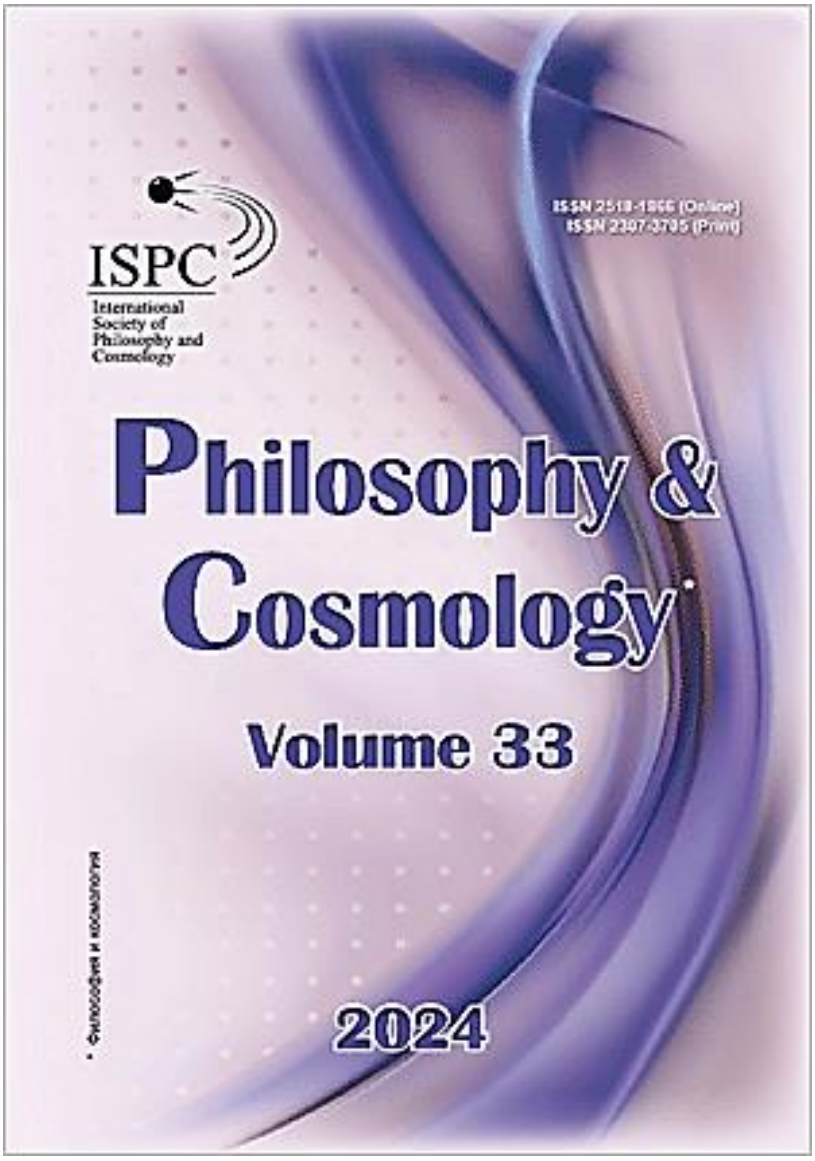
O'Brien C. S., *The Demiurge in Ancient Thought: Secondary Gods and Divine Mediators*. Cambridge 2015: Cambridge University Press.

Pleše Z., "Evil and Its Sources in Gnostic Traditions", in: Jourdan F. – Hirsch-Luipold R. (eds.), *Die Wurzel allen Übels Vorstellungen über die Herkunft des Bösen und Schlechten in der Philosophie und Religion des 1.–4. Jahrhunderts. Ratio Religionis Studien III*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2014.

Taylor A. E., *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. Oxford 1928: Clarendon Press.

Thévenaz P., *L'Âme du monde, le Devenir et la Matière chez Plutarque (Collection d'Études anciennes)*. Paris 1938: Les Belles Lettres.

Tzamalikos P., "The Concept of Ὕλη (Matter) in Plato's Timaeus", *Philosophia. Yearbook of the Research Center for Greek Philosophy at the Academy of Athens*, 27-28, 1997/1998, pp. 131-141.
Vlastos G., "Creation in the Timaeus: Is it a fiction?", in: Allen R. E. (ed.), *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, Routledge, London-New York 1965.
Vlastos G., *Plato's Universe*. Seattle 1975: University of Washington Press.



https://ispcjournal.org/

The "intentional" benevolent self-sufficiency of the *One* according to Plotinus

Apostolos A. Kaproulias,
Doctor of Philosophy,
Academic Staff of the Hellenic Open University
aakaproulias@yahoo.gr

Abstract

The hypostasis of the *One* in Plotinus' ontological system involves structural and functional value and contribution. It exists within the boundaries of its "benevolent self-sufficiency", as a mobile force of production (immanence) and, at the same time, as absolutely oriented and enclosed in itself (transcendence). It is a dual state, which is perpetually stable and, therefore, not subject to any circumstances. At the same time, however, it is also a reality which is circulated in the realm of "intention" since the *One* is absolutely free to choose the quality of its self-determination. In a different approach: the "intention" of the *One* ultimately suggests that it is from its domain that the perfect union of nature with the will, of substance with "intention", of "remaining" with "movement", draws its culmination or even its prototypes.

Keywords: One, Plotinus, good, self-sufficiency, unity, simplicity, perfection, intention.

Plotinus' ontological system is admittedly structured under the obvious influences of the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic doctrines and, therefore, draws its inspiration from its extreme end, that of the One, an Entity "frantically" active and eternally immobile.[1] According to this axiomatically accepted as a constitutive principle, therefore, the One constitutes a transcendental reality with a structural and functional presence.[2] It is an Entity, which first of all arranges in a strictly hierarchical way anything that exists and, at the same time, adds possibilities of self-determination corresponding of their status to all of its products.[3] So, it defines first of all positions and relations and, of course, compatible functions. The *One* itself does not "interact" with all those which are active in the region of becoming, it is posited beyond them and, precisely because it does not develop relations of interaction or dependence with worldly beings, it has, according to Plotinus, a "benevolent self-sufficiency".[4] This description actually restrains and delimits

[1] Cf. A. H. ARMSTRONG, "The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus», *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, 1976, p. 192.

[2] Cf. W.Z.MAZUR, "To Try to Bring the Divine in Us Back Up to the Divine in the All": The Gnostic Background of Plotinus's", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 25/4, 2017, p. 568.

[3] PLOTINUS, *Enneades*, V, 4, 1, 1- 5: «Εἴ τι ἔστι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἀνάγκη ἐξ ἐκείνου εἶναι ἢ εὐθὺς ἢ τὴν ἀναγωγὴν ἐπ᾽ ἐκεῖνο διὰ τῶν μεταξὺ ἔχειν, καὶ τάξιν εἶναι δευτέρων καὶ τρίτων, τοῦ μὲν ἐπὶ τὸ πρῶτον τοῦ δευτέρου ἀναγομένου, τοῦ δὲ τρίτου ἐπὶ τὸ δεύτερον». "If there is something after that which is first, it is necessary that what comes from it does so either immediately, or else it has its ascent back to it through intermediaries and there is an ordering of things second and third,1 with the second ascending to the first and the third to the second" [Plotinus, *The Enneads*, L.P. Gerson (ed.) J.M. Dillon et al. (trans), Cambridge: University Press 2018, 577]. Cf. J. BUSSANICH, *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, Cambridge: University Press, 2006, p. 38.

[4] PLOT., *Enn.*, I, 7, 1, 7-13: «Εἰ οὖν τι μὴ πρὸς ἄλλο ἐνεργοῖ ἄριστον ὂν τῶν ὄντων καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄντων, πρὸς αὐτὸ δὲ τὰ ἄλλα, δῆλον, ὡς τοῦτο ἂν εἴη τὸ ἀγαθόν, δι᾽ ὃ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀγαθοῦ μεταλαμβάνειν ἔστι· τὰ δὲ ἄλλα διχῶς ἂν ἔχοι, ὅσα οὕτω τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ τῷ πρὸς αὐτὸ ὡμοιῶσθαι καὶ τῷ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ποιεῖσθαι». "If, then, something were to act not for something else, since this is the best among Beings, or transcending them, and since it is in relation to it that the other things act, it is clear that this would be the Good because of which it is possible for the others to partake of good. Other things which have

the *One*, even if this is not, at first sight, entirely interpretable.[5]

But, before we attempt to explain the term "benevolent self-sufficiency" of the One under a "challenging", as we shall see, relevance, we need to point out from the outset that, precisely because of this property, the first Principle constitutes permanently the field of reference of the beings produced by it. Nevertheless, it does not possess the characteristic or even the tendency to relate with an existentially superior or even inferior being.[6]

However, Plotinus clarifies, right from the beginning, that the *One* is ontologically beyond *substance*, *energy*, *intellect* and any intelligible activity and, therefore, is considered to be a self-caused and self-producing Being.[7] Therefore, it is at the top of the ontological hierarchy and, that is why, everything

---

the Good like this, have it in two ways, by assimilating themselves to it, and by directing their activity towards it" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 105].

[5] Cf. J. BUSSANICH, *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 39.

[6] PLOT., *Enn.*, I, 7, 1, 20-24: «Καὶ γὰρ αὖ τοῦτο δεῖ τἀγαθὸν τίθεσθαι, εἰς ὃ πάντα ἀνήρτηται, αὐτὸ δὲ εἰς μηδέν· οὕτω γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς τὸ οὗ πάντα ἐφίεται. Δεῖ οὖν μένειν αὐτό, πρὸς αὐτὸ δὲ ἐπιστρέφειν πάντα, ὥσπερ κύκλον πρὸς κέντρον ἀφ' οὗ πᾶσαι γραμμαί». "For, once more, we must posit the Good to be that upon which all things depend, whereas it depends on nothing. For in this way it is true that it is 'that which all things desire'. It must, then, remain, and all things must revert to it, like the centre of a circle from which all the radii come" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 105-106].

[7] Cf. PLOT., *Enn.*, I, 7, 1, 13-20: «Εἰ οὖν ἔφεσις καὶ ἐνέργεια πρὸς τὸ ἄριστον ἀγαθόν, δεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν μὴ πρὸς ἄλλο βλέπον μηδ' ἐφιέμενον ἄλλου ἐν ἡσύχωι οὖσαν πηγὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν ἐνεργειῶν κατὰ φύσιν οὖσαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθοειδῆ ποιοῦσαν οὐ τῇ πρὸς ἐκεῖνα ἐνεργείᾳ – ἐκεῖνα γὰρ πρὸς αὐτήν – οὐ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ οὐδὲ τῇ νοήσει τἀγαθὸν εἶναι, ἀλλ' αὐτῇ μονῇ τἀγαθὸν εἶναι. Καὶ γὰρ ὅτι ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας, ἐπέκεινα καὶ ἐνεργείας καὶ ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ νοήσεως». "If, then, desire and activity towards that which is best is good, the Good must not look to something else nor be desirous of something else, but be in tranquillity, 'the spring and source of activities' according to nature, and make other things Good-like not by an activity in relation to them, for it is they that are active in relation to it.6 It is not due to activity or thinking that it is the Good, but by remaining in itself. And because it transcends Substantiality, it also transcends activity and transcends Intellect and thinking" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 105].Cf. R. MORTLEY, «Negative Theology and Abstraction in Plotinus», *The American Journal of Philology*, 94/4, 1975, p. 372.

that exists follows the *One* in terms of value and hierarchy. So, since the first Principle is not related, as we have mentioned, to any other being, the *One* will develop a dynamic state of relations only in reference to itself.[8]

So, the One has its own self-determination and stands "isolated" from any interaction, which, first and foremost, means that it exists free of any restrictions that external relations of any kind would introduce.[9] In this sense, the One will constitute a strictly defined "unity" and, consequently, a correspondingly defined "simplicity", since it does not "allow" in its own nature ontological additions, changes and alterations, that is, what is consistent with external interactions in general.[10]

The question that arises here, however, is whether the "unity" of the One, also understood as "simplicity", refers to an exclusive or an inclusive "unity". It should be stressed that this question also concerned J. Bussanich, who probably settles on the first version. But, how would such an

[8] Cf. J. BUSSANICH, *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 45.

[9] Cf. R.T.WALLIS, *Neoplatonism*, London: G. Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1995, p. 57.

[10] PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 5-13: «Δεῖ μὲν γάρ τι πρὸ πάντων εἶναι – ἁπλοῦν τοῦτο – καὶ πάντων ἕτερον τῶν μετ' αὐτό, ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ὄν, οὐ μεμιγμένον τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάλιν ἕτερον τρόπον τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεῖναι δυνάμενον, ὂν ὄντως ἕν, οὐχ ἕτερον ὄν, εἶτα ἕν, καθ' οὗ ψεῦδος καὶ τὸ ἓν εἶναι, οὗ μὴ λόγος μηδὲ ἐπιστήμη, ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐπέκεινα λέγεται εἶναι οὐσίας – εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἁπλοῦν ἔσται συμβάσεως ἔξω πάσης καὶ συνθέσεως καὶ ὄντως ἕν, οὐκ ἂν ἀρχὴ εἴη – αὐταρκέστατόν τε τῶι ἁπλοῦν εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον ἁπάντων· τὸ γὰρ τὸ μὴ πρῶτον ἐνδεὲς τοῦ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, τό τε μὴ ἁπλοῦν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἁπλῶν δεόμενον, ἵν' ᾖ ἐξ ἐκείνων». "For there must be something simple prior to all things and different from all things after it, being by itself, not mixed with the things that come from it, all the while being able to be present to other things, having what those other things have in a different manner, being truly one, and not having its existing different from its being one. Given this, it is false that that of which there is no 'account or scientific understanding' is even one; it is actually said to 'transcend Substantiality' – for if it is not simple, beyond all combination and composition and not truly one, it would not be a principle. And it is absolutely self-sufficient by being simple and first of all. For that which is not first needs that which is prior to it, and that which is not simple is in need of the 'simples' in it in order that it be composed of them" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 577]. Cf. PLATON, *Res Publica*, 509 d. Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus's metaphysics of the One*, pp. 42-43.

assumption justify by implication the term "benevolent self-sufficiency" as, in our view, a synoptic description of the reality of the One?

The One actually keeps its "unity" in a unique and unrepeatable way, a fact which constitutes the main property of its self-existence. In its territory, as already mentioned, there is no form of composition or division, not even one that could be defined or considered as implicitly existing. However, although the "unity" and "simplicity" of the One imply a state of inner "remaining" in the sense that it is an integral existence, the One itself also reveals a creative energy. So, it progressively communicates its presence in a particularly "special" way, i.e., as "unmoved mover" since it "challenges", supervises and "inspires" the descending and ascending moves of beings, without, however, moving with them.[11]

J. M. Rist points out that the One develops such a type of kinetic activity, since by nature and y position has no need to engage in any type of creative transformations and, consequently, it has no need for anything more than itself.[12] This explanation leads to an interesting, for the moment, relation between "unity", "simplicity" and "self-sufficiency". The Self is self-evidently one, simple and self-sufficient, for it remains in every perspective "itself".[13] So, any separations-multiplications that arise in the existing world, occur out of how the creative energy of the One works in beings and, in this sense, the being with accepts this energy is the one that

[11] Cf. PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 15-19: «Τὸ δὴ τοιοῦτον ἓν μόνον δεῖ εἶναι· ἄλλο γὰρ εἰ εἴη τοιοῦτον, ἓν ἂν εἴη τὰ ἄμφω. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ σώματα λέγομεν δύο, ἢ τὸ ἓν πρῶτον σῶμα. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἁπλοῦν σῶμα, γινόμενόν τε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἀρχή· ἡ δὲ ἀρχὴ ἀγένητος·» "That which is indeed one like this must be unique. For if there were something else like this, the two of them would be one. For we are not speaking about two bodies or saying that the One is the first body. For no body is simple. And a body is generated, and not a principle; 'a principle is ungenerated'" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 577]. Cf. PLAT., *Phaidrus*, 245 d.

[12] J.M.RIST, «Forms of Individuals in Plotinus», *The Classical Quarterly*, 13/2, 1963, pp. 223-231.

[13] Cf. C.M.COHOE, «Plotinus on Divine Simplicity, Ontological Independence, and Perfect Being Theology», *Philosophical Quarterly*, 67/269, 2017, p. 752.

remains exposed or dependent on the circumstances and the multiple forms.[14]

The "self-sufficiency" of the One implies, according also to J. Bussanich, that the first Principle is ultimately in a state of exclusive and "unique" unity. Hence, a determination of the form *one-multitude* is excluded from the domain of the One, since, if in the spiritual range of the *True Being*, "unity" was understood as "inclusive" or even "all-inclusive", then by logical implication not only its "simplicity" but also its "self-sufficiency" would be questioned.[15]

According to all these, the One is both a self-sufficient and a perfect Being, two attributes which are directly intertwined, mainly because they fully justify its state of "kinetic immanence". Actually, "perfection", as its characteristic idiom, indicates its "completeness" as well as its "self-sufficiency". However, "perfection" is also related with the productive unfolding of the One, if one considers that the One, as a perfect Being, is governed by the principle of the inexhaustible offering, of endless/unlimited creation, which is understood as the overflow of its productive power.[16] This point, however, about the metaphysics of immanence confirms, also from this line of reasoning, the "self-sufficiency" of the *One*, in the sense that, through its own

[14] PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 20-23: «μὴ σωματικὴ δὲ οὖσα, ἀλλ᾽ ὄντως μία, ἐκεῖνο ἂν εἴη τὸ πρῶτον. Εἰ ἄρα ἕτερόν τι μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον εἴη, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι ἁπλοῦν εἴη· ἓν ἄρα πολλὰ ἔσται. Πόθεν οὖν τοῦτο; Ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου· οὐ γὰρ δὴ κατὰ συντυχίαν, οὐδ᾽ ἂν ἔτι ἐκεῖνο πάντων ἀρχή». "Since the One is not corporeal, but truly one, it would be that which is first. If, therefore, there should be some- thing different after that which is first, that thing would not itself be simple; it will, therefore, be a one-many" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 577].

[15] Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 43.

[16] PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 2, 1, 7-10: «ὅν γάρ τέλειον τῷ μηδέν ζητεῖν μηδέ ἔχειν μηδέ δεῖσθαι οἷον ὑπερερρύη καί τό ὑπερπλῆρες αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο». "Since it is perfect, due to its neither seeking anything, nor having anything, nor needing anything, it in a way overflows and its superabundance has made something else" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 549].Cf. G. LEKKAS, «Plotinus: Towards a Ontology of Likeness (On the One and Nous)», *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13/1, 2005, pp. 37-39. Cf. J.H.HEISER, «Plotinus and the Apeiron of Plato's Parmenides», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 55/1, 1991, p. 62.

unceasing activity, it remains permanently or eternally self-sufficient. So, the *One* seems to develop its activity in a fixed and inexhaustible way,[17] without existential changes,[18] an intelligible, rational or even or even desirable preparation,[19] but also without its products having actual knowledge of its ontological status.[20]

The above further confirms that the One permanently develops a benevolent activity, i.e., it is characterized as *Good*, since what takes place in the existent is not conceived outside or beyond its creative power. Or, else, the existence of the produced beings is directly interwoven with the projections of the existence of the One, in contrast, obviously, with this first Principle which, as has already been shown, does not depend for its presence on any other entity. Therefore, by the term "benevolent self-sufficiency" we mean the state of a perfect and self-sufficient Being, which «*τίκτει ἐν τῷ καλῷ*», decorates the existent, without, for the most part, being dispersed in the contexts of the world.[21]

---

[17] PLOT., *Enn.*, VI, 9, 9, 3-4.

[18] PLOT., *Enn.*, III, 8, 8, 46-49.

[19] PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 3, 12, 28-33. A.H. ARMSTRONG, "Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought of Plotinus", *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, XIX, 1975, p. 158.

[20] PLOT., *Enn.*, VI, 7, 39, 19-33. Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 49.

[21] PLOT., *Enn.*, III, 8, 11, 10-13: «Τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλα περὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἔχει τὴν ἐνέργειαν, τὸ δὲ ἀγαθὸν οὐδενὸς δεῖται· διὸ οὐδέν ἐστιν αὐτῶι ἢ αὐτό. Φθεγξάμενος οὖν τὸ ἀγαθὸν μηδὲν ἔτι προσνόει·» "For other things have their activity with respect to and for the sake of the Good, whereas the Good has no need of anything. And so it has nothing but itself. For this reason, when you have uttered 'the Good', don't make any mental additions" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 367]. PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 23- 27: «Πῶς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου; Εἰ τέλεόν ἐστι τὸ πρῶτον καὶ πάντων τελεώτατον καὶ δύναμις ἡ πρώτη, δεῖ πάντων τῶν ὄντων δυνατώτατον εἶναι, καὶ τὰς ἄλλας δυνάμεις καθόσον δύνανται μιμεῖσθαι ἐκεῖνο». "How, then, does it come from that which is first? If that which is first is perfect, that is, the most perfect of all things and the first power, it must be the most powerful of all things, and the other powers imitate it as much as they are able" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 578]. Imitation obviously does not refer to ontological affinity, much less to identity, since pantheism does not find a privileged field of presence in the Neoplatonic School.

And a further, final, question: Could "benevolent self-sufficiency" also be seen from a different perspective? Could it be considered that, as a "motionless movement", it concerns or, more correctly, confirms the "intention" of the *One* to behave in such a way? Scholars seem to arrive at the conclusion that, according to Plotinus, the *One* forms a mode of presence, different but corresponding to its essence/nature, without itself entering into any preparations, especially emotional, ones.[22] However, such a view raises issues, since it defines the activity of the *One* as an essential property of it and, at the same time, makes it a "victim" of its physical dispositions. The interpretative-research difficulty is overcome, however, as soon as we understand that the *One* constitutes by its nature a dynamic state, which produces a further activity such that it could in no way be identified with its "Being".[23] In this sense, it would not be too risky, in the first place, to understand "intention" as the generating power of this activity, or, even further, to consider that within the limits of "intention" exists what ultimately draws a parallel between the *One* and a "closed circuit of electric charge".

Besides, from the *One*, as a perfect "unity" and as an already complete "self-sufficiency", it would not be possible to lack the "intention", which, under an advanced reading, indicates the willingness of the first Principle to combine its choices/actions with its inherently "technical" specifications. Moreover, no one would dispute that the highest confirmation of the "unity" and "perfection" of a Being is the absolute agreement between nature and will, substance and "intention".

In Plotinus, the existence of "intention" in the *One* must not, in any way, be questioned for an additional reason as well; any entity that participates - to whatever extent - in the

[22] Cf. E.F.BALES, «A Heideggerian Interpretation of Negative Theology in Plotinus», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 47/2, 1983, p. 202. Cf. J. BUSSANICH *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, p. 49.

[23] Cf. G. LEKKAS, «Plotinus: Towards a Ontology of Likeness (On the One and Nous)», p. 55.

processes of production as a "producer", participates by "intention" of its own.[24] So, how could the "intention" be missing from the *One*, since it too must be included in the scope of the first Principle's gifts to the produced animate entities? After all, it is not possible for the *One* to bequeath properties which it does not possess to an absolute degree.[25] It is also not susceptible to any external accident.

On the other hand, since the Neoplatonic philosopher admits that "intention" constitutes, apart from being structural, also a dynamic element of animate beings,[26] it

[24] PLOT., *Enn.*, VI, 1, 12, 32-37: «Ἆρ' οὖν ἄλλη τις ὑπόστασις κατὰ τὸ ποιητικὸν τοῦ ποιητικὸν οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ὄντος ἢ καθόσον ποιόν; Τάχα μὲν γὰρ ἄν τις ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμψύχων καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῶν προαίρεσιν ἐχόντων τῷ νενευκέναι πρὸς τὸ ποιεῖν ὑπόστασιν εἶναι καὶ κατὰ τὸ ποιητικόν». "Is there not, then, another real existent in respect of the productive thing, without the productive thing being different from being qualified in a certain way? For one could very well assume in the case of living beings and even more in the case of things with choice, because of their inclination to production, that there is also a special form of real existence in respect of being productive" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 663]. In the *One* no property is attributed (apophaticism and metaphysics of transcendence), a detail which however does not remove its productive and categorically describable emanation. Cf. PLOT., *Enn.*, III, 4, 5, 1-3: «Ἢ καὶ ἡ αἵρεσις ἐκεῖ ἡ λεγομένη τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς προαίρεσιν καὶ διάθεσιν καθόλου καὶ πανταχοῦ αἰνίττεται». "In fact, choice, too, as it is spoken of in the intelligible world, is an allegorical way of referring to the intention and disposition of the soul for life generally and everywhere" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 287].

[25] PLOT., *Enn.*, V, 4, 1, 27- 34: «Ὅ τι δ' ἂν τῶν ἄλλων εἰς τελείωσιν ἴῃ, ὁρῶμεν γεννῶν καὶ οὐκ ἀνεχόμενον ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένειν, ἀλλ' ἕτερον ποιοῦν, οὐ μόνον ὅ τι ἂν προαίρεσιν ἔχῃ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσα φύει ἄνευ προαιρέσεως, καὶ τὰ ἄψυχα δὲ μεταδιδόντα ἑαυτῶν καθόσον δύναται· οἷον τὸ πῦρ θερμαίνει, καὶ ψύχει ἡ χιών, καὶ τὰ φάρμακα δὲ εἰς ἄλλο ἐργάζεται οἷον αὐτά – πάντα τὴν ἀρχὴν κατὰ δύναμιν ἀπομιμούμενα εἰς ἀιδιότητά τε καὶ ἀγαθότητα». "In the case of other things, we see whatever comes to perfection, generating, and not holding back so as to remain self-contained, but rather making something else. This is the case not only for things that have choice, but also for things that grow without choice – and even for things without souls, which give of themselves to the extent that they are able. For example, fire warms, and snow chills, and drugs which act on something else according to their own nature. Everything imitates the principle according to its capacity by tending towards eternity and goodness" [L.P. Gerson (ed.), 578].

[26] PLOT., *Enn.*, II, 3, 2, 16-21

could not, therefore, be recognized as the absolutely dynamic expression of the *One*. But even further: while scholars focus on the free self-determination of the *One*, which certainly possesses the ontological prerequisites to set itself as unfolding in its self-sufficiency, they do not insist on this: that the freedom of the first Principle is strictly and exclusively intertwined with its "intention", since any peculiar activations of it cannot be seen either as a circumstantial, or, certainly, as an emanating phenomenon of the effects or reactions of the produced multitude.[27] Thus, it does not develop inherent accidents as well.

According to all these, we would add that the "free intention" of the *One* is not ultimately confirmed in the truth of the essence of the *One*, but rather the truth of the essence emanates, on a strictly epistemological or declarative level, from the creative freedom which the *One* also provides to the animate beings.[28] Its "intention", therefore, indicates its absolute self-consciousness and, at the same time, demonstrates that it is an entity with an objective presence, even if the human intellect rather perceives it as oscillating between its creative indeterminacy and its static immensity.[29]

Conclusions

In Plotinus, the *One* constitutes a "peculiar" presence, which, although it is located in a relational-dynamic reference exclusively to itself, nevertheless is the supreme productive cause of the entire existent. It develops a distinctly decorative orientation, as it evokes a wide range of generations, which in the first place aim to establish to the utmost the order and regularity of the universal world. This activity of the *One* does not raise any complication or alteration of its ontological characteristics, namely its "unity"', "simplicity" and "self-

[27] PLOT., *Enn.*, II, 3, 14, 27-28.

[28] J. TROUILLARD, *La Mystagogie de Proclos*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982, p. 31

[29] Cf. A.H. ARMSTRONG, *Plotinus*, Greek trans. N. Papadakis-M.koffa, Athens: Enalios, 2006, p. 96.

sufficiency". Thus, it emerges as an entity which enjoys its "benevolent self-sufficiency", for it constitutes that creative Principle which produces without assigning even the least of itself to its products. This special limitation of the *One* in itself demonstrates its free "intention" to combine in a perfect and complete way its essential selfhood and its ontological self-efficiency with its eternally circulating creative presence, which, however, does not lead to any expression of pantheism, despite the fact that we are in a clearly monistic system.

Bibliography

Armstrong A. H., *Plotinus*, Greek trans. N. Papadakis-M.koffa, Athens: Enalios, 2006.

- «The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus», *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, 1976, pp. 187-197.
- «Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought of Plotinus», *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, XIX, 1975, pp. 155-163.

Bales E.F., «A Heideggerian Interpretation of Negative Theology in Plotinus», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 47/2, 1983, pp. 197-208.

Bussanich J., *Plotinus' s metaphysics of the One*, Cambridge: University Press, 2006.

Cohoe C.M., «Plotinus on Divine Simplicity, Ontological Independence, and Perfect Being Theology», *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 67/269, 2017, pp. 751–771.

Heiser J.H., «Plotinus and the Apeiron of Plato's Parmenides», *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 55/1, 1991, pp. 53-81.

Lekkas G., «Plotinus: Towards a Ontology of Likeness (On the One and Nous)», *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13/1, 2005, pp. 53-68.

Mazur W.Z., «To Try to Bring the Divine in Us Back Up to the Divine in the All": The Gnostic Background of Plotinus's», *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 25/4, 2017, pp. 561-580.

Mortley R., «Negative Theology and Abstraction in Plotinus», *The American Journal of Philology*, 94/4, 1975, pp. 363-377.

Rist J.M., «Forms of Individuals in Plotinus», *The Classical Quarterly*, 13/2, 1963, pp. 223-231.

Trouillard J., *La Mystagogie de Proclos*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982.

Wallis R.T., *Neoplatonism*, London: G. Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1995.

ΣΧΟΛΗ

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND
THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

VOLUME 18

ISSUE 1

2024

https://classics.nsu.ru/schole/

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 discipline 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[1]. 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

[1] 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[2].

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[3]. 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[4]. 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.

[2] 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.

[3] Cf. for instance, Breton S., «Âme spinoziste, Âme néoplatonicienne», R*evue 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.

[4] 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 Proclos», *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 ἐπί 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[5].

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[6]. 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 ἐξῄρηνται μὲν οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ὅλων, ταῦτα δὲ πληροῦντες ὥσπερ εἴπομεν ἀγαθῶν, αὐτοὶ πανάγαθοι τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες»[7]. ("The Gods, therefore, are exempt from the whole of things. But filling these, as we have said, with good, they are themselves perfectly good"[8]). 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

[5] 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 "remaingins" and "reversion", cf. the emblematic work of Trouillard, J., *La mystagogie de Proclos*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1982, pp.53-115. Cf. Gersh S., *From Iamblichus to Eriugena,* E. J. Brill, Leiden 1978, pp. 223-225.

[6] Cf. *Respublica*, II, 380d.1- 381e.7.

[7] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 88.16-18.

[8] Taylor Th., (transl.), *The Theology of Plato*, The Prometheus Trust, 1995, p.103.

absolute good is not divisible («πάλιν δὲ κἀνταῦθα παραιτησόμεθα τοὺς μεριστῶς ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς τὸ ἄριστον...»[9]) ("but here again, we must oppose those who interpret in a divisible manner that which is most excellent in the Gods..."[10]), 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

[9] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 88.20-22.
[10] Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 103.

περιουσίαν»[11] ("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"[12]). 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)[13].

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

[11] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 88.18-20.

[12] Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 103

[13] 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 nominubus* 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*[14]: «Ὃ καὶ ὁ Τίμαιος ἡμῖν ἐνδεικνύμενος ἄριστον τῶν αἰτίων τὸν πρῶτον συνεχῶς ἀποκαλεῖ δημιουργόν (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τῶν αἰτίων ἄριστος, ὁ δὲ τῶν γεγονότων κάλλιστος)»[15]("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"[16]). 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»[17]. ("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"[18]). Therefore,

[14] Cf. Βλ. 32d.1-c.7.

[15] *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.

[16] Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 103.

[17] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 90.14-19.

[18] 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 ἀνενδεές· ἀλλὰ κἀνταῦθα τὸ αὔταρκες ἐνδεές ἐστι δυνάμεων, οὐ γὰρ πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ νοητὰ τὰς νοήσεις ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ χρόνον ἐνεργοῦσι καὶ τὸ παντελὲς τῆς θεωρίας ἐν ταῖς ὅλαις κέκτηνται περιόδοις· ἡ τοίνυν αὐτάρκεια τῶν θείων ψυχῶν καὶ τελειότης τῆς ζωῆς οὐχ ὁμοῦ πᾶσα σύνεστι»[19]. ("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,

[19] *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 Proclos*, 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"[20]). 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 νοερὸς κόσμος αὐτάρκης ὡς ἐν αἰῶνι τὸ ὅλον ἀγαθὸν ἱδρυσάμενος καὶ πᾶσαν ὁμοῦ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μακαριότητα συλλαβὼν καὶ μηδενὸς ὢν ἐνδεής, τῷ πᾶσαν αὐτῷ παρεῖναι ζωήν, πᾶσαν δὲ νόησιν, ἐλλείπειν δὲ μηδὲν μηδὲ ποθεῖν ὡς ἀπόν· ἀλλὰ καὶ οὗτος αὐτάρκης μὲν ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ τάξει, τῆς δὲ τῶν θεῶν αὐταρκείας ἀπολείπεται»[21]. ("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"[22]). 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[23]. But as has

[20] Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 104.

[21] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 91.1-7.

[22] Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 104.

[23] 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: «Ἆρ᾽ 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»[24] ("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.

[24] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 91.22-92.1.

nature of the celestial bodies is immaterial and immutable"[25]). 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 αὗται κοινωνοῦσί πως σώμασι καί εἰσι μέσαι τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριζομένης οὐσίας»[26] ("For these communicate in a certain respect with bodies, and are the media of an impartible essence, and of an essence divided about bodies."[27]). 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

[25] Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 105.

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

[27] 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.[28] Therefore, by this line of reasoning too, it is validated that only te 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 ἱδρυσάμενοι τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἑνώσεις ἄτρεπτοι κυριώτατα καὶ πρώτως εἰσὶ καὶ ἀπαθεῖς»[29] ("But the Gods alone having established their unions according to this transcendency of beings, are immutable dominations, are primary and impassive"[30]). 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.[31] As a result of the above: «Διὸ δὴ καὶ πανταχοῦ παρόντες οἱ θεοὶ πάντων ὁμοίως ἐξῄρηνται, καὶ πάντα συνέχοντες ὑπ᾽ οὐδενὸς κρατοῦνται τῶν συνεχομένων, ἀλλ᾽ εἰσὶν ἀμιγεῖς πρὸς πάντα καὶ ἄχραντοι»[32] ("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

[28] *Theologia Platonica*, I, I, 92.8-13.Cf. *Institutio theologica,* pr. 169, 146.24-25.

[29] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 92.13-16.

[30] Taylor, Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 105.

[31] On the position of the henads in Proclus' system, the most important, in our view, analysis is made by Saffrey H. D. and Westering 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.

[32] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 92.25-93.2.

they contain; but they are unmingled with all things and undefiled."[33]). 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 δὴ τρίτον λέγεται μὲν καὶ ὁ κόσμος οὗτος ὡσαύτως ἔχειν καθ' ὅσον ἄλυτον ἀεὶ κρατουμένην ἔλαχε τὴν ἐναύτῳ τάξιν· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐπεὶ σωματοειδής ἐστι, μεταβολῆς ἄμοιρος οὐκ ἔστιν»[34] ("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"[35]). 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*[36]. 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[37]. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that no inflexibilities emerge. So, it is mentioned that

[33] Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 106.

[34] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 93.3-6. Cf. *Timaeus*, 32c.3 and *Respublica*, 269e.1.

[35] Taylor Th., *The Theology of Plato*, p. 106.

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

[37] 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[38]. 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 «μονοειδές» ("unform"), «ἀδιάλυτον» ("indissoluble") and «ὡσαύτως 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[39], Proclus notes that the «μονοειδές» or, otherwise, the «ἑνιαῖον», 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

[38] 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.

[39] Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 118.10-119.30.

reversing way, since the One is found before their presence as their precondition[40]. Similarly, as a concept it is followed by «ἀδιάλυτον», which maintains cohesion and connects the ends in the divine union[41]. 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[42]. According to the above reasoning, the Neoplatonic philosopher emphasizes that the «ἑνιαῖον» is identified with the divine, the «ἀδιάλυτον» with the immortal, and «ὡσαύτως ἔχον» with the intelligible[43].

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.

[40] *Theologia Platonica*, I, 118.20-25.
[41] Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 118.25-119.1.
[42] Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 119.4-7.
[43] Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, I, 119.8-9.

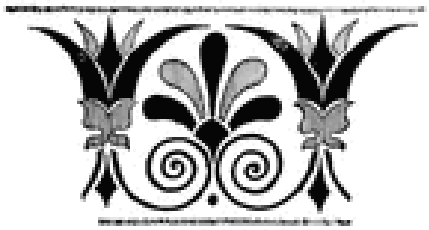
For its part, the natural world, as perishable, is causally subject to the divine domain, a parameter which excludes its ontological independence and, consequently, its direct and absolute self-sufficiency. In a similar way, it is excluded from souls as well as from heavenly bodies.

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», R*evue 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 Proclos», *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.

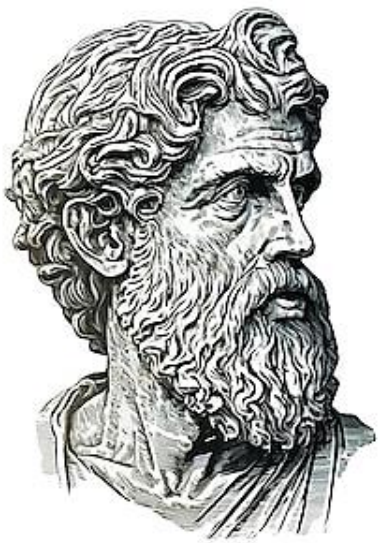
Moutsopoulos E., «Ο Πρόκλος ως δεσμός ανάμεσα στην αρχαία και τη νεότερη φιλοσοφία», *Η επικαιρότητα της αρχαίας ελληνικής φιλοσοφίας*, transl. Dragona-Monachou, M., Athens 1997: Ελληνικά Γράμματα.

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 Proclos*, Paris 1972: Les Belles Lettres.
Trouillard J., *La mystagogie de Proclos*, Paris 1982: Les Belles Lettres, pp.53-115.



Pythagorean Philosophy and Theurgy on Friendship

Alexios A. Petrou,
Professor, University of Nicosia
petrou.a@unic.ac.cy

Abstract

In the Pythagorean tradition, friendship is elevated beyond a mere human relationship, serving as a means to transcend human frailty and attain immortality. This philosophy posits that humans are imprisoned and require liberation through the benevolence of the gods. The Pythagorean way of life is seen as a path to achieving immortality and freedom, where friendship with the gods is the highest form of association. The spiritual practice of theurgy is essential in this process, enabling humans to purify themselves and receive the gift of friendship from the gods. The Pythagoreans distinguished between various forms of friendship, including the highest and most noble understanding between gods and humans, which requires faith, knowledge, philosophy, and theurgy. True friendship is characterized by trust, piety, and scientific worship, and its pursuit necessitates the avoidance of jealousy and conflict, as well as careful judgment and reverence. Additionally, purification, self-control, and a healthy diet are crucial in the pursuit of wisdom and friendship. Ultimately, the Pythagorean philosophy on friendship offers a profound understanding of human relationships, emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth, self-transcendence, and the pursuit of wisdom, leading to the cultivation of true and lasting friendships that bring about wholeness, reconciliation, and harmony.

Keywords: Pythagoras, Iamblichus, Theurgy, Friendship, Education, Purification

According to a sacred oration human beings by nature are herd animals; they are under custody --prisoners-- and it is difficult for them to free themselves or escape. Plato seems to know this: reminding Cebes of the Pythagorean theory of Philolaus, he asserts that human beings are possessions of the gods; they are guarded by them.[1] But for what reason are they imprisoned? Indeed, is there a way to gain their freedom?

Diogenes Laertius tells us that when Hieronymus descended to Hades, he saw Hesiodus' soul bound upon a brazen column and heard it squeak, and also saw Homer's soul hanging from a tree guarded by snakes, because they dared speak against the gods.[2] For Homer the human being is corporeal: there is no immortal human soul. A similar view of the corporeality of the human will later be held by Epicharmus,[3] Herodotus, Pindarus[4] and the tragedians[5]: it is *hybris* to even consider that a mortal may become immortal.[6] Greek tradition creates a chasm between the human being and the gods; they are in perpetual discord.

On the other hand, the Pythagoreans held an opposing conviction. In the last two lines of the *Golden Verses*[7] the poet says:

> Then, if you leave the body behind
> and go to the free *aither*,
> you will be immortal,
> an undying god, no longer mortal.

[1] Plato (*Phdr*. 61d and 62b).

[2] Diogenes Laertius (8, 21).

[3] Epicharmus (*CGF*, fr.20.2): *A mortal should think mortal thoughts, not immortal thoughts.*

[4] Pindarus (I, 5. 14-6): *Do not seek to become Zeus; you have everything, if a share of these fine things comes to you. Mortal aims befit mortal men* and P, 3, 61-2: *Oh! my soul do not aspire to eternal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible...*

[5] Sophocles, OCT (*Tr*. 473): *Since I see that you think as mortals should think and not without good judgment...*

[6] On the subject of hybris, see Bremer 65-98.

[7] Thom 98-9, verses 70-1.

The Neoplatonic Hierocles, commenting, maintains that the purpose of life is to free ourselves from the evils of material life and ascend to the isles of the Blessed in the sphere of the gods.[8] Ascention, confirms twice Empedocles,[9] is accomplished beyond corporeality in the free *aither*, wherein one becomes an imperishable god. Iamblichus adds that the philosophic way of life is the path for mortals to attain immortality and freedom.[10] In order to accomplish such a great task it is imperative to transcend the Delphic injunctions: "nothing in excess" (*«μηδέν άγαν»*) and "everything in moderation" (*«πάν μέτρον άριστον»*). This does not imply a distancing of the philosophical subject from the Oracle of Apollo, rather one has to become in a way irreverent (*«υβριστής»*)[11] and a demonic dancer of

[8] One of the most important Pythagorean principles is that of reincarnation. The Pythagoreans are in agreement with the Orphics on this matter. They support the possibility of deification: the harmonization of the human soul with the Universal soul. Also, see Hierocles, *CA*.

Because human life is full of difficulties and comprises a dialectical synthesis of the finite and the infinite, it ought to follow a specified ascending course until it arrives at the level of perfection, that of the Universal soul. And because the duration of the human biological body in most cases is not sufficient for the completion of the process of catharsis, the soul, reincarnates, enters another body in order to complete its mission. On this subject see Anton 11-2. The Pythagorean principle of reincarnation will later be followed by the neoplatonic Plotinus (3.4.2). On this matter see Georgopoulou-Nicolakakou 1991.

[9] Empedocles (*Epigr*. in D-K, 5 and fragment 112,10). See also Diogenes Laertius (8,62).

Nevertheless, the position of Empedocles differs from that of Pythagoras. According to G. Zuntz, the poet of the purifications supports the view that the human is already immortal in his/her present life. On the contrary, the poet of the G*olden Verses* supports that the philosophical subject --through the purifications ventured in his/her present mortal life and through continuous reincarnations-- has the possibility of becoming immortal in a future life. This view is also held by Hierocles in his comments. See Zuntz 189-91. Compare Thom 226-9.

[10] Iamblichus (*VP* 6.31). Compare Aristotle (*Fr.* 192).

Much later, Fr. Nietzsche in his own way repeats the same position in the *Twilight of the Idols*: "To live alone one must be an animal or a god – says Aristotle. There is yet a third case: one must be both – a philosopher". In Nietzsche 1988, KSA 6:59.

[11] Hybris, is defined through the Heracletean meanings of want (*«χρησμοσύνη»*) and satiety (*«κόρος»*) (D-K, fr. 65). It is the natural law

Dionysus.[12] Interestingly, according to an anonymous Samian poet, Pythagoras himself was considered to be the son of Apollo.[13] Abaris the Hyperborean will go even further, in Pythagoras he recognized the god himself.[14]

The philosophers possess divine characteristics that transcend human attributes. Their wisdom is divine beyond the spheres of the human mind,[15] which due to its limited nature cannot rise to the supreme apprehension of totality.[16] Most importantly, divine wisdom is given through the benevolence of the gods themselves; it cannot be attained by human effort nor can it be seen or understood by a finite

---

that defines the limits of personal assertions, without however posing any ethical or social limitations on the code of behavior, since such confines are neither perfect nor eternal. The Pythagorean approach does not constitute a traditional metaphysical interpretation of human existence. The fact that the natural laws are eternal according to the Pythagoreans, leads humans to the necessary way of friendship and philosophy. However, this path of the philosophical way of life does not refer to an ethical Ego which turns its back to nature. On the contrary, the Pythagorean way is beyond ethics and possesses the freedom of movement from the closed world of a personal Ego to that of Nature.

Nietzsche, in the first of *Five prologues on five unwritten books*, which bears the title *On the Pathos of Truth* --*Über das Pathos der Warheit*-1872-- (Breazeal 61-6 and KSA 1:755-60), deals with the innate feeling of human *self-love* and supports the necessity of this *unique* emotion for both humans themselves as well as for humanity as a whole. According to the philosopher, this feeling of the *mysterious contradiction* between being and becoming disappears at the moment *of supreme perfection* and thus the perspective of an eternally present human being is fulfilled in the best possible way [Breazeal 61-2, KSA 1:755-56. See the relevant comment in the *Nachlass* of the same period, KSA 7:433 (19, 43)]. However, such a supreme existence is not supported by any metaphysical or social code, except by the dreadful loneliness of its own Ego in search for Being and in the process of contemplating the eternal game of the gods: the destruction and creation of the cosmos. Of course, this form of contemplation does not constitute a metaphysical or social code. Furthermore, through a divine existence one may transcend loneliness and indeed become a friend of the gods. Even more, through philosophy one may shed human mortality and become a god.

[12] On this subject, see Padel 130-44.

[13] Iamblichus (*VP* 2.5).

[14] Iamblichus (*VP* 19.92).

[15] Iamblichus (*VP* 23.103).

[16] Empedocles *On Nature*, in Sextus Empiricus (*M.* 8,123).

mind. Therefore, it is wise for all who philosophize to call forth such benevolence with all the might of their souls.[17] Divine wisdom can only be approached through the assistance of the gods, who become guides and friends of their chosen ones, engifting them with the ability to perceive the beauty and the greatness of their wisdom.[18]

We can approach totality only when we become *friends* of the gods. Having conceived the essence of the Pythagorean inducement, Hölderlin in *Form and Spirit* (*Gestalt und Geist*) will write that all is *friendship*, and Heidegger translating, will further elucidate that *form and spirit determine each other*[19] without either of them loosing its uniqueness. When mortal men receive the gift of coming into intercourse with the gods they are transformed into "noble heroes"[20] -- luminous lovers-philosophers-- who have attained the "other" of their Being to become immortal *mortals*.

According to the Pythagorean position, friendship between mortals and gods as well as the accomplishment of the deification of friends results through the process of theurgy. In *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus tells us that the ways of theology (the noetic theory on being) and of philosophy (of perspective dialectics) are on their own insufficient; they have to be complemented by *ineffable* works[21] through which the gods purify the friends and transform them into lesser deities.

This conviction regarding human nature, which clearly discerns the ability of experiencing the divine despite human weakness, becomes catalytic through friendship. So the human being, which belongs to the heard, even though incapable of comprehending his/her own self on account of weakness and ignorance, through faith in the "other" --which

[17] Iamblichus (*VP* 1.1).

[18] Nietzsche in the *Philosopher* defines this condition as the ***teleology of philosophical genius*** and as the perspective of *transcendence*. KSA 7: 420 (19, 16).

[19] Heidegger 5:46.

[20] Thom 94-5, verse 2.

[21] Iamblichus (*Myst.* 2.11.21): *For the perfect efficacy of in- effable works, which are divinely performed in a way surpassing all intelligence.* Compare with Smith 74-86.

is justified through concealment and ineffability-- receives the gift of friendship and is thus freed from the bonds of incarceration and the identity of Ego; from a passive prisoner he/she becomes an active element and driving force. In this divine order of friendship phenomena are revealed in their entirety and the totality of existence is unconcealed.

The friendship of the gods leads Pythagoras in the arms of Apollo, wherefrom the philosopher --*demon* and godly man[22]-- returns to the world of opposites and change, to teach the chosen ones --his *fellow-hearers*-- a new and more universal world, regulated and organized in accordance with godly wisdom. Pythagoras' undertaking is founded upon the transcendence of an ethically determined meaning of friendship. Moreover, the philosopher gains the friendship of the gods through a direct understanding that the concealed existence of totality precedes any fixed concept attributed to common forms of friendship. While friendship with the gods entails the continuation of the natural powers of *concealment.* Furthermore, in accord with the divine wisdom of concealment, secrecy is adopted as part of the Pythagorean way of life.

Symbols and *things heard* (*akousmata*) are the ways of friends that the Pythagoreans keep concealed for their sole use. Iamblichus says that to the uninitiated they appear laughable and silly; to friends however they are clearly understood and evident.[23] Plutarchus also confirms that initiation allows friends to excel in virtue whereas the incarcerated and members of the herd are jealous and envious; for this reason, the uninitiated humiliate and upset the philosophers. Plutarchus, drawing from Plato, compares the philosophically ignorant with "puppies, delighting to pull and tear" whoever chances to be in their realm[24]. Therefore, it is divine wisdom that guided the Pythagoreans to keep their deepest understanding of friendship concealed.

[22] Iamblichus (*VP* 6.31).

[23] Iamblichus (*VP* 23.105).

[24] Plutarchus (*Moralia,* vol. 1, "Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat prorfectus", 78E-F). Compare Plato (*R.* 539b).

Moreover, for the sake of clarity they discerned between various kinds of friendship. The highest, most noble and secret understanding is between gods and humans, which we have already discussed. Iamblichus speaks of yet another five kinds: friendship of one doctrine for another, friendship of the soul for the body or the reasoning part for the unreasoning, friendship between people (political, national and personal relations), friendship between non-rational animals and, friendship (that is reconciliation) of the opposing powers concealed within the body, that in itself is mortal.

These kinds of friendship emerge through piety and scientific worship, philosophy and theory, through healthy lawfulness, correct physiology, health and the practice of a healthy diet, through unswerving relationships, and through prudence. Hence, faith and knowledge, philosophy and theurgy, intelligence, right opinion, purity of soul and bodily health constitute the prerequisites of Pythagorean friendship.[25] In this light, friendship is defined as the deepest flourishing of the cosmic elements, piercing even through Pythagoreanism and organizing intelligence, soul, and material world in accordance to the first imperishable principle, that of the One.

The principle of the One is the highest teaching of universal and cosmic unity through which the Pythagoreans apprehended the organization of nature. Despite the fact that through their secret teachings it may appear that the Pythagoreans give the impression of ethical prejudice, this is not the case. On the contrary, it is more likely that ethical prejudices appear to be based on or result from the deification of the philosophical way of Pythagorean life. Be that as it may, the secrecy of the teachings was not founded upon an elitist outlook but served for the protection of friends. Moreover, in respect to friendship concerning the relationships between people, Pythagoras' inducements refer

[25] Iamblichus (*VP* 33.229 and *Protr.* 19,291). See also de Vogel 150-9 and Shaw 118-126.

to the avoidance of jealousy[26] and of dispute,[27] daughter of Discord (*«Έρις»*).[28]

Hesiodus, referring to *«Έρις»* (Discord) speaks of her two kinds: the first bears the characteristics of detrimental jealousy whilst the second is benevolent and bears the characteristics of the roots of the earth, helping everyone to exert their utmost, to improve his/her livelihood and appreciate the necessity of work.[29] Much later Nietzsche[30]

[26] The word used by Iamblichus is *agon.* However, this word has more than one meaning, and therefore, cannot convey the essence that the Syrian wants to emphasize: both jealousy and its opposite, that of benevolent desire for the improvement of one's way of life. For this reason, we make use of the word 'jealousy' in order to convey the meaning indicated.

[27] The theme of friendship is the guiding motive of Empedocles' great poem *On Nature* [we follow the edition of Kirk, Raven & Schofield: 341-98, pp. 284-313]. On the surviving fragments of this poem, which are highly reminiscent of Parmenides' poem, the elements of Love (*«Φιλότης»*) and of Strife (*«Νείκος»*) occupy the dominant position. The first is that constituting the harmonic relation of the four roots, fire, water, earth and air, whilst the second is that which constitutes their in-between dimensions (349, ln.19-20). These two elements, as well as the roots themselves interchange as regards their dominance (349, ln. 27-9, pp.289, 359, p.295, 365, 366, p.299), and this interchange secures universal stability that is conserved by the very nature of the two elements, which run through one another (349, ln.33-5). Regarding the common belief of Pythagoras and Empedocles about the character of the four roots, also see Tzavaras 191-2.

However, the *friendship* that Iamblichus describes here is probably that which Empedocles calls Love (*Φιλότης*), the unifying element, that is "held fast in the close obscurity of Harmony" (358, ln.6, p. 295) and rejuvenates the mortal generations (360, ln.16-7, p. 296), providing them with equal proportions of mixture, for only in this manner can the human being clearly see and understand the world (392, p. 310).

Obviously, Iamblichus uses the term *«φιλία»* wrongly, thus implying that which Empedocles terms *«Φιλότης»*. The result of this mix up is to articulate in a confused manner concepts such as *«φιλονεικία»* and *«φιλοτιμία».* These concepts, which according to Empedocles have the same meaning and characterize *«Νείκος»*, here are put forth in pairs, either *«φιλονεικία-φιλοτιμία»* or *«φιλονεικία-φιλία»*, resulting in an "erroneous" translation on the basis of what Iamblichus implied in each case.

[28] Hesiodus (*Th.*, 223-32).

[29] Hesiodus (*Op.*, 14-24).

reminds us of the latter meaning of *«Ἔρις»*. In the fifth preface of the handwritten manuscript *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books*, Nietzsche presented to Cosima Wagner on the Christmas of 1872, *Homer's Contest* (*Homer's Wettkampf*), where the German philosopher brings the second kind of *Ἔρις* to the surface, indirectly expressing his objections on the views of Iamblichus and even more specifically those of the Orphics, indicating the necessity as well as the practical value of the agonistic morality of the ancient Greeks, not only for the Greeks themselves but also for contemporaries.[31]

---

[30] Our insistence in comparing the positions of the German philosopher with those of Pythagoras is not coincidental. E. Rohde, a friend and fellow student of Fr. Nietzsche, wrote an article relevant to the *Pythagorean life* of Iamblichus in *Rheinisches Museum* (Rohde 1871-1872) published by his Professor Friedrich Ritschl. It is notable, that in 1870 Nietzsche had written an article regarding Homer and Hesiodus in the same journal (Nietzsche 1870).

Nietzsche has in mind Rohde's article. In a letter addressed to him, Nietzsche points out that historian J. Burckhardt expressed an interest about his article [Middleton 1996, to Erwin Rohde, after the 21/ 12/ 1871, pp. 84-5; Nietzsche 1986, NSB 3: 257-8].

Notwithstanding, the above --up to a point coincidental-- relation, Nietzsche's philosophy is in essence "Pythagorean". The German philosopher, as he states in the second part of his Prologue in *Ecce Homo*, "is a student of philosopher Dionysus" (KSA 6: 257-258). On the other hand, Pythagoras was a student of Zoroaster, maintains Apuleius in his *Apology* (*Apologia* 31), and during his stay in Arabia together with Porphyrius visited Zaratus the Chaldean, where next to him he was purified from his sins and was taught the ways which human beings ought to maintain in order to keep themselves cleansed (Porphyrius, *VP* 12). For all the references of the ancient writers on the relation between Pythagoras and Zoroaster, see Guthrie: vol. 1, p. 253. From the above, we can infer that the choice of the name "Zarathustra" by Nietzsche was not made by chance.

For the evolutionary path of the theory on the immortality of the soul and the relations of the Orphic and Pythagorean principles with Dionysus Zagreus, see Zeller: vol. I, 1, pp. 53-68, 122-48 and 361-420, and Gomperz: vol. 1, pp. 127-129. Nietzsche knew of Zeller's book. In a letter he addressed to E. Rohde on June 11th 1872 (NSB 4: 9-10), he refers to it and also provides a special citation on Pythagorean philosophy. On the relation of Nietzsche with the Pythagoreans, see Silk & Stern 74 and 218, and Vogel 56, 78-9 and 360-2.

[31] Kaufmann 1982: 35; KSA 1:787.

Notwithstanding, Pythagoras urges us to refrain from quarrelling and conflict since we ought to know how to give way so as to control temper.[32] For his students he instituted punishments --the so-called *πεδαρτάσεις* (suspensions)[33]-- whose purpose was the general improvement of the way of life. To be effective one had to recognize their protective and friendly character. And this was accomplished only if they were suffered in good will and in the attitude of reverence. Furthermore, according to the Pythagorean exhortations, friendship ought to be founded upon trust and should never be terminated because of misfortune or disability that may occur in life, save only because of great and incorrigible vice.[34] Moreover, one ought to never begrudge those who are not utterly evil and who during a debate or argument maintain good will. On the other hand, if the debate occurs between good and saintly people one ought to express one's difference not with words but with actions.[35] Finally, true friendship has to be the result of careful judgment and not chance.[36]

According to Iamblichus, Pythagoras maintains that friendship is of two kinds: either right (*«εύκαιρες» – on good time*) or wrong (*«άκαιρες» – out of time*).[37] Right friendship is timely and wrong is that which is untimely. The latter kind arises at an inappropriate moment and differentiates two possible friends on the basis of age, status

[32] Iamblichus (*VP* 22.101 and 33.230-1).

[33] *«Πεδάρταση»* is the punishment of mid-air suspension from the feet (πεδ -foot and αρτάω -suspend) [also see Aeschylus (*Pr.* 269]. We may, therefore, conjecture that the Pythagorean School imposed upon its students severe and exacting punishments. Of course, these punishments were intended for the improvement of the way of life. Compare Diogenes Laertius (8, 20). In this case, reference is made to *«πελαργᾶν»*, which, according to *LSJ*: 1356-7 may be an erroneous form of *«πεδαρτᾶν»*; we consider that it refers to yet another punishment that was imposed to young Pythagoreans, i.e. the punishment of standing on one leg, in the same posture as storks («πελαργοί»).

[34] Iamblichus (*VP* 22.102 and 33.232). Compare Iamblichus (*Myst.* 5.9.1).

[35] Iamblichus (*VP* 33.232).

[36] Iamblichus (*VP* 33.233).

[37] Iamblichus (*VP* 30.180).

or rank, kinship and favours done. In the untimely type of association it is absolutely essential to control tempers, threatening dispositions and insolence. From these two kinds of friendship, we may arrive at three conclusions. The first is that the best kind of association between people is the timely. The untimely association, to say the least, is difficult. The second conclusion, that is probably more important than the first, is that friendship between the gods and mortals is untimely. However, it is not untimely in a negative manner. On the contrary, what appears to be untimely is in truth the timeliest friendship. Finally, the third conclusion clarifies that: whereas in human relations the timely and untimely types of friendship act as opposites, in the case of immortal mortals and gods they act as complementary. Likewise, it may be said, that the relations between philosophers, in the Pythagorean meaning of the term, belong to the "untimely timely" type of friendship.[38]

Since friendship does not only concern human relationships, the opposites of love («*φιλότης*») and strife («*νείκος*») cannot define the whole they are merely its parts. It is precisely because of friendship in-itself that these two seemingly opposing forces of life arise. Friendship *in se* precedes and thus defines both forces of love and strife and therefore, it forms the ground through which they arise. However, friendship arising through the intercourse of human beings with the gods brings forth wholeness, reconciliation, harmony, and understanding of the meaning of friendship itself, as well as clarifies the nature and workings of the opposing forces and the hold they bear on human life and action.

The philosophical path of the Pythagorean way of life binds us to friendship, which however, does not only arise through the human power of love and strife because from strife arises friendship only after the extinguishment of the

[38] Nietzsche, in the fifth part of the prologue to *Zarathustra* will refer to them as untimely, claiming that true philosophers have never allowed the chord of their lyre to seize playing (KSA 4:19); producing the same penetrating sounds with those produced by the heavenly spheres creating the universal harmonies [Iamblichus (*VP* 15.65)].

fiery anger of soul (*«ἐκ μὲν νείκους γίγνεται φιλία σβεννυμένου πυρὸς θυμικοῦ»*)[39]. It is imperative to remember that the fundamental pre-condition for the understanding of friendship *in se* is given to the chosen-ones either through the benevolence of the gods or the good predisposition of a certain god, or else through the guidance of a divine demon. Hence, the aim of the Pythagorean way of life is twofold: firstly, it focuses on the purification of the mind and soul, and secondly, it prepares the noble souls to receive the gift of friendship that leads and guides through the long and unending path to wisdom. Iamblichus warns us of the difficulties to be faced: the path is rugged and the wanderer must be very careful. He ought to walk the way in small footsteps.[40] Nietzsche, will repeat it[41] and elsewhere will also show us the steps; he too will teach us to walk the way to wisdom:

The way to wisdom...

***The first step**. Respect (discipline and learning) better than anybody else. Collect all things that are worthy of respect and let them clash amongst each other. Carry whichever weight... Community Period.*

***The second step**. Break up the heart that is full of respect if it is tightly bound. The free the spirit. Independence. Period of isolation. Be critical of anything worthy of respect (by idealizing all that is unworthy of respect). Unsuccessful attempt at inverted appraisals.*

***The third step**. Great decision of what matches its rightful position; for recognition. No god and no human hitherto over me! The creator instinct... Give somebody the right to act.*[42]

According to a Pythagorean exhortation, the right of action stems from helping the friend to lift his load and not to lay it down, because "achievements come about as a result of action

[39] Iamblichus (*Protr.* 21, symbol 8).
[40] Iamblichus (*VP* 1.1).
[41] Nietzsche 1985: 5; KSA, 3:17.
[42] Nietzsche 1901-13: 13:39, 12:121, 14:310, 6:33.

rather than inaction (laziness)".[43] Naturally, the question regarding the way through which Pythagoras achieved friendship arises.

To answer this question we are obliged to examine the educational practice of common listening at the *place of common learning* (*«ομακοείον»*) followed by the Pythagorean School. Firstly, let us take a look at the way in which the listeners were selected: Pythagoras did not readily accept all those who wished to become his students, but he tested and appraised them by observing their comportment in the presence of their parents and other relatives, scrutinizing their uncalled for laughter, their silence and unjustified talkativeness, the nature of their desires, their friends as well as their behavior towards them, the way in which they passed their day, he even scrutinized what caused them joy and what sadness. In addition, he examined their whole appearance, their gait and physique, and drew conclusions as to the hidden virtues of their soul. For the initiated even the physical characteristics of the candidates constitute obvious signs.[44]

Those who passed successfully the "physiognomic" test[45] were accepted in the Pythagorean School, the first five years as *akousmatics* (listeners only). During this period the philosopher scrutinized the steadfastness as well as the authenticity of their friendship (love) for learning and also their disdain for honors. In turn, as "learners" (*«μαθηματικοί»*) they participated in the regular lessons and where taught the essential part of the sciences.[46]

However, as previously mentioned, the most fundamental aspect of learning was not the acquisition of knowledge *per se* but the *catharsis* (purification) of the mind and soul. Pythagoras considered that the lessons as well as the educational exercises ought to be faced with magnanimity and courage. He also made statutes for various forms of trial and punishment. In addition, he strongly urged his students

[43] Iamblichus (*VP* 18.84). Compare Iamblichus (*Protr.* 21).
[44] Iamblichus (*VP* 17.71).
[45] Iamblichus (*VP* 17.74).
[46] Iamblichus (*VP* 17.72).

to abstain from eating anything animate and other food that inhibits alertness and correct judgment. The companions over a number of years exercised in discreetness and absolute silence, so as to be able to control their words, and to remain acute in their incessant study for the deep understanding of obscure theorems.[47] For the same reasons, he advised abstinence from wine, a plain diet, restricted sleep, as well as indifference towards glory and wealth. Towards one's elders he advised sincere respect, towards one's peer's true comradeship in the way of life, kindness and amiability. Finally, towards those younger he advised to maintain a stance of spontaneous support and stimulation, without envy.[48]

The first form of education was music. Pythagoras made use of certain melodies and rhythms in order to restore the powers of the soul to their harmonious and original state; he devised methods of quelling and curing the ills of the body and soul; in an ingenious way he also composed musical pieces so as to reverse with ease the irrational passions of the soul.[49] Pythagoras was considered the inventor and lawmaker of his School of learning. The philosopher as well as his students believed that he was the only one directly instructed by the nature of the universal harmony to easily perceive and understand the cosmic sounds, which owing to his natural inclination was capable to 'perfectly' reproduce. Since in earnest others were unable to apprehend the pure and clear archetypes,[50] he considered that only he was worthy to teach and that his students in order to reap the benefits and return to the correct way of life should desire to learn and be educated from the images and examples that he imparted.

From the moment Pythagoras conceived the teaching of cosmic sound and universal harmony, he recapitulated it under the name of *friendship*, which neither exists when the soul is blinded by anger, sorrow or lust, nor when the soul is distorted by ignorance, the most unholy and destructive of

[47] Iamblichus (*VP* 16.68).
[48] Iamblichus (*VP* 16.69).
[49] Iamblichus (*VP* 15.64).
[50] Iamblichus (*VP* 15.66).

desires. The philosopher was said to have cleaned and cured the soul of all the above ills, because he lived what he knew and taught: that when one is inspired by the right teacher, and receives the appropriate teaching and aids, in the right time his/her soul is correctly re-arranged so as to receive the gift of inner sight that sees the truth of all beings.[51]

The true sight and the pure soul direct the human being to philosophy and theurgy, which brings forth eternal friendship and augments divine love (*«φιλίαν ἀδιάλυτον ἐγείρει και τόν θεῖον ἔρωτα συναύξει»*).[52] Pythagoras, this very labourer of friendship,[53] is the first to name himself a philosopher.[54] He is a *divine demon* (*«θείος δαίμων»*), in love with wisdom, and according to Hierocles, a human-god who apperceives the absolute beauty and through the right use of mind and the benevolence of the gods he loves and philosophizes.[55]

Bibliography

Anton, J. P., "The Pythagorean way of life: Religion and Morality." In K. Boudouris, ed., *Pythagorean Philosophy*, Athens – Samos, 1992, pp. 9-19 (in Greek).

Breazeal, D. (ed.), *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*, New Jersey / Sussex, 1979.

[51] Iamblichus (*VP* 16.70).

[52] Iamblichus (*Myster.* 5.26.35).

[53] Diogenes Laertius (8,16).

[54] Iamblichus (*VP* 12.58). Compare Diogenes Laertius (Preface, 12).

Hegel, commenting, supports the view that "philosophy" is not love for the attainment of wisdom, which is an unfulfilled desire; philosophy is not something that can be acquired. And "philosopher" is the one whose relation to wisdom is esoteric (not to be made into an object). His relationship is contemplative, without any insinuation that it is lacking in practical importance. See Hegel: vol. 1, pp. 199-200.

[55] According to Nicomachus Gerasenus, Philolaus supported that the number that coincides with love, friendship, wisdom, thought (*«ἔρωτα καὶ φιλίαν καὶ μῆτιν καὶ ἐπίνοιαν»*) is number 8 [Iamblichus (*in Nic.*17.74)] the number of musical ratios and the cosmic system. Compare Plato (*Smp.* 203e-211d). On this subject, see Georgopoulou–Nicolakakou 1989: 75-105.

Bremer, J.-M., *Hamartia: Tragic Error in the Poetics of Aristotle and in Greek Tragedy*, Amsterdam, 1969.
de Vogel, C. J., *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism*. Assen,1966.
Georgopoulou-Nicolakakou, N. D., *The platonic myth of Diotima*. Athens, 1989 (in Greek).
Georgopoulou-Nicolakakou, N. D., *The Plotinean Morality of Purification*, Athens, 1991 (in Greek).
Gomperz, Th., *Greek Thinkers: A History of Ancient Philosophy*, Trans. L. Magnus, 2 vols. London, 1964.
Guthrie, W.K.C., *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. Cambridge, 1962.
Hegel, G. W. F. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Trans. E. S. Haldane, 3 vols. Lincoln and London, 1995.
Heidegger, M., *Gesamtausgabe*. F. –W. Von Hermann, ed., Frakfurt am Main, 1975-.
Kaufmann, W. (ed.), *The Portable Nietzsche*. New York, 1982.
Kirk, G.S., Raven, J.E. & Schofield, M. (eds.), *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge, 1987.
Middleton, Ch. (ed.), *Selected letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1996.
Nietzsche, Fr., "Der Florentische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, in Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf." *RhM*, 1870, 25: pp. 528-40.
Nietzsche, Fr., *Grossoctavausgabe Werke*. ed. by Kröner,19 vols. Leipzig, 1901-1913.
Nietzsche, Fr., *Daybreak*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge,1985.
Nietzsche, Fr., (NSB). *Sämtliche Briefe*, Ed. G. Colli & M. Montinari. 8 vols. Berlin,1986.
Nietzsche, Fr., (KSA). *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Ed. by G. Colli & M. Montinari. 15 vols. Berlin,1988
Padel, R., *Whom Gods Destroy*. Princeton/ New Jersey, 1995.
Rohde, E., "Die Quellen des Iamblichus in seiner Biographie des Pythagoras." *RhM*, 1871-1872, 26: pp. 554-76 and 27: pp. 23-61.
Shaw, G., *Theurgy and the Soul*. Pennsylvania, 1995.
Silk, M. S. & Stern, J. P., *Nietzsche on tragedy*. Cambridge, 1990.
Smith, A., "Iamblichus' Views on the Relationship of Philosophy and Religion in 'De Mysteriis'." In H.J. Blumenthal & E.G. Clark, eds., *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*. London, 1993, pp. 74-86.
Vogel, M. *Apollonisch und Dionysisch*. Regensburg, 1966.
Thom, J., *The Pythagorean "Golden Verses"*. Leiden, 1995.
Tzavaras, G. "Pythagorean effects in the philosophy of Empedocles." In K. Boudouris, ed., *Pythagorean Philosophy*. Athens - Samos. 1989-94 (in Greek).
Zeller, E., *Die Philosophie der Griechen*. 3 vols. Leipzig, 1923.
Zuntz, G., *Persephone: Three Essays of Religion and Thought in Magna Grecia*. Oxford, 1971.

Syrianus' critique of Aristotelian antiplatonism: general remarks

Christos Ath. Terezis,
Professor, University of Patras
terezis@upatras.gr

Abstract

Focusing on the field of the History of Philosophy and specifically on the topic about the debate between realism and nominalism, in this article we attempt to investigate the passage of the critical commentary of Syrianus, the Neoplatonist philosopher, on the M, 1079A19-33 of Aristotle's *Metaphysica*. Through this commentary, we have the chance to see how the Neoplatonic School of the fifth century approached the "ideological opponent" of the founder of the Academy, whose theories aims to preserve integral. Syrianus' passage is significantly interesting, since it focuses on how Aristotle attempted to exercise critique on the Platonic theory of the "Ideas". Through his comments, we face a Platonic reading of the Aristotelian critique, since the Neoplatonist commentator, following the approach of Plotinus and Iamblichus, moves in the context of ontological monism. Our article is structured by four sections, in which we pay attention on the consequences of his theoretical approach on the fields of Metaphysics, Cosmology and, partially, Epistemology, as well as how realism is metaphysically founded. The greatest conclusion that we draw is that he is fully conversant with the philosophical tradition and that he presents an excellent eclectic performance.

Keywords: Syrianus, Plato, Aristotle, realism, nominalism, universal, (thing) of secondary origin

Introduction

We could argue that the research and teaching presence of Syrianus in the late period of the Platonic Academy, i.e. the Neoplatonic School, is connected with one of the most radical compositions in the History of Philosophy, in which the fruitful eclecticism -in which a not linear encyclopedism is included- reaches the peak of the theoretical "paroxysm". We are now in the fifth century AD, during which the Academy was going through one of its most "noble" periods, with schoolmasters (Plutarch, Syrianus, Proclus, and Damascius, who directed it until 529) who gave it unparalleled glory. And one of the factors which enhanced this glory was the systematic teaching of Aristotle's works and their explicit or implicit inclusion in the body of Neoplatonic research. One of the Aristotelian treatises that acquired a truly privileged field of presence in the Neoplatonic theory was the *Metaphysics*, which was systematically commented by Syrianus, who delivered a clear picture of the attitude of the representatives of his School towards their "ideological" opponent and the tradition which he himself shaped. Syrianus, the teacher of Proclus and his fascinating theories, undertakes an attempt of high risks but also quite attractive. On the one hand, he has to keep the Platonic tradition intact and, on the other, to make an as far as possible objective presentation of a philosopher who was a delight with his inexhaustible, theoretical and methodological, systematic tones.[1]

One of the fundamental issues to which the extensive *Metaphysics* is indebted for its enduring fame is the criticism of Plato's theory of the "Ideas" by Aristotle, to such an extent that the philosophical adventure was impressively fertilized in the depth of historical time. The way in which Syrianus approaches this critique is clearly Platonic, but with a highly decisive parameter, which requires a thorough not only

[1] For the philosophical achievements of Syiranus, see for example the great study by Longo Ang., 2005. Also, Longo Ang., 2009; Luna C., 2007: 121-133; Terezis Ch., 2017.

analysis but also interpretation, which by extension contribute to a clearly different worldview compared to that of Plato's. Specifically, He does not move along the axis of ontological dualism, on the basis of which Plato founded the theory, but in the light of the monism, which was introduced by Plotinus. This is a distinction which has crucial consequences for the powers of Metaphysics and for the way in which Cosmology is constituted, with implications even for the branch of Gnoseology. In this article there will be some general interpretative approaches concerning the terms of foundation and the implications of monism according to Syrianus. The main framework of our research, however, is defined by how one should critically study a commentary which has a temporal distance from the text that it refers to.

Therefore, although we take as an occasion the commentary on some passages of the *Metaphysics* by Syrianus our main purpose is to detect and evaluate his methodology and its theoretical foundations. Regardless of the quality of his comments, his attempt has been influenced by the eight centuries which intervene between himself and the text of his reference. It should be noted that what is stated in Syrianus' text is inscribed in a broader context. We will, however, remain in it –apart from certain highly demanding topics–, since it has an autonomous theoretical specificity and is basically a summary. It is also worth mentioning that this period, which was quite one of a kind regarding its performances, is included in the only surviving work of Syrianus. Thus, although this article will attempts to shed light on an aspect –important for the delimitations of Ontology and Gnoseology– of the realism-nominalism controversy, it can be also placed in the branch of the History of Philosophy, for it explores a crucial period of thought. In the fifth century A.D., not only Neoplatonism but also Christianity evolve impressively, which presents not only clear similarities but also unbridgeable differences.

I. Delimitation of the metaphysical archetypal definition of physical beings

So, of central interest, both for the content and development of the theory of "Ideas" and for the relevant controversy between the Lyceum and the Academy, is the chapter in which Syrianus treats –albeit in his own concise way, in contrast to Proclus– the following passage from *Metaphysica*: *Ἔτι κατὰ μὲν τὴν ὑπόληψιν καθ' ἣν εἶναι τὰς ἰδέας οὐ μόνον τῶν οὐσιῶν ἔσονται εἴδη ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλων πολλῶν (τὸ γὰρ νόημα ἓν οὐ μόνον περὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ μὴ οὐσιῶν ἐστί, καὶ ἐπιστῆμαι οὐ μόνον τῆς οὐσίας εἰσί· συμβαίνει δὲ καὶ ἄλλα μυρία τοιαῦτα)· κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τὰς δόξας τὰς περὶ αὐτῶν, εἰ ἔστι μεθεκτὰ τὰ εἴδη, τῶν οὐσιῶν ἀναγκαῖον ἰδέας εἶναι μόνον· οὐ γὰρ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς μετέχονται ἀλλὰ δεῖ ταύτῃ ἑκάστου μετέχειν ᾗ μὴ καθ' ὑποκειμένου λέγονται (...) ὥστε ἔσται οὐσία τὰ εἴδη· ταὐτὰ δ' ἐνταῦθα οὐσίαν σημαίνει κἀκεῖ· ἢ τί ἔσται τὸ εἶναι φάναι τι παρὰ ταῦτα, τὸ ἓν ἐπὶ πολλῶν;* (Μ′, 1079A19-33).[2] The schoolmaster of the Academy observes

[2] The above passage belongs to the fourth chapter of book M, which has as its theoretical aim to present certain aspects of Plato's theory of the "Ideas" and to criticize their content. Basically, we have a repetition of what is contained in Book A (990b-991a8), with the main focus on the reflection concerning the justification of the separate character of the "Ideas" in relation to physical bodies, with Aristotle defending their immanent character from the outset. In this passage, Aristotle notes the following: a) by accepting that the Platonists accept that there are "Ideas" as unities in a plurality of objects whose knowledge is possible, they must necessarily accept that not only substances but many other things have such archetypes. His reasoning is based on the fact that a meaning can unify not only substances but also objects or states of affairs that are not substances. The extension would be that science should not be denied its causes solely by substances. b) But if the "Ideas" are inherent in themselves, it follows by implication that there are only "Ideas" of substances. In addition, according to the Platonists' reasoning, "Ideas" are not possessed in a symbolic sense. That is to say, the participation is taken to occur on condition that the archetypes in question are understood as separate from those subjects which they could categorically identify. c) In Aristotelian application: if an object participates in the self-double, then it will have a share in the eternal by accident. And the rationale is inscribed in the fact that the property of eternal is not

first of all that Aristotle expressed the above question in a very comprehensive way, with the ironic attitude possibly creeping into the wording. He even points out that already in his earlier reflections, he, as well as Aristotle in the passage 987a ff., had dealt with the ontological question concerning which beings have "Ideas" and which do not.[3] We would

essential to any individual physical double but is symbolic. So, the "Ideas" are substance. d) The term "substance", at least conceptually, can be used for both the physical and the metaphysical world. e) It is not meaningful or ontologically grounded to claim that what we call unity over the many is separate from the many itself. By his extreme point Aristotle attempts to shake the foundations of Platonic metaphysical realism. But his reasoning is also interesting for the individual stages through which he passes, which we will attempt to highlight in the light of the readings of Syrianus. However, the fact that his point refers to the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* is beyond the obvious. However, this Aristotelian quotation presents certain reading difficulties. Already Robin, 1908, has approached the question with extreme systematicity, making use of the commentary sources, especially Alexander's, and the literature up to his time. Cf. pp. 627-634, from which we quote the following note on Aristotle's relevant positions on the "substance", including the relation of unity-fullness, which do not belong to the horizon of acceptance of the Neoplatonists: «Si la substance n'a pas la même signification ici-bas et dans la sphère transcendante, l'unitè d'une multiplicité n'a plus rien de commun avec la multiplicité à part de laquelle elle est dite exister, ce qui rend incompréhensible la substantialisation de cette unité sous le nom d'Idée» (p. 631). In view of the neoplatonists: (a) they have made the multitude an internal mode of existence of the metaphysical world, in order to ensure the constitution of the multitude of the natural world; (b) the metaphysical multitude does not remove the self-evident metaphysical unity; (c) the term "substance" is used for both worlds, but with a different meaning from each other, so that any discussion on the subject must pass through the principle of analogy and the ambiguities which it defines. The ontological otherness between them does not therefore remove the creation of the physical from the metaphysical world, under the conditions set by the latter. And we must not forget to emphasize the possibilities which non-inelastic and non-one-dimensional monism provides.

[3] This question will also be found in Proclus, in his commentary to Plato's *Parmenides*, 784.16-25: *Τεττάρων ὄντων ἐν ταῖς περὶ Ἰδεῶν ζητήσεσι προβλημάτων, πρῶτου μὲν, εἰ ἔστι τὰ εἴδη· δευτέρου δὲ τίνων ἐστι καὶ τίνων οὐκ ἔστι τὰ εἴδη, τρίτου δὲ ὁποῖα δὴ τινα ἐστι τὰ εἴδη καὶ τίς ἡ ἰδιότης αὐτῶν· τετάρτου δὲ, πῶς μετέχεται ὑπὸ τῶν τῆδε καὶ τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς μεθέξεως*. "There are four problems involved in discussions about the Ideas. First, are there Ideas? For what could anyone say about

note in this connection that the answer to this question would also give the ontological question an evaluative content, since the determination by metaphysical archetypes refers to integrities, of whatever degree it would certainly be possible to secure in the physical universe. And if such integrities are not observed on a universal scale, it follows by implication that there are physical states which do not possess central content but a circumstantial or secondary or even complementary. For historical reasons, it is worth recalling that this question had already been raised in the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*, the intellectual bastion of the Neoplatonic School.[4] In addition, Syrianus mentions that in the elaboration of his treatises, details were included regarding substances as "universals", e.g. of man and the horse, whether there are states which perfect - apparently in

themunless their existence has been previously agreed upon? Second, of what things are there Ideas and of what things not? (There are many differences of opinion on this point also.) Third, what sort of realities are Ideas, and what is their peculiar property? And fourth, how do things in this world participate in them and what is the manner of this participation?" (Morrow G., 1987: 156-157). This is the preliminary research question of the third book of this treatise. Syrianus has posed the question a little earlier than the passage we will be working on: *Πολλῶν ὄντων περὶ τὰς ἰδέας προβλημάτων τέτταρά ἐστιν τὰ πλείστης ἄξια σπουδῆς, εἰ εἰσὶ καὶ τίνες εἰσὶ καὶ ὁποῖαι καὶ διὰ τι· δεύτερον τίνων εἰσὶν οἱ Ἰδέαι· τρίτον τίνα τὰ μετέχοντα τῶν Ἰδεῶν, πότερον τὰ γενητὰ μόνα ἢ καὶ τὰ ἀΐδια· τέταρτον δὲ, πῶς μετέχει τῶν Ἰδεῶν τὰ μετέχοντα* (*Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 108.31-109.4). "While there are many problems connected with the Forms, there are four which are most worthy of attention; first, whether they exist; What they are; what sort of things they are; and why they are (I take all these to be actually one single problem; for they all centre on the question of their actual existence); secondly, of what things there are Forms; thirdly, what things participate in Forms, whether they are generated things only or also eternal things; and if the latter, whether all eternal things or only some; and if some, whether only those eternal things that are corporeal, as for instance the heavenly bodies, or also some of the incorporeal entities; and fourthly, how the participants in the Forms participate in them" (Dillon J. - O'Meara D. (trans.) 2014, 68). Cf. Steel C., 1984: 4. Regardless of the particular directions chosen, however, this is a question that spans the whole of the Platonic tradition and constitutes the main detail of the meeting of the two worlds.

[4] *Parmenides*, 130c-d.

qualitative terms and with teleology not being excluded, at least microcosmically - substances, such as virtue (Practical Reason) and science (Theoretical Reason), as well as whether a certain property is present or occurs afterwards - whichever approach is chosen being of central interest for ontological questions - in souls, in bodies and in physical states in general. And the category of these properties includes similarity, equality and magnitude. It is understood, of course, that virtue and science cannot be expressed by the mode in which a horse exists, while the other three –those referring mainly to external or organic characteristics– are conjoined.

Commenting on the above, we have to observe first of all that similarity and equality define relations and comparisons (clearly not tangible per se and not reflected through strictly focused analytical propositions in the sense of their obligatory reduction to a third thing), while magnitude defines an objective and directly representational tangible situation, subject to measurements, both in terms of the «τόδε τι» in question and comparatively. In fact, in the course of their examination, it would emerge how similarity and equality can function in terms of size in fields of relations and comparisons between the various material bodies, both of which are factors that are also inscribed in the metrical readings. At least naturally-empirically, we have to note that the magnitude of any body is of such a texture that it provides conditions for comparisons with any other size. But of course provided that the necessary tools are available and that there is awareness of how they are used and applied, with the mental processing of representational data being a safe reinforcement. But since these are three not insignificant properties as to the mode of existence and functioning of beings, we are called upon to open for discussion whether they are indeed external accidents and whether, by implication, as such alone they are not inherently present in the sensible beings. In fact, it could not easily be denied that similarity and equality are exclusively forms of supervision, present in human consciousness and capable of constituting the fact of knowledge. Neoplatonically –but also Christianly–

however, such a version does not exclude their existence in the organism of individual hypostases, as mainly representational modes fundamental to comparisons. Such an approach, however, would lead to a "brutal" realism if it were exclusive to any research process. But the passivity of human mental processes is far from the theoretical organogram of the Neoplatonic School. And here again an inviolable condition for any discussion undertaken will be that, apart from whether or not realism is fully acceptable, we are faced with a strictly structured monistic system, not a dualistic one. This detail requires a highly extended theoretical intervention, since monism explicitly excludes any version of a pre-existing unformed matter. In the regime here, matter by definition constitutes an a posteriori product, but it contains all the creative forces-energies of the metaphysical world from which it comes, and actually in terms of order, or the aesthetically remarkable.

In addition, the above remark is necessary in order to give the real meaning to the verb «παραγίγνεται» ("to be produced"), which is not of comfortable translational passage according to the surrounding textual data. But an additional difficult, as well as fascinating, question will immediately arise. In particular, if the properties in question have the potential for universal –or at least in a broad ontic field– intervention, then we would have the legitimacy to argue that they are in a peculiar way "universals" and that by their generalizable property add validity to realism, not of course in order to emerge –in a neoplatonic context it is self-evident– but in order to make it great and unmanageable. In the meantime, however, as present or as added to each being in a particular way and, therefore, as existing modes, they serve nominalism, but without providing it with conditions for it to prevail, except for individual and particularly limited autonomies, which even in a more general ontological inscription would be in danger of being abolished. We would dare to observe the following: certain powers are granted to nominalism, but in order to make it instrumental. A theme thus emerges which was to plague philosophical reflection at

least until the late Middle Ages.[5] Moreover, another concern comes to the fore, clearly generalizable in terms of the applications to which it refers: in what sense of common substrates, for any category or property, do both man and a celestial body have size? The answer will turn directly to the fact that any being in the physical universe has that size which approximates to its existential-functional code, to the way in which its organic parts as a body are composed together and constitute a particular extension. If this detail is not carefully approached, not only are solutions to the ontological question of the immanence and the mode of existence of nature not easily possible, but also the very formulation of those relevant specialized questions which would aim at delimited formulations with regard to the branches of Gnoseology and formal Logic, which permanently stimulated the theoretical reflexes of the representatives of the Neoplatonic School.

But the following is also worthy of attention: under which ontological condition would the three properties mentioned above take place? And from where and with what purpose? In a physical (including human) body, it is impossible that it is a condition of occasional or future presence-function, since as a formed body it has its particular size and is comparable from the outset. And here monism comes to deposit its powers. At the starting point, then, of the creation of the physical universe we can make a case for a pure matter, in whose existence the aforementioned properties would function as such. And this in the sense that they contribute, each one in its own way, to the fact that a part of matter as an extended chora undergoes such processes in each case, with the consequence that it is transformed into a particular body. But it is precisely here that the question which will be

[5] On the realism-nominalism controversy, see for example an excellent special issue in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1992 (No. 1) entitled "Les Universaux". This issue also includes a study by Boulnois, 1992: 3-33, from which we read the following about Aristotle: «Pour Aristote, l'universel est en effet de l'ordre du discours. Il est simplement le témoignage de l'extrême économie du langage: un même mot peut être prédiqué d'un pluralité de choses.... (4)». On the above positions Syrianus will unleash his arrows of subversion.

related to the choice of the world-theoretical paradigm will return: monism or dualism? By being a clear monist, therefore, Syrianus will obviously choose the solution of intrinsic, a priori properties of matter capable of causing what we have mentioned above. We believe that the discussion of the constitutional status of the accidents must necessarily pass through the distinction between matter and bodies, while the explicit assessment that the monism adopted here, as being of Neoplatonic origin, is of non-negotiable metaphysical foundation would be a fact. Therefore, the accidents are not accidental, but are inscribed in a systematic plan. In addition, however, through all the aforementioned, the aim of preventing pantheism, one of the non-negotiable options of Neoplatonism, which is not subject to discussion, will be pronounced. The aforementioned properties can therefore legitimately be characterized as accidental under an already factual model: in the sense that they reflect, in applied idioms, the existent properties of matter as modes of presence not only of themselves but also of matter as in an active state of being in that tends towards a specific form. Under this premise, however, the answer that possesses preeminent legitimacy seems to be the following: a body is constituted with such a size that it is inscribed in the comparative perspectives of similarity and equality. But the skeptical discourse will take a further step. That is to say, no doubt similarity can be comfortably established. But is equality placed in such a possibility? Almost excluding it as a comparative performance and ascertainment upon bodies, it would probably be applied in other details: in the equality of distances, of the velocity of orbital cycles, of attractions and repulsions, or in presences by analogy within one and the same cosmic field, operating under the same laws for all its parts.

II. Recourse to the starting points of Neoplatonism

Carrying the issue back to earlier periods of Neoplatonism, Syrianus mentions that according to Iamblichus (the leading

representative of Syrian Neoplatonic eclecticism), the accidents are found only in bodies, apparently on the grounds that they are subject to changes and modalities, or that bodies need certain accidents to complete their formation. We would note, then, that it follows by implication that souls, which in their very nature have an unchangeable character, are not acceptable to accidents, at least as far as their a priori core is concerned. As such, therefore, the accidents, and precisely as appearing exclusively in bodies, must arise from causes which are not metaphysical. And this task is undertaken by the "natural reasons". This is a crucial point with regard to the functions of the two worlds and to the productive-archetypal transition –in which we believe that teleological plan is also included– from the metaphysical to the physical. But it is further clarified that Iamblichus characterizes these causes as «διωρισμένας», a notion which obviously leads to the conclusion that these are interventions which express a programmatic plan with specific recipients and emanating bounded characteristics, suggestive of teleological plan. It is even worth noting that it is a verbal participle of present perfect, which of course also receives the status of a noun, and thus refers to a constitutive process which has already taken place and is still taking place at the current moment of any occurrences, and will also function as an open condition of possibility for anything further.

Also, Syrianus mentions that Plotinus had moved in the same direction, who had argued that we cannot place in the "Intellect" –the second reality of his system– the "Form" of whiteness. The cause of the exclusion is due to the fact that it is a quality which is found in particular physical bodies, that is, in its general presence in various ways according to the particular state or entity, and is subject to sensory experience. And obviously whiteness, like the other qualities of the same category, would be understood, according to the broader reasoning, as secondary and, therefore, not as decisive of the

fact of existence itself.[6] Moreover, we cannot generally rule out the possibility that a coloring may arise through a highly specific dialectical encounter between an organism and the environmental conditions in which it is created and develops, so that we can discuss the condition of natural adaptation. Under an open view, then, we would suppose that in the "Intellect" there may be the "Form" of color but certainly not of individual colors. The reason for which Syrianus refers to this remark of Plotinus is obvious: to deconstruct the Aristotelian syllogism on the existence of "Ideas" even of non-physical substances, in Aristotle's' attempt, possibly, to bring out the consequences which the Platonic theory of archetypes brings about.

Commenting on the above reasoning schemes we have to note that the observation of Iamblichus –and its acceptance, as proved, by Syrianus– leads to two other remarks: a) the source of the accidents –at least the direct one– does not derive from the archetypal "Ideas", which, as metaphysical, have an integral ontological content and form only established states, either essential or of essential properties in terms of their interventionist-functional immanence, or their establishment in a system subordinate to temporal becoming. b) Natural reasons –which are derived from the "Ideas", apparently on the basis of their specifically targeted combinations– are not sources of unchanging ontic conditions but of those which are changeable and vary according to particular ontic conditions. Reference is obviously made here to the inexhaustible relativism of a case, which, at least in the view of Plato and many of his descendants, leads not to systematic knowledge but to mere opinion, i.e. to "doxa". There is a transition from the ontological realism of authentic contents to the ontic nominalism of the specific changeable. But the fact that the natural discourses represent, by analogy of course, at the level of becoming the way in which the archetypal "Ideas" have manifested themselves through their combinations, is of central importance for determining the

[6] Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.6.3, 1-6; 4.7.9, 19-21. For a historical-systematic reading of the broader context to which all these belong, cf Courtine J. Fr., 2003: 167-211.

constitutive position and function of the accidents themselves. And it is indeed generally accepted that the accidents are subject to the changeability caused by the physical becoming or even contribute to its provocation precisely as such. In any case, it is impossible for them to be present and to appear meaningless as regards the "behaviours" of beings.

It is therefore a matter that requires special attention, since it raises challenging questions as to how we can move from the circumstantial to the realization of teleology, to a limited extent of course. The only answer that could reasonably be formulated would be that it is expected that in the course of time the deficit conditions will gradually diminish, with the consequence that the ontic fields will take on a systematic content. But could the accidents constitute factors which come to assimilate man to the more general natural conditions and through such a situation to the archetypal "Ideas"? Is there a broad plan that is extended through the details? As early as the fourth century B.C., Speusippus, as the emblematic exponent of the new scientific spirit, would have agreed with such a version. And of course these would be simulations which would repeal neither particularities nor the particular ways in which time would be secured for the better. However no matter how challenging all these are, they are placed in a parameter that is fully binding: on what grounds would we rule out that what comes from natural reasons –which, it should be noted, do not cease to be the projections of integral metaphysical archetypes– will not have a positive effect? Therefore, this is precisely where the advantage of the whole syllogism lies, since maximalist world-theoretical generalizations are not imposed and thus natural objects - apart from the teleological orientation - are also approached on the basis of the real and ascertainable conditions in which they develop.

All these have epistemological consequences, since, where the accidents prevail, final predicates or even reductions are not easy. Iamblichus therefore comes up with a flexible solution to cosmological questions, which offers particular advantages for a detailed understanding of the modes-modalities of the natural world as its functions, and not only

of its ontological texture or the teleology by which it is governed in the manner of the Neoplatonic theoretical regime.[7] The scientific tone does not abandon its transgressions and aims, despite whatever hermeneutical and world-theoretical choices are being made. Under an open critical reading, then, we would note that natural reasons are capable of being subsumed into certain categorical schemes on the basis of representational experiences, but from this point onwards, that is, towards the "Ideas", Gnoseology follows with respect to its reflections the adopted world-theoretical schemes. Sensible data no longer exist, with the consequence that in other thematic fields Syrianus makes extensive use of the Platonic theory of recollection, with the above data serving as initial irritating challenges. And here we can complete our previous reasoning: given that within consciousness there are unities of integral concepts, why we would exclude the unities of integral phenomena, whenever they arise?

It is, moreover, crucial that Iamblichus points out the relevance-distinction between the "Ideas" and the natural reasons concerning the communication of the two worlds in terms of its general characteristics. He puts it forward in such a way that it does not lead to a version of an absolute separation and isolation between them. We could even argue, implicitly as a result of the broader context, that the "Ideas" are manifested energetically –in this text reference is made to "powers"–, that is, not in their essence, which mainly expresses their per se state. In a process which is neither cognitively determinable nor ascertainable through tangible sensory experience, the "Ideas" cause the development of natural reasons in such a way that they constitute the mundane eternal cores –which reflect by analogy the metaphysical unity– which will feed processes for the formation of matter –and certainly not only by occasional accidents– which manifests continuously through the new sensible bodies. As a result of the resulting products, we could argue that natural reasons have the possibility of being flexibly present at various levels, each in a particular way, a

[7] Cf. for instance, *Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 116.5-118.28.

detail which is, however, also linked to an aesthetic harmony, which is not limited into standardization.

But what is the broader point being made beyond the focus on processes? Iamblichus, remaining consistent with the Platonic tradition, sets as a theoretical goal to keep the presence of "Ideas" intact and separate from sensible beings. Thus, their transcendence remains intact. Ingeniously, then, Syrianus uses him in order to invalidate the opposite orientation of Aristotle, who is puzzled about how the separateness and, by extension, transcendence of the "Ideas" could be justified. It is at this point that the Neoplatonic School's famous theory of the intermediates, which here function as intermediating between the two worlds, is reinforced, with Proclus extending it later impressively. Therefore, the productive-archetypal role of these metaphysical-archetypal realities, in actually infinite varieties, is assured by natural reasons. In more detail, the above define that while the "Ideas" provide those ontological states which are necessary for the existence-functioning of beings – such as, for example, life and motion as among the most capital ones–, how these states will manifest themselves on a case-by-case basis depends on how the natural reasons activate their intervening productivity in each individual field of the universe, apparently as legislative principles of regularities, as introductory configurations and functionalisms.[8] We could even, again in an open way, argue that natural reasons, although belonging to the natural world, possess properties of the metaphysical world.

By transferring the question with the appropriate specializations to human beings, we will acquire conditions for a broader understanding of what is discussed here, which will of course present an inexhaustible variety. We therefore choose, with the broader contexts from Syrianus' writings as a starting point, to note the following, which are articulated under a type of cumulus: a) The archetypal "Ideas" add to

[8] Cf. for instance, *Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 84.20-86.37, where we read: *Δῆλον ὅτι τὸ ἕν τινι οὐ διαιρεῖται ἄνευ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, ὅταν ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἕν τινι λέγηται* (86.26-27). The whole passage can be characterized as the definition of the metaphysics of immanence.

rational beings, which are human beings, the possibility of contemplation and science. b) Therefore, contemplation and science are common characteristics exclusively of all rational beings. c) Every human being contemplates in a particular way and engages in research in a particular science. d) But each particular way of contemplation, regardless of its reference, is not reduced to an archetypal "Idea", from which it would derive its characteristics. The same is true of any scientific pursuit. That is, there are no "Ideas" of unrepeatable research activities. Therefore: a) Every rational being contemplates because it participates in the universal property of contemplation –which the corresponding "Idea" contains archetypically–, while it also engages in a particular science, precisely because it participates in the universal scientific possibility - which the corresponding "Idea" secures in an archetypal way.[9]

The relevance here between realism and nominalism is clear and not in the form of compromises. It is a specialized manifestation of the universal. It thus becomes clear that the human personality is valorized, in that it activates – in an unrepeatable way - through its initiatives a divine gift which exists within it. And in this regard, Syrianus will draw his outlets from the theory of recollection, to which he even does not attribute a standardized-inflexible content, inspiring Proclus in this process as well. Summarizing what we have examined, we formulate the following synthetic assessment: the particular ways of manifestation of contemplation and scientific thought constitute projections of the inner accidents, which a man acquires the conditions for bringing forth not only because he is archetypically descended from the "self-human" but also because he has become a concrete living substance by natural reasons. However, critical thinking again poses concerns: do the "Ideas" of contemplation and science exist in the "self-human"? By logical deduction we are led to

[9] Cf. for instance, *Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά,* 88.13-91.9, where there is a systematic discussion on the relation of the scientifically energetic mind to being and becoming, which is inscribed in how Gnoseology undertakes to formulate its correspondences with Ontology

the conclusion that they are contained, since it is not possible for such archetypes to be provided by natural reasons. But in order for every man to express himself thoughtfully and scientifically, he must have been constituted by natural reasons. The revaluation of nature is therefore explicit.

III. Ontological and epistemological foundations of the "later-born"

In fact, by extending the positions of Iamblichus and Plotinus, the head of the Academy, so that they can be combined with the disciplines of Gnoseology and formal Logic[10], mentions that the one meaning of –any– many beings or states does not necessarily mean that there will be an "Idea" of its objective content, because then by implication there would be "Ideas" of the many states by nature. In order to deconstruct the Aristotelian critique, arguments are ontologized in their foundations. What happens, then, in internal succession in the above, is the following, determined by the deductive articulation: of those beings or states of which there are "Ideas", there are also universal reasons –as conceptual categorical schemes–, without, however, being able to argue the opposite. Thus, realism is pervasive in the case in which the above premise is applicable and can subsequently acquire the functions of the conceptual.[11] The ontological and epistemological approaches here certainly presuppose an acceptance as to which "Ideas" exist and which do not, a distinction which also has a normative content as to the mode of being, since the presence of "Ideas" is exclusively associated with integrity. Thus, Ontology is often associated with the principles of the Practical reason in a generalized version, with mutual interpretative outlets between them, but with the same ontology permanently maintaining its integrity. Therefore, any diversion that occurs is outside the competence of the Ontology.

[10] Cf. Terezis Ch., 2023.

[11] For a very thorough reading of the above issue, cf. De Libera Al., 2005: 211-264.

However, attention is also required to consider whether there are situations of non-deflection which are not in accordance with the principles set out in the Ontology. In which branch are they included? The research and interpretive key here too is the reference to the sciences: *Οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ὅσων εἰσὶν ἐπιστῆμαι αἱ μὴ κυρίως λεγόμεναι, τούτων ἁπάντων ἐστὶν εἶδη* (114.12-13). The distinction between «κυρίως» and «μὴ κυρίως» sciences is interesting from an epistemological point of view. In all likelihood, the «κυρίως» will first refer to the evaluative content of the objects of reference in terms of their ontological integrity and then carry over to the scientific process of reading them itself. But the term «ἐπιστήμη» is not removed, and we appreciate that the occasional «μὴ κυρίως» version refers to a specialized product of the intervention of natural reasons. If, for example, the discussion is about the science of Biology, we would note that it is not in the absolute sense of the term «κυρίως», but it is not «μὴ κυρίως» either. It is precisely Science –of which there is an "Idea"– that is «κυρίως»; Biology is «κυρίως» by participation or in specialised sense, while Biology's references to individual changing phenomena of the natural environment are «μὴ κυρίως».[12] Moreover, we

[12] A little earlier Syrianus has stated the following: *Εἰ περὶ ὄντα αἱ ἐπιστῆμαι, ἔστι τὰ καθόλου· τῶν γὰρ καθόλου αἱ ἐπιστῆμαι· ὡς εἶναι τὸν συλλογισμὸν ἐν τρίτῳ σχήματι· τὰ ἐπιστητὰ καθόλου, τὰ ἐπιστητὰ ὄντα, τινά καθόλου ὄντα· οὐ γὰρ πάντα τὰ καθόλου, οὐ γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὰ ὑστερογενῆ ἢ τὰ ἐν τοῖς ἀτόμοις. Ἄτοπον δὲ οὐδὲν πάντα τὰ ἐπιστητὰ ὄντα εἶναι, εἰ τὰ κυρίως ἐπιστητὰ λαμβάνοιτο, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὰ ἰατρικὰ ἢ τεκτονικά· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιστῆμαι κυρίως αὗται, μόναι δὲ δικαίως οὕτως ἂν προσαγορεύοιντο αἱ περὶ τὰ ἀΐδια καὶ καθ' αὑτὰ ὄντα καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως διακείμενα πραγματευόμεναι* (*Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 110.9-16). "if the sciences are concerned with real objects, universal entities (*ta katholou*) exist; For the sciences are concerned with universals. This, then, is a syllogism in the third figure: the objects of knowledge are universal; the objects of knowledge are real objects; so therefore, there are some existent universals. For not all universals exist – not, for instance, the 'laterborn', nor those that inhere in individuals. But there is nothing strange in the claim that all objects of knowledge are real, if one takes that to refer to the objects of the proper (*kuriôs*) sciences, not, for instance, the objects of medicine, or carpentry; for these are not sciences in the proper sense, but one might justly term such only those which concern themselves with objects which are eternal and exist by themselves and are always in the

should not exclude from our discussion that individual scientific branches of Biology are also developing. By extension, the same could be argued for the virtues of Practical Reason. For example, the "Idea" of justice is accepted as a "universal" scientifically «κυρίως» approachable, while there are particular ways of its personal manifestation which do not fall, at least to an absolute degree, within the «κυρίως».

In the next step of reasoning, Syrianus, having as a starting point that the "Ideas" as a whole have authentic objective content, characterizes them as substances, i.e. he takes them as ontologically integral. But these substances do not manifest themselves in the physical universe –or are not perceived by physical beings– in their per se state. They exist as modes of possession and, multi-branching manifestation by the individual recipients of the archetypal gifts, that is, through the utilization of immanence. We would note, then, that the "Idea" of substance is certainly granted to the whole of beings, yet each produced being perceives and manifests it on the basis of its particularity. That is to say, it is not substance in every participating being, or at least it is not substance in comparison with that which is perceived in its archetypal function. And at this point a highly crucial clarification is provided: self-science and self-justice are substances, but the corresponding states of Theoretical and Practical Reason immanent in human interiority in particular

same state (J. Dillon J. - O'Meara D. (trans.), 2014: 70). This is a crucial passage indeed, which makes a highly elaborate demarcation between "universals" and "later-born" with the former referring to ontological foundations and the latter to cognitive elaborations based on "atoms". We could easily argue that an emblematic definition of realism is formulated here, with the subordination of nominalism. However, the syllogism is also interesting for the following reason: it highlights the correlation between "universals" and "beings". We would note, applying the fields of the syllogism, that there are "universals" which are not "beings" and such could be, for example, justice or virtue in general. But Syrianus does not dwell on this discussion. By refining authentic Platonism to its peaks, he notes that, in the literal sense of the term, science is that which refers to the eternal beings. What is generally described in terms of scientific specialization is not included in the constellation of science in the very literal sense of the word.

are not substances but dispositions. Therefore, and under a more generalized view, each being cannot be characterized as the absolute expression of a metaphysical substance-Idea, but as that being which projects it –as well as certain others in which it participates and possesses– with its particular characteristics and the modes of its presence, of its being permanently subject to becoming. In this ontic condition we can talk about a property, that is, a way of receiving-possessing-manifesting an "Idea"-metaphysical substance. It should be noted, moreover, that "dispotition" constitutes an internal tendency, which, however, in the broader context, refers to a substrate which has undergone a diligent treatment and claims to become a way of life with normative foundations. It is not excluded, however, that in this context, too, attention is drawn to recollection, which, even if unquestioningly, will shape the relevant case-by-case tendencies. Of course, it is not strongly validated whether the Neoplatonic scholar takes recollection in the same way as Plato. By being a consistent monist and a far away from pantheism, it is more likely that he takes recollection on the terms set by divine immanence. At birth man, like primitive man, contains in the form of psychic reasons what the divine world has granted in general and to himself. By means of specific processes he is gradually led to self-knowledge, which leads him to the identification of the divine projections-imanences within himself.[13]

[13] We will not go into matters of recollection but will simply quote the following: *Οὐ γὰρ ἄλλων τινῶν αἱ μαθήσεις ἀναμνήσεις ἢ τῶν μέσων εἰδῶν, ταυτὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν τῶν ἑστώτων καθόλου λόγων, οὐ τῶν ὑστερογενῶν ἀλλὰ τῶν κατ' οὐσιαν προϋπαρχόντων ταῖς ψυχαῖς, ὑφ' ὧν καὶ οἱ τῆς φύσεως ἐμπνεόμενοι λόγοι καὶ ποδηγετούμενοι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα δημιουργεῖν δύνανται* (*Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 82.25-9). "For what we learn are nothing else but recollections of the median level of forms, which is the same as to say the eternally-existent general reason-principles, not the 'later-born' (*husterogenêis*)22 concepts but rather those pre-existing essentially (*kat' ousian*) in our souls, being inspired and guided by which those reasonprinciples in nature are enabled to create individual things (Dillon J. - O'Meara D. (trans.), 2014: 33-34).

IV. Realism reveals its binding intentions

The next observation of Syrianus is, mainly in terms of their cosmological perspective, of capital importance for the relationship between realism and nominalism. He mentions that archetypal "Ideas" as substances do not acquire their substance because they exist in individual object-bodies. That is, he does not accept that there is a particular substrate (subject) which would contribute, by virtue of its internal potentialities or energy fields, to the objective existence of these substances. Therefore, he puts Aristotelian nominalism into the margin by definition. He absolutely adopts (metaphysical and evolving into intra- and intercosmic) realism, according to which the "Ideas" are from the outset authentic realities and determine the mode of existence of individual bodies, through the mediation of natural reasons, of course.[14] Therefore, they give hypostasis but do not receive. Both he and later Proclus developed in an emblematic way the theory of "forms-in-matter", perhaps the most expressive of the metaphysics of immanence. According to its content, the forms-in-matter do not owe their existence to matter, but are themselves the sources of its existence in their ultimate direct presence. In other terms, matter exists

[14] It should be noted that Syrianus has already made announcements regarding the necessary forthcoming reflections: *Ἀνάγκη μεταβαίνειν ἐφ' ἑτέρας φύσεις, αἳ διαιωνίως καὶ ἀκινήτως καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶδος τὰ πάντα κόσμου καὶ τάξεως πληροῦσαι τὴν αἰτίαν τῶν γιγνομένων ἐν ἑαυτοῖς περιέχουσιν, ἐλάττους μὲν ἀριθμῷ τῶν ἐγκοσμίων οὖσαι τῶν πραγμάτων, ἅτε τῷ ἑνὶ γειτνιῶσαι καὶ προσεχῶς ἀπὸ τῆς μονάδος προελθοῦσαι, δυνάμει δὲ ἀφράστῳ τὴν τε τοῦ σύμπαντος χρόνου καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ φυομένων ἀπειρίαν περιλαμβάνουσαι κατὰ τινα ὑπεροχὴν ἐξῃρημένην αὐτῶν καὶ ἀσύντακτον* (*Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικά*, 108.17-24). "We must transfer our attention to other natures, which, filling all things as they do, eternally and unmovingly and by reason of their very being, with order and structure, embrace within themselves the cause of what comes to be, being less in number than encosmic things, inasmuch as they are closer neighbours of the One and proceed immediately from the monad, but by reason of their ineffable power contain the unlimitedness of the whole of time and those things which come to be within it, by reason of a superiority to them which is separable and unconnected" (Dillon J. - O'Meara D. (trans.), 2014: 68).

precisely because it is the product of the combination of "Forms", which manifests itself in infinite ways.[15]

Extensions

What we have elaborated can lead us to the following assessments of Syrianus' research - methodological performance:

a) He appears to have an advanced grasp of the historical depth of the theories he is working on and to make textual choices that will support them. It should be noted that throughout his Commentary he does not reflect in terms of an inflexible linear or quotational encyclopaedism, but rather a synthetic one, with eclecticism being evident.

b) In order to preserve with a firm argumentation the tradition of Platonism on Metaphysics and on Cosmology, he does not remain in the Aristotelian text which he comments on, but refers to others, so that in an explicit or implicit way, he leads the reader to the conclusion that Aristotle does not

[15] Cf. for instance, Syrianus, *Εἰς τὰ Μετὰ τὰ Φυσικὰ* 12.4-8 and 119.33-120.2: *Τὰ μὲν ἔνυλα εἴδη ἀχώριστα ἐστι τῶν ὑποκειμένων· ἀλλ' οὐχ οὕτως αἱ ἰδέαι αὐσίαι ἐλέγοντο τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλ' ὅτι κατ' αὐτὰς καὶ δι' αὐτὰς καὶ ὑπ' οὐτῶν τὰ τῇδε τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει· ὥστε ἀνάγκη αὐτὰς εἶναι χωριστάς τῆς γενέσεως*. "The forms-in-matter, certainly, are inseparable from their substrata; but it is not in this manner that the Forms were stated to be essences (*ousiai*) of things, but because things in this realm possess their existence in accordance with them and through them and by their agency; so necessarily they are separate from the realm of generation (Dillon J. - O'Meara D. (trans.), 2014: 82-83). We think it is obvious that this verse is a "key" to what is discussed in our study. In fact, it is not impossible that Syrianus uses the term "Eide" to refer to Aristotle and the term "Idea" to refer to Plato. Cf. Proclus, *In Timaeus* C, 24.31-25.17 and E, 285.27-286.1. On a broader reading it would be required that the following statement by Aristotle be included in the discussion: *Λέγω δὲ οὐσίαν ἄνευ ὕλης τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι* (*Metaphysica*, 1032b14), whereas immediately before it is noted: *εἶδος δὲ λέγω τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἑκάστου καὶ τὴν πρώτην οὐσίαν* (ibid., 1032b1-2). Book Z is crucial to the whole discussion, but the relevant commentary by Syrianus has not survived.

correctly grasp the theory of "universals". He even shows him to be led into contradictions by the fact that he does not inscribe Plato's syllogisms in their actual structures, with the consequence that he distorts them as to the relation of the two worlds.

c) Despite the fact that he clearly moves along the axis of ontological monism, he is particularly ingenious with regard to the way in which he also elaborates the theory of dualistic realities, with the result that he appears unparalleled in his validation of realism.

References

Aubenque P., *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, Paris 1962: P.U.F.

Boulnois Oliv., «Réelles intentions: nature commune et universaux selon Duns Scot», *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale,* 1, 1992, pp. 3-33.

Courtine J. Fr., *Les catégories de l'être*, Paris: 2003 P.U.F.

De Libera Al., *Métaphysique et Noétique. Albert de Grand*, Paris 2005: J. Vrin.

Dillon J.- O'Meara D. (trans.), *Syrianus: On Aristotle Metaphysics 13-14,* London et.al 2014: Bloomsbury.

Lernould Al., «Les réponses du platonicien Syrianus aux critiques faites par Aristote en "Métaphysique" M et N cotre la thèse de l existence séparée des nombres», Longo Ang. (ed), *Syrianus et la Métaphysique de l'Antiquité Tardive*, Naples 2009: Bibliopolis.

Longo Ang. (ed.), *Syrianus et la Métaphysique de l'Antiquité Tardive*, Naples 2009: Bibliopolis.

Longo Ang., *Siriano e i principi della scienza*, Naples 2005: Bibliopolis.

Luna C., «La doctrine des principes: Syrianus comme source textuelle et doctrinale de Proclus», Segonds Al. Ph. – Steel C., *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, Paris 2000: Leuven-Les Belles Lettres.

Luna C., «Mise En Page Et Transmission Textuelle Du Commentaire De Syrianus Sur La Métaphysique», in: D' Ancona, Ch. (ed.). *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*. Leiden 2007: E. J. Brill.

Morrow G. (trans.), *Proclus' commentary on Plato's Parmenides,* Princeton University Press, 1987.

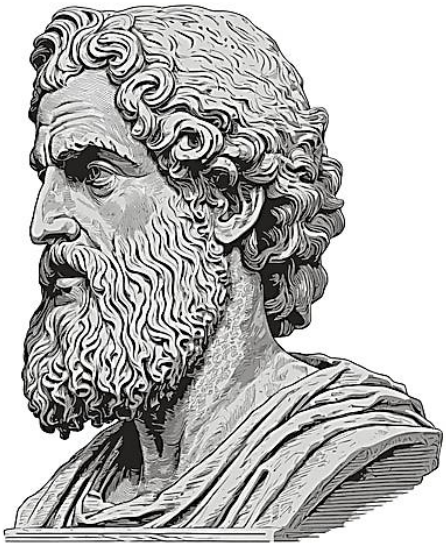
Robin L., *La théorie platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres*. Paris 1908: P.U.F.

Saffrey, H. D. – Westerink, L.G. (intr.), *Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne*, v. III, Paris 1978: Les Belles Lettres.

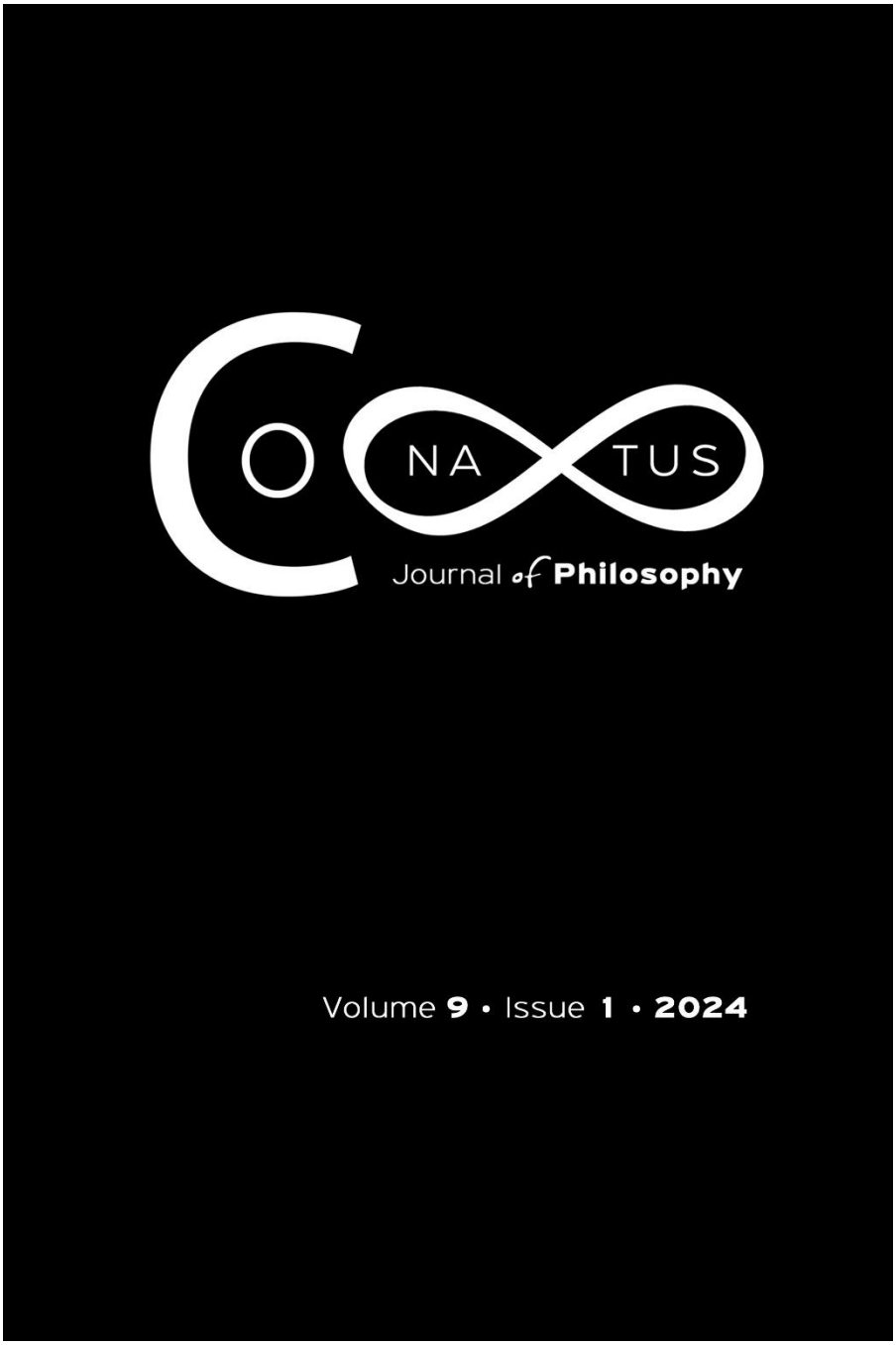
Steel, C., «Proclus et les arguments et contre l' hypothèse des Idées», *Revue de philosophie ancienne*, 2, 1984, pp. 3-27.

Terezis Ch. (2017), *Syrianus. The modern world of the Platonic Academy*, Athens 2017: Ennoia.

Terezis Ch.., "Aspects of the presence of the Aristotelian Logic in Western and Eastern Christianity. The "middle places" according to Boethius and Holobolus", *Dia-noesis – A Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2023): 67-84.https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.37770



Articles



https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/Conatus/index

The image of Aphrodite in Empedocles

Anna Afonasina,
Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University
afonasina@gmail.com

Abstract

Aphrodite is one of the important deities of the Greek pantheon. But she is not the only one and at first glance does not seem to be the most honoured and powerful. In the Homeric epic and hymns she is presented as a narcissistic, capricious and passion-prone goddess. She is mostly associated with beauty and love charms. It might seem that this was enough for Empedocles to identify her with one of the two active powers – Love. However, in Empedocles' poem the image of Aphrodite is very complex and, in many ways, differs from the traditional view of her. She acts as a god-craftsman, is involved in such activities as metal casting, pottery, and artwork. The main question I will try to answer is the following – can we find the origins of this complex image in the literary and cultural tradition known in Empedocles' time, or did he make a radical turn and invent a new previously unknown idea of the deity?

Keywords: Empedocles, Aphrodite, Ancient Greek epic poetry, Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Near East goddesses, religious practice, archaeological data on Aphrodite.

There are two powers in Empedocles' cosmic cycle – Love and Strife. Empedocles gives them different names. In many fragments Love is called Aphrodite. We can see it almost at the beginning of the poem in fr. B 17 DK = D 73 LM, which says that: "and by whom they have loving thoughts and perform deeds of union, calling her 'Joy' as by

name and 'Aphrodite'" (transl. Laks, Most 2016). Plutarch says (*Isis and Osiris* 48, 370d) that this beneficent power Empedocles calls Love, Friendship and Harmony (Concord) (B 18 DK = D 65 LM). This active power is called Aphrodite in B 22 DK = D 101 LM, where she likens the roots of everything (fire, water, earth and air) inducing them to make love to each other. This fragment is supported by a testimony from Plutarch (*On the face on the Moon* 12, 926d-927a, B 27 DK = D 96 + D 98 LM) according to which all these roots were unmixed, indifferent to each other and lonely, until the desire rushed to the nature, and the Love was born in them, Aphrodite and Eros.

In several fragments, Love is presented under the name of Cypris with the new function of artificer (demiurge). These fragments are short, but quite informative. From the fragment B 73 DK = D 199 LM we can conclude that Aphrodite acts as a potter. The fragments B 86 DK and B 87 DK = D 213-214 LM hint at the fact that Aphrodite creates a human body in a manner a sculptor would create a statue. Close in content are the fragments B 75 DK = D 200 LM and B 96 DK = D 192 LM, where there are some anatomical observations associated with the creation of some parts of the human body or other living things. In B 35 DK = D 75 LM we find a verb literally meaning 'smelt metal', 'cast of bronze statues', and in the main context of a quite voluminous fragment it points to the work of Aphrodite as a metallurgist. The verb χέω gives us an idea of how exactly she creates different forms of living beings – she smelts or casts them in forms (τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν).

Another feature of Aphrodite appears in the part of the poem that deals with the purification and rebirth of souls. In B 128 DK = D 25 LM Cypris is proclaimed the only deity to whom no bloody sacrifices are ever made, because, as Porphyry explains (*On abstinence* II, 20), when Love and a sense of kinship rule, no one kills anyone, considering all animals to be kin.

After a brief review of the functions and roles that Aphrodite performs in Empedocles, the question inevitably arises – how did such a multifaceted and powerful deity

come into being? Does she have a prototype in the mythological tradition before Empedocles or is it his personal invention? And why Aphrodite and not Athena, Demeter, Artemis or Hera? To answer these questions, we have to turn to Homer and Hesiod, classical and Roman historians, poets and writers, in order to consider their testimonies for cult practice. We will consult with archaeological data and museum artifacts as well. Here we go.

In Homeric epics and Hymns, Aphrodite is responsible for all the attractions of the gods and people to each other. Her power does not spread only on three goddesses – Athena, Artemis and Hestia (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 7-33). Zeus is constantly in the power of Aphrodite's spell. Helen is literally chained to Paris. On the one hand, it is seen how Helen tries to resist the power of Aphrodite, on the other, she can do nothing about it (*Iliad* III, 390-448). One of the remarkable features of this plot is the scene where Aphrodite appears in her angry manifestation, shows her irritation and promises to punish Helen for her disobedience. This trait, from my point of view, does not correspond to the image of Aphrodite in Empedocles, where she is the exact opposite of any hatred, but in the epic, hymns and poetry disobedience to Aphrodite is always fraught with negative actions on her part towards man. In other place of the *Iliad* (XIV, 192-212) Hera asks Aphrodite for her belt, for two reasons, one is true, the other false, but both are equally important to us. False reason is that Hera wants to reconnect her parents Oceanus and Tethys marriage bonds, because they have long been in discord and long need a hug. Thus, the idea is voiced that the power of Aphrodite removes discord. On the one hand, this is similar to what we see in Empedocles, that the use of this force is very basic and limited. The functions of Aphrodite in Empedocles are not limited to sexual attraction. However, if we assume that the Oceanus and Tethys are figurative representations of such physical phenomena as water and earth, then we will see a picture quite in the spirit of Empedocles' philosophy: Aphrodite restores the lost connection between the elements. Hera's true intention however was to seduce Zeus in order to prevent him from

making another military intervention. The forces of Aphrodite here again comes down to bed needs, because the very description of her belt makes that clear: "Curiously-wrought, wherein are fashioned all manner of allurements; therein is love, therein desire, therein dalliance – beguilement that steals the wits even of the wise" (*Iliad* XIV, 215-217, transl. A.T. Murray).

So, do we find in the epic description of Aphrodite's character any clear indications, useful for future development of her image in a philosophical direction, any prerequisites for transformation of this figure into a more powerful creature? It is primarily its binding force, a force that makes one aggregate, against which neither gods, nor men can resist, a force that tames wild animals and makes them compliant. However, let's look at other situations, which, practically cross out the possibility of Empedocles' borrowing from Homer.

A mere mortal can wound Aphrodite. Convinced by Athena not to be afraid of Aphrodite, Diomedes boldly chases Aphrodite, catches up with the goddess and wounds her. One more reason for such a crazy pursuit is the confidence or some knowledge on Diomedes' part that Aphrodite is a weak goddess, not of those who take part in battles like Athena or Enio (*Iliad* V, 330-334). Aphrodite's weakness also manifests itself in the way she falls to her knees in front of her mother Dione, complains to her and cries and asks her to heal her wound. However, not only Aphrodite suffered at the hands of mortals. Several cases when it happened with other gods are listed further in V, 375–405, among them the mighty Ares, Hera and Hades. Elsewhere, Aphrodite and Ares, fleeing the battlefield, are caught up by Athena, who at the call of Hera throws them to the ground (*Iliad* XXI, 420-426). I do not think it could have inspired Empedocles.

And that is not all. Aphrodite in the Homer tradition can not only send love charms, but also experience their influence, and not on her own will. The Homeric hymn to Aphrodite contains the story of how she was thrown by Zeus into a state of love obsession with a shepherd Anchises. At the very beginning of the hymn, we learn the purpose for

which it was done. It turns out that Zeus wanted to teach Aphrodite that she should not boast about her art before other gods (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 48-50). How much Aphrodite is saddened by this is shown by her following words: "His name shall be Aeneas (Αἰνείας), because I felt awful grief (αἰνόν) in that I laid me in the bed of a mortal man"[1] (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 198-199, transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White). Aphrodite continues to lament and towards the end of the hymn she openly admits her defeat:

> "And now because of you I shall have great shame among the deathless gods henceforth, continually. For until now they feared my jibes and the wiles by which, or soon or late, [250] I mated all the immortals with mortal women, making them all subject to my will. But now my mouth shall no more have this power among the gods; for very great has been my madness, my miserable and dreadful madness, and I went astray out of my mind..." (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 247–254, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White).

Two things catch our attention in this part of the hymn. The first is that Aphrodite is deprived of her power and influence, and the second is that she herself is at loss. Formerly she used to send madness on gods and mortals, but now she is not able to resist it herself. This may be related to the Phrygian great goddess Cybele, one of the properties of which is the ability to send madness and heal from it, for example, as it happened with Dionysus (Apollodorus, *Mythological Library* III, 5, 1). Moreover, Aphrodite appears before Anchises in the guise of a mere mortal, and says in the hymn that she is the daughter of King Otreus, the ruler of Phrygia (*Hymn to Aphrodite* V, 110-112). But in this story, Aphrodite loses her former power and advantage before other gods. Can we consider that the Homeric epics

[1] τῷ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομ' ἔσσεται, οὕνεκα μ' αἰνὸν ἔσχεν ἄχος, ἕνεκα βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμπεσον εὐνῇ. A. Faulkner (2008, 257) supposes, that in given context 'Aeneas' means 'horrible' and comes from the expression αἰνὸν ἄχος – horrible distress.

and hymns already reflect the idea of two different Aphrodites, one earthly and one heavenly? In any case, from the image of Aphrodite as depicted in Homer Empedocles could hardly borrow much.

Let's move on to another mythological story about Aphrodite, as presented in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The first thing to note is that Eros, usually the companion and aide of Aphrodite, is mentioned here among the first gods, and it seems that he has no parents. He is described as the "fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them" (*Theogony*, 120-122, transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White), and his functions listed here coincide with those that are usually attributed, as we have already seen, to Aphrodite; she is also the most beautiful, depriving of reason, and conquering the soul. The action of Eros is not described further in detail, but it is assumed that he forces the gods to mate and produce offspring. What is meant is that if Eros had not been born in the beginning, all other generations would not have been possible. Aphrodite herself appears among the first generations of gods, when Cronos, having cut off the fertile organ of Uranus, deprived him of his generating power, and probably the power in general, taking after him a leading position among the gods. This story needs detailed consideration and interpretation.

First, Aphrodite, like the first gods, is born without parents, coming out of the foam formed by the waves produced by the severed member of Uranus. This places her among the first gods who also appeared in the process of self-origination. Secondly, Aphrodite, having appeared from the foam (ἀφρός = σπέρμα, cf. Diogenes of Apollonia, A 24 DK), inherits the irresistible erotic power of Uranus, who could not stop in his love desire to 'cover' Gaia every night (*Theogony*, 127 ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα καλύπτοι). Many different beings were to be born as a result of this, but Uranus locked them in Gaia's womb, from which she suffered greatly. The further story and its end is known: Aphrodite appears from the sea foam accompanied from the beginning by Eros, and she has been given "the portion allotted to her

amongst men and undying gods, – the whisperings of maidens and smiles and deceits with sweet delight and love and graciousness" (*Theogony* 203-205, transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White). That is, she is the kind of creature that can control this irresistible and dangerous force, and that's what Homer's Aphrodite was proud of until Zeus played a cruel trick on her. Hesiod also mentions Aphrodite's connection with the shepherd Anchises, but this story is only an example among the many gods' similarities to mortals, and looks like a natural event.

From this we can conclude the following. It seems that Aphrodite in Hesiod is more powerful goddess than in Homer. In general, it can be said to embody the source of the most important driving force in nature, the force of love attraction. Aphrodite is inextricably linked to Eros. And I dare to assume here that at the beginning of the story about the creation of the world, where Eros is established as one of the unborn gods (*Theogony*, 120-122), Aphrodite is as if invisibly present. This assumption can be supported by the similarity of the functions attributed to Eros and Aphrodite. In the above lines of *Theogony* it is said that Eros "unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them" (transl. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White). Let us recall a recent example with the belt of Aphrodite from *Iliad*, the power of which deprives the mind of even the reasonable (XIV, 215-217). Vered Lev Kenaan (2010, 46) draws attention to the fact that Eros is called by the Hesiod the most beautiful of all eternal gods (*Theogony*, 120 - Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν θεοῖσι), which should mean the very first, not yet manifested introduction of beauty into the emerging world. Manifested beauty emerges together with Aphrodite, and this symbolizes the second stage of creation. It's also important that Aphrodite has no parents. The above features of Aphrodite give ample reason to believe that Hesiod could be a reliable source for further philosophical reflections of Empedocles. And although the Hesiod's actions of Aphrodite are still described in terms of down-to-earth love amenities, there are also many things that significantly distinguish her image from this of Homer.

For the first time Aphrodite "Urania" is found in Herodotus (I, 105), where he describes the Scythians' invasion of the Syrian city of Askalon and mentions the looting of the temple of Aphrodite. According to Herodotus, it was the oldest temple of the goddess, and to Cyprus her veneration came later together with the natives of Syria. It is important to note here that the identification of Aphrodite with Astarte (whose temple was in fact plundered by the Scythians) is a commonplace among many ancient authors (e.g., Pausanias, *Description of Greece* I, 14, 5).[2] I will not develop this subject further, it is a more important to concentrate only on what could have been the starting point for Empedocles in choosing a deity. The very epithet "Urania" may open the desired possibility for us. Probably the origin of this word is due to the fact that Aphrodite is genetically linked to Uranus. That is why sometimes the epithet may be translated as "heavenly".[3] However, the connection with Uranus is manifested in some images of Aphrodite not in the form of a beautiful girl. As Pausanias reports (*Description of Greece* I, 19, 1) – in Athens next to the place that citizens call "Gardens" is the temple of Aphrodite "Urania" and a statue of Aphrodite, which looks like a rectangular stone. Non-iconic image of Aphrodite was also found in Paphos on Cyprus, in the oldest place of her worship. Tacitus informs us that "The image of the goddess does not bear the human shape; it is a rounded mass rising

[2] More details on the identification of Aphrodite with various Eastern goddesses can be found in the work of Julia Ustinova (2005), as well as in some chapters of a large collection devoted entirely to Aphrodite (Smith, Pickup 2010). Marcovich calls her an emigrant goddess, and denies the origin of her name from the word 'foam' (Marcovich 1996).

[3] Plato gave this word an ethical colouring, denoting by it spiritual love for a man. This is patronised by Aphrodite Urania, in contrast to the earthy bodily love for a woman, Aphrodite Pandemos (*Symp*. 180c-185d). Xenophon (*Symp*. VIII, 9) and Lucian in his work *Amores* argues in roughly the same style. On the civic role of the 'popular' Aphrodite, see Pirenne-Delforge 2010, 14-15, where the importance of Aphrodite as a unifying force in trade and political interactions is emphasized, which contradicts the Platonic interpretation of the function of Aphrodite Pandemos as a visualization of man's attraction to woman, to everything earthy and primitive.

like a cone from a broad base to a small circumference. The meaning of this is doubtful" (*History*, II, 3, trans. A. J. Church, W. J. Brodribb). On the one hand, it could symbolize the phallus of Uranus, which fell into the sea and created the foam from which Aphrodite came out, on the other – Eros, who acts as a not yet manifested appearance and beauty of Aphrodite. This fact certainly adds to the universality of the image of Aphrodite.

The phallic interpretation of the non-iconic image of Aphrodite is enhanced by the aspect pointed out by Nano Marinatos (2000). She believes that sexuality, which is clearly expressed in images of naked goddesses and which is emphasized in every way in texts related to Aphrodite, should not be read flatly and unilaterally. On the contrary, it testifies to great power, but above all to danger, and first of all to men. Let us recall Herodotus' story about the Scythians punished by Aphrodite for looting her temple by the so-called "female" disease. It is believed that he meant impotence, although castration (Herodotus mentions Ἐνάρεας in this place, I, 105, 4) or homosexuality (since homosexual men are recorded as servants in the temple of Ishtar) are equally possible. Aphrodite has long been associated with Ishtar (see Ustinova 2005; Herodotus *History*, I, 199; Lucian *On the Syrian Goddess*), therefore the power to turn men into women applies to her as well. Besides, Macrobius (*Saturnalia* III, 8, 1-3) describes the statue of Venus in Cyprus, who was with female figure and clothing, but at the same time bearded and with male sexual organs, and was revered both as a male and a female deity (see also Winbladh 2012).[4] In general, it should be noted that Greek deities were perceived not simply as individuals or personifications of any qualities, but as

[4] Macrobius also reports that according to Aristophanes she was called Ἀφρόδιτον. The Nationalmuseum in Stockholm has a unique herm of Hermaphrodites - the upper part of the herm depicts a woman (goddess) lifting her skirt and revealing what is underneath, namely the male genitals. In the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia in Reggio Calabria one can see a terracotta figure of a girl lifting her skirt to expose the male genitals (the 4th cent. BCE, Locri). Such images become more numerous in the Roman period.

forces before which man has no protection. The only thing man could do was to obey them.

To understand more clearly why Empedocles chooses Aphrodite from a large list of goddesses, we must turn to the religious customs of Sicily of the archaic and classical periods.

In Sicily, on Mount Eryx (modern Erice), there was the shrine of Aphrodite. It was founded by the Phoenicians around the 9–8th centuries BCE, and it is believed that Astarte was originally worshipped here, and only from the 5th century BCE, after the Greek conquest of western Sicily, it was reestablished as a sanctuary of Aphrodite.[5] No detailed information about this place from the early authors has come down to us, but Claudius Aelianus, the writer of the 2nd–3rd centuries CE, tells an interesting story. On Mount Eryx, he writes in *On the nature of animals* IV, 2, a festival called Anagogia ("sailing away") is held. The name of the festival comes from the idea that during these days Aphrodite goes from there to Libya. Usually there are a lot of pigeons in Eryx, but during these days they disappear and people say that they accompany Aphrodite as they are considered her favorite animals. But on the ninth day, a shining pigeon (πορφυρᾶν)[6] of special beauty arrives from the sea. It is followed by others, which means Aphrodite's return, so the end of the festival is called Catagogia ("return").

Aphrodite's affinity with different oriental goddesses, such as Ishtar, who was revered in Babylon, Atargatis in Assyrians, Astarta in Phoenicians, has already been mentioned above.[7] The departure of Aphrodite to Libya,[8]

[5] The Romans venerated her as Venus Erycina, and Christians built the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin nearby. Cf. Marcovich 1996, 48: "even today in many village churches on Cyprus, Aphrodite's island, the Virgin Mary is being invoked as Panagía Aphrodítissa, that is, 'the most holy Aphrodite'".

[6] Here Aelianus adds: Anacreontes of Teos (fr. 2 West) describes Aphrodite as 'shining' (ὥσπερ οὖν τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ὁ Τήιος ἡμῖν Ἀνακρέων ᾄδει, πορφυρέην που λέγων). And further: the dove could be golden, just as Homer sings of Aphrodite (*Iliad* V, 427).

[7] For more details on Aphrodite's connection with Near Eastern goddesses, the origin of her name, and her paths to Greece and Rome, see Marcovich 1996, 45-46.

thus, may mean her brief return home, and emphasize her origin and the very connection with the oriental goddesses. Secondly, Herodotus (II, 55) has a story "that two black doves had come flying from Thebes in Egypt, one to Libya and one to Dodona; [2] the latter settled on an oak tree, and there uttered human speech, declaring that a place of divination from Zeus must be made there; the people of Dodona understood that the message was divine, and therefore established the oracular shrine. [3] The dove which came to Libya told the Libyans (they say) to make an oracle of Ammon; this also is sacred to Zeus" (transl. A. D. Godley).[9] Dodona is the oldest oracle in Greece, where they asked to fulfill the prophecies of Zeus and Dione. The name of the latter can be translated simply as "deity", or be a female version of the name of Zeus.[10] Dione is otherwise known to us from the Homer epic as the mother of Aphrodite. However, some researchers (Dakaris 1963, Vandenberg 2007, 29-30) suggest that the name of Dione began to be used as a substitute for the goddess who was worshiped here in ancient times, before the arrival of the Greeks on these lands. This goddess is believed to be the Great Mother or Gaia.[11]

[8] In Herodotus Libya was a rather vague concept. Nevertheless, it is a region of the southern coast of Africa, bordering Egypt, where there were many Phoenician colonies.

[9] On the one hand, Herodotus himself explains below why the Dodonians are speaking about doves (II, 57), on the other hand, the connection of Aphrodite with doves is attested from very ancient times. Homer mentions it several times. The goddess is depicted with doves on alabaster from Cyprus (kept in Paris, LIMC 74; 570 BCE), she holds doves on a statue dedicated to her in Corinth (LIMC 66; 490 BCE) and on a bronze statuette from Epirus (Athens, LIMC 125; 450 BCE).

[10] In the archaeological museum of Ioannina, the visitor will find many bronze plates on which questions were written to the oracle. Addresses to both Zeus and Dione are present on almost every one of them.

[11] Dakaris, who excavated in Dodona, dates the beginning of the cult to around 2000 BCE on the basis of ceramic finds. He also points to the close connection of doves with the Cretan-Mycenaean religion, where doves were honoured as a symbol of deity and sacred animals. Zeus first appears in Dodona in the 13th century BCE. Dakaris also discovered three different levels of cultic activity, the beginning of which he considers

Thus, the story of the departure and return of Aphrodite to Eryx, accompanied by pigeons, took us into a very distant past, and opened another possible interpretation of the image of Aphrodite, according to which she was associated with the most ancient autochthonous female deity, whose cult was probably displaced by the new Olympic goddess. I do not rule out the fact that as a native of Sicily, Empedocles had access to this kind of information. No one doubts that he was familiar with the works of Homer and Hesiod, but his knowledge of the oral tradition, which has not reached us, or reached us in a seriously distorted form, cannot be excluded. I assume that Empedocles by virtue of the education and versatile interest could possess the information that in ancient times the most powerful creature was not Zeus, but a certain goddess connected with the earth and its interior, passion and birth, disobedience of which is dangerous for the man and can lead to loss of reason. And Aphrodite, by its nature and origin, is very suitable for this role.

Aelian's next testimony has, I think, some relation to Empedocles' fragment B 128 DK = D 25 LM, where Cypris is revered by a special offering:

> She it was whose favor they won with pious images,
> Painted animals and artfully scented perfumes,
> Sacrifices of unmixed myrrh and of fragrant incense,
> Casting onto the ground libations of blond honey.
> The altar was not drenched with the unmixed blood of bulls...
> (transl. A. Laks, G. Most)

Aelian explains (X, 50) that every day people come to Mount Eryx to make a sacrifice in the temple of Aphrodite. The largest altar is outside, and the fire burns on it all day until nightfall. At dawn, however, there is not a single

to be the worship of the sacred oak tree. This was followed by the worship of the earth goddess Gaia, and only then, from the thirteenth century onwards, Zeus. Dakaris' work (Dakaris 1963) has remained unavailable to me; this information is obtained from Vandenberg (2007, 29).

smouldering charcoal or ash left on the altar, nor any parts of the animals that are underburned, but it is covered with dew and fresh grass. And so, it happens every night. Despite the fact that animal sacrifices are mentioned here, an important addition is the story that in the morning the altar looks purified, and there are no traces of murder on it. The Roman historian Tacitus (the first–second centuries CE) also has similar information. In the second book of his *History* he tells that in Cyprus, in the oldest temple of the goddess in Paphos, it was forbidden to pour blood on the altars, only prayers and pure flames should be raised from the altars (II, 3). In other words, it is possible to sacrifice animals (although only males), but the blood should not touch the altar. This custom, which probably dates back to the most ancient times, could be reflected in the statement of Empedocles in B 128 DK: "The altar was not drenched with the unmixed blood of bulls".

So, my assumption is that if such stories with the purification of the altar or special restrictions on its use were popular in the times of Empedocles, then there is one step left from them to what Empedocles will teach about – bloodless and non-violent sacrifices.

Non-violent indeed, because, according to Aelian's testimony, animals come to the altar freely, without enforcement. Those who were going to make sacrifices needed to express their strong desire and ability to pay. Only then the goddess herself brought the animals to the altar. But it was important not to be stingy and pay honestly. For those who wanted to save money, the goddess took the animals and the sacrifice became ineffective. The idea that animals are under the goddess' protection and the sacrifice is made without violence leads us closer to Empedocles. The fact that Aphrodite has power over and patronizes animals can already be seen in the part of the Homeric hymn that describes how she goes on a date to Anchises accompanied by wild animals (*Hymn V to Aphrodite*, 68-74):

> "So she came to many-fountained Ida, the mother of wild creatures and went straight to the homestead

> across the mountains. After her [70] came grey wolves, fawning on her, and grim-eyed lions, and bears, and fleet leopards, ravenous for deer: and she was glad in heart to see them, and put desire in their breasts, so that they all mated, two together, about the shadowy coombes" (trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White).

The listed features of Aphrodite are related both to the Phrygian Great Goddess (Cybele, Rhea) and to Astarta, who in ancient religion and iconography has features of a patroness of wild animals (Marinatos 2000, 11-13). Thus, we have two testimonies of Aphrodite as the patroness of animals, which should be seen as a sign of great power and control over nature.

The most difficult, it seems to me, is to explain how Aphrodite became in Empedocles a demiurge. In the beginning of the article I enumerated the fragments describing how she makes various objects and body parts of living creatures with her hands, acting as an artist, potter, sculptor, and metallurgist. Will it be possible to find hints at all this in literary or archaeological materials?

A large-scale work by the writer of the fifth century CE Nonnus of Panopolis comes to the aid. In *Dionysiaca* he talks about many gods, including Aphrodite, who, being preoccupied with the process of handicraft (namely weaving), ceased to pay attention to her magic belt (XXIV, 234-330). In the result, fields ceased to bear fruit, beasts ceased to bring forth offspring, and people stopped to sing love songs, play musical instruments and make love. Aphrodite weaved poorly, ineptly, but very enthusiastically. And she didn't even notice how she enjoyed the anger of Athena, who in this type of activity was not considered to be superior. It was only after Athena had summoned all the gods and made a laughing-stock of Aphrodite the latter stopped weaving. Of course, weaving is not listed among the activities of Aphrodite in Empedocles, but we can generalize this story and gather useful information for this study – it reflects the handicraft side of the image of Aphrodite. Probably, such stories also had circulation in the times of Empedocles and

opened before him a wide field for further development of Aphrodite's image.

The lawful husband of Aphrodite is lame god-craftsman Hephaestus. Aphrodite in hymns and poetry differs from other goddesses in that she is always adorned with rich jewelry, which skilful master has made for her. Markovich believes that this reflects the influence of Phoenician craftsmanship in making jewelry (Marcovich 1996, 52). However, this does not mean that Aphrodite herself begins to create something out of metal, while in the fragment B 35 DK = D 75 LM it is possible to subtract this aspect of Aphrodite's activity – after Strife gradually recedes and Love finds itself in the middle of a vortex, a huge number of mortal creatures start *to melt out* of separate wandering parts (τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν). If this fragment can be read in the context of demiurgical activity of Aphrodite, then I have to admit that her occupation with foundry is an innovation of Empedocles. To date, I have not been able to find parallels to this in the written and material culture of the times of Empedocles and the preceding tradition.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of reader to another interesting, though rather dark, moment. Empedocles' special attitude towards living beings and his doctrine of the rebirth of *daimones* place him in the context of the Orphic tradition (Riedweg 1995, Betegh 2001), which gives us another opportunity for searching parallels. In the Orphic hymn to the Night, Cypris is glorified as the beginning of all things:

I shall sing of Night,
mother of gods and men;
we call Night Kypris,
she gave birth to all.
Hear, O blessed goddess, 3
jet-black and starlit,
for you delight in the quiet
and slumber-filled serenity.
(trans. A. N. Athanassakis and B. M. Wolkow)

Given that the hymns as they came to us date back to the second century CE, we must carefully draw parallels between them and the poem of Empedocles. However, Orphism in the fifth century BCE was already an established religion, and it is likely that many elements of the later hymns can be traced back to the earlier tradition. The identification of Aphrodite with Night, which in Hesiod was the first offspring of the primordial Chaos, clearly sets her apart from the general list of deities.

Conclusion. In his poem Empedocles created a splendid image of a deity whose main function is to fit together disparate, apathetic particles wandering in space. This deity is not faceless at all, it is endowed with special features of a demiurge, who makes different organs with her own hands and creates a living organism out of them. Besides, it is a goddess who does not accept bloody sacrifices and violence. And she has a name. It is Aphrodite. Empedocles creates a new deity endowed with moral traits, whose cult is designed to change the attitude towards the value of life not only of man but also of animals. Some features of this deity could be borrowed from the Homeric epic and hymns, from Hesiod's *Theogony*, and from oriental myths. However, the study makes it clear that the image of Aphrodite as a demiurge drawn by Empedocles is not found in the tradition that precedes him.

References

Betegh, G. (2001) "Empédocle, Orphée et le papyrus de Derveni," Pierre-Marie Morel and Jean-François Pradeau, eds. *Les anciens savants*. Strasbourg, 47–70.

Dakaris, S. I. (1963) "Das Taubenorakel von Dodona und das Totenorakel bei Ephyra," *Antike Kunst*, Beiheft I, 35–54.

Evelyn-White, Hugh G., ed. (1914) *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press.

Faulkner, A. (2008) *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*. Oxford University Press.

Marinatos, N. (2000) *The Goddess and the Warrior. The Naked Goddess and the Mistress of Animals in Early Greek Religion*. Routledge.

Marcovich, M. (1996) "From Ishtar to Aphrodite," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30.2 (Special Issue: Distinguished Humanities Lectures II), 43–59.

Pirenne-Delforge, V. (2010) "Flourishing Aphrodite: An Overview," Amy C. Smith, & S. Pickup, eds. *Brill's companion to Aphrodite*. Leiden: Brill, 3–16.

Riedweg, C. (1995) "Orphisches bei Empedocles," *Antike und Abendland* 41, 34–59.

Smith, Amy C. & Pickup, S., eds. (2010) *Brill's companion to Aphrodite*. Leiden: Brill.

Ustinova, Yu. (2005) "Snaked-Limbed and Tendril-Limbed Goddesses in the Art and Mythology of the Mediterranean and Black See," David Braund, ed. *Scythians and Greeks: Cultural Interactions in Scythia, Athens and the Early Roman Empire (sixth century BC – first century AD)*. University of Exeter Press.

Vandenberg, Philipp (2007) *Mysteries of the Oracles: The Last Secrets of Antiquity*. New York, NY.

Lev Kenaan, Vered (2010) "Aphrodite: The Goddess of Appearances," Amy C. Smith, & S. Pickup, eds. *Brill's companion to Aphrodite*. Leiden: Brill, 27–49.

Winbladh, M.-L. (2012) *The Bearded Goddess, Androgynes, Goddesses and Monsters in Ancient Cyprus*. Armida Publications, Cypern.

The Allegory of the Divided Line in Proclus' Ontotheology

Eleni Boliaki,
Associate Professor,
Hellenic Open University
eboliaki@eap.gr
- Vasiliki Anagnostopoulou,
Ph.D. Cand. Hellenic Open University
vasiaanagn94@gmail.com

Abstract

The goal of this research paper is to highlight the way in which Proclus elaborates and incorporates in his ontotheological system the allegory of the divided Line in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic* (1.287.20-292.21). It focuses on the presentation of the reasoning process and the interpretive approach of the subject matter by this Neoplatonic thinker. More specifically, in this paper we will present Proclus' reasoning process regarding the unity of the Line, demonstrating those details that are explanatory additions to the already existing Platonic text. We will highlight the way Proclus employs the two-part and, later, four-part division of the Line, as well as the contents of each section, with an emphasis on the new meanings he gives to the terms and the new terms that he introduces.

Key words: Proclus, Plato, allegory, Line, intelligible, visible

Introduction

In this study, we present a specific research project from the commentary work of the Neoplatonic thinker and last scholarch of the Platonic Academy, Proclus, on Plato's *Republic*. We aim to highlight how Proclus interprets one of Plato's three allegories, the Allegory of the Line.[1]Our research ambition is to examine how Proclus manages to incorporate Plato's descriptions into his own worldview, which is shaped by his theological understanding of reality. To achieve this, we will conduct a systematic, interpretative, and synthetic analysis of the passages that concern this allegory exclusively, frequently employing intertextuality, and we will attempt a reconstruction and a re-synthetic arrangement of Proclus' argumentation so that we can follow, with the necessary precision and coherence, the stages he goes through.

Moving in this direction, it is worth observing the following: Proclus places at the center of his elaborations not merely the intention to bring Plato into the intellectual foreground as an ever-present duty, but to validate a timeless temporality, which emerges through a non-autonomous textual formation, bearing the strong character of commentary. By commentary, we do not refer to specific doxographical contexts but to a meta-synthetic reading and elaboration of prior formulations, which in any case were integrated into the later intellectual milieu. And here, the historical orientation plays the pivotal role and brings the study of Proclus' work into the domain of the History of Philosophy. Given that Proclus processes the entirety of Plato's work through his ontotheological lens, we must examine how this is validated through his reference to Plato.

1 It should be noted here that a similar study by Pieter d'Hoine titled "The Metaphysics of the 'Divided Line' in Proclus: A Sample of Pythagorean Theology" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 56 (2018), pp. 575–599, has preceded this one. Although this study focuses on how Proclus interprets the Allegory of the Line in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, it primarily aims, as its title suggests, to connect it with Pythagorean theology.

In order to carry out such an endeavor, we must assume the following: Proclus attempts to highlight a holistic system of Knowledge based on a conceptual 'arsenal' that is multifaceted.

A. Towards a Proof of the Unity of the Line

The first line of reasoning brings to the forefront the issue of the unity of the Line, with Proclus gradually introducing us to his familiar ontological system. More specifically, the Neoplatonic scholarch notes the following: "Since he wished to show, then, that the procession of the beings from unity is continuous and unified, he compared this continuity with a single line because subsequent things always proceed from primary ones by virtue of their similarity and coherence, since no void separates the things that are".[2] In this passage, the following position is expressed: the existence of a single Line, though divided, remains one, and serves as proof by Plato of the continuous and unified procession of beings from the supreme ontological principle, the One. From this perspective, the procession of beings occurs through descending degrees, with lower beings deriving from higher ones, based on the function of two principles: similarity, which reflects the existence of the lower within the higher in potential, and continuity, which refers both to a sequential articulation and consequent unfolding of similar ontological levels, and to a specific linear classificatory regularity in terms of cause and effect, with the former always initiating the latter.[3] To these designations, which pertain to the emanative

2 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* I.288.7-10: «Τήν μέν οὖν ἀφ'ένός πρόοδον τῶν ὄντων συνεχῆ και ἡνωμένην οὐσαν ἐνδείξασθαι βουλόμενος γραμμῇ μιᾷ τήν συνέχειαν ταύτην ἀπείκασεν, δι'ὁμοιότητος καί ἀλληλουχίας τῶν δευτέρων ἀπό τῶν πρώτων ἀεί προϊόντων, κενοῦ δέ οὐδενός τά ὄντα διείργοντος». The translation of the citations are from *Proclus' Commentary on the Republic*, Translated, Annotated, and Introduced by Brian Duvick, ed. "Princeton University Press," 2017.

3 Regarding the concept of similarity, Christos Athan. Terezis notes the following: "... Proclus refers to two levels of similarity. Concerning the general categories, the similarity between each underlying being and its

development of beings, Proclus adds another parameter: the absence of void, which could act as an obstacle in this process. Here, the Neoplatonic scholarch, applying his specialized insights, reaches the following conclusion: "in fact, this was not permissible, for the Good creates all things and turns them back again to itself".[4] According to this passage, the existence of a void space, which might suggest the existence of a non-being, would not be permissible for one basic reason: the Good, or the One, produces everything and causes their reversion. [5] In order to ensure both the

predecessor is defined in terms of what an even higher category has formed. Within a genus, however, things that appear multiplicatively resemble their source-unit based on how that source uniquely shapes them. Indeed, various types of similarity are developed throughout his system, but none of them reach the same intensity as the previous two. In a system where everything operates in absolute mutual reciprocity, the predominance of similarities is inevitable, functioning analogically" (*The Neoplatonic School as the Culmination of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, University of Patras, p. 142). We also refer to Aik. Paraskevopoulou's doctoral dissertation: *The Concept of Similarity in the Neoplatonic Proclus*, Patras, 2018, where this issue is extensively analyzed.

4 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.288.12-13: «οὐδέ γάρ ἦν τοῦτο θεμιτόν, τἀγαθοῦ πάντα παράγοντος καί εἰς ἑαυτό πάλιν ἐπιστρέφοντος».

5 For the triadic scheme "remaining-procession-reversion," see E. R. Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology*, Oxford 1963, pp. 212-223; J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1972, pp. 78-106, and *La mystagogie de Proclos*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1972, pp. 53-91; W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, Klostermann, Frankfurt 1965, pp. 118-164; and also Christos Athan. Terezis's study, *The Neoplatonic School as the Culmination of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, pp. 102-112. This triadic scheme plays a crucial role in Proclus's ontological system. The "remaining" (*monē*) refers precisely to the self-retention of the primary highest Principle, as well as any other, within itself—a detail that signifies the absence of any participation or relationship pointing to external determination, in an atmosphere of profound secrecy (see Proclus, *Elements of Theology: Toward a Summary of Ancient Greek Metaphysics*, translated by Anna Kelesidou-Galanou, ed. "Zitros", Thessaloniki, 2017 p. 166). The "procession" (*proodos*) expresses the production of effects—the metaphysical, and later the physical world—under terms of systematic and pre-planned productive descent from the highest Principle and other secondary principles. The "reversion" (*epistrophē*) signifies the reversion of the created causes back to their respective origins, to the direct cause and ultimately to the One,

descending productive unfolding and the ascending reversion of beings, it is necessary for both of these processes to occur continuously, without intervening voids that would disrupt the flow of the process. It should be noted here that Proclus has explicitly addressed the issue of similarity elsewhere, particularly in his *Elements of Theology*, where, aiming to connect this notion with both the procession of beings and their reversion to the supreme Principle, he states: "All procession is accomplished through a similarity of the secondary to the primary." [6] and "But all things are bound together by similarity, as by dissimilarity they are distinguished and severed. If, then, reversion is a communion and conjunction, and all communion and conjunction is through similarity, it follows that all reversion must be accomplished through similarity.". [7] The first passage (29) implies that similarity is the ontological state that allows for the existence of the secondary from the primary, and the second passage develops a unique teleology, indicating that through likeness, the reversion of all effects to their immediate cause is achieved. This reversion does not occur in spatial terms but through the recognition and utilization of the gifts bestowed upon them.

The next logical premise highlights the relationship between the producer and the produced, with Proclus asserting: "In any case, the creation must be like its Creator. Therefore, since the latter is one, the creation must be continuous. For continuity is related to unity. A cause of this continuity is the similarity of the subsequent sections to the

following a hierarchical path from the lower, subordinate beings to the higher archetypes, aiming to restore absolute ontological completeness and perfection. (See *Proclus, Elements of Theology*, pp. 168-170). Here too, a distinctive teleology is developed, achieving unity.

6 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 29: «πᾶσα πρόοδος δι' ὁμοιότητος ἀποτελεῖται τῶν δευτέρων πρός τά πρῶτα»

7 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 32: «συνδεῖ πάντα ἡ ὁμοιότης, ὥσπερ διακρίνει ἡ ἀνομοιότης καί διίστησιν. Εἰ οὖν ἡ ἐπιστροφή κοινωνία τίς ἐστι καί συναφή, πᾶσα δέ κοινωνία καί συναφή πᾶσα δι' ὁμοιότητος, πᾶσα ἄρα ἐπιστροφή δι' ὁμοιότητος ἀποτελεῖτο ἄν». The translation of the citations are from *Proclus, The Elements of Theology,* A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary by E. R. Dodds, ed. "Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963.

principal ones.".[8] Here, Proclus argues that continuity is due to the unity of both the One and its products. Generation, or the progressive production of all ontological levels, is continuous because continuity is related to the One. The cause of continuity is similarity, which is also linked to the One, as it is a form of unity. In examining this, we can divide Proclus' statement into three key points, which we will approach through intertextual analysis and confirmation from the *Elements of Theology*: a) How are the cause and the effect connected, and what is their relationship? b) What is the relationship between continuity and kinship? c) What is the connection between similarity and unity? Proclus, as previously mentioned, argues in the *Elements of Theology* that all procession occurs under the conditions of similarity. Since the productive cause is superior to its products, these products cannot be absolutely identical in power to their cause. This necessitates that they are either distinct and unequal, or both distinct and united. In the first case, Proclus identifies the paradox: if they are completely distinct, there would be no sympathy or participation between them, in terms of the lower being harmonized with the higher or partaking in it. This hypothesis contradicts the idea that the participating entity (the produced) draws its essence from the cause through communion. If, on the other hand, there is a relationship that includes both distinction and unity, the effect (the produced) would both participate and not participate in the cause, thus deriving its essence from the cause and simultaneously not deriving it. Proclus notes that if the product is more distinct, it will be more alien to the producer than related, and thus more discordant and unsympathetic. Since the products are kindred to their causes in essence and sympathetic to them, and they naturally depend on them and desire their connection with them (as they desire the Good, which they know through their

8 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.288.14-18: «δεῖ γοῦν ὁμοιοῦσθαι τῷ γεννῶντι τήν γένεσιν· ἑνός οὖν ἐκείνου ὄντος συνεχῆ τήν γένεσιν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι· συγγενές γάρ τῷ ἑνί τό συνεχές. τούτου δέ αἴτιον τοῦ συνεχοῦς ἡ ὁμοιότης τῶν ἐπομένων τμημάτων πρός τά ἡγούμενα ... ἡ γάρ ὁμοιότης ἑνότης τίς ἐστιν»

mediation), they are more united than distinct, and thus more similar. Hence, the productive cause gives form first to the similar before the dissimilar. Moreover, the product owes its existence to similarity, as this ensures the preservation of the identity of the offspring with its parent.

B. Towards an Interpretative Approach to the Fourfold Division of the Line

At the next stage, the reasoning takes on a more synthetic perspective, bringing to the forefront the fourfold division of the Line, highlighting the relationship that develops between its parts. Specifically, Proclus argues: "Of the four sections of the one line that he reveals, he posits that the two comprising its greater section belong to the genus of what is contemplated, but that the two comprising the lesser belong to the genus of what is seen.".[9] According to this passage, the fourfold division of the Line does not arise randomly but is structured in such a way that it corresponds to the content of its segments. Based on this division, the larger and ontologically superior parts correspond to the intelligible realm (*νοητόν*), while the smaller and ontologically inferior parts correspond to the visible realm (*ὁρώμενον*). The superiority refers both to an evaluative hierarchy and to chronological precedence, as the intelligible realm is closer to the One (Ἕν), and thus its productive development precedes that of the visible realm. It is important to emphasize here that the manner in which the fourfold distinction of the Line emerges is expressed through the participle "*ἀναφανέντων*," derived from the verb "*ἀναφαίνομαι*," which refers either to the (re)appearance of these parts or to a cognitive process of ascension that progresses gradually upwards. The second interpretation, which is articulated through reasoned conjecture, seems to receive appropriate textual support.

9 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.289.6-10: «τεττάρων δέ τῆς μίας γραμμῆς ἀναφανέντων αὐτῷ τμημάτων τά μέν δύο τά τό μεῖζον αὐτῆς τμήμα συμπληροῦντα τοῦ νοουμένου γένους εἶναι τίθεται, τά δέ δύο τά τό ἔλασσον τοῦ ὁρωμένου γένους»

However, the simultaneous presence of both interpretations cannot be entirely ruled out.

The distinction mentioned above is entirely reasonable based on the following observation: "In fact, he must attribute the greater part to what is contemplated, since it both is superior to and contains the other, but the lesser part to what is seen, for it is causally contained in the former. But what is contained is everywhere less than what contains it, whether you should consider the containment in terms of essence, power, or energy, as one sees both in the case of all things that are continuous and in the case of all that are divided.".[10] According to this, the higher contains the lower, and therefore it is necessary for the containing entity to have a broader ontological scope than that which is causally contained, in terms of essence, power, and energy.[11] It should be emphasized that the concepts of essence (οὐσία), power (δύναμις), and energy (ἐνέργεια) are foundational pillars upon which Proclus' ontological system is built. These concepts describe the productive-procession dynamics through which the multiplicity arises from the single supreme Principle, the One (Ἕν). The cause exists in a state of actuality during its productive development, while the effect receives this energy as a potential state, a state of anticipation that, at a later level, defines its active production. Despite the fact that the cause is of a different order and ontological priority than the effect, each entity, when viewed within its own rank and level—without reference to their relational connections or their hierarchical status—constitutes a being

10 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.289.10-16: «Δεῖ γάρ τῷ νοουμένῳ τό μεῖζον ἀποδιδόναι, κρείττονί τε ὄντι καί περιέχοντι θάτερον, τῷ δέ ὁρωμένῳ τό ἔλάσσον· περιέχεται γάρ ἐν ἐκείνῳ κατ'αἰτίαν. Ἔλασσον δέ τοῦ περιέχοντος πανταχοῦ το περιεχόμενον, εἴτε κατ'ουσίαν εἴτε κατά δύναμιν εἴτε κατ' ἐνέργειαν λαμβάνοις τήν περιοχήν, ὥσπερ καί ἐπί τῶν συνεχῶν καί ἐπί τῶν διῃρημένων ὁρᾶται πάντων».

11 The verb "to encompass" (*periecho*) holds significant importance in Proclus's conceptual system, expressing the capacity of causes to contain their effects in a unified way as they progress. See *Proclus, Elements of Theology*, proposition 65, where the Neoplatonic thinker discusses the relationship between cause-agent and effect-product.

that "has its existence in its own order" and thus possesses its own particular essence.[12]

C. Towards the Elucidation of the Contents of Each Segment of the Line

Proclus begins his reasoning by addressing the lowest and most inferior section of the Line, the visible (*ὁρώμενον*), a movement mirrored by Plato. Proclus justifies this approach with the following explanation: "He [Socrates] says, beginning with what is first for us, the visible genus, because this is more familiar".[13] The primary reason for beginning his argumentation from the lower ontological level is that it is more familiar to human perception. Consequently, the epistemological process maintains its ascending nature. Proclus, like Plato, begins his analysis from what is most accessible to human experience and understanding, gradually working upwards toward the more abstract and higher levels of reality.

The aforementioned ontological domain, as already known from Plato, is divided into two levels: the level of *Eikasia* and the level of *Pistis*. Regarding the entities contained within each level, Proclus notes the following: "One of the two sections is comprised of images".[14] According to this passage, one of the two sections, the lower one, contains *images* (εἰκόνες), while the remaining part encompasses all the entities from which the images derive. Here, Proclus identifies

12 For further clarification on this issue, see *Elements of Theology*, the propositions 77-79 in particular, pp. 375-377, where the relationship between potentiality and actuality is accurately articulated. For a comprehensive study of this subject in Neoplatonism, see also Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Brill, Leiden 1978, pp. 27-45.

13 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.289.20-22: «τούτου δέ ἑξῆς φησίν ἀπό πρός ἡμᾶς πρώτων ὡς γνωριμοτέρων ἀρξάμενος τοῦ ὁρωμένου γένους». See also Plato's *Republic*, 509e.

14 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.289.22-23: «τό μέν ἕτερον τοῖν πραγμάτοιν εἰκόνες, τό δέ λοιπόν πᾶν ἀφ' ὧν αἱ εἰκόνες». See Plato's *Republic*, 509e-510a.

a detail that raises questions: "all the rest is comprised of the things from which the images come. Since the images, in turn, can indicate statues and drawings and everything of the sort, [Socrates] says, defining himself what he means the images to be, that they are like those produced by luminescence in illuminated objects, and that he calls both the shadows and the reflections in water and in other mirrors *images*".[15] The issue Proclus identifies here relates to Plato's categorization of images, which includes both shadows and reflections (pantasmata).[16] Proclus argues that, since images can be considered to include statues, paintings, and anything similar, it is necessary to define the entities that belong to the lower ontological category. In other words, the specific details that distinguish these entities ontologically and evaluatively from one another must be identified. He concludes with the following categorical definition: images are those formations created by objects that illuminate those that receive the light. In contrast, shadows refer to those representations formed in water and mirrors, which he refers to as reflections or phantasms (phantasmata).

To further elaborate on the properties associated with mirrors, Proclus provides the following observations: "And when he defines what properties these mirrors must have, he says density, smoothness, and brightness. Indeed, there must be density, he says, in order that the reflection that falls on the pores not lose the quality of emerging as a single image from many effluences. There must be smoothness to prevent that roughness, because of prominences and recesses, become a cause of irregularity for the image to be constituted. There must be brightness so that the image, though it possesses an

15 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.289.23-28: «τῶν δέ αὖ εἰκόνων δηλοῦν δυναμένων καί ἀγάλματα καί ζῳγραφήματα καί πᾶν ὅτι τοιοῦτον, αὐτός διοριζόμενος τίνας εἶναι βούλεται τάς εἰκόνας, καί ὡς τά ἀπό τῶν φωτιζόντων ἀποτελουμένας ἐν φωτιζομένοις, τάς τε σκιάς φησιν εἰκόνας καλεῖν καί τάς ἐμφάσεις τάς τε ἐν ὕδασιν καί τάς ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐνόπτροις»

16 See Plato's *Republic*, 510a. For a broader interpretation, see Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, translated by Ioannis Arzoglou, ed. "MIET", Athens, 1994, pp. 100-123. Vlastos adopts an interdisciplinary approach to this issue.

obscure idea of its model, may nonetheless be seen.".17 The properties of mirrors, to which both Proclus and Plato refer in the *Republic*, fall into three categories: density, smoothness, and brightness. [18] Proclus highlights here the necessary justifications that make the existence of these properties essential. Moving in this direction, he notes that density ensures the absence of pores, which could otherwise lead to the loss of unity and uniqueness in the image formed from multiple emanations. He also argues that smoothness is necessary because roughness, with its indentations and protrusions, becomes a cause of irregularities in the image being formed. Finally, he points out that brightness makes the image visible, even though it may have a faint and blurred form.

The next premise in Proclus' argumentation highlights the relationship between reflections (*emphases*) and shadows with the *eidola*, with Proclus asserting the following: "reflections are the hypostases of certain images, since they are fashioned by daemonic device, as he himself teaches in the *Sophist*.19 "In fact, the shadows with which he says the images are linked have this sort of nature. For these are images of bodies and of figures, and they have a strong sympathetic relation with the things from which they emanate". [20] In this passage, the Neoplatonist philosopher

17 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.289.28-290.6: «καί δή καί διορίζων, τίνα ποτέ δεῖ τούτοις ὑπάρχειν τοῖς ἐνόπτροις, πυκνότητά φησι καί λειότητα καί φανότητα· τῆς μέν γάρ πυκνότητος δεῖν, ἵνα μη τοῖς πόροις ἐμπίπτουσα ἡ ἔμφασις ἀπολέσῃ το ἓν ἐκ πολλῶν γενέσθαι τῶν ἀπορροιῶν εἴδωλον· τῆς δε λειότητος ἵνα μη ταῖς ἐξοχαῖς καί ἐσοχαῖς ἡ τραχύτης ἀνωμαλίας αἰτία γίνηται τῷ συστησομένῳ· τῆς δε φανότητος, ἵνα το εἴδωλον ἀμυδράν ἔχον την ἰδέαν ὅμως ὀφθῇ·». See also Plato's *Republic*, 510a.

18 See also Proclus's commentary on this Platonic passage, where he substitutes the terms "dense," "smooth," and "bright" with the abstract concepts "density," "smoothness," and "brightness." This internal modification does not result in any semantic alteration.

19 See Plato's *Sophist*, 266b.

20 *Proclus, Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.290.10-15: «αἱ ἐμφάσεις ὑποστάσεις εἰσίν εἰδώλων τινῶν δαιμονίᾳ μηχανῇ δημιουργούμεναι, καθάπερ αὐτός ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ διδάσκει. Καί γάρ αἱ σκιαί, αἷς τά εἴδωλα συζυγεῖν φησιν, τοιαύτην ἔχουσι φύσιν· καί γάρ

Proclus centers his analysis on *emphases*—those beings Plato refers to as phantasms (*phantasmata*), which are the reflections of *eidola* in various mirrors. Drawing on Plato's *Sophist*, Proclus argues that these *emphases* are produced by a "daemonic mechanism" to distinguish them from shadows (*skiai*).[21] According to his reasoning, *emphases* constitute the hypostases of certain *eidola*, while shadows, which are coupled with the *eidola*, are images of bodies and shapes. These shadows are distinguished by a pronounced sympathy with the entities from which they fall.[22]

The first point that deserves special attention is that Proclus attributes *hypostasis* to the *emphases*, the nature and perspective of which will be highlighted in the next passage: "For thus he says that likenesses (eikasta) are to visible things as discursive thoughts are to the intelligibles.[23] But these thoughts are probably both certain forms and beings. Therefore, the likenesses too, being images of visible objects, possess a certain nature and essence in one way or another in

αὗται σωμάτων εἰσί καί σχημάτων εἰκόνες, καί παμπόλλην ἔχουσιν πρός τά ἀφ' ὧν ἐκπίπτουσιν συμπάθειαν».

21 Furthermore, in the *Sophist*, art is distinguished into two categories: acquisitive, which is related to human productive activity aimed at obtaining something that already exists, and creative, which is related to the divine and aimed at producing something that did not previously exist. Each of these categories is further divided into two parts: the *autopoietic*, concerning the production of true things, and the *eidolopoietic*, concerning the production of their imitations.

22 The term "sympathy" plays a central role for the Neoplatonists, with the spiritualization and animation of the universe relying heavily on the mutual interaction of its parts, according to the laws of Natural Science. The term, with several variations, also appears in the Stoics, indicating the coherence of nature, governed by unity and cooperation. On a metaphysical level, "sympathy" confirms the presence of the divine and the proactive intervention of divine providence in the cosmos, with nature's teleology being a given. Marcus Aurelius discusses the concept of "sympathy" in his work *Meditations*, speaking of a "sacred bond" that connects all things, and due to this connection, there is a "mixture of the whole," which reflects divine providence in the entire universe (see Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, III.9).

23 See Plato's *Republic*, 534a.

the objects where they exist".[24] According to this passage, the objects belonging to the ontological level of Eikasia are images of the visible, which reside in the immediately superior segment of the visible realm, Pistis, which includes all living beings as well as every human creation. The way in which these objects of vision relate to the eikasta (likenesses) is analogous to how the objects of the intellect relate to the objects of thought, as they are forms and beings. Therefore, they are fundamentally aligned in nature and essence with those things that exist within them.

In the next and final stage, Proclus notes the following: "After moving on to the greater section of the line, which he posited as belonging to the intelligible genus, he defines a segment that is secondary in this section as well, but another that is prior by nature. While the secondary segment, he says, is of discursive thought ... the primary segment is purely intelligible, which intellect observes, since the intelligible is higher than discursive thoughts, and this intellect is not conducted to an end".[25] At this point in his argument, Proclus addresses the division of the intelligible segment of the Line, which is also dual in nature. Proclus attributes to one part, the second, the term *dianoetic*, thus referring to the level of *Dianoia*. As is already known, Plato divides the intelligible portion of the Line into two parts: the first corresponds to the level of *Dianoia*, and the second to the level of Science. The level of *Dianoia* is the lower ontological level of *Noesis*, in which the soul, according to Plato, makes use of images of the objects found in the level of *Pistis* (Belief), which are imitative objects. Starting from hypotheses,

24 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.290.25-29: «οὕτω γάρ ἔχειν τά εἰκαστά πρός τά ὁρατά φησιν, ὡς τά διανοητά πρός τά νοητά· ταῦτα δε εἰκότως καί εἶδη τινά καί ὄντα· καί τα εἰκαστά ἄρα τῶν ὁρατῶν εἰδώλων ὄντα φύσιν ἔχει τινά καί οὐσίαν ἀμωσγεπῶς ἐν οἷς ἐστιν».

25 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.291.14-292.2: «μεταβάς δέ ἐπί τό μεῖζον τμῆμα τῆς γραμμῆς, ὃ δή τοῦ νοουμένου γένους ἔθετο, τό μέν ὁρίζεται κἀν τούτῳ δεύτερον, τό δέ φύσει πρότερον, διανοητόν μέν τό δεύτερον ... νοητόν δέ εἰλικρινῶς τό πρότερον, ὃ δή τῶν διανοητῶν ὑπέρτερον νοῦς ἐπισκοπεῖ καί οὗτος οὐκ επί τελευτήν πορευόμενος».

the soul proceeds toward a conclusion rather than a first principle. This level pertains mainly to mathematics and the natural sciences and, by ontological extension, to mathematical Forms.

Proclus extends Plato's reasoning by noting the following: "which makes use of "the entities that were previously imitated," 26 that is, the visible things, whose objects of apprehension were imitated and images, but where the objects are imitated by those [visibles]. So when discursive thought, commencing from certain "preliminary hypotheses, 27 avails itself of these images" which are imitated in the division of the inferior section, the soul is forced to investigate by studying the consequences of these hypotheses which are accepted as conventional principles. For the visible objects are imitations of the discursive thoughts: while the drawn circle and triangle are clearly imitations of those in geometry, numbers in visible things are imitations of those that the arithmetician contemplates, and the method is the same in all the other cases as well. These visible entities, then, are imitated first by the things posterior to them-- I mean their likenesses-- and they are themselves imitations of discursive thoughts. This, then, is discursive thought, as I said".[28]

Proclus explains that the first objects of imitation are the visible things, whose copies and images are the objects of *eikasia*, and these, in turn, have been imitated by others. These visible objects are used as images, starting from certain

26 See Plato's *Republic*, 510b.

27 Plato says, "proceeding from certain hypotheses...."

28 Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, 1.291.17-31: «ὃ δή τοῖς τότε μιμηθεῖσιν, τοῖς ὁρατοῖς δήπουθεν, ὧν ἦν τά εἰκαστά μιμητά καί εἰκόνες, αὐτά δέ ὑπ'ἐκείνων μιμηθέντα -τούτοις οὖν τοῖς ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἐλλάσσονος τμήματος διαιρέσει μιμηθεῖσιν εἰκόσι χρώμενον ἐξ ὑποθέσεών τινων ὡρμημένων, καί τάυτας ὡς ἀρχαῖς ὁμολογούμεναις τά ἑπόμενα ζητοῦσα ἀναγκάζεται σκοπεῖν ἡ ψυχή. Τῶν γάρ διανοημάτων τά ὁρατά μιμητά, κύκλος μέν ὁ γραφόμενος δηλαδή τοῦ ἐν γεωμετρίᾳ καί τρίγωνον, ἀριθμοί δέ οἱ ἐν τοῖς ὁρατοῖς τῶν ὑπό τοῦ ἀριθμητικοῦ θεωρουμένων, καί ἐπί τῶν ἀλλων ἀπάντων ὁ αὐτός τρόπος. Ταῦτα δή τά ὁρατά μιμηθέντα πρότερον ὑπό τῶν μετά ταῦτα, τῶν εἰκαστῶν λέγω, μιμητά δέ αὐτά τῶν διανοητῶν ὄντα. Διανοητόν μέν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστιν ὡς ἔφην».

hypotheses that serve as principles, and the soul is compelled to investigate what follows from them. Proclus emphasizes an important detail here: the visible shapes are used as tools in reasoning, as likenesses of the objects that exist in the realm of the intelligible (*noeton*) and can only be apprehended by the intellect (*nous*). These shapes, mainly used in mathematical sciences, provide clarity and precision in the process of investigating corresponding Ideas in the intelligible realm. From this perspective, Proclus describes them as *dianoemata* (intellectual constructs), highlighting the significant role of *dianoia* in this process. The task of *dianoia* is to move from visible representations—through geometric and numerical constructs—toward intelligible objects. Starting from visible objects and progressing through stages, it ascends through the levels of *eikasia*, which are imitations of the objects of *dianoia*, and these, in turn, are imitations of the objects in the highest level of *noesis*, overseen by the *Nous*.

Conclusion

The discussion presented above brings to the forefront what is defined as Neoplatonic commentary, which opens up opportunities for interpretative and conceptual exploration of what has already been inherited from ancient Greek—primarily Platonic—philosophy. Proclus, who could easily be described as a profound encyclopedist of unparalleled skill, deals with inexhaustible issues, with intertextuality constantly inviting further investigation and clarification.

Proclus is far from being merely a simple analyst of Plato, as his approach to the texts is highly synthetic, aiming at a coherent articulation of arguments. Among the three allegories, the allegory of the Line, in our view, is the one that for Proclus provides the necessary premises for affirming his monistic system. This is because it possesses the specialized conceptual nuances that depict "procession" as a metaphysical version of movement—an unfolding that does not refer to changes and transitions, but rather to internal

modalities that express metaphysical diversity and reveal the dynamic of emanation.

The thematic direction of this study—the Platonic allegory of the Line—is, of course, not unfamiliar to the specialist reader. However, its originality lies in how this topic is approached by the Neoplatonist thinker Proclus, who attempts to integrate it into the intellectual atmosphere of his time, which demanded transformations and theoretical renewal. Given that during this particular historical period, new perspectives had been explored, new cosmological paths adopted, and new terminologies introduced that expanded the existing ones, special attention must be paid to those details which are embedded in a period that differs from the one in which they were first formulated.

Undoubtedly, Proclus' argumentation does not radically diverge from what Plato himself had already supported in the *Republic*. However, the major achievement of Proclus lies in the following: by transforming the cosmological formulations of the past, in this case, those of Plato, according to the intellectual and theoretical conditions of his own era, he contributes to a theoretical renewal. These theoretical reinforcements become even more effective when they respond, often in a multidimensional way, to the unfolding new conditions of reading, research, and interpretive demands of philosophy and science in the 5th century AD.

Bibliography

Beierwaltes W., *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, ed. "Klostermann", Frankfurt 1965, σσ. 118-164.

Dodds E. R., Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. "Oxford University Press", Oxford 1963.

Duvick Brian, Proclus, *Commentary on the Republic*, ed. "Princeton University Press," 2017.

Gersh Stephen, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the prehistory and evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition,* ed. "Brill", Leiden 1978, σσ. 27-45.

Hoine d' Pieter, «*The Metaphysics of the "Divided Line" in Proclus: A Sample of Pythagorean Theology*» in: *Journal of the history of philosophy*, vol. 56, 2018.

Trouillard J., *L' Un et l' âme selon Proclos*, ed. "Les Belles Lettres", Paris 1972.

Trouillard J., *La mystagogie de Proclos*, ed. "Les Belles Lettres", Paris 1982.

Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies*, translated by Ioannis Arzoglou, ed. "MIET", Athens, 1994.

Paraskevopoulou, Aik., *The Concept of Similarity in the Neoplatonic Proclus*, Patras, 2018.

Proclus, *Elements of Theology: Toward a Summary of Ancient Greek Metaphysics*, translated by Anna Kelesidou-Galanou, ed. "Zitros", Thessaloniki, 2017.

Terezis, Christos Ath., *The Neoplatonic School as the Culmination of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, University of Patras, 2019.

Integrated dialectic in Plato's *Parmenides*: a comparative analysis of Proclus' and Ficino's Commentaries on *Parmenides*

Markos Dendrinos,
Professor, University of West Attica
mdendr@gmail.com

Abstract

Plato's *Parmenides* was considered as the main ontological work of the ancient philosophy and used for this reason as the summit of the philosophical curriculum of the New Platonic Academy established by the Neoplatonists after Iamblichus. Proclus' *Commentary*, based on Syrianus, serves as a key reference text for understanding of the sophisticated concepts of the dialogue. After the not fully survived commentaries of Proclus and Damascius, a great enterprise was undertaken by Georgios Pachymeres in Late Byzantium for a complete commentary and later in Renaissance by Marsilio Ficino, the founder of the revived Platonic Academy in Florence. In this article the focus is given in those passages of *Parmenides* where Ficino has given comments differentiated from the respective comments of Proclus. Lastly, some remarks are presented concerning the structure of dialectical schema of *Parmenides*, which can be considered as a great standard for an in-depth analysis of the various levels of being in ontological theories.

Keywords: Proclus, Ficino, Plato's Parmenides, Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides, Ficino's Commentary on Plato Parmenides, Pachymeres's Commentary on Plato Parmenides, Platonic dialectic

1. Introduction

Plotinus[1], Porphyry[2], and Iamblichus[3] established, in Late Antiquity, a philosophical school based on Platonic teachings enriched with mystical-theurgical practices. This system came to be known in modern times as Neoplatonism[4]. Later, Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus[5] revived the center of Platonic studies in Athens, where they transmitted the knowledge of their predecessors. The central figure in this school was Proclus[6], a disciple of Plutarch and Syrianus, who offered a tightly rationalistic system, philosophically related to the polytheistic ancient tradition.

It is of interest to get a glimpse of the structure of the curriculum followed by the pupils of the School. Proclus informs us about a so-called 'major mysteries' course, introduced by Iamblichus, presented in two cycles: a first cycle consisting of ten dialogues of Plato, and a second cycle made up of two dialogues. The second cycle was the culminating point of the curriculum and included physics in the frame of Plato's Timaeus and metaphysics in the frame of Plato's Parmenides. Dillon and O'Meara argue that the

[1] In Plotinus, 2015, you can find the complete works of Plotinus; Bowe, 2003, is concerned with Plotinus' approach to Aristotle and Aristotle's approach to Plato, aiming to show the significance of the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy.

[2] In Porphyry, 2023, you can find the complete works of Porphyry.

[3] In Iamblichus, 2021 you can find the complete works of Iamblichus; in Kupperman, 2014, the philosophy, theology and theurgy of Iamblichus are presented.

[4] Neoplatonism is described in detail in Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, 1998; in Remes, *Neoplatonism (Ancient Philosophies)*, 2008; in Slaveva-Griffin & Remes, *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, 2014. Cf. Anna Griva – Markos Dendrinos, 2023.

[5] In Longo, 2000, we are informed about the life and works of Syriamus.

[6] In Pachoumi, 2024, we can see the conceptual blending of ritual actions and philosophical concepts presented by Proclus concerning Hieratic Art; in Siorvanes, 2022, we are informed about the texts of Proclus that combine Neo-Platonic philosophy and science; in Chlup, 2012, the enormous influence of Proclus on Byzantine, medieval, Renaissance and German Classical philosophy is exercised.

students were led to the discovery of the transcendent, immaterial, and divine causes of the universe through studying the philosophical science of the divine, that is, the 'theological' science or metaphysics. Therefore, metaphysics was the goal of the curriculum, reached, at a preparatory level, by a reading of Aristotle's Metaphysics, and, at a superior level, far more adequately, we may suppose, by reading Plato's Parmenides, the culmination of the course in Plato's dialogues and of the curriculum as a whole .

Therefore, the need for an analytical commentary on *Parmenides* was crucial, and that was the great work of Proclus, based on the oral and probably written sources of Syrianus. Proclus' surviving Commentary[8] stops at the explanation of the conclusion of the first hypothesis (142a). Fortunately, comments and allegorical explanations of Proclus concerning the remaining hypotheses are provided in the introduction of his Commentary, as well as in Proclus' *On the Theology of Plato*[9].

The Neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius[10], whose commentaries have been partially preserved, focus on a theological-metaphysical interpretation of the Parmenidean

[7] Dillon, John & O'Meara, Dominic J., 2014, pp.1-3.

[8] Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, Books I-VII, Dillon & Morrow, Internet Archive, and also, Luna & Segonds *Proclus. Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon* (t.I: 2007, t. II: 2010, t. III: 2011, t. IV: 2013, t. V: 2014, t. VI: 2017).

[9] Proclus Diadochus, *On the Theology of Plato*, Translated by Thomas Taylor, Internet Archive, and also, Saffrey & Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne* (t.I: 1968, t. II: 1974, t. III: 1978, t. IV: 1981, t. V: 1987, t. VI: 1997). You can also refer to the Introduction of Thomas Taylor to Platonic Theology (Taylor, T., *Introduction to the Six Books of Proclus' On The Theology Of Plato*, Wikisource).

[10] In Ahbel-Rappe, 2010, Damascius' *Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, the last surviving independent philosophical treatise from the Late Academy, is presented; Athanassiadi, 1999, features the Greek text of Damascius' *Philosophical History* (the story of the pagan community from the late fourth century AD), reconstructed critically from Photius' Epitome and Suidas' Lexicon; Golitsis, 2023, presents the novel perspectives of Damascius about time in respect to Plato, Aristotle and his Neoplatonist predecessors.

hypotheses, whereas Pachymeres' integrated commentary[11] in Late Byzantium, complementing the surviving Proclus' Commentary on the first hypothesis, is based mainly on a logical exegesis of the specific syllogisms, under the influence of Aristotelian philosophy[12].

Proclus considers that the hypotheses in the second part of *Parmenides* are nine. The number nine is also preserved by the rest of the Neoplatonists, except for Amelius, who divides the hypotheses into eight (see Proclus, *Commentary*, VI.1052.32–1053.33), and Theodore, who divides them into ten (see Proclus, *Commentary*, VI. 1057.6–1058.21). The nine hypotheses in Proclus' division are as follows[13]:

Ἓν εἰ ἔστιν: We examine 5 hypotheses about the varied reality-existence (καθ' ὕπαρξιν) of the one (the principles of reality):

[1] If the one is, then a number of negative conclusions follow about the one: the one beyond the essence and the intelligibles.

[2] If the one is, then a number of affirmative conclusions follow about the one: the divine adornments, counterparts of being, and their affirmative characteristics.

[3] If the one is, then a number of affirmative and negative conclusions follow about the one: souls, except the divine ones belonging to the second hypothesis, as inferior to the intelligibles.

[4] If the one is, then a number of affirmative conclusions follow about the others: the others as participants in the one, i.e., the material species.

[5] If the one is, then a number of negative conclusions follow about the others: the others as not participating in the one, i.e., the matter.

Ἓν εἰ μή ἔστιν: We examine 4 hypotheses, which confirm the impossibility of this case, when we think of the non-being, both as relatively non-being and as absolute non-

[11] Garda, T. A.; Honea, S. M.; Stinger, P. M.; Umholtz G. (edit., transl.) & Westerink, L.G. (Introd.), *George Pachymeres Commentary on Plato's Parmenides [Anonymous Sequel to Proclus' Commentary]*, 1989.

[12] Savoidakis, 2021, p. 6.

[13] Ibid, pp. 27-8.

being. In other words, when we negate a cause, we inevitably negate all its offspring as well.

[6] If the one is not, then a number of affirmative conclusions follow about the one: the one as relatively non-being.

[7] If the one is not, then a number of negative conclusions follow about the one: the one as absolutely non-being.

[8] If the one is not, then a number of affirmative conclusions follow about the others: the others as relatively non-beings.

[9] If the one is not, then a number of negative conclusions follow about the others: the others as absolutely non-beings.

According to the Neoplatonic exponents Theodore, Plutarch, Syrianus and Proclus, hypotheses 1-5 can be used to deduce truths corresponding to distinct natures and principles of reality, while the falsehoods and paradoxes, which are produced by the assumption that the one is not within the negative hypotheses 6-9, lead us to the opposite proposition that the one is, thus essentially confirming the first affirmative hypotheses 1-5[14]. Therefore, 6-9 should not be assigned to specific principles, but rather they complete the dialectic, since, with the inconsistent and impossible inferences deduced, they show that we must abandon the assumption "the one is not" and accept the opposite one "the one is". According to Proclus, the purpose of Parmenides is to show how from the "being" of the one all beings are born, and how, if the one is not, all are eliminated and do not exist

[14] "But there are four other hypotheses besides these, which by taking away the one, evince that all things must be entirely subverted, both beings and things in generation, and that no being can any longer have any subsistence; and this, in order that he may demonstrate the one to be the cause of being and preservation, that through it all things participate of the nature of being, and that each has its hyparxis suspended from the one. And in short, we syllogistically collect this through all beings, that if the one is, all things subsist as far as to the last hypostasis, and if it is not, no being has any subsistence. The one, therefore, is both the hypostatic and preservative cause of all things; which Parmenides also himself collects at the end of the dialogue" (Proclus, *On the Theology of Plato*, Ch.XII).

in any way. The interpretation of Proclus regarding the negative hypotheses is not accepted fully by Damascius who insists on a pragmatic interpretation of hypotheses 6 and 8, unlike the seventh and ninth, which lead indeed to incompatibilities (Damascius. *Commentaire du Parménide de Platon*, t.IV, p. 81.7-19, 83.12-84.5, 122.6-123.8)[15].

After Damascius and Pachymeres, Marsilio Ficino[16], the founder of the revived Platonic Academy in Florence, was the first in the Renaissance to attempt to comment on and decipher the densely meaningful text of Plato's *Parmenides*. Ficino, convinced of the central importance of *Parmenides* in Plato's works, was determined to explore it in depth. He was primarily based on the Proclus' *Commentary* both in the medieval translation of William of Moerbeke and in the Greek original text. Due to the lack of the full work of Proclus's comments, he had to rely on his own interpretation, supported by what additional clues he could draw from Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. Ficino's full-length commentary was begun in 1492 and completed by 1494, but it was first published in 1496.

2. Ficino vs Proclus: convergent and divergent views in their Commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides*

Ficino retained Proclus' division of Parmenidean hypotheses into nine sections (five affirmative and four negative hypotheses) as well as his orientation regarding the

[15] Westerink, L.G. (texte établi), Combès, J. (introd., trad., annoté), Segonds, A. Ph. (collaboration), *Damascius. Commentaire du Parménide de Platon*, t.I-II: 1997, t.III: 2002, t.IV: 2003, in Savoidakis, 2021, pp.28-9.

[16] Voss, 2006, provides a substantial historical and philosophical context for Marsilio Ficino and explains his astrology in relation to his Christian Platonic convictions; Cassirer, et al, 1954, present three major currents of thought dominant in the earlier Italian Renaissance: classical humanism (Petrarch and Valla), Platonism (Ficino and Pico), and Aristotelianism (Pomponazzi); Walker, 2002, takes readers through the magical concerns of some of the greatest thinkers of the Renaissance, from Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples to Jean Bodin, Francis Bacon, and Tommaso Campanella.

inconsistency of the results of the negative hypotheses produced by the assumption that "the one is not", leading to its refutation. However, there are some notable differences, some major and others minor, in Ficino's interpretation compared to Proclus' consideration, as discussed below.

An important point of differentiation between Ficino and the ancient commentators, especially Syrianus and Proclus, is Ficino's unwillingness to follow their detailed correspondence of the characteristics described in *Parmenides* to specific orders of gods. Syrianus and Proclus argue that each characteristic denied of the one (in the first hypothesis) or asserted of it (in the second hypothesis), such as whole, part, shape, corresponds to a distinct class of gods (intelligible, intellectual, ultra-cosmic and so on). In this way, by denying these characteristics of the one, the first hypothesis indicates that the first principle transcends all the divine orders and their attributes; on the other hand, by asserting them of the one being, the second hypothesis presents the whole hierarchy of the gods and the souls that are created by the one and compose the universe[17]. Ficino admits that the way of correspondence of the various divine orders to certain features observed by Proclus in the frame of the second hypothesis is, in fact, extremely difficult to observe. In the same context, Ficino seems reluctant to accept another strange Proclean correspondence of each conclusion to a single order of gods. Moreover, Ficino implies that Proclus places the divine minds and the goddess soul in the frame of the second hypothesis and the soul that is divine but not a goddess in the frame of the third hypothesis. We must also underline Ficino's irony in the same passage about the existence of such a goddess. Furthermore, such a distinction between a goddess soul and the divine souls does not exactly correspond with what Proclus really says: Proclus establishes a distinction between the whole divine soul, described in the second hypothesis by the presence of time, and the souls that derive from the whole soul, described in the third hypothesis[18] (Ficino, LII.3). In another related passage,

[17] Ficino, 2012, p.351, note 13.
[18] Ibid, p.352, note 16.

Ficino argues that the third hypothesis does not concern only particular souls, but all the souls that are utterly divine and he elucidates that by 'divine' he does not mean a soul that is a goddess but the soul that possesses a certain likeness with the gods. Additionally, Ficino notes that the various opinions presented in his Commentary are not necessarily adopted by him. In this context, Ficino explicitly rejects what he understands to be Proclus' distinction between the goddess soul and the divine souls; but we must bear in mind that possibly here Ficino misunderstands Proclus, since what Proclus exactly says is that the divine soul is described in the second hypothesis, while the souls that derive from the divine soul are discussed in the third hypothesis[19] (Ficino, XCVI.1).

Elsewhere, Ficino states that Syrianus and Proclus assign each predicate, such as 'multitude', 'part', 'whole', 'straight', 'spherical', 'younger' and 'older', 'similitude' and 'dissimilitude', to a different divinity, but Ficino remarks that this contrivance seems more poetic than philosophical (Ficino, LVI.3). He also states, coming closer to the modern perspective, that it is extremely difficult for him to follow this reasoning of his predecessors, considering it rather arbitrary or exaggerated (Ficino, LII.3). However, he accepts that different predicates do indeed correspond to different qualitative levels of the world of intelligibles, associating identity, attitude, similarity, and equality with higher intelligibles, while their opposites are associated to lower ones. He further emphasizes that he does not agree with the over-matching of each predicate with a particular deity, as Proclus does, who goes so far as to match the temporal predicates 'is, becomes, was, became, will be, will become, and has been done' with eight gods (Ficino, LXXXX.3). Generally, Ficino tries to analyze the propositions and conclusions of the Parmenidean discourse, following the Socratic/ Platonic dialectic and the principles of formal logic more rigidly than the late Neoplatonists, who seem to take some matters for granted, considering them not in need of proof, and they often deviate onto paths of specialized

[19] Ibid, p.370, note 231.

ontological descriptions, moving away from the original subject.

Let see now the subtle differences in the presentation of hypercosmic and cosmic gods between Ficino and Proclus. Ficino offers a simpler image of these hierarchies: (a) the hypercosmic gods are divided into those closer to the intelligible world, others as close as possible to the sensible world and others in the middle. These are the gods who in Syrianus and Proclus are called intelligible, intellectual, both intelligible and intellectual respectively, but Ficino prefers to call them simply superior, inferior and intermediary gods (b) the cosmic gods are also divided into superior (souls of the greater spheres), intermediary (souls of the stars) and inferior gods (the indivisible divinities contained within the spheres). He leaves aside the more detailed distinctions established by Syrianus and Proclus concerning the hierarchies between the hypercosmic and cosmic gods (ruling and liberating gods), the four classes of cosmic gods mentioned in Proclus' *Platonic Theology* 6, as well as the cosmic gods, universal souls and 'higher beings' (angels, demons and heroes) mentioned in Proclus' *Commentary on Parmenides* (VII.1201.22-1239.21)[20] (Ficino, XCIV.2). Ficino adds that it is correct to connect the propositions of the second hypothesis with divine ideas, i.e., gods, but one should not consider that any separate class of gods is hidden in each proposition of the text (Ficino, XCIV.4).

The disciples of Syrianus take the fact that the propositions of the *Parmenides* vary in their degree of extension as an opportunity to introduce similar degrees of gods. In this context, they attribute the terms 'whole' and 'continuous multitude' to the intelligible substance that is superior, while 'separate multitude' is attributed to the intellectual substance that is inferior. Ficino accepts that the first two terms refer more to the higher gods and the third to the lower ones, but generally, all these terms refer to both orders of gods. He also contends that we cannot distinguish the intelligible order from the intellectual in substance, but only according to reason, based possibly on Plotinus (Ficino, XCV.2).

[20] Ibid, p.338, note 207.

There is a numerical efficacy in the divine mind, and each number that proceeds from it is destined for a particular nature. The Magi (Babylonian astronomers), who observed the solar and lunar numbers and applied them to various things, connected the solar and lunar qualities through the numbers to these things, in the context of a sympathy that harmonizes everything. Proclus writes that the ancient priests used to employ certain numbers, which possessed an ineffable power, in order to accomplish the most important operations of sacred ceremonies. At this point, however, Ficino does not take a position, as magical numbers and astrological effects were, in his time, a dangerous issue to mention. But then, he turns to safer and more acceptable figures, such as Plato and Pythagoras. Plato holds that the cycles of souls and political communities are related to certain numbers, while the universal circular motion of the world is contained in a perfect number (*Rep.*, 8.546b-e). Also, Pythagoras defines two principles of numbers: the paternal and the maternal; that is, the unity and the dyad, the limit and the infinite, the first number being the number three, as a mixture of limit and infinite. The unity relates to the absolute one, the dyad to essence, and the trinity to the first being and intelligible. Thus, all things are organized through numbers: by virtue of even numbers, the processions, divisions and separable compositions; by virtue of odd numbers, the simpler, superior and inseparable powers and the gatherings into unity (Ficino, XCV.5).

In the frame of the 6th hypothesis, Parmenides places 'difference' ('ἑτερότης') as the condition by which the one is distinguished from the others, then he passes from the relation 'ἑτέρων' (different things) to the relation 'ἑτεροίων' (nearly different things), then to the relation 'ἀλλοίων' (nearly other things) and then to the relation 'ἀνομοίων' (unlike things). In this way, he proves that the one is unlike the others, while the one is obviously like itself. Ficino does not follow the same line of reasoning for proving unlikeness. He is based on the concept of motion. The state of the soul with regard to motion is quite different from the state of all other entities. It is different from beings at rest, because the

soul moves, but it is also different from the other beings in motion, because they are moved by some other factor, while the soul is moved by itself. So, we can say that the soul (one) is unlike the others because of the unlikeness concerning its motion. On the other hand, it is in accordance with, and like, itself; otherwise it would lack its very own property. Ficino continues with the question of inequality and equality, again based on the mobility of the soul. He, therefore, proves the inequality between the soul (one) and the others based on the fact that the soul's mobility is not equal, that is it does not come about by virtue of true equality, which is completely at rest and eternal. The soul (one) is not equal to the others that are eternal substances, which are truly considered equal, given that they are always equally disposed. Besides, the soul (one) is not equal to the other temporal substances, since by nature it is far superior to them. Therefore, since it is not equal to the others, it is said to be greater or smaller. The greater and the smaller, however, are opposed, and a mean is required, that is, an equality. This equality is not a true and permanent one, but it is of a flowing kind, comparable to some flux or part of flux alike. Therefore, inequality, equality, smallness, greatness, likeness, unlikeness and otherness pertain to the one at the level of the soul, which is non-being in the sense that it is flowing (Ficino, CVI.1-2).

In the last paragraph of his comments on the 7th hypothesis, Ficino repeats his position on the refutation of the antecedent propositions in the negative hypotheses, as it follows from the falsity of the contradictory conclusions. Ficino even goes so far as to say that not only in the last four negative hypotheses, but also in the five affirmative hypotheses, a number of contradictory propositions appear. Because of this, he tries to defend Parmenides, offering interpretations through which he removes the suspicion of contradiction (Ficino, CVIII. 4). With such a position, in my opinion, Ficino deviates considerably from the traditional line of the Neoplatonists, who consider the positive hypotheses to be clearly consistent and coherent, in contrast to the negative

ones, where a false antecedent is posited, the falsity of which is demonstrated through arriving at false conclusions.

3. The dialectical schema in *Parmenides*: a challenge for ontological studies of scholars across various periods

Proclus contends that the dialogue *Parmenides* stands as the model for the integrated Platonic dialectic. The accurate full model is suggested by Proclus as a set of 24 dialectical modes produced through the combination of three distinct categories, and it is applied analytically in the case of the one[21]:

1st category (2 possible cases). The antecedent of the hypothesis concerning a thing is set to be or not to be: i) if the one is, ii) if the one is not.

2nd category (3 possible cases). Affirmative or negative character of an inference: i) affirmative, ii) negative, iii) affirmative and negative together (affirmative under one view and negative under another one).

3rd category (4 possible cases). The thing under consideration is examined in relation to both itself and the others, and the others in relation to both themselves and the thing: i) the one in relation to itself, ii) the one in relation to the others, iii) the others in relation to themselves, iv) the others in relation to the one.

An exhaustive combination of the above cases gives 2x3x4=24 distinct reasonings, which are presented in the form of the following 4 sextets:

1st sextet

[1] If the one is, then what is valid for the relation of the one to itself can be concluded.

[2] If the one is, then what is not valid for the relation of the one to itself can be concluded.

[3] If the one is, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the one to itself can be concluded.

[4] If the one is, then what is valid for the relation of the one to the others can be concluded.

[21] Savoidakis, 2021, pp.41-2.

[5] If the one is, then what is not valid for the relation of the one to the others can be concluded.

[6] If the one is, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the one to the others can be concluded.

2nd sextet

[1] If the one is, then what is valid for the relation of the others to themselves can be concluded.

[2] If the one is, then what is not valid for the relation of the others to themselves can be concluded.

[3] If the one is, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the others to themselves can be concluded.

[4] If the one is, then what is valid for the relation of the others to the one can be concluded.

[5] If the one is, then what is not valid for the relation of the others to the one can be concluded.

[6] If the one is, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the others to the one can be concluded.

3rd sextet

[1] If the one is not, then what is valid for the relation of the one to itself can be concluded.

[2] If the one is not, then what is not valid for the relation of the one to itself can be concluded.

[3] If the one is not, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the one to itself can be concluded.

[4] If the one is not, then what is valid for the relation of the one to the others can be concluded.

[5] If the one is not, then what is not valid for the relation of the one to the others can be concluded.

[6] If the one is not, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the one to the others can be concluded.

4th sextet

[1] If the one is not, then what is valid for the relation of the others to themselves can be concluded.

[2] If the one is not, then what is not valid for the relation of the others to themselves can be concluded.

[3] If the one is not, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the others to themselves can be concluded.

[4] If the one is not, then what is valid for the relation of the others to the one can be concluded.

[5] If the one is not, then what is not valid for the relation of the others to the one can be concluded.

[6] If the one is not, then what is valid and is not valid for the relation of the others to the one can be concluded.

According to Proclus (*Commentary*, V.1006.24-26), the investigation of all the above 24 reasonings leads to the purpose of the whole dialectical method, that is to find the nature of the thing being examined (in the above case: the one) and how many and what are the properties it provides (as a cause) to itself and to the other things. The aforementioned 4 sextets are applied in the frame of the 9 Parmenidean hypotheses as follows (Proclus, *Commentary*, V.1000.32-1003.2):

1st sextet in hypotheses 1-3; 2nd sextet in hypotheses 4-5; 3rd sextet in hypotheses 6-7; 4th sextet in hypotheses 8-9.

Proclus explains the integrated model of the 24 reasonings in 4 sextets in detail by applying it to the following examples[22]:

- if the soul is / if the soul is not → what happens to the soul in relation to itself and to the bodies and what happens to the bodies in relation to themselves and to the soul (Proclus, *Commentary*, V.1004.11-1006.26).

- if the many are / if the many are not → what happens to the many in relation to themselves and to the one, and what happens to the one in relation to itself and to the many (Proclus, *Commentary*, V.1008.17-37).

- if the similar is / if the similar is not → what happens to the similar in relation to itself and to the others (the sensibles), and what happens to the others in relation to themselves and to the similar.

- if the dissimilar is / if the dissimilar is not → what happens to the dissimilar in relation to itself and to the others (the sensibles), and what happens to the others in relation to themselves and to the dissimilar (Proclus, *Commentary*, V.1009.19-1010.25).

- if the motion is (as self-motion) / if the motion is not → what happens to the motion in relation to itself and to the

[22] Ibid. p.43.

others, and what happens to the others in relation to themselves and to the motion.

- if the rest is (as self-rest) / if the rest is not → what happens to the rest in relation to itself and to the others, and what happens to the others in relation to themselves and to the rest (Proclus, *Commentary*, V.1010.29-1011.32).

Contemporary historians of philosophy take a different approach to the structure of the Parmenidean dialectical schema.

Taylor[23], Cornford[24], Ryle[25] and Allen[26] consider that the number of hypotheses is eight, a number followed also in contemporary studies[27].

The formal arrangement of the hypotheses according to Taylor[28] is as follows:

[I] If the real is one, nothing whatever can be asserted of it (137c-142a).

[II] If the real is one, everything can be asserted of it (142b-157c).

[III] If the real is one, everything can be asserted of "things other than the one" (157b-159b).

[IV] If the real is one nothing can be asserted of "things other than the one" (159b-160b).

[V] If the one is unreal, everything can be asserted of it (160b-163b).

[VI] If the one is unreal, nothing at all can be asserted of it (163b-164b).

[VIl] If the one is unreal, everything can be asserted about "things other than the one" (164b-165e)

[VIII] If the one is unreal, nothing can be asserted about anything (165e-166c).

Allen[29] has a different viewpoint:

---

[23] Taylor, A.E., *Plato, the man and his work*, Internet Archive.

[24] Conford, F.M., *Plato and Parmenides: Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides*, 1951.

[25] Ryle, G.,"Plato's 'Parmenides' ", 1971, and also, Ryle, G., "Review of F.M.Cornford, 'Plato and Parmenides' ", 1971.

[26] Allen, R.E., *Plato's Parmenides*, 1997.

[27] Dendrinos & Griva, 2021.

[28] Taylor, A.E., Internet Archive, p.361.

[29] Allen, 1997, pp.213-4.

Hypothesis I: if Unity is, what follows for Unity (137c-157b).

Hypothesis II: if Unity is, what follows for the others (157b-160b).

Hypothesis III: if Unity is not, what follows for Unity (160b-164b).

Hypothesis IV: if Unity is not, what follows for the others (164b-166c).

Thus, Allen introduces four main divisions in the exercise, with a number of deductions corresponding to each of them. The assumption that Unity is yields three deductions in respect to Unity (Hypothesis I) and two deductions in respect to the others (Hypothesis II); the assumption that Unity is not yields two deductions in respect to Unity (Hypothesis III) and two deductions in respect to the others (Hypothesis IV). The branches of the four main hypotheses are given below:

I.1 (137c-142b): εἰ ἕν ἐστιν.

I.2 (142b-155e): ἕν εἰ ἔστιν, 142b 3,5, εἰ ἕν ἐστιν 142c3, proceeding again from

the beginning.

I.3 (155e-157b): τὸ ἕν εἰ ἔστιν, 155e4, proceeding for the third time.

III.1 (160b-163b): εἰ μὴ ἔστι τὸ ἕν, 160b5, εἰ ἕν μὴ ἔστιν, 160b7, ἕν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, 160d3.

III.2 (163b-164b): ἕν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, 163c1, returning once more to the beginning.

IV.1 (164b-165e): ἕν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, 164b5, starting again.

IV.2 (165e-166c): ἕν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, 165e2-3, returning once more to the beginning.

We can see from the above the basic difference in the approach taken by the ancient and the Renaissance commentators versus that taken by the contemporary historians of philosophy. The former approach places special weight on ontology and the connection with the Greek metaphysical tradition, while the latter focuses on consistency and dialectical power.

Few modern interpreters give particular weight to the Neoplatonic perspective, while the analytical commentary of Marsilio Ficino, a learned Platonist with significant access to

ancient texts and manuscripts, has been completely ignored. This approach is unjustified if one wants to make a reliable interpretation of the platonic works as close as possible to the Platonic spirit. Unfortunately, the truth that may be hidden in the comments of scholars who were the natural continuation of Platonism –and thus most likely related to both an oral tradition that is now lost and complementary sources that have not survived– has not been sufficiently exploited. The attitude of faith and respect of the Neoplatonists toward Platonic doctrines remains, despite some differences in analysis, in the texts of Ficino, who offered us many inspirations concerning the ontological and dialectical elements of Parmenides. Ficino also constitutes a bridge between the past and modern times, as he relies heavily on the view of the Neoplatonists but, at the same time, considers some of their individual positions to be exaggerated or overly sophisticated[30].

Some contemporary commentators[31] follow a middle ground, based on the ancient tradition, while introducing a number of key innovative interpretations. Their interpretative framework is that *Parmenides* is an excellent piece of ontology, perhaps the most important and valuable ontological text we have at our disposal from ancient Greek tradition. *Parmenides* is indeed a marvelous structure that explores the relationship of unity (the nature of the one) with being, time and the remaining primary properties (limit-infinite, rest-motion, same-different, similar-dissimilar, etc.), arriving at conclusions that, despite their seeming contradiction, are characterized by unique beauty and symmetry, as always befits the true. We must take into account that once the pair of concepts "the one and the others" is defined, the possibility and consistency of their distinction become difficult to defend, since the one is supposed to be something that encompasses everything, without leaving anything outside its domain. This impossibility is overcome only if we abandon the conception of the one as a unique entity covering anything that is

[30] Dendrinos & Griva, 2021, pp. 685-6.
[31] Dendrinos & Griva, 2021.

supposed to exist and consider it a certain being, characterized by unity and delimited by other beings. Furthermore, we are obliged to attribute a different meaning to each of the 'ones' mentioned in each hypothesis, an approach also followed by the Neoplatonists and Ficino[32].

Bibliography

Primary sources

Ficino, Marsilio, *Commentaries on Plato, Volume 2 – Parmenides, Part II,* edited and translated by Maude Vanhaelen, Harvard University Press, 2012.

Garda, T. A., Honea, S. M., Stinger, P. M., Umholtz G. (edit., transl.) & Westerink, L.G. (Introd.), *George Pachymeres Commentary on Plato's Parmenides [Anonymous Sequel to Proclus' Commentary],* Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi Philosophi Byzantini 4, Athens, Academy of Athens, Editions OUSIA-BRUXELLES, 1989.

Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Delphi Complete Works of Iamblichus*, Delphi Classics, 2021.

Luna C. et Segonds, A. Ph., *Proclus. Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon*, Tomes I-VI, Livres I-VI, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, (tome I: 2007, t. II: 2010, t. III: 2011, t. IV: 2013, t. V: 2014, t. VI: 2017).

Plotinus, *Delphi Complete Works of Plotinus - Complete Enneads*, Delphi Classics, 2015.

Porphyry, *The Collected Works of Porphyry,* Delphi Classics, Ancient Classic Series, 1, 2023.

Proclus, *Proclus Collected Works*, Delphi Classics, 2023.

Proclus Diadochus, *On the Theology of Plato,* Translated by Thomas Taylor, Internet Archive, https://ia601306.us.archive.org/30/items/ProclusOnTheTheologyOfPlato-ElectronicEdition/ProclusPlatoTheologyCOMPLEET.pdf

Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, Books I-VII, Dillon, J. M, & Morrow, G.R., Internet Archive,
https://archive.org/details/dillon-morrow-commentary-on-platos-parmenides-en-1992
http://users.uoa.gr/~nchilak/Summer%20School%202022/WG05/%CE%98%CE%A3%2022%20Morrow,%20Dillon%20-%20Proclus%E2%80%99%20Commentary%20on%20Plato%E2%80%99s%20(1992)%20-%20Copy.pdf

[32] Ibid, 2021, pp. 686-7.

Saffrey H. D. et Westerink, L. G., *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne,* Tomes I-VI, Livres I-VI, Paris, Les Belles Lettres (Tome I: 1968, t. II: 1974, t. III: 1978, t. IV: 1981, t. V: 1987, t. VI: 1997).

Taylor, Thomas, *Introduction to the Six Books of Proclus' On The Theology Of Plato,* https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Six_Books_of_Proclus,_the_Platonic_Successor,_on_the_Theology_of_Plato/Introduction

Westerink, L.G. (texte établi), Combès, J. (introd., trad., annoté), Segonds, A. Ph. (collaboration), *Damascius. Commentaire du Parménide de Platon,* Tomes I-IV, Collection des Universités de France, Paris Les Belles Lettres, tomes I-II: 1997, tome III: 2002, tome IV: 2003.

Secondary sources

Ahbel-Rappe, Sara, *Damascius' Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, Oxford University Press, 2015

Allen, R.E., *Plato's Parmenides*, Translated with Comment, Revised Edition, Yale University Press, 1997.

Athanassiadi, Polymnia, *Damascius: The Philosophical History,* Apamea, 1, 1999

Bowe G.S., *Plotinus and the Platonic Metaphysical Hierarchy,* Global Scholarly Publications, 1, 2003.

Cassirer, Ernst; Kristeller, Paul Oskar; Randall, John Herman, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man: Petrarca, Valla, Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, Vives*, Chicago University press, 3, 1954.

Chlup, Radek, *Proclus: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Illustrated, 2012.

Conford, F.M., *Plato and Parmenides: Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides*, Routledge & Kegan Paul; 3rd edition, 1951.

Dendrinos. Markos & Griva Anna, "Neoplatonic and Gnostic Resonances in the Martyrdom of Cyprian of Athenais Eudocia", *Dia-noesis – A Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2023): p. 19-38

Dendrinos, Markos & Griva, Anna, *Plato Parmenides: Ontology of the One in the Platonic Theory of Ideas*, Introduction, translation, comments. Zitros Publications, 2021.

Dillon, John & O'Meara, Dominic J., *On Aristotle Metaphysics 3-4*, 2014.

Golitsis, Pantelis, *Damascius' Philosophy of Time,* De Gruyter, Chronoi, 7, 2023

Kupperman, Jeffrey S., *Living Theurgy: A Course in Iamblichus' Philosophy, Theology and Theurgy*, Avalonia, 2014.

Lloyd, A. C., *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1, 1998.

Longo, Angela, Syrianus, Cambridge University Press, The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity, 1, 2000.

Pachoumi, Eleni, *Proclus' on the Hieratic Art According to the Greeks: Critical Edition with Translation and Commentary*, Brill, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Traditi; 33, 2024.

Remes, Pauliina, *Neoplatonism (Ancient Philosophies),* University of California Press, 1, 2008

Ryle, G., "Plato's 'Parmenides' (II.)", *Mind*, Vol. 48, No. 191 (1939), 302-325 reprinted as: G. Ryle, "Plato's 'Parmenides' ", *Collected Papers*, London: Hutchinson, Vol.2, 1971, pp. 1-44.

Ryle, G., "Review of F.M.Cornford, 'Plato and Parmenides' ", *Collected Papers*, London: Hutchinson, Vol.2, 1971, pp. 45-53.

Savoidakis, Georgios, *The Commentary of Georgios Pachymeris to the Platonic Parmenides as a continuation of the Commentary of Proclus*: Translation and interpretive comments. Master of Philosophy: Texts, Interpretations, Practices, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2021. http://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/331870?ln=el

Siorvanes, Lucas, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, Edinburgh University Press, 2022

Slaveva-Griffin, Svetla; Remes, Pauliina, *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy, 1, 2014.

Taylor, A.E., *Plato, the man and his work*, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/platothemanandhi032950mbp

Voss, Angela, *Marsilio Ficino,* North Atlantic Books, Western esoteric masters series, Paperback, 2006.

Walker, D. P., *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella (Magic in History Series)*,The Pennsylvania State University Press, Magic in History, 2000.

Philosophical Notes

ANCIENT GREEK DEMOCRACY AND AMERICAN REPUBLICANISM

Prometheus in Political Theory

Michail Theodosiadis

Edinburgh Studies in Comparative Political Theory and Intellectual History

Representation of Harmony in Greek Vase Painting

Voula Lambropoulou,
Professor, University of Athens
voula.lambropoulou@yahoo.com

Abstract

Harmony, as the representative of Order and Beauty in the world, belongs to the holy circle *of Aphrodite. It is* a beautiful harmony coming from opposites, a *subject* well known in the ancient Cosmogonies. Those among Greeks, who created cosmogonies, are very fond of cosmogonic myths which usually began with love and marriage. The intellectual centre of Greece now is Athens. Here all the arts are cultivated. Here too the Muses establish themselves who now give birth to Harmony. The view of Harmony is the case of graceful, brilliant art and the beginning of symmetry and imperishable unity of the sciences represented by the Muses, and found in the symmetry of beauty and intellect. But above all she brings harmony to the souls and balance and sophrosyne.

Keywords: Harmony, Order, Beauty, Greek Vase Painting, cosmogony

The '*Harmony*' in early Greek philosophy, is the union of opposites principles (initions) or elements.[1] In mythology Harmony is the daughter of Aphrodite, Goddess of Beauty and Love, and Ares the God of War.[2] Harmony, therefore, is the result of two opposite dieties. In this case the male and female principles were *presented* by these two *Gods. It is* a beautiful harmony coming from opposites, a *subject* well known in the ancient Cosmogonies. Those among Greeks, who created cosmogonies, are very fond of cosmogonic myths which usually began with love and marriage[3].

Before cosmology were cosmogony and theogony. Genesis was conceived as birth, and birth is the result of marriage. The chief marriage of the early cosmogonies is the union of Sky and Earth. On the whole, in Greek Cosmology, Earth and Heaven are essentially the female *and* male principles.[4] In the gap 'between' their divided forms appears the winged figure of the Cosmic Eros.[5] However, a lot has been said about these mythical marriages, the theogonies, the Chaos[6] and the coming of Eros to the world. It was Eros, therefore, who united the tow opposite Gods out of whom Harmony was born. According to *mythology she* belonged to, and was worshipped in, Boeotia. [7] However, the Harmony of theogony and the local Theban worship[8] is *present as the* mother *of muses,* like Mnemosyne in Attica.[9]

Harmony, as the representative of Order and Beauty in the world, belongs to the holy circle *of Aphrodite. In the wedding of Harmony and Kadmus, Apollo and parents were present.* The ceremony Is described by Pindarus, Theognis, Euripides, Scholiasts and vividly by Nonnos. Even in Pausanias' time the abode of Harmony and the spot where the Muses sang the nuptial ballad, were considered sights worth seeing. The painters, too, turned with excessive zeal to the presentation of this famous ceremony so one could *see on* the throne of Bathucleus in Amylcas the gods *bringing bridal presents* at the wedding Harmony.[10] All this we can gather from some evidence found from the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 5th. We have as an example the **Vase of frangois,** of which Harmony's parents, Aphrodite and

Ares, are depicted as being present at the ceremony too. But even more important proof than this is a 5th century black-figured **Attican amphora from Region,** on which Apollo, as the inscription names him, dressed in a long mantle like that of the guitar players walks like a chariot pulled by a lion and boar playing the harp. On the chariot there stand the *Harmonia* ad the *Kadmos.*[11]

Similar presentations are sseen on ancient Ionian **rings from Etrouria;** one of these rings is thought to belong to the 6th century. Also, on a **vase** of the 4h century found **in Vulci** but today kept in the Attican collection of Berlin (a very similar fragment was also found in the collection of Neapolis under the number 3226) and thought to have been made by the Dorians working in Athens we make the following: Kadmus is depicted fighting with the Theban dragon. The Gods are present too. Next to Kadmus we notice Harmony; there is an inscription naming her. The picture which is facing us must refer, judging from its mode of composition, to another presentation of the 5th century which is most probably under the influence of Polygnotus. Kadmus before his fight with the dragon, is shown on a **vase from Krimea (Hermitage no.2189).** However, it is not certain whether Harmony is present. If, for the evidence proof of **the vase of Berlin** we take in consideration the above views, according to which Kadmus kills the dragon and frees Harmony from him, then we must conclude that the reason behind the killing of the dragon was to complement the legen with other versions too, such as that of the northern legend, Si guardakvida.

In the depiction of an **Attican oak-like lekynthus** with gold decoration Harmony is found again amongst other named figures. In the middle there is a seated female figure, Aphrodite, looking to the left at Eros who seated in her hand; from left Peitho is approaching, with Ygeia following behind; *'Τύχη'* (Fortune), who belongs to the middle group, is standing below; to the right of Fortune there is a virgin standing with an inscription naming her *'Armonian'.* This is the Harmony that the vase painter presents as the mother of the Muses, naturally not thinking of Euripides, and moves

into the group of the intimate and friendly deities. All these figures are ethereal as if they came from the hand of an inspired artist, and they are presented of worship but from the Attican culture which derives from the common property of intellectual grandeur and the public consciousness. Such characteristics point to a *similarity with* the theory of the world in Pericle's and Plato's time.

In the same way she is presented on an *όνος in* **epinetron from Eretria** *of the second* half of the 5th century. We see Aphrodite with the attendants consisting of Eros, Harmony, Peitho, Core and Hemeros, being driven before our eyes. When Harmony broke the bounds of the worship in Boeotia and reach the Attican grounds where all the arts and sciences flourished, just after all the bright victories *of* the Greeks, in the 5th century, then Aeschylus thought it wise not to present her as *the daughter of the* wild god of War, the destructive Ares, and so presented her as the goddess giving blessings and belonging from now on the public religion, the daughter of Zeus. Also, in the above described epinetron from Eretria, there appear on the side below Pyleus and Thetis engaged in a fight; further down there follows the wedding of Admitus and Alkestis and finally the wedding of Zeus and Hera. Nonnos (XIII, 351) copies from their wedding feasts the apples of Esperides, which custom he incorporates into the Theban tradition. Zeus, as it goes, appointed Harmony, the daughter *of* A res *and* Aphrodite, to be the wife of Kadmus *and* on *the day if this* festival the Gods abandoned their heavenly abodes in order to celebrate in common with their beloved ones in Kathmia. The Charities and the *Ὧραι* also came in order to adorn the feast and the highlight of the feast was thought to be that moment during whcich the Muses sang their wonderful ballad.

The intellectual centre of Greece now is Athens. Here all the arts are cultivated. Here too the Muses establish themselves who now give birth to Harmony. The Aeschylus's view of Harmony the case of graceful, brilliant art and the beginning of symmetry and imperishable unity of the sciences represented by the Muses, and found in the symmetry of beauty and intellect. But above all she brings

harmony to the souls and balance and sophrosyne.

Here as well as there the scenery is ideal for pure art and the figures move in gold divine forms. There are depicted here, not only mythological scenes with linely and graceful figures, but also holly devils, mythico-allegorical figures in formation appearance and composition in a group. Euripides, like the painter, allows his imagination to prevail. Erechtheus' children, Harmony and the Muses, Aphrodite and Wisdom together with Eros, stand exactly on the same level. In exactly the same way the figures move and appear in Euripides's lyric scenes. Men and Gods are pictured next to *'Ευδαιμονία"/' Πανδαισία", "Παιδιά", "Ευνομία"* etc. or on the vases with the gold decoration. It is in the nature of the thing that these figures are not foreign or distant to the Athenian way of presentation. As soon as the name is pronounced to the Athenian ear, it sounds very familiar like something known from long ago that suddenly takes concrete form. So, one does not wonder at finding this Harmony presented on the vases with the gold decoration too; in fact, one looks for her there and is very pleased when he finally finds her.

References

1. Aristotle *Metaphysics*. A΄ 986a.22
2. Homer, *Odyssey*. 262-316
3. Hesiod *Theogony*. 979, 980 and 934
4. Plato, *Sophist*. 242d-e
5. Hesiod. *Theogony*. 123
6. Aeschylus. Fr. 44, 1-5
7. Aristophanes, *Aves*, 699 and 696
8. Hesiod. *Theogony*, 937 and 975
9. Pindar, *Pythian*, XI, 1-7
10. Homer. Hymn to Apollo. 195-196
11. Black-figure Attic amphora "with a neck" from Region, Calabria, by the Diosphos Painter. About 500 BC, No. 361411. Paris, Musee du Louvre CA 1961. In front: Depicting Cadmus and Harmony in a chariot drawn by a lion and a boar. Behind the animals Apollo the guitar player. Inscriptions with the names of Cadmus, Harmonia and Apollo. J.D.

Beazley, *Paralipomena*, Oxford 1971, 248, 135.
12. Nonnos, XIII, 351 (Epinetron)

Red-figure Epinetron

https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%95%CF%80%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%B7%CF%84%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BD#/media/%CE%91%CF%81%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF:Attic_red-figure_Epinetron_Antikensammlung_Berlin_1.jpg

The marriage of Cadmus with Harmonia. Black-figure amphora of Diosophos Painter, early 5th B.C. Cadmus guarded the Aryan spring and Ares married him with his daughter Harmonia. On the vase, Cadmus and Harmonia on a chariot pulled by a lion and a bull. Apollo the harpist following on foot heralds the wedding procession. Paris, Louvre, ca 1691

Aims and scope

Dia-noesis – A Journal of Philosophy is a biannual scholarly publication issued under the auspices of the University of Western Macedonia (Greece). it is an international open-access peer reviewed journal (both print and electronic) dedicated to the dissemination of original research in the field of **philosophy, political theory, history, political anthropology, history of political thought and literature, religion, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics**. In addition, the journal accepts comprehensive book reviews by distinguished authors in the above fields.

Dia-noesis invites original unpublished papers within any field of Philosophy or application of philosophical method to any areas of intellectual and practical life. Furthermore, the journal is committed to meet the highest ethical standards in research and academic publication. Academic rigor, precision, conceptual clarity and cohesion, logical consistency, critical analysis and originality are the basic criteria for a paper to be published. It also welcomes submissions of articles with a non-western focus.

Publishing in *Dia-noesis* is **totally free of cost**. Light editing services are being provided at no cost for the authors by the Editors of the journal. Users can download articles and issues free of charge through **our website**. Print versions are of high quality and can be bought **via Ammon Books.** The articles are printed in on premium paper with high-resolution figures. Our covers are customized to your article and designed to be complimentary to the journal.

Finally, the journal aims to serve the interests of a wide range of readers and academic scholars of philosophy and political theory, as well as theologians, social scientists, anthropologists, historians and others interested in multidisciplinary studies related to humanities and social sciences. **Copyright / Open Access** Articles published in *Dianoesis* will be **Open-Access articles** distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). **The copyright is retained by the author(s).**

Submission Guidelines

Instructions for Authors

1. Contributors should submit their manuscripts in **Word - .docx** format by sending an email to **ilvavouras@gmail.com - m.theodosiadis@studyingreece.edu.gr**

2. All submissions are subjected to a **blind peer review**, which will be implemented within three months.

3. Articles should normally be around **6.000 – 9.000 words**.

4. All authors should include their full names, affiliations, postal addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses on the cover page of the manuscript. One author should be identified as the corresponding author.

5. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with ample margins, typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font size, and must be accompanied by an abstract of about 100–150 words as well as by a list of 3–8 keywords.

6. The manuscript should be **an original work**, and does not duplicate any other previously published work, including the author's own previously published work. Plagiarism checks are performed for all submitted articles through Elsevier. The editors **can reject manuscripts of more than the 30%-40% similarity**.

7. The manuscript must not in any way violate intellectual property rights of third parties.

8. The manuscript should not be under consideration or peer review or accepted for publication or in press or published elsewhere.

9. Bibliographic references should be provided in footnotes e.g.,
** For philosophical texts:* Hobbes, *De Cive*, X, 16 – Plat. *Resp.*

343c.
* *For books:* Lloyd S. A., 2009: 289-294 **or** Lloyd S. A., *Morality in the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*: *Cases in the Law of Nature*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 289-294.
* *For articles*: Ranson S., "Towards the learning society", *Education Management and Administration*, 20: 2, 1992, pp. 68-79.
* *For chapters within books*: Ball S. J., (ed.), 1990: 75-78 **or** Hoskin K., "Foucault under examination: the crypto-educationalist unmasked", in: Ball S. J., (ed.) *Foucault and Education,* Routledge, London 1990, pp. 75-78.

The references should be listed alphabetically at the end of the paper in the following standard form:

For philosophical texts: Hobbes T., *De Cive: the English version entitled in the first edition Philosophical rudiments concerning government and society*, The Clarendon edition of the philosophical works of Thomas Hobbes; v. 3, Oxford University Press 1983.

For books: Barnett R., *The Limits of Competence: Knowledge, Higher Education and Society*. Buckingham 1994: The Society for Research into Higher Education.

For articles: Ranson S., "Towards the learning society", *Education Management and Administration*, 20: 2, 1992, pp. 68-79.

For chapters within books: Hoskin K., "Foucault under examination: the crypto-educationalist unmasked", in: Ball S. J., (ed.) *Foucault and Education,* Routledge, London 1990.

10. The Editor reserves the right to make changes to manuscripts where necessary to bring them into conformity with the stylistic and bibliographical conventions of the Journal.

* For the promotion of philosophical discourse, the journal *Dia-noesis* contains a section titled ***Book Presentations***, which aims to present and familiarize the philosophical community with the new philosophical publications. Publishers and authors who are interested in presenting their work in the journal *Dia-noesis: A Journal of Philosophy* should send a volume of their new book accompanied by a brief presentation note of it at the following address: Konstantinoupoleos 2, Oreokastro, Postal Code 57013, Thessaloniki, Greece. The book and the presentation note of the book as well will undergo a review process by the Editorial Board of the journal.

dia-noesis

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι

(Parmenides, Fr. B. 3 DK)

https://dianoesis-journal.com/

Articles

Philosophy in Late Antiquity

Middle Platonism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism

https://dianoesis-journal.com/

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι

Scopus®
ELSEVIER

ISSN: 2459-413X