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Introduction

This volume contains papers given at the second international conference on Iamblichus held at Liverpool in September 1995. It follows from the first in two ways. In the first place the members of that conference decided that it would be useful to reconvene at some future date. Secondly the earlier conference—the first one ever devoted to Iamblichus—dealt largely with that philosopher's ethical and soteriological interests, and it was felt that its successor should concentrate on what one might call "hard philosophy," all the more important as Iamblichus' role in the creation of the logical and metaphysical structures of later Neoplatonism comes to be identified, described and criticised in ever more rigorous and precise ways. It is to this process that we hope the present volume will make a contribution, as well as serving to identify where the progress of research has now arrived. The survey of its contents which follows is intended to give an outline picture of what was achieved at the conference, but of course it can do no more than that.

The book begins with three papers on Iamblichus' activity as an interpreter of Aristotle and Plato: in the late Platonist curriculum, which Iamblichus appears to have invented (cf. *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* 26.17), Aristotle always came before Plato. The practice of doing one's own philosophy by writing commentaries on the classical philosophers was another characteristic of that Platonism which, if Iamblichus did not himself invent it, certainly became more prominent in his work than it had been before.

H.J. Blumenthal sets out to give a general picture of Iamblichus' work as a commentator on strictly philosophical work, excluding thereby a work which Iamblichus would have regarded as particularly important, his commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Blumenthal suggests that Iamblichus set out to produce commentaries on all the works in the curriculum, and examines how far he actually did so. The evidence is uneven, and while we can be sure that there were commentaries on the *Categories* and Plato's *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, and reasonably

certain that there was none on the *De Anima*, the situation is less clear for other works. Good candidates for having been treated by Iamblichus in formal commentaries, as opposed to the normal lecture courses, are the *De Interpretatione*, and *Prior Analytics*, and for Plato the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus* and *Alcibiades I*. A notable absentee, in view of the later commentators' practice, is Porphyry's *Ἑισαγωγή*. In the case of other works for which commentaries by Iamblichus have been claimed, such as the *De Caelo* and *Metaphysics*, the evidence is far from conclusive, since the relevant texts could easily have come from commentaries on other treatises. Even among the works for which we can be certain that there were commentaries, Iamblichus' is not always represented in the same way by our sources. In particular Proclus, who frequently cites Iamblichus by name in the *Timaeus* commentary, hardly ever does so in that on the *Parmenides* although the presence of Iamblichean material can be convincingly shown: the reasons for this difference are considered, and appear to stem from a development in Proclus' methods. Other issues discussed are differences between Iamblichus and Proclus on mathematics, the differing attitudes to Iamblichus of his successors, and the treatment of "Pythagorean" material, particularly the texts falsely attributed to Archytas.

C.G. Steel stresses the connection between the development of Neoplatonic thought and the interpretation of the *Parmenides*, making the important point that the relation was reciprocal. Though Iamblichus' *Parmenides* commentary is lost, we can reconstruct its principles and show that Iamblichus' interpretation was original and often at variance with that of both his predecessors and successors. Its basis, moreover, was primarily philosophical. Steel concentrates on Iamblichus' reading of the first and second hypotheses, arguing that he disagreed with the usual view that the first was about the primal god, the One or the Good and maintained that it was rather concerned with "God and the gods," a combination which Proclus attacks. Damascius tells us that Iamblichus' innovation was to make all the gods super-substantial. Though Syrianus' interpretation, which is followed by Proclus, looks similar, Steel shows that it is not in fact the same: they put all the other gods in the second hypothesis. There is a further problem about where Iamblichus put the intelligibles, since there are grounds for placing them in both the first and second hypotheses, and no entity should be in more than one. Steel argues that while primarily in the second, the intelligibles are also in the first, but not in the same way. The fragmentary evidence available allows us to see that Iamblichus maintained that the negations in the first hypothesis apply to the intelligibles too: in any case he saw them as more closely related to the One than did Syrianus and Proclus. Steel also discusses the controversial question of the origin and location of the henads, and examines the evidence for Iamblichus' views about the transition from the first to the second hypothesis. Information about what Iamblichus put in the second is, however, insufficient to allow us to form a complete picture. He concludes by suggesting that it might have been easier for Iamblichus to place the henads in the first hypothesis if he regarded the One itself as so transcendent that it could not be included there.

G. van Riel examines Iamblichus' interpretation of the *Philebus*, beginning with apparently contradictory reports of its *skopos* in the *Anonymous Prolegomena* on one hand and Damascius' commentary on the other: according to the former it deals with the Good beyond being, and would thus serve, as van Riel points out, to replace *Republic* 6 in the curriculum, while Damascius says the dialogue is about the Good in existing things. Van Riel tries to reconcile these texts and avoid the solution that Damascius, or his reporter, has been careless, giving a view which was in fact that of Syrianus and Proclus. He begins by tracing the interpretations of the *Philebus* from the ethical one of Thrasyllus through the ontological but not transcendent one of Middle Platonism and that of Plotinus. Discussing Plotinus in some detail he shows that even he did not take the dialogue to refer to the highest Good, but that problems arise from the notion of the One imposing Limit on the Unlimited, as Plotinus conceived it, if it is not to admit a dualism which he rejected. It is argued that his two kinds of matter are partly proposed as a solution to this problem. Iamblichus, on the other hand saw the problem and solved it by putting Limit and the Unlimited, as principles, on the same level, and prior to Being. Then, as Proclus put it, the Unlimited is not the matter of Limit, and the two are horizontally rather than vertically opposed. This reorganization can be shown to be the work of Iamblichus, who found the material for it precisely in his interpretation of the *Philebus*. Plato's location of the One Good above πέρας, μικτόν, ἄπειρον then facilitates Iamblichus' new structure, which has it above the intelligible triad, while πέρας, and ἄπειρον are within the intelligible. On the other hand the One's position in this structure was felt to make it too close to what follows, leading Iamblichus to introduce an even higher principle, his ἄρρητον. At the level below that, however, van Riel argues that the four principles described in the *Philebus* should be seen as different ways of talking about the One. Cause then describes its relation to what is below. These different ways of looking at the One enable us to resolve the original contradiction between the testimonies of Damascius and the *Anonymous Prolegomena*.

In a wide ranging paper on "Metafisica e matematica in Giamblico," F. Romano begins by addressing the question of what metaphysics in Iamblichus really means, an important one given that the term was not used by the ancient philosophers themselves. He suggests that the concept is bound up with the notion of the intelligible: in Iamblichus what refers to or includes the intelligible is metaphysics. Thus metaphysics in Iamblichus can be studied by examining the uses of νοητός and the terms used with it: by way of example Romano looks closely at some texts from the *De Mysteriis*. He then proceeds to look at the relation between metaphysics and mathematics as it appears in the more important of Iamblichus' own writings, stressing the need to include those which are not primarily mathematical. Of the latter the *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* is the most productive, while the *De Mysteriis* and *De Vita Pythagorica* are the most helpful of the non-mathematical works. The *De Vita Pythagorica* attributes to Pythagoras the view that all of nature, including both eternal and immaterial intelligibles and also the things in this world, can be understood through mathematics, while Iamblichus himself regards mathematics as being related to the science that deals with the intelligibles and the gods. Pythagoras

is also credited with seeing mathematics as having a purifying and liberating role which prepares its practitioners for the ascent to the divine. This preparatory role for mathematics can be seen in Iamblichus' mathematical writings too, while the titles of lost ones indicate that mathematics was also a key to ethics and physics. The *Theologoumena Arithmeticae* shows that behind all this lies the causal and originative power of the number one. The *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* corroborates conclusions already reached about the ties between mathematics and metaphysics, showing that mathematics turns reason towards the intelligible and, importantly, that the soul's existence can be seen in terms of mathematical proportions. Further, mathematics has the same nature as its objects and so is closely related to the intelligible. Mathematics, which means Pythagorean mathematics, is thus superior to all the sciences except theology.

There follow three papers on Iamblichus' logic, thanks to Simplicius the best attested part of his philosophy in the strict sense, and which turns out to involve matters which are not logical at all. Two of them approach, from different angles, the puzzle set by Simplicius when in the opening pages of his commentary he referred to Iamblichus' *νοεὰ θεωρία* of Aristotle's *Categories* which, he says, Iamblichus added to previous interpretations of that work—as well as modifying Porphyry and bringing in "Archytas." J.M. Dillon sets out to isolate this feature of Iamblichus' commentary by looking only at the securely attested citations in Simplicius, noting that Iamblichus appears to have applied his allegorical technique of interpretation even to the initially unpromising *Categories*. He examines several examples of Iamblichus' exposition, beginning with the question of whether the ability to have contrary properties was an essential or accidental attribute of substance, and where this might be applicable. By analogical—more Pythagorean, according to Simplicius—reasoning Iamblichus finds it in the intelligible as well as the sensible realm to which some earlier interpreters had confined it. There contraries can be present simultaneously rather than successively. This is an example of *νοεὰ θεωρία*, the important feature of it being that Iamblichus looks for ontological rather than merely logical explanations, and is keen to show that the same thing applies in different ways at different levels. Similar methods can be seen in his interpretation of quantity: here again he finds distinctions existing differently at different levels of being. *Νοεὰ θεωρία* even finds discreteness and continuity as manifestations of the power of the One. All this enables Iamblichus to read Aristotle metaphysically, and bring him closer to Plato. The last part of Dillon's paper is devoted to Iamblichus' treatment of time, which arises from discussion of the category *πότε*. Once again Iamblichus is interested in what it really is at the highest possible level, and it is in this context that he produces his theory of intellectual time. Here as elsewhere "Archytas" is pressed into service. Dillon concludes that what Iamblichus was doing was to read the *Categories* as a coherent description of the Neoplatonic intelligible world.

R.L. Cardullo similarly draws attention to the way Simplicius in his preliminaries presents *νοεὰ θεωρία* as peculiar to the interpretation of Iamblichus, and starts from that and the three other passages where the term is used, but maintains

that the application of the principles it describes can easily be detected elsewhere. She further points out that the term is actually attested in the extant writings of Iamblichus, namely in the *De Mysteriis*, where it specifically refers to high speculation which requires *Nous* for its accomplishment. While Dillon concentrates on the first three categories, Cardullo focuses on πού and ἔχειν, to which three of the four occurrences of νοερά θεωρία refer. Similarly Dillon relates Iamblichus' exposition primarily to the previous history of *Categories* exegesis, whereas Cardullo also looks forward to Syrianus whose logic she has studied in unprecedented detail. Nevertheless she too stresses the importance for Iamblichus of "Archytas" and Pythagoreanism. In the light of these considerations she examines Simplicius' reports of Iamblichus' discussion of the *skopos* of the treatise, and sees his solution, which Simplicius accepts, as designed to include all the candidates previously proposed, and thus to admit the intelligible into the interpretation of the treatise. So when he deals with homonyms and synonyms Iamblichus applies these terms not only to the physical world, but also to the relation of these to the intelligible. Here the concept of πρὸς ἐν λέγεσθαι, as understood by the late Neoplatonists can be exploited to show hierarchical relations, and is particularly relevant to his understanding of the category ἔχειν, which the application of νοερά θεωρία allows him to refer to the levels of soul, intellect and the gods. Similarly place can be found in the intelligible and may be applied even to Iamblichus' god in so far as it contains what follows. Iamblichus' approach, with its attempt to integrate the *Categories* into Platonic philosophy was not followed by Syrianus who was less concerned with harmonising the differences and often saw the treatise as a target for criticism and polemic.

D.P. Taormina discusses a more specific problem, Iamblichus' exposition of the category ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν, and in particular his criticism of Porphyry's treatment of active and passive movement. Iamblichus treats this question by way of introduction to his classification of higher kinds of being—the contents of the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. He deals with it by putting it into a framework given by an ontological and hierarchical structure, which rules out Porphyry's treatment based on a horizontal opposition between action and being acted on. Taormina examines Iamblichus' treatment by way of a translation—the first into a modern language—and commentary on texts from Simplicius' *Categories* commentary which discuss Aristotle's definition of movement as incomplete act, where Iamblichus is reported to have solved what for him was an ontological problem by special definitions of ἐνέργεια, ἐντελέχεια, ἐνεργεία and ποιήσις. As well as Porphyry, Plotinus and the Stoics are targets of his critique, which aims *inter alia* at defending his own picture of the intelligible world: thus he uses the opportunity offered by the *Categories* to investigate the relation between these concepts as they might apply at the level of his own first principles. Iamblichus' targets include Plotinus' assimilation of act and movement. His critique of this position leads him on to a further problem—for him—in Plotinus, the assimilation of being in act and in movement, which he again treats as a matter for ontology, exploiting Theophrastus' distinction between movement and act, but conceding that they may be assimilated at

the level of the sensible world. Above that, act, which is now pure act, is superior. In further discussions Iamblichus specifically criticises the notion of movement as an incomplete act. This leads to further questions about movement, in particular its place in the whole ontological system, and its final cause. In fact his critiques have produced a new theory about act, action, and entelechy. These problems about act and movement will appear again in later Platonists.

A. Sheppard, in "Phantasia and Mathematical Projection in Iamblichus," explores the possible Iamblichean origin for Syrianus' and Proclus' view that mathematical objects appear as images in the faculty of φαντασία. Sheppard traces the beginnings of this doctrine (but not necessarily the doctrine itself) through Plutarch of Athens back to Iamblichus.

Plotinus argued that the faculty of imagination was double (*Enneades* 4.3.30–31), one for images of the higher soul and the other for images of perception. According to Plotinus, these two faculties performed best when the higher (rational) soul was in charge of the lower soul. When the higher and lower souls are at odds, the lower soul does not recognize the images of the higher. Later Neoplatonists rejected the two faculties of imagination, but accepted a single faculty with two aspects. Iamblichus is quite likely responsible for the change, for he believed that the soul had images of perceptive data (as Aristotle held) but also images from above implanted in the faculty by the gods themselves (*De Mysteriis* 3.14). From this beginning Proclus developed his doctrine of mathematical projection. Proclus used the Iamblichean division to argue that mathematical Forms appear as images in the imaginative faculty and that these images in turn are useful to sense perception.

It is interesting to note here that image-making was assigned by the neoplatonists to the soul's vehicle, which is itself an intermediary between the rational soul and the body. Iamblichus' theory of imagination makes the imaginative faculty a mean as well, between the rational soul's higher existence (including communion with the gods) and the lower embodied life (including sense-perception).

A. Charles-Saget considers whether Iamblichus can be classified as a philosopher and, if so, what kind of philosopher he may be. In her paper, "Jamblique, Doxographie et Philosophie dans le Traité *De L'Âme*," she examines the role of the *De Anima* in Iamblichus' philosophy. In this work Iamblichus provides both an extensive doxography of the opinions of others and his own synthesis and explanation of the tradition expressed therein. In Iamblichus' own doctrines one finds a move away from the purely philosophical toward the "mythic." Charles-Saget examines three passages from the *De Anima* concerning the placement of soul at the lowest psychic level beneath Intellect, gods, and the superior classes (angels, heroes, and demons). She argues that Iamblichus is much more ready than Proclus or others to use such a mythological hierarchy without appending philosophical arguments in support. He is also more likely to refer to "ancient" authority, especially in contexts that are "mythic" (e.g., the final judgment, punishment, and purification of souls after death). Unlike Ionian philosophers who moved from myth to philosophy, Charles-Saget concludes, Iamblichus moves in the opposite direction.

F. García Bazán's paper, "Jámblico y el Descenso del Alma: Síntesis de Doctrinas y Relectura Neoplatónica," investigates possible links between the Gnostics and Iamblichus, especially in the area of the soul's descent. The Gnostic universe is similar to that of the neoplatonists, but also different in important ways. The Gnostics posit an intellectual principle, *Sophia*, who herself descends and illicitly gives birth to an evil, or at least irrational, Demiurge. This Demiurge in his turn creates human souls, who are set adrift in the material realm. They have the divine spark of *Sophia* in them and can escape the Demiurge and return to their true home in the Intelligible Realm.

Plotinus, of course, wrote treatises against the Gnostics, arguing against their doctrines of the evil Demiurge and the descent of the *Sophia*/World Soul. Iamblichus mentions the Gnostics only once in his extant writings at *De Anima* 375.9, where he says that they explain the cause of the soul's descent as *παράνοια ἢ παρέκβασις*. García Bazán argues that Plotinus himself lacked this knowledge of the cause of the descent in Gnosticism and that Iamblichus therefore had access to better, more complete Gnostic texts than Plotinus. This, García Bazán says, suggests an exchange of ideas between Gnostics and neoplatonists after Plotinus' death.

Iamblichus' doctrine of the descent of the soul is therefore a reaction to those of both Plotinus and the Gnostics. Iamblichus saw the soul's descent as a necessary part of the demiurgic creation. The human soul was lowest in rank of all souls and was sown by the Demiurge into the lower realm. Thus souls neither have an undescended higher aspect (as Plotinus maintains) nor descend for some innate fault or τόλμα (as the Gnostics claim).

The next three papers are concerned with Iamblichus' reaction to Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended soul. R.M. van den Berg ("Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3.333.28ff.: The Myth of the Winged Charioteer according to Iamblichus and Proclus") reconsiders the evidence of *In Timaeum*, frg. 87. This long fragment contains several different arguments against Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended part of the soul. (1) Plato (*Timaeus* 43c-d) considers the soul as consisting of the two circles of the same and the different, and both circles (representing higher and lower soul) are affected in the descent (lines 4-12). (2) Since the *προαίρεσις* sins when it has been stirred up by the irrational powers of the soul, the whole soul is affected (12-16). (3) If the best part of us were happy and always intellegizing, then the whole of us would always be happy (16-22). (4) In the *Phaedrus*, the charioteer of the soul, which is the soul's highest part, sinks and rises; thus the whole soul is affected (23-32). Dillon, Steel, and Finamore have accepted all the arguments as Iamblichean. Van den Berg challenges this contention and claims that only the first can be Iamblichean. It should perhaps be pointed out that strictly speaking Proclus attributes none of the arguments to Iamblichus. Proclus says, after (1), "Iamblichus rightly contends against those who think these things." He does not say that Iamblichus argued against these thinkers by using argument (1) any more than the other three arguments.

Most of van den Berg's paper is devoted to arguing that (4) is Proclus' own argument and not that of Iamblichus. The two positions attributed to Iamblichus there

(that the charioteer in the *Phaedrus* myth is the highest part of the human soul and that every human soul is affected by its descent) are contradicted by other evidence from Iamblichus' writings. For Iamblichus says in *In Phaedrum*, frg. 6 that the "helmsman" not the "charioteer" is the highest part of the soul. Further, in *In Phaedrum*, frg. 5, *De Anima* 380.23–26 and 379.22–24, and *In Phaedrum*, frg. 7, we have evidence that Iamblichus did not believe that all human souls were affected. Van den Berg concludes that the argument in the fragment is Proclus' and not Iamblichus' and that Iamblichus' actual position (that some human souls are unaffected by the descent) is intermediary between those of Proclus and Plotinus.

J.F. Finamore, in "The Rational Soul in Iamblichus' Philosophy," examines Iamblichus' curious view of the intellectual component of the soul by which it can achieve union with higher principles. Plotinus had stressed the soul's Intellect as its true, undescended self. Iamblichus argued that the human soul existed at a lower level of reality separate from Intellect and higher divine souls. How then does Iamblichus' intellectual component differ from Plotinus' psychic intellect? By considering passages from the *De Anima*, *De Mysteriis*, and the Platonic commentaries, Finamore argues that the intellectual component is not an actualized intellect but an intellectual capacity awaiting actualization by the gods and other higher beings through theurgy. Iamblichus subdivides humanity into three categories: pure souls, impure souls, and souls intermediate between them. Each category is distinguished by the type of intellectual activity of its members. Even the highest souls need the gods help to actualize their intellect.

G. Shaw ("The Mortality and Anonymity of the Iamblichean Soul") examines Iamblichus' seemingly contradictory view of the human soul as both divine and immortal, on the one hand, and human and mortal, on the other. For the human soul acts as a mean between the higher and lower realms and is changed in its very οὐσία when it descends and rises. Iamblichus indicates that the highest principle of our own soul is beyond our understanding but that it is a sort of mechanism for *eros* in the soul that causes it to yearn for and seek higher states of knowledge. It is this mechanism, once the soul has recognized its own insignificance compared to the gods, that allows the soul to return above. But when it returns, it ceases to be what it was before. Shaw argues that the immortality sought by the embodied soul can never be the *embodied* soul's immortality, but rather that of the *disembodied* soul, which must cease to be an individual in order to become part of the community of souls and gods. As such the soul "dies" and is born again at a higher plane and with a higher but different οὐσία.

M.J. Edwards, in "Being, Life and Mind: A Brief Inquiry," investigates the origins of this Neoplatonic triad. He argues against the view of some modern scholars that the triad appears in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Plotinus, or Porphyry. Rather Iamblichus was the first to establish the triad in the canonical order and did so from basic Platonic tenets. There is therefore no need to look for borrowings from the *Chaldaean Oracles* or any Gnostic texts. In the final section of his paper, Edwards distances Augustine's doctrine of the trinity from the being-life-mind triad.

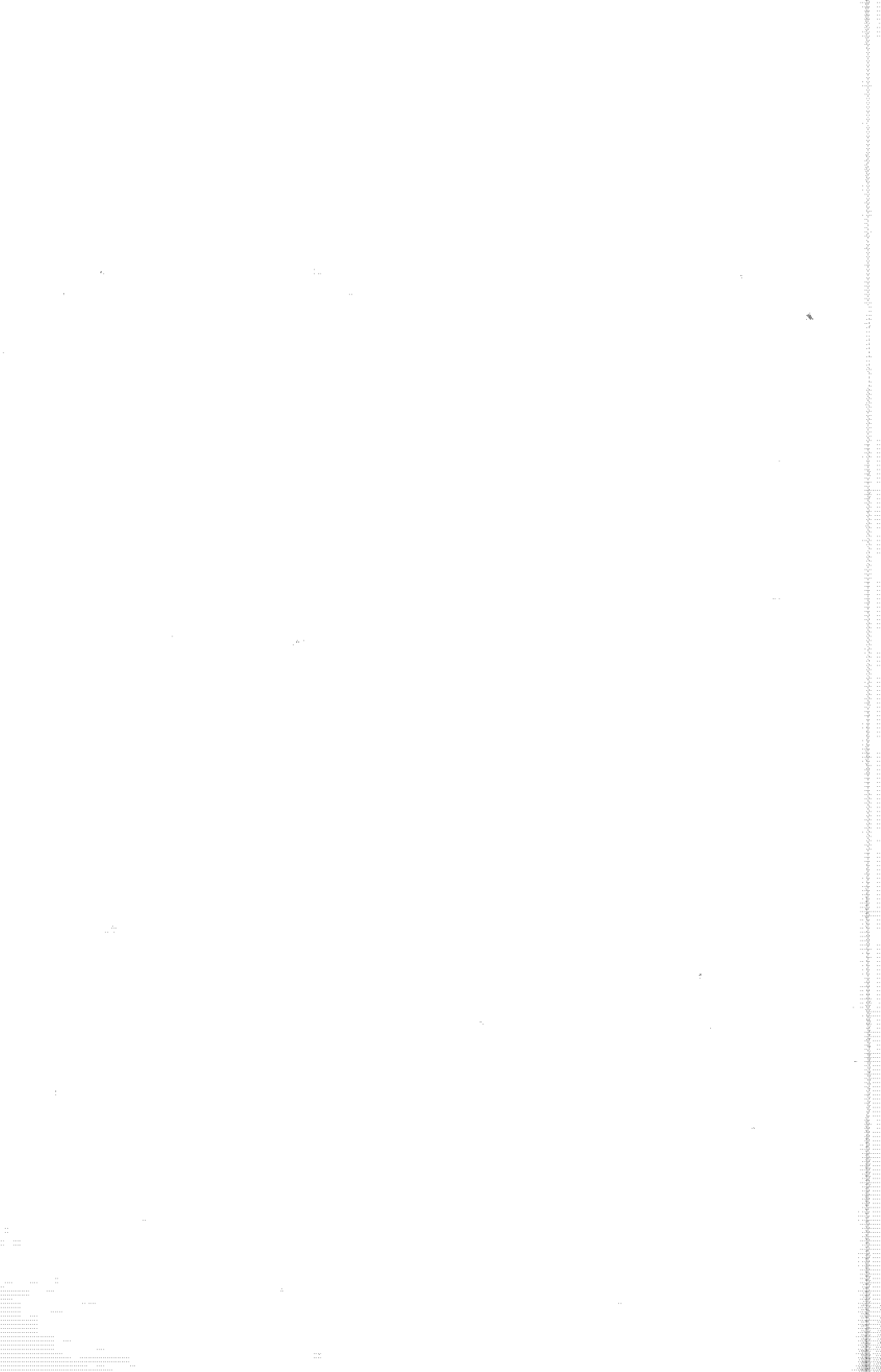
The collection of papers ends, appropriately enough, with a look at how Iamblichus' metaphysical and epistemological doctrines continued to influence Neoplatonism into the sixth century and beyond. E. Tempelis' paper, "Iamblichus and the School of Ammonius, Son of Hermias, on Divine Omniscience," examines how one of Iamblichus' doctrines helped the Alexandrian Neoplatonists solve the dilemma of human free will. This problem arose long before Neoplatonism. If god knows everything that will occur, how can human actions be free?

Tempelis draws from three commentaries on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (those by Ammonius, Stephanus, and an anonymous author) to show how these thinkers used an epistemological doctrine of Iamblichus for their solution. Iamblichus held that the act of knowing required not two objects but three: the knower, the thing known, and knowledge itself. Knowledge, he said, was a mean between the knower and the thing known. Thus, the knower and the knowledge can be of different orders. An intellect, for example, can know things (Forms, say) at its own level and be, therefore, of equal status with the known thing. Or it can know things beneath it (the whiteness of this page) and be superior to the thing known. Finally, it can know things above it (Intelligibles or the One) and be inferior to the thing known. Furthermore, the nature of one knower can be better or worse than another, and that too can affect the knowledge.

Applying this Iamblichean doctrine to the problem of determinism, the Alexandrian school said that god's knowledge of temporal events was superior to those events themselves and the resulting knowledge was superior to that of all others (because of the gods' rank). Thus, god knows temporal events in a universal way (timelessly, through the reason principles) and god's knowledge is superior to ours insofar as god is superior to us. All this can now be seen to be Iamblichean doctrine, although we do not know whether Iamblichus drew the conclusion that because god knows all things timelessly, human actions are known but free.

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Henry J. Blumenthal
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The Editors



Iamblichus as a Commentator

Henry J. Blumenthal

Twenty two years ago, when that growth in interest in Neoplatonism which is a συναίτιον of this conference was only just getting under way, two large books appeared which will be familiar to all who are interested in Iamblichus. I am referring, of course, to J.M. Dillon's collection of the fragmentary remains of Iamblichus' commentaries on Plato's dialogues, supplied with an ample commentary to boot,¹ and B. Dalsgaard Larsen's *Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et Philosophe*, of which some 240 pages are devoted to his role as *exégète*: a collection of exegetical fragments appeared as a 130 page appendix.² Larsen's book covered the interpretation of both Plato and Aristotle, and pre-empted a second volume of Dillon's which was to deal with Aristotle. I mention these books because we are, *inter alia*, taking stock, and it is remarkable that not much attention has been paid since then to Iamblichus' role as a commentator. Perhaps they have had the same effect on the study of this aspect of Iamblichus as Proclus' work had on the interpretation of Plato at Alexandria.

Be that as it may, I intend to look, not very originally, at Iamblichus' activities as a commentator on philosophical works—and so I shall say nothing about the twenty-eight books or more of his lost commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles*³—and also to say something, in the manner of core samples, about how his expositions compare with those of the later commentators. Though the process can be traced

1 *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. and trans. (Leiden 1973).

2 In a second volume (Aarhus 1972).

3 Damascius, *De Principiis*, vol. 1, 86 5–6 = vol. 2, 1.7–8, refers to his views in the twenty-eighth book. On this work and the evidence for it see further L.G. Westerink's *Note Complémentaire* 3 on pages 215–6 of his and Combès' edition, vol. 2 (Paris 1987).

back in part to Porphyry,⁴ I think it is safe to say that Iamblichus was the first Neoplatonist, at least of those about whom we are reasonably well informed, to set out in a systematic way to write commentaries on the major works of both Plato and—in Iamblichus' case to a lesser extent—Aristotle too. The fact that he did both is noteworthy, since most of his successors seem to have specialised, more or less, in one or the other, in their published works if not in their lecture courses. We are, as ever in this area, faced with difficulties about deciding who wrote what, which often amounts to making difficult decisions about the implications of the usual imprecise references that are commonplace in ancient commentary. The best we have are those which Simplicius in his *Physics* commentary gives to specific books or even chapters of Iamblichus' *Timaeus* and *Categories* commentaries (cf. *In Aristotelis Physica Commentaria* 639.23–24; in the second chapter of book 5 of the commentary on the *Timaeus* 786.11–12; in the first book of the commentary on the *Categories*).⁵ But that Iamblichus did write commentaries on both Plato and Aristotle can be regarded as firmly established. It is tempting to think, though there is no text which allows us to demonstrate this, that his doing so was connected with the fact that it seems to have been he who set up the thereafter traditional course in which certain works of Aristotle were read as propaedeutic to a selection of twelve—or rather ten plus two—Platonic dialogues which culminated in the study of the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*.

Let us start by setting out what can be known with some degree of certainty. As regards commentary on Aristotle, that is not much. We can be quite sure that Iamblichus wrote a commentary on the *Categories* because Simplicius tells us so, and refers to it frequently: he mentions Iamblichus by name some 170 times, and clearly uses him without attribution elsewhere.⁶ How far Iamblichus' commentary was original and how far it depended on Porphyry's great commentary dedicated to Gaedalius is another matter altogether. The *Fihrist*, sometimes a useful supplement to other information, lists by name only a commentary on the *Categories*,⁷ and in a further note merely gives Iamblichus in a long list, which includes Plotinus, of those who wrote commentaries on Aristotle "in connection with logic and other branches of philosophy."⁸ Though he discusses some views of Iamblichus on the *De*

4 Omitting the surviving commentaries on the *Categories* and the well-known lost one, A. Smith in his edition of Porphyry's fragments (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1993) prints texts from commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* and *Ethics*, and others which may come from commentaries on the *Sophistici Elenchi* and *Metaphysics*, and for Plato on the *Cratylus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Phaedo* and *Republic*. Fragments of a *Timaeus* commentary are collected by A.R. Sodano in *Porphyrii in Platonis Timaeum Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Naples 1964). Some of these may have been on selected portions of the works in question: in particular that on the *Metaphysics*, if it existed at all, may have been on book A only, cf. H.J. Blumenthal, "Did Iamblichus write a commentary on the *De Anima*?", *Hermes* 102 (1974) 541.

5 There are also two in Syrianus, to the seventh and fifth books of Iamblichus' collection of Pythagorean doctrines (*In Metaphysica Commentaria* 140.15, 149.30–31).

6 Cf. H. Chadwick, *Boethius. The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford 1981) 143–4.

7 *The Fihrist of Al-Nadim. A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, B. Dodge, ed. and trans., vol. 2 (New York 1970) 599.

8 *Ibid.*, 614.

Interpretatione, Dalsgaard Larsen, in his collection of fragments and *testimonia*, gives only nine texts belonging to a commentary on the *Prior Analytics* and a further nine under the heading *incertae sedis*. That is to be set against 136 from the *Categories* commentary. For Plato, on the other hand, there are entries for commentaries on the *Alcibiades I*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Sophist*—one each for the two last—*Phaedrus*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, and *Parmenides*. In addition Dillon found evidence for commentaries on the *De Caelo*, perhaps the *De Anima*, and also the *Metaphysics*.

I think I have shown that there is no good evidence for a *De Anima* commentary.⁹ Apart from that, the evidence for commentaries on Aristotle's works other than the *Categories* and also the *Prior Analytics*, for which there is good if not copious evidence in Ammonius, might be worth another look. Let us first, however, look at the list of Plato's dialogues in the standard curriculum and see how well it is represented in what actually survives from, or about, Iamblichus' output. The curriculum is set out in part in chapter 26 of the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, and specifically attributed to Iamblichus: λέγομεν δὲ ὁ ὁ θεῖος Ἰάμβλιχος ἐποίησεν. What he did was to set up a group of twelve dialogues (26.17), with everything in them being contained in the last two, the "physics" in the *Timaeus*, and the theology in the *Parmenides* (*ibid.*, 14–16): this view of the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* is already attested in Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary, at 1.13.14–17, with Proclus' approval of Iamblichus' notion. The author of the *Anonymous Prolegomena* further tells us that everyone thought these were the dialogues to be discussed—presumably in both lectures and commentaries. In addition to the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* the dialogues in the list include the *Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium* and *Philebus*. That leaves us two short. Westerink in his introduction to the *Anonymous Prolegomena* argued convincingly for the addition at 26.40 of the *Sophist* and *Politicus*,¹⁰ though in the *Politicus* only the myth seems to have interested the Neoplatonists: these would then come in the course between the *Theaetetus* and *Phaedrus*. There is good, or at least reasonably good, evidence for commentaries by Iamblichus on all these dialogues except the *Gorgias*, *Cratylus*,¹¹ *Theaetetus*, *Politicus* and *Symposium*.¹²

What was in the Aristotle course is less clear but, given the often and strongly expressed convictions of the Neoplatonists about the outstanding importance of the study of the soul,¹³ we may safely assume that it included the *De Anima*. Though we

9 See Blumenthal (above, note 4) 540–56.

10 Though he prints them only in the French translation and not in the Greek text, cf. *Note Complémentaire* 222 and pages lxxvii–lxxiii of the updated French edition, *Prolegomènes à Philosophie de Platon*, L.G. Westerink, ed., J. Trouillard, trans. (Paris 1990); cf. *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, L.G. Westerink, ed. (Amsterdam 1962) xxxvii–xl.

11 Dillon ([above, note 1] 22) rightly describes Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum Commentaria* 56.13–15 as only a possible reference to a commentary on this dialogue.

12 For the commentary on the *Philebus*, see G. van Riel's paper in this volume pages 31–46.

13 Cf. e.g., Pseudo-Simplicius, *In De Anima* 1.3–5, Philoponus, *In Aristotelis De Anima Libros Commentaria* 12.15.

cannot, of course, be sure that practice did not change, what the *Anonymous Prolegomena* tells us about the Plato course suggests that it might not have done, so that we might reasonably adduce as evidence the fact that Marinus tells us how the aged Plutarch read the *De Anima* with the young Proclus when he appeared in Athens (*Vita Procli* 12). On the other hand Marinus also tells us that Proclus—presumably later¹⁴—read the whole corpus in two years (*Vita Procli* 13, *init.*), and though Marinus does not say so, we might guess that this was another of Proclus' exceptional achievements rather than the normal reading for a student in the "Academy."¹⁵

If we were to stick to Iamblichus and try to establish the contents of the Aristotle part of the curriculum on the basis of knowledge about commentaries written by him we would soon be in difficulties because there is, as we have already noticed, relatively little information about them. Indeed it might be worth reminding ourselves that the only Iamblichus commentaries on Plato and Aristotle about which we can be quite sure, and for which there is plenty of evidence, are those on the *Categories* and the *Timaeus*. There is also good evidence, but of a rather different nature, for that on the *Parmenides*. It is fairly clear from the contents and organization of the several *Categories* commentaries which we have that the opening lectures in the courses which they represent formed an introduction to the whole of the Aristotle course, since they tell us how to approach any of his works and not just the *Categories* itself. The details of this introduction have been thoroughly examined by I. Hadot,¹⁶ and I have discussed their significance for the commentaries elsewhere, so I do not intend to say any more about them here except to raise the question of whether or not the two series of questions that were to be raised were contributed by Iamblichus or someone else. Once again one has to give the unsatisfactory answer that we cannot tell: Hadot has argued that they were devised by Proclus, but that there is evidence, from Origen, that at least the beginnings of the system go back to the third century.¹⁷

In due course the start of the Aristotle lectures dealt not with an Aristotelian treatise but with Porphyry's *Eisagoge*, the introduction to the *Categories* which came to be used as the basis for a general introduction to Aristotle and how to read him. That practice is probably post-Iamblichean: in any case the commentaries on the *Eisagoge* that we have all come from the later period of late antique Aristotle exposition. Given the high rate of preservation of *Categories* commentaries it seems

14 Marinus' account of Proclus is governed by philosophical rather than chronological considerations, cf. H.J. Blumenthal, "Marinus' Life of Proclus: Neoplatonist Biography," *Byzantion* 54 (1984) 469–94.

15 "Academy" because there may have been no institution more formal than a group of scholars and students residing in what was originally Plutarch's private house.

16 In Hadot et al., *Simplicius, Commentaire sur les Catégories*, fasc. 1 (Leiden 1990); "The Role of the Commentaries on Aristotle in the Teaching of Philosophy according to the Prefaces of the Neoplatonic Commentaries on the *Categories*" in *Aristotle and the Later Tradition*, H.J. Blumenthal and H.M. Robinson, eds., *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, supp. vol. (Oxford 1991) 175–89.

17 Cf. "Les Introductions aux Commentaires Exégétiques chez les Auteurs Néoplatoniciens et les Auteurs Chrétiens," *Les Règles de l'Interprétation*, M. Tardieu, ed. (Paris 1987) 99–122.

unlikely that all the *Eisagoge* commentaries before that of Ammonius (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4.3) would have sunk without trace. From the latest period comes a further insertion into the curriculum, an introduction to Aristotle's philosophy (cf. Olympiodorus, *Prolegomena* 1.3–6), presented as *Prolegomena* to his logic, or even to philosophy as a whole, which came even before the commentary on the *Eisagoge*. The examples we have are Olympiodorus' *Prolegomena to Logic*, Elias' *Prolegomena to Philosophy*,¹⁸ and what may be another version of the same lectures transmitted as 'Απὸ Φωνῆς Δάβιδ—which could by now mean either by David, or a record of his course.¹⁹

It is time now to look again, briefly, at the evidence for the less well-attested commentaries on Aristotle. For the *De Interpretatione*, Dillon²⁰ relied on just one reference, in Stephanus' short commentary on that work where we are given five lines of Iamblichus' explanation of a text—the words ἡ ὁ συνδέσμων εἰς (*ibid.*, 17a16)—marked off by λέγει ὁ Ἰάμβλιχος ὅτι at the start and οὐκ ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο ἀλήθες at the end (*ibid.*, 21.28–32). These lines certainly look as if they come from a commentary. We might support this testimony with Ammonius' in his commentary on the work (*ibid.*, 135.12–19) saying he will approach an issue κατὰ τὴν τοῦ θείου Ἰαμβλίου ὑφήγησιν, though that relates to the recognition of truth and falsehood rather than to specific textual exposition. The discussion of a difference between Iamblichus and the ἐξηγήτης from Aphrodisias' Περὶ τῆς Διαλεκτικῆς ἐρωτήσεως (*ibid.*, 202.3–203.4) does not point clearly to any particular work of Iamblichus, but could be based on the *Prior Analytics* commentary. More promising is a reference (*ibid.*, 227.26–32) to his views on κατάφασις. Taking these texts together the case for a *De Interpretatione* commentary looks good. That cannot be said for another candidate, a commentary on the *De Caelo*, where the only citations of Iamblichus in Simplicius' commentary which are at all specific to the treatise deal with his views on the *scopos* of the treatise, namely that it is about divine and heavenly body, Περὶ τοῦ Οὐρανίου καὶ Θείου Σώματος, which he said included the investigation of the whole cosmos. Simplicius also gives Iamblichus' reasons for holding this opinion (*De Caelo* 1.24–2.5; 5.4–13). The obvious difficulty with this as evidence for a commentary is that a discussion of the purpose of any one of Aristotle's works could come from a discussion of the contents of the curriculum, with the *Categories* commentary as a possible location. Either of these could also have been the source for the definition of the *scopos* of the *De Anima* as being about the rational soul, Περὶ τῆς Λογικῆς Ψυχῆς, which both Pseudo-Philoponus and Pseudo-Simplicius used to exclude any possibility of 3.5 referring to a transcendent

18 A. Busse, in *apparatu*, supplies from one MS τῶν πέντε φωνῶν before φιλοσοφίας, thus making it an introduction to the *Eisagoge* only: its opening remarks, however, are apparently intended to have a wider application.

19 On the meaning of ἀπὸ φωνῆς cf. M. Richard, "ΑΠΟ ΦΩΝΗΣ," *Byzantion* 20 (1950) 191–222.

20 Above, note 1, 21.

✓ soul:²¹ Iamblichus, as the man who rejected Plotinus' view that each of us has a transcendent intellect, is an obvious candidate for having imposed this limitation. We might note in passing that Simplicius tells us that Syrianus' and his followers' view of the purpose of the *De Caelo* was not the same: they wanted to exclude the cosmos as a whole (*ibid.*, 2.5–12). We should also note that on this question Simplicius does not agree with Iamblichus (cf. *ibid.*, 5.32–34). That leaves the *Metaphysics*. Here we have a only a reference in Syrianus to the views of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus about how duality or plurality might or might not emerge from unity (*In Metaphysica Commentaria* 46.20–25), a subject so central to any Neoplatonist that the reference cannot be said to constitute clear evidence for the existence of a commentary by Iamblichus.

✓ A further question might now usefully be asked. It may, I hope, be said without further argument that the late commentators no longer distinguished writing one's own philosophy in the form of independent works and doing so in the course of writing commentary, be it on Plato, Aristotle or anyone else. Going back a stage we can, of course, see this procedure in parts of a work like Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. Now, since Iamblichus set the direction for so much later work, I want to ask whether he might have been the first to see commentary as philosophy and philosophy as commentary. Clearly the question cannot be answered as easily as it can in the case of a commentator who will present texts that we know were not commentary as if they were, or for that matter ideas that we know were produced in the course of independent works: the most obvious case is the treatment of Plotinus in both the real and the false Philoponus' discussions of *De Anima* 3.5, where his views on the intellect are given as if they were interpretation of νοῦς ἐνεργεῖα (*ibid.*, 535.1ff). The best documented of Iamblichus' commentaries, that on the *Categories*, is unfortunately the least helpful in this respect: where it treats Plotinus as if he were a commentator it does, of course, refer to one of the few works, namely Plotinus, *Enneades* 6.1–3, which might legitimately be seen as something like a commentary—I say nothing of the unwritten doctrines of Plotinus which some have found reflected in Dexippus and Simplicius.²² We are in slightly better case with the *Timaeus* commentary, where Proclus frequently cites Iamblichus while dealing with matters which others dealt with in contexts other than that of commentary. The controversy about the undescended intellect, where Proclus gives the opinions of Plotinus and Theodorus as well as Iamblichus, is a good example (Proclus, *In Timaeum* 3.333.28–334.4). Another comes in the discussion of whether or not the "creation" in the *Timaeus* is to be understood chronologically, a question on which all Platonists would have had an opinion whether or not they actually wrote commentaries on the dialogue (cf. *ibid.*, 1.276.30–277.13). We are still, however, impeded in any attempt to see exactly what Iamblichus said on any given issue by the fact that in

21 — Pseudo-Philoponus, *In Aristotelis De Anima Libros Commentaria* 536.2–4, following Plutarch with whose view about active intellect he agrees, *ibid.*, 535.13; Pseudo-Simplicius, *In Aristotelis De Anima Libros Commentaria* 240.2–3.

22 Cf. especially P. Henry, "Trois Apories Orales de Plotin sur les *Catégories* d'Aristote" in *Zetesis. Festschrift E. de Strycker* (Antwerp 1973) 234–65, and "The Oral Teaching of Plotinus," *Dionysius* 6 (1982) 3–12.

Proclus' commentary it is often particularly difficult to tell where the sections of text to be attributed to him begin and end.

One matter that could be relevant if it were clear may be mentioned at this point. As a possible explanation of the notorious—perhaps not quite as notorious as it should be since some ignore it—report in Simplicius' *Categories* commentary (*ibid.*, 191.8–12) that Plotinus and Iamblichus kept a part of the soul undescended, it has been suggested that Simplicius was acquainted with Plotinus through Iamblichus. On that basis C.G. Steel once made the interesting proposal that the troublesome text could be dealt with by assuming that Iamblichus' *Categories* commentary was Simplicius' source for the information about Plotinus, and that the text could then be made consistent with the other evidence about Iamblichus' views on the intellect if one were to read ὡς Πλωτίνῳ κατὰ Ἰάμβλῖχον δοκεῖ, instead of ὡς Πλωτίνῳ καὶ Ἰαμβλῖχῳ δοκεῖ.²³ The emendation would be simple enough, but it seems unlikely that Simplicius would have needed Iamblichus as a source for so well-known a doctrine of Plotinus—or indeed for his knowledge of Plotinus in general. It would also, as far as I know, be the only case of Iamblichus being so used.

Of one thing we can be sure, and that is the importance of Iamblichus' work to at least some part of the commentary tradition. The most striking example is the statement of the Pseudo-Simplicius at the start of his *De Anima* commentary that he will explain Aristotle, sticking as closely as possible to the truth as indicated in Iamblichus' own work *On the Soul*, κατὰ τὴν Ἰαμβλῖχου ἐν τοῖς ἰδίῳις αὐτοῦ Περὶ Ψυχῆς Συγγράμμασι (*ibid.*, 1.19), not, one should hasten to add, his commentary on Aristotle's treatise. In fact Pseudo-Simplicius' named references to Iamblichus on the soul are specifically to Iamblichus' own treatise (cf. also *ibid.*, 240.37–38: ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ περὶ ψυχῆς πραγματείᾳ). Two references in Priscian are less clear, but contain none of the usual commentary vocabulary. Thus in the *Metaphrasis* Priscian talks of τῶν Ἰαμβλῖχῳ ἐν τοῖς Περὶ Ψυχῆς πεφίλοσοφημένων (*ibid.*, 7.17–18), and in the *Solutiones* he refers baldly to *Iamblichus De Anima scribens* (*ibid.*, 42.17).²⁴

The evidence we have about Iamblichus' own treatise, consisting primarily of the fragments preserved by Stobaeus, suggests at first sight that it was an odd choice on Pseudo-Simplicius' part, since what we have does not show Iamblichus discussing the meaning of particular texts, but rather giving a doxography of views about a series of questions in psychology, often of a type that would be appropriate to a survey course for beginners rather than the more advanced students who would have been at the receiving end of a work like that of Pseudo-Simplicius. One must, of course, make the reservation that Stobaeus might not have wished to quote passages of close interpretation which would hardly have been of great interest to the readers of a wide-ranging *florilegium* of the type that he was compiling. A few passages from Priscian which can be attributed to Iamblichus are more promising and, if they are rightly attributed to him, show him presenting Aristotelian

23 C.G. Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Brussels 1978) 49.

24 On these passages cf. also P.M. Huby, "Priscian of Lydia as Evidence for Iamblichus" in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark, eds. (London 1993) 6.

psychology in the light of Neoplatonic views:²⁵ in particular the concept of imagination attributed to him in the *Metaphrasis* is in line with the usual Neoplatonic adaptations of Aristotle (cf. *ibid.*, 23.13–24.4). Let us recall that Priscian says that Iamblichus and Plutarch are the genuine interpreters of Aristotle. Plutarch probably did write a commentary at least on the third book of the *De Anima*:²⁶ is the remark then evidence for one by Iamblichus? It certainly need not be, given the general tendency among late Neoplatonists to treat independent works as commentary just as much as real commentary. Furthermore it is remarkable that Pseudo-Simplicius, having told us that he intends to follow the lead of Iamblichus, makes so little explicit use of him, though there is scope for trying to isolate Iamblichean material in his *De Anima* commentary: some of this has been done by Steel,²⁷ and a translation of a collection of it is being produced by J.M. Dillon and J.F. Finamore. When he does cite Iamblichus it is mainly to refer to his views about the soul in support of his own interpretations. So, for example, at *In De Anima* 89.33–35 he writes:

εἰ δέ, ὥς Ἰαμβλίχῳ δοκεῖ, οὐκ ἂν ἐξ ἀπαθούς καὶ τελείας
οὐσίας προῖοι διεστραμμένη καὶ ἀτελὴς ἐνέργεια, εἴη ἂν
παθαινομένη πῶς κατ' οὐσίαν.

if, as Iamblichus thinks, a dispersed and incomplete activity would not proceed from an impassible and perfect substance, then the soul would in some way be affected in its being.²⁸

What we do not have are reports of Iamblichus' detailed expositions of particular texts in the *De Anima*. We might add that the Pseudo-Simplicius' specific references to Iamblichus' independent work in themselves constitute good reason for doubting the existence of a commentary, since a commentator who felt that degree of allegiance to Iamblichus would be most unlikely not to have referred to his commentary had there been one.

In any case the sections of Iamblichus' *De Anima* preserved by Stobaeus with definite attributions are of more interest for determining Iamblichus' own views as they relate to those of others in a fairly general way, rather than for the light his *De Anima* could, even as an independent work, shed on how Iamblichus dealt with specific problems in Plato or Aristotle, or how he set out to reconcile differences between them—if he did. One authority at least thought he was blind to them. In discussing the qualities needed in a good commentator Elias (or David)²⁹ said that he

25 Cf. Huby (above, note 24) 6–10.

26 Cf. especially Pseudo-Simplicius, *In Aristotelis De Anima Commentaria* 259.40 to 260.1 and Blumenthal (above, note 4) 540 and 551–2 with references given there. See also D.P. Taormina, *Plutarco di Atene. L'Uno, l'Anima, le Forme* (Catania 1989) 169–75: Taormina argues for a commentary on all three books.

27 Above, note 23, especially 123ff.

28 That need not mean that it actually undergoes permanent change. On the meaning of παθαινομένη πῶς κατ' οὐσίαν cf. H.J. Blumenthal, "The Psychology of (?) Simplicius' Commentary on the *De Anima*," in *Soul and the Structure of Being in Late Neoplatonism. Syrianus, Proclus and Simplicius*, H.J. Blumenthal and A.C. Lloyd, eds. (Liverpool 1982) 91–2.

29 Hadot, in the commentary on Simplicius' *Categories* commentary wants to restore the authorship to David ([above, note 16] vii, note 2 and the Appendix by J. Mahé, 195–203); Mahé

should not be partisan like Iamblichus, whose attachment to Plato caused him to deny that Aristotle opposed the Ideas (cf. *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentaria* 123.1–3).³⁰ That means that even if we had more material we would have found less of the specific discussion of differences between Plato and Aristotle than we find in the later commentators. As to Iamblichus' method we have the real Simplicius' statement in his *Categorias* commentary that he intended to follow the *voεpà* *θεωpía* of Iamblichus in his own exposition (*ibid.*, cf. 2.9–15 with 3.2–4): what this *voεpà* *θεωpía* might have been is another matter which others have discussed but, given the place of the *Categorias* commentaries in the whole course, that falls little short of saying that "I shall adopt Iamblichus' approach in writing my own commentaries—or giving my own lectures."³¹

That attitude to Iamblichus was not universal, for Simplicius' teacher Ammonius and Ammonius' pupil Philoponus seem to have had a more sceptical, or at least more detached, position vis-à-vis Iamblichus: it is not, of course, always easy to distinguish the views of these two, given that Philoponus published most of the works of Ammonius we have in such a way that it is sometimes unclear just how much should be attributed to each of them. In any case the references to Iamblichus are few, and not generally characterised by the adulation we have just observed.³²

So much for Iamblichus and Aristotle. Similar conclusions to those we have indicated for Simplicius and Pseudo-Simplicius are suggested by Iamblichus' place in Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary, at the other end of the course, even if straightforward declarations of allegiance are not to be found there: expressions of approval frequently are. How are we to explain his lesser prominence in the history of the exposition of the *Parmenides*? It is particularly notable that when we have commentaries on the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* from the same hand, the name of Iamblichus appears so frequently in the one and is simply absent from the other, though comparison with Damascius shows that his work is sometimes being used,³³ and it is possible to detect Iamblichean material elsewhere. At first sight it is nevertheless remarkable that of the 114 named references to Iamblichus in Proclus not one is from the *Parmenides* commentary. By contrast there are twenty-five from that

nevertheless admits that restoration to David would not solve all the problems that presented themselves to the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* causing him to assign the work to Elias.

30 Δεῖ αὐτὸν μὴ συμπάσχειν αἰρέσει τινί, ὃ πέπονθεν Ἰάμβλῖχος· οὗτος γὰρ προσπάσχων τῷ Πλάτῳ συνδίδωσι τῷ Ἀριστοτέλει ὅτι οὐκ ἀντιλέγει τῷ Πλάτῳ διὰ τὰς ἰδέας.

31 On Iamblichus' *voεpà* *θεωpía*, see now the papers by J.M. Dillon and R.L. Cardullo in this volume, respectively pages 65–77 and 79–94.

32 For some details, see H.J. Blumenthal, "John Philoponus: Alexandrian Platonist?," *Hermes* 114 (1986) 327–8.

33 Cf. especially *Procli Commentarius In Platonis Parmenidem*, V. Cousin, ed. (Hildesheim 1961) 1054.37ff., introduced by οἱ δὲ μετὰ τούτους, where Cousin records a scholion saying Ἰαμβλίου δόξα. See further the notes *ad loc.* in *Proclus' Commentary on the Parmenides*, G.R. Morrow and J.M. Dillon, trans. (Princeton 1987) 412–3, and the introduction to H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink's edition of *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, vol. 1 (Paris 1968) lxxxii–lxxxiii.

of Damascius, though only two are apparently clear references to a commentary by Iamblichus,³⁴ with a few more that may be.

In fact a careful reading of the *Parmenides* commentary shows that Iamblichus' views are far from unrepresented. In an important article Dillon has shown that in a set of ten discussions from the extant Greek text and one from Moerbeke's Latin version of part of what is lost, Proclus cites a series of two or more opinions on a text before proceeding to Syrianus' and his own: a good case for Iamblichus being the author of, usually, the second in each set can be made in nine of the eleven—and in most cases for Porphyry as the source of the first.³⁵ Thus one's initial impression that Iamblichus was one of the authorities Proclus used in this commentary too is confirmed.

Why, then, does Iamblichus' name fail to appear? The reasons are not obvious. One can only say that in this commentary Proclus does not care to name the sources for the opinions he discusses: only the references to Syrianus are transparent, with standard mentions of "our—or my—teacher,"³⁶ but even he is not named. Dillon, in the introduction to his and Morrow's translation of the *Parmenides* commentary, has suggested that perhaps artistic considerations may have been involved,³⁷ and that Proclus moved from the methods of the *Timaeus* commentary with its frequently named references through the *Alcibiades* commentary where they are fewer to that of the *Parmenides* commentary where they have virtually disappeared.³⁸ The *Timaeus* commentary is known from Marinus' testimony to be an early work,³⁹ while Dillon argues for a late dating for the *Parmenides* one.⁴⁰ One might add a suggestion in support of this explanation. Proclus in his youth appeared to take great pleasure in rhetoric and acquired a considerable reputation in that art, as Marinus tells us (*Vita Procli* 8). We know that, quite apart from the literary interests shown in his *Republic* commentary, he continued to produce works on literary topics. Did his earlier predilections, then, as sometimes happens, come to the fore in his later work and allow a striving for elegance to overcome the requirements of scholarship?

Be that as it may, there is as a result of Proclus' procedures surprisingly little direct and unequivocal evidence for the Iamblichus *Parmenides* commentary: Dillon's

34 ...ὡς δὲ τὴν Ἰαμβλίου παραθέσθαι ἐξηγήσιν (Damascius, *In Parmenidem* 146.3); ...κατὰ τὸν μέγαν Ἰαμβλίχον. ἔστιν γὰρ αὕτη πιθανωτάτη πασῶν τῶν παλαιῶν ἐξηγήσεων (*ibid.*, 247.15–16).

35 "Porphyry and Iamblichus in Proclus' Commentary on the *Parmenides*" in *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*, J.M. Duffy and J. Peradotto, eds., *Arethusa* (Buffalo and New York 1988) 21–48. On the two sets where an attribution to Iamblichus is rather less clear cf. pages 30–32.

36 Cf. e.g., 640.19–20, 944.17.

37 Above, note 33, xxxv.

38 *Ibid.*, xxxv–xxxvi.

39 *Vita Procli* 13: he wrote it at the age of twenty-eight.

40 Above, note 33, xxxiv–xxxvii.

1973 collection of fragments assigned only one passage from Proclus' *Parmenides* commentary to that work.⁴¹ Apart from the references in Damascius we have already noted, only Syrianus refers to it formally, and then only once:

δι' ἀκριβείας μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς εἰς τὸν Παρμενίδην
ὑπομνήμασιν Ἰαμβλῆχῳ τῷ θεῷ περὶ τούτων εἴρηται.

(*In Metaphysica Commentaria* 38.37–39)

On the other hand we find references to the *Timaeus* commentary in a number of works on different subjects, so for example in Pseudo-Simplicius' *De Anima* commentary (*ibid.*, 133.34–35) and, as we have seen, Simplicius' on the *Physics*.

One area where Proclus disagreed with Iamblichus is one that we have so far mentioned only in passing, and that is in the treatment of mathematics. Where they differ is that Iamblichus used mathematics as a field for the cultivation of the Pythagorean connections about which he was so enthusiastic, attributing mathematical notions both to Pythagoras himself and to a variety of real and probably fictitious Pythagorean figures who, even if real, probably never held them. I. Mueller has considered Proclus' Euclid commentary in relation to Iamblichus' *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*, from which some of it has been supposed to be derived, and shown that Proclus, though not unsympathetic to the attribution of Neoplatonic philosophy to Pythagoreans, discounts the Pythagoreanizing tendencies in Iamblichus' mathematics in favour of more pedestrian—my word—explanations and a recourse to more serious mathematical predecessors such as Archimedes and Apollonius.⁴² Proclus, moreover, retains, as we might, Plato as the source of ideas that Iamblichus assigns to the character to whom we refer as Pseudo-Archytas. In this respect Proclus is at odds with his teacher Syrianus, who was no less ready than Iamblichus to see Pythagoras and his followers—real or alleged, such as the possibly purely fictional Pythagorean Brotinus⁴³—as the inventor of Platonist doctrine, seeing Archytas as the inventor of the Divided Line (*In Metaphysica Commentaria* 102.3–4) and even attributing to Pythagoras the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being (cf. *ibid.*, 81.31–38).⁴⁴ In these matters and others Syrianus may be seen as a closer “disciple” of Iamblichus than was Proclus. He was, on the other hand, less inclined than Iamblichus to explain away differences between Plato and Aristotle, so that we may see Iamblichus as being closer to the central tendency of Neoplatonist exposition of Aristotle.

41 Frg. 2 (above, note 1) 207.

42 “Mathematics and Philosophy in Proclus' Commentary on Book I of Euclid's *Elements*” in *Proclus. Lecteur et Interprète des Anciens. Actes du Colloque International du CNRS, Paris 2–4.10.1985*, J. Pépin and H.D. Saffrey, eds. (Paris 1987) 313–4; cf. also his “Iamblichus and Proclus' Euclid Commentary,” *Hermes* 115 (1987) 334–48.

43 Cf. *In Metaphysica Commentaria* 166.5–6, 183.1–3. The latest treatment of this figure, by A. Bélis (in *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, R. Goulet, ed., vol. 2 [Paris 1994] 137–8) takes him as a real Pythagorean of the first generation, while pointing out that some of the works attributed to him are falsifications.

44 On Syrianus' Pythagoreanizing, cf. especially D.J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1989) 119–41.

We may contrast the allegedly sober and sensible Simplicius who accepts and inserts material from "pseudo-Archytas," and is happy to attribute to him not only some of the details of Aristotle's treatise but also the invention of the ten categories:

Ἀρχύταν . . . ὅς πρὸ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους τὴν εἰς δέκα γένη
διαίρεσιν ἐποίησατο.

(In *Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium* 67.24–25)

And this is not just because "Archytas" had become part and parcel of discussion of the categories, since Simplicius also refers to his views on time—as quoted by Iamblichus—in the course of his *Physics* commentary (*ibid.*, 786.11–13).

Though once again proof is impossible, the firm insertion of the pseudo-Archytas material into the tradition of commentary on the *Categorias* was probably another of Iamblichus' contributions. To have arranged for the definitive adoption of "Archytas" would certainly be in line with his tendency to see Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans as the real founders of philosophy. Simplicius tells us that Iamblichus added other useful material to Porphyry's commentary, and after telling us about Archytas mentions further that Iamblichus inserted texts from his work at the appropriate places. While Simplicius does not say that Porphyry had made no use of these texts there is no evidence that he had done so, notwithstanding the fact that he was another Pythagoras enthusiast whose life of the sage contains tales which show that the scholarship which Porphyry applied to other matters had been put on the back burner.⁴⁵ That of the two it was Iamblichus rather than Porphyry who was responsible for using Archytas—and not just for supplying additional material, in the form of quotations from him, in the text of his commentary—is reinforced by the fact that Simplicius does not even mention Porphyry in the discussions of Archytas' text and ideas. In the extensive commentary on Simplicius' commentary being produced in Paris, Hadot has written that, "Jamblique . . . suivait pas à pas le grand commentaire à Gédalios de Porphyre, mais élargissait l'horizon de ce dernier en se servant . . . du traité du Pseudo-Archytas . . . *Sur le Tout*."⁴⁶ While that statement too does not rely on detailed argumentation, it is probably a fair account of what happened. The expansion produced by the adlection of Pseudo-Archytas was sufficiently far reaching to have caused Iamblichus to offer all sorts of comments which a commentator working without that material would not have made. In particular, as Simplicius tells us, he tried wherever possible to show that Aristotle agreed with Archytas, without neglecting their differences (*In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium* 2.21–24). What is surprising, if one is trying to take Iamblichus seriously as philosopher and commentator, is that he seems to have accepted the text as authentic, though at least some others realised that it was not. One such was Themistius, to whom we do not always look for attention to philological matters: he, as reported by Boethius, simply said that the Archytas in question was not Archytas of Tarentum but some Peripatetic who "used the old name to establish the authority of

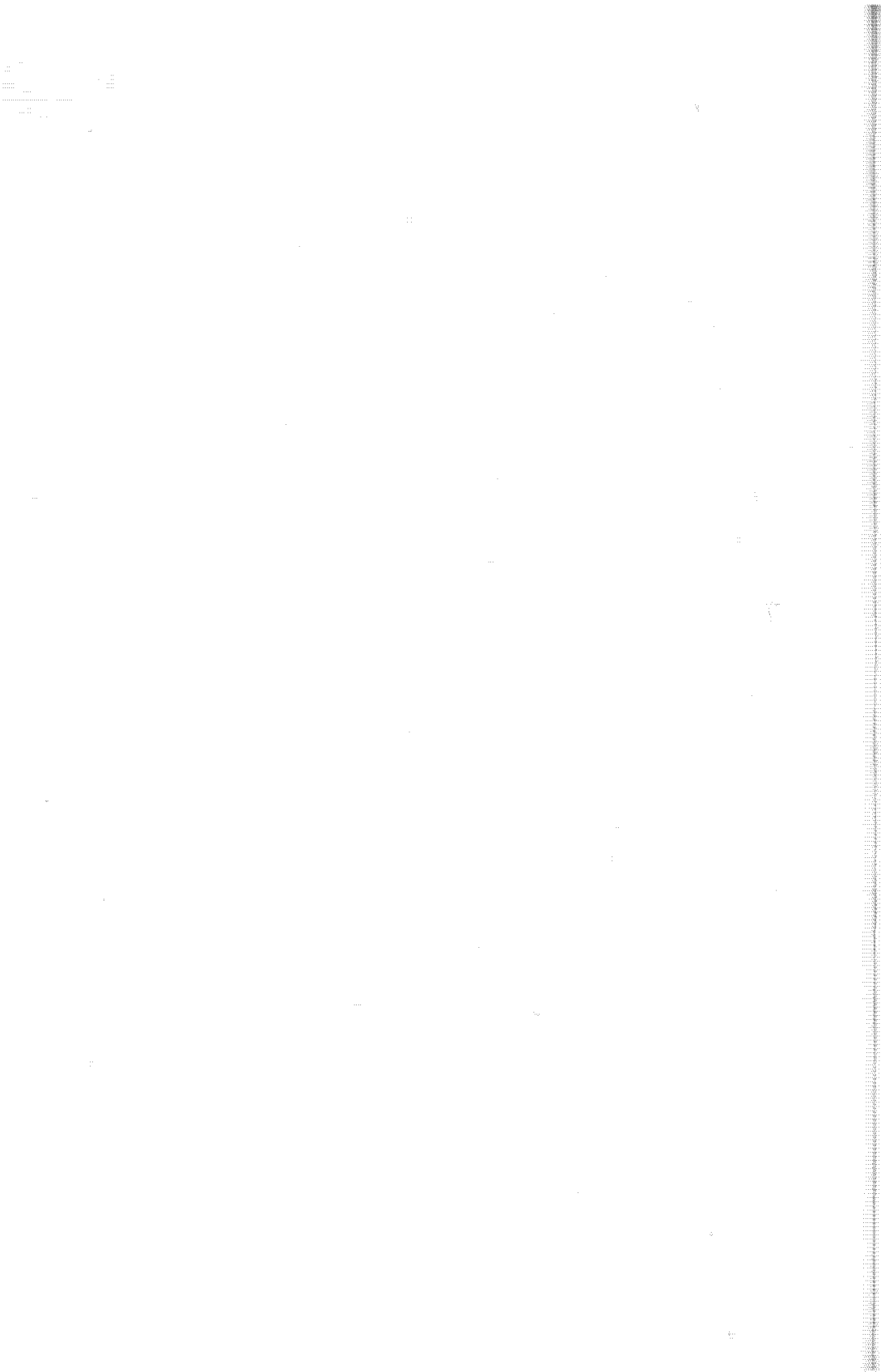
45 For a brief characterization, cf. M.J. Edwards, "Two images of Pythagoras: Iamblichus and Porphyry" in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods* (above, note 24) 159–60.

46 Hadot (above, note 16) 5, note 16.

a new work."⁴⁷ Iamblichus' credulity, assuming he was acting in good faith, can perhaps only be explained by the side of him that we are not primarily considering here. That he treated the text as a serious contribution to the discussion of the problems handled in the *Categories* is rather less culpable: that, after all, might have been what it was intended to be.

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⁴⁷ Boethius, *In Categories* 1 = *Patrologia Latina* 64, 162a. Cf. Chadwick ([above, note 6] 127) who points out that Boethius shared the scepticism about "Archytas" and draws attention to his *Institutio Arithmetica* 2.41. Hadot ([above, note 16] 20, note 7) suggests that Simplicius might have had Themistius as his target when he referred to those who held that Archytas' definition of time was a conflation of Stoic and Aristotelian material (cf. *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium* 350.10–16). The text from Boethius' *Categories* commentary may also be found in T.A. Szlezák, "Pseudo-Archytas über die Kategorien," *Peripatoi* 4 (Berlin 1972) 30.



Iamblichus and the Theological Interpretation of the *Parmenides*

Carlos G. Steel

The development of Neoplatonism is in many ways interconnected with the history of the interpretation of the *Parmenides*. The different views about the first principles that were defended in the School since Plotinus often depended upon a particular understanding of the hypotheses of the *Parmenides*. But one could as well say that a specific reading of the *Parmenides* started from a particular set of philosophical premisses. This interdependence of hermeneutics and philosophical speculation is particularly manifest in the case of Iamblichus who, in his interpretation of the Platonic texts, always intended "to consider the truth and reality" and was never satisfied with purely philological or literary explanations.¹ His important *Commentary on the Parmenides* is unfortunately lost. However we can reconstruct the basic principles of his interpretation thanks to the information we may gather from Proclus' monumental commentary.² Iamblichus' interpretation is often original and provocative since he departs radically from the preceding and the later tradition. Thus his proposal to consider as subject of the third hypothesis no longer the Soul, as all before and after him did, but the κρείττονα γένη, that is the superior classes such as angels, heroes and demons, forced him to put the souls on a lower grade in the scheme, the fourth hypothesis, which was traditionally reserved for the material

¹ On Iamblichus' hermeneutical method, see the article of H.J. Blumenthal in this volume, pages 1–13.

² Although Proclus uses extensively materials from previous commentators, and particularly from Porphyry and Iamblichus, he never explicitly mentions the names of his authorities, except for Syrianus. However, it is possible to identify many anonymous positions with great certainty. See *Notes Complémentaires to Theologia Platonica*, H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, eds., vol. 2 (Paris 1968) 125ff. and the excellent article of J.M. Dillon, "Porphyry and Iamblichus in Proclus' Commentary on the *Parmenides*" in *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies presented to L.G. Westerink*, J. Duffy and J. Peradotto, eds., *Arethusa* 21 (Buffalo and New York 1988) 21–48. For quotations I use *Proclus' Commentary on the Parmenides*, G.R. Morrow and J.M. Dillon, trans. (Princeton 1987), adapting the text when necessary.

forms. In this paper, however, I will examine his most controversial interpretation of the first hypothesis, and, subsidiary, of the second. As Proclus says, all interpreters from Plotinus on had agreed "that the first hypothesis concerns the primal God," the One or the Good, the first principle and ultimate end of all things.³ Iamblichus, however, seems to be an exception. For according to Proclus he argued that the first hypothesis is concerned "with God and the gods" (περὶ θεοῦ καὶ θεῶν), "for the argument is not only about the One, but about all the divine henads."⁴ The position of Iamblichus about the first hypothesis is not just an eccentric view of a bizarre philosopher occupied more with theurgy and religion than philosophical questions. On the contrary, it marks an important step in the history of the interpretation of the *Parmenides*, as is indirectly evident from the rather extended reaction of Proclus against his position.

In the introduction to his Commentary, Proclus gives us a historical survey of the interpretation of the *Parmenides*.⁵ First the text was understood as a logical or dialectical dialogue: a logical exercise without any real purport. Others gave the dialogue an ontological interpretation: it is a discussion about the Forms, that is the One intelligible Being. With Plotinus starts the henological interpretation: its dialectic is about the One and the different modes of being one. Finally, there is the theological reading to which Proclus subscribes. If one admits that to be God and to be One are the same, and that to be unified is to be deified, the *Parmenides* is about all things "insofar as" they are deified. The *Parmenides* thus becomes the dialogue in which Plato develops his "scientific theology." According to Proclus, this theological interpretation was first launched by his master Syrianus.⁶ However, I will argue that it is Iamblichus who is the real inventor of this interpretation. Proclus, however, is strongly opposed to this Iamblichean position, because, in his view, it undermines the basic principles of the true interpretation of the hypotheses, as he had learned it from Syrianus. As so often in a philosophical conflict, the closer a divergent opinion is to your own views, the more fiercely it will be attacked.

Proclus discusses Iamblichus' views at the most crucial moments in his Commentary on the *Parmenides*: at the beginning and at the end of the interpretation of the first hypothesis.⁷ Before he starts the detailed explanation of the lemmata of the text (λέξεις), Proclus first presents a general discussion (θεωρία) of the various questions concerning the first hypothesis. The first question is about its *skopos* or subject matter. This is of course the most fundamental question, because the entire interpretation of the dialectics of the *Parmenides* depends upon it. Some philosophers had argued that the first hypothesis has no referent in reality. It concerns a unity without being, which is a pure abstraction and even an impossibility, as is conceded by Parmenides when he concludes his negative deductions: "Is it possible that all this

3 In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1053.39–1054.1.

4 *Ibid.*, 6.1051.37–52.2.

5 *Ibid.*, 1.630.37–645.8.

6 *Ibid.*, 1.641.1ff. and 6.1061.20–64.17.

7 *Ibid.*, 6.1066.16–1071.8 and 7.499.16–31.

holds true of the One? I should say not" (*Parmenides* 142a). In *Theologia Platonica* 2.4, such a doctrine is attributed to the Platonist Origen who considered the Intellect as the first principle and rejected any other principle beyond the Intellect.⁸ This is, of course, for any true Neoplatonist a most heterodox position, and Proclus combats it fiercely, arguing with the help of the *Sophist* that the first hypothesis and its negations concern a reality and not an impossibility.⁹

Having refuted this interpretation, Proclus turns to another divergent opinion about the scope of the first hypothesis. Now the discussion is not with an outsider, but with someone in the Neoplatonic school, "some of those whom we revere" (*In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 1066.21). They fully accept that the first hypothesis is "about something which subsists beyond being;" this is "about the Divine," because only the Divine subsists beyond being. However, they conclude from this premiss that the hypothesis is not only about the first God or primal Cause but about all the other gods as well. The position referred to may certainly be attributed to Iamblichus. And Proclus also gives the main argument for his innovative interpretation:

For they argue that since every god, inasmuch as he is god, is a henad—for it is this, the One, which divinizes all being—for that reason they think it right to join to the speculation of the first God an exposition about all the gods. For all the gods are henads above being and transcend the multiplicity of beings and are the summits of beings (πάντες γὰρ εἰσιν ἐνάδες ὑπερούσιοι καὶ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ὄντων ὑπερανέχουσai καὶ ἀκρότητες τῶν οὐσιῶν).

(Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1066.22–28)

Proclus criticizes Iamblichus' opinion at length. How is it possible to bring together in one hypothesis the first God, which is only One and absolutely transcendent beyond all beings, and all the other gods, which are participated henads and are related to the multiplicity and the diversity of beings? And how can all the negative conclusions of this hypothesis similarly fit all the gods? And if, at the end, it is said of the One that it does not participate in being and that it is not even one, how could this hold true of the participated henads? If Iamblichus elsewhere emphasizes the transcendence of the primal One so much, why should he place this One in the same hypothesis with the henads which are participated in by being, or as Proclus puts it a bit sarcastically "why squeeze the whole discourse about the gods into the first hypothesis"?¹⁰ The fact that Proclus so lengthily and so emotionally attacks Iamblichus' position using many *ad hominem* arguments against him, is surprising. After all, the doctrinal divergence between both philosophers is not so great: for both, as we will see, share the same views about the gods as supersubstantial henads.

⁸ *Theologia Platonica* 2.4 and the introduction to H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink (above, note 2) x–xii.

⁹ Cf. C.G. Steel, "Le *Sophiste* comme Texte Théologique" in *Proclus et son Influence dans le Moyen Age*, E.P. Bos and P.A. Meijer, eds. (Leiden 1992) 51–64.

¹⁰ *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1068.30–31: συνωθοῦσιν τὸν περὶ θεῶν λόγον εἰς τὴν πρώτην ὑπόθεσιν.

If Proclus, then, so strongly opposes the venerated philosopher, it must be because of his interpretation of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

On Iamblichus' doctrine on the gods, we have a most interesting testimony in Damascius' *De Principiis*:

Almost all philosophers before Iamblichus considered that there is only one God beyond being, whereas all other gods are substantial beings (οὐσιώδεις), but divinized through illuminations (ἐλλάμψεις) from the One. According to them the multitude of the supersubstantial henads are not self-subsistent hypostases (αὐτοτελεῖς ὑποστάσεις), but illuminations from the only God and deifications given unto the various substances.

(Damascius, *De Principiis* vol. 3, 64.7–14)

All Platonist philosophers accepted, of course, a multitude of gods besides the first God: divine intellects, souls, demons, celestial bodies, even the world as a whole; but nobody had put those gods on the same level as the One itself as "ones" beyond being. They were intellects, souls, etc., but divinized through "illuminations" from the One. According to Damascius, Iamblichus was the first to declare that all gods insofar as gods, are "self-subsistent hypostases" or ὑπάρξεις beyond being and substance.¹¹ It is this doctrine about the gods which is fully developed by Syrianus and Proclus.

As we have seen, Syrianus based his theological interpretation of the *Parmenides* on the principle that "to be One and God, to be unified and divinized, are the same." This principle, however, must be further specified:

For this One exists in one way in the gods, otherwise in the beings that come after the gods; for in one case it is self-subsistent (αὐτοτελές), not like something existing in a substratum (for every god is god according to the One, though the first God is solely One, having no multiplicity, while each of the others is multiplied because different entities depend on each of them). So in the former case the One truly is, while in the latter case it exists as a habit (ἔξεις) in something else: a divine intellect, or soul or body.

(Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 1.641.22ff)

We therefore must posit after the One a series of self-subsistent "ones" or "henads" which are specified through the diverse classes of beings depending upon them and a series of beings which possess unity through participation as a habit. The first series is that of the gods, the second that of the divinized beings.

As the one soul has generated some souls separate from bodies, and some which are inseparable, and as the one and whole Intellect has constituted some intellects separate from souls, and others which are in them as habits (καθ' ἔξεις) of them, so also the One has produced some self-subsistent (αὐτοτελεῖς) henads which transcend their participants and other entities which act as unifications of other entities in which they inhere.

(Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1062.26–34)

¹¹ That may also be the reason why Iamblichus preferred to use the term ὑπάρξεις to designate the "being" of the gods. See Damascius, *De Principiis* 3, 149.10–13.

Much has been written on the origin and the meaning of this doctrine of the henadic gods since E.R. Dodds.¹² Apart from its evident structuring role in the Neoplatonic system (as Soul to souls, Intellect to intellects, so the One stands to "ones") it is probable that the focus on unity as the essential character of the gods must also be explained as a defence against the criticism of pagan polytheism by Christian intellectuals. Even if one must distinguish multiple and different gods (for the power of the divine should not be constrained or narrowed!), all gods *qua* gods are one and united. Proclus is usually credited with this doctrine, although he himself only summarizes his master's view. But if we believe Damascius, Iamblichus was the first to defend it.

However, in their introduction to volume 3 of the *Platonic Theology*, Saffrey and Westerink have denied that this doctrine goes back to Iamblichus. Although admitting that Iamblichus may have used the term "henad" to characterize the gods, his doctrine about "the God and the gods" is in fact about "the One and the Intelligible gods."¹³ I am not convinced, however, by the textual evidence they introduce and in this debate I will take the side of Dillon.¹⁴ It seems to me that Proclus substantially agrees with Iamblichus' doctrine about the henadic gods. Anyway, he never criticizes the doctrine itself. His refutation only concerns Iamblichus' ideosyncratic interpretation of the first hypothesis, because it undermines and confuses the rigorous structure of the dialectic of the *Parmenides* as he had learned it from his master Syrianus, and particularly the admirable correspondence between the conclusions of the first and the second hypothesis.

According to Syrianus, the first hypothesis is "about the One God insofar as he generates and orders all the classes of gods."¹⁵ This formulation is at first strikingly similar to Iamblichus' formulation "about God and the gods." For Syrianus does not consider the One in its absoluteness as the subject-matter of the

¹² *Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1963) 257–60 and 346; J.M. Dillon, "Iamblichus and the Origin of the Doctrine of the Henads," *Phronesis* 17 (1972) 102–06 (repr. in *Iamblichi Chalcidensis In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* [Leiden 1973] 412–16); H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, Introduction to vol. 3 of *Theologia Platonica* (Paris 1978) ix–xi; and J.M. Dillon, "Iamblichus and Henads Again" in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark, eds. (Bristol 1993) 48–54.

¹³ Thus at the conclusion of their excellent study with a discussion of all relevant textual material: "même si Jamblique a employé en quelque'endroit de son oeuvre le mot 'hénade,' c'était pour désigner un dieu intelligible, car sa doctrine est celle d'un dieu Un et des dieux intelligibles étroitement unis, et révélés par la première hypothèse" (above, note 12) xi.

¹⁴ Dillon (above, note 12). In his translation of Proclus' Commentary on the *Parmenides* ([Princeton 1987] 389) Dillon seems to be overwhelmed by the arguments of Saffrey and Westerink, but not fully convinced. In his recent study in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods* (above, note 12) he develops an interpretation which tries to reconcile both positions: his first interpretation (Iamblichus had a theory about henads) and the thesis of Saffrey and Westerink (Iamblichus' henads are in fact identical with the intelligible gods). Although admitting that the henads are formally distinguished from the intelligible, he still admits that they may be substantially identified with the One Being insofar as they are objects of intellection. My position in this article is different and less complicated, I hope.

¹⁵ In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1063.20–22: τὴν πρώτην ὑπόθεσιν τίθει περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς εἶναι θεοῦ πῶς γεννᾷ καὶ διακοσμεῖ πάσας τὰς τάξεις τῶν θεῶν.

first hypothesis, but "the One insofar as it generates all the ones." However, the gods generated by the primal One are not included in the first hypothesis: they are introduced in hierarchical order in the second hypothesis. "The second is about the divine orders, how they have proceeded from the One and about the being which is connected to each of them." In his interpretation, Syrianus insists on the remarkable parallelism between the order of the deductions in the first and in the second hypothesis. Whatever is denied of the One in the first hypothesis (that it is not many, that it is neither a whole nor a part, that it has no limit, that it is without shape, that it is neither the same nor different, that it is neither like nor unlike, that it is neither equal nor unequal, etc.) is affirmed, in the same order, of the One-being in the second hypothesis. Moreover, the order of the deductions, from the most general to the most specific, corresponds to the procession of the various classes of gods (or self-subsisting ones) from the superior to the inferior, that is, the intelligible, intellectual, hypercosmic, etc. until we reach, at the very end, the divinized classes (souls and bodies). By denying all those attributes to the One in the first hypothesis Parmenides shows that the One is above all the classes of gods, whereas by affirming them of the One, he manifests all the classes of gods that proceed from it.¹⁶

We have thus demonstrated that one must articulate the second hypothesis according to all the processions of the One-that-is and that this hypothesis is nothing else but the generation and the procession of the gods which proceeds from above from the supreme unification of the intelligibles until the divinized substance. (*Theologia Platonica* vol. 3, 23.81.25-82.4)

Thus Proclus summarizes his doctrine in *Platonic Theology* 3.23 before he starts his exposition of the intelligible gods based upon the *Parmenides*. It is exactly at this crucial moment of his exposition that he feels the need to attack again Iamblichus' views on the subject of the first hypothesis:

The argument in the first hypothesis is not as some say, about God and the gods. For it is not lawful to connect the multiplicity with the One itself and the One with the multiplicity; for the primal God is absolutely transcendent above all things. But in the first hypothesis he denies both being and the one itself of the first. This, however, does not befit the other gods, as is evident for everyone. (*Theologia Platonica* 3.23)

Thus far, we have learned nothing we did not yet know from the discussion in the *Parmenides Commentary*. However, Proclus now continues with a very important statement:

Οὐ μὴν οὐδ', ὥς αὐτοὶ λέγουσι, περὶ τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ποιεῖται τὸν λόγον ὁ Παρμενίδης, ἐκείνων τὰς ἀποφάσεις εἶναι λέγοντες διότι συνήνουνται τῷ ἐνὶ καὶ εἰσὶν ἀπλότῃ καὶ ἐνώσει προέχοντες ἀπάντων τῶν θεῶν γενῶν. (*Theologia Platonica* 82.10-14)

¹⁶ For a clear exposition of Syrianus' and Proclus' scientific interpretation of the *Parmenides*, see H.D. Saffrey, "La Théologie Platonicienne de Proclus, Fruit de l'Exégèse du Parménide," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 116 (1984) 1-12.

And it is also not true that Parmenides in the first hypothesis is treating of the intelligible gods, as they maintain. For they say that the negations refer to those gods because they are united to the One and surpass in simplicity and unity all the other divine classes of gods.

Starting from this text Saffrey and Westerink have argued that the "gods" Iamblichus is discussing in the first hypothesis are not the predecessors of Proclus' henads, but the intelligible gods. "On n'échappe donc pas à la conclusion que pour Jamblique le sujet de la première hypothèse était le Premier Dieu et les dieux intelligibles."¹⁷ As confirmation of this interpretation they quote several texts from Iamblichus which prove how much he insisted on the fact that the intelligible is inseparable from the One, substantiated in the One, fixated in it, not proceeding from it, contracted in it.... I quote *inter multa*: "the divine Iamblichus declares that the intelligible remains in the One, and that it is more united to the One than to being and that it is more characterized by the One than by being."¹⁸ From these and similar texts they conclude that according to Iamblichus the intelligible is so intimately united to the One, that it may be included in the negative discourse about the One in the first hypothesis. In fact, the gods of the first hypothesis are nothing but the intelligible monads which are concentrated in the primal One.

It is in this sense that they propose to supplement the missing text in the presentation of Iamblichus' interpretation of the hypotheses in *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1054.37–1055.17. In fact in the manuscript tradition of the Commentary the section concerning the second hypothesis is lacking through an unfortunate omission (probably due to a *homoioteleuton*). The text runs thus:

τὴν μὲν πρώτην λέγοντες εἶναι περὶ θεοῦ καὶ θεῶν· οὐ γὰρ
μόνον περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ πασῶν τῶν θεῶν ἐνάδων αὐτὴν
ποιεῖσθαι τὸν λόγον νοητῶν· τὴν δὲ τρίτην ...

It is clear that we miss a statement about the subject of the second hypothesis. But where does the lacuna start and what is missing? Grammatically it is difficult to construe νοητῶν with τῶν θεῶν ἐνάδων. Therefore it seems that something is missing before the word νοητῶν. At first Saffrey and Westerink suggested that the second hypothesis contains νοερά and νοητά.¹⁹ Their suggestion was followed by J.M. Dillon (1973, page 206), who proposed, *exempli gratia*, that the lacuna should be filled as follows:

λόγον· <τὴν δὲ δευτέραν περὶ τοῦ νοεροῦ πλάτους καὶ τῶν
θεῶν τῶν> νοητῶν· τὴν δὲ τρίτην ...

However, in their edition of *Theologia Platonica* vol. 3 Saffrey and Westerink reconsidered their first opinion and proposed a new correction:²⁰

¹⁷ *Theologia Platonica*, introduction (above, note 12, xxx).

¹⁸ Cf. Damascius (above, page 18) vol. 2, 93.24–94.4.

¹⁹ *Theologia Platonica* (above, note 12) 1.1968, page lxxii.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xix, note 2 followed by Dillon in his translation of Proclus' Commentary (above, note 2) 412.

λόγον· <τὴν δὲ δευτέραν περὶ τῶν νοερῶν, ἀλλ' οὐ περὶ
τῶν νοητῶν· τὴν δὲ τρίτην...

the second hypothesis is about the intellectual beings, not about the intelligible.

In their justification of this correction they suppose that Iamblichus, reacting, as he often did, against Porphyry, restricted the second hypothesis to the level of the intellectual beings, whereas he put the intelligible beings in the first, because he considered them as co-united with the One. Besides, they argue, there is no other occasion to discuss the intelligible gods, because it appears that Iamblichus had reserved the second hypothesis for the "Intellectual realm." At least, that is a reasonable inference from a comment made by Proclus in his criticism of Iamblichus' interpretation.²¹ As we have seen, Iamblichus had reserved the third hypothesis, not for the soul, as was usual, but for the "superior classes of being." But, as Proclus remarks, there is no need for a special hypothesis for those classes, because they are either 'intellectual beings' and then they must be included in the second hypothesis, for we have there a treatment of "the whole intellectual level" (πᾶν τὸ νοερὸν πλάτος); or if they are psychic beings, they must be included in the treatment of the soul in the third hypothesis. But it seems difficult to me to conclude from this sole section of the Commentary that Iamblichus had reserved the second hypothesis exclusively for the intellectual beings. The context of Proclus' remark is polemical. There is nothing to prevent Iamblichus' view being that the second hypothesis also treats of the intelligible beings.²² There are even many texts, and particularly a long section in the *Timaeus* commentary, which make clear that Iamblichus considered the One being of the *Parmenides* or the "monad of being," or the ὄντως οὐσία or ἀεὶ ὄν as identical with the νοητόν. Iamblichus situates this ἐν ὄν at the summit of the intelligible realm, "enjoying primary participation in the One."²³ The fact that this One being or νοητόν is more characterized (εἰδοποιεῖται) by the One than by being, that it is rather one than being, does not prevent it from being the supreme level of being, what Damascius will later call the Unified (τὸ ἡνωμένον). If then the Intelligible and the One being are identical, we must also accept that the Intelligible is the subject of the second hypothesis.

But what, then, about the first hypothesis? Are not the intelligibles also included here? And how could they be the subject matter of two hypotheses? For a correct understanding of Iamblichus' position we must return to the testimony of Proclus in the *Platonic Theology* 3.23. One cannot conclude from this text that Iamblichus identified the intelligible monads with the gods. On the contrary, it is clear from the structure of the argument that they must be formally distinguished. For Proclus first criticizes Iamblichus because he put the many henadic gods together with the one God in the first hypothesis. He then goes on with an *a fortiori* argument: "And it is also not true (οὐ μὴν οὐδέ) that the first hypothesis is an argument about

²¹ Cf. *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1055.16–23.

²² A similar observation has been made by I. Perczel (Budapest) in a not yet published seminar given in Paris (1995).

²³ *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.230.5ff.

the intelligible gods.” We may infer from this text that, in Iamblichus’ interpretation, the first hypothesis is not only a discussion “about God and the gods,” but also about the “intelligible.” The text of *Theologia Platonica* 3.23, page 82.10–12:

οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ποιεῖται
τὸν λόγον ὁ Παρμενίδης ...

even offers an excellent parallel to complement the lacuna in *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1054.37ff. Therefore I would hazard the following correction:

οὐ γὰρ μόνον περὶ τοῦ ἐνός, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ πασῶν τῶν
θεῶν ἐνάδων αὐτὴν ποιεῖσθαι τὸν λόγον <καὶ περὶ> τῶν νοητῶν
<τὴν δὲ δευτέραν οὐ μόνον περὶ τῶν νοερῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν
νοητῶν>.

The first hypothesis is about God and the gods—for the discussion is not only about the One, but also about all the divine henads <and about> the intelligibles; <the second is not only about the intellectual beings, but also about the intelligibles>.

Therefore the intelligible must have been discussed by Iamblichus both in the first and in the second hypothesis, as Proclus explicitly says in his criticism: “according to this position Parmenides will have to treat the intelligible gods in the second hypothesis: for whatever he denied in this first hypothesis, he affirms again in the latter.” In the formulation of the subject of the second hypothesis (“not only . . . , but . . .”), we may recognize some polemic against Porphyry. As we know, Iamblichus was the first to make a real distinction between the intelligible and the intellectual realm. Therefore he must have insisted that this hypothesis not only concerns the intellectual, but also the intelligible realm.

But how can the intelligible principles be the subject of both the first and the second hypothesis? And how can they be included in the first? Certainly not in the same way as the henadic gods are. For that the henads must be included in the negative discourse about the One is understandable from Iamblichus’ perspective. After all, those gods are, as we have seen, self-subsisting unities and as such transcend all being and all predicates depending upon being (many, whole, part, identical, different, etc.). All the negative deductions of the first hypothesis can, then, as well be applied to all the gods if we consider them only in what characterizes them formally as gods, that is as unities, without including in our consideration their specifying characters. For of each god, be he intelligible or intellectual or encosmic, it must be said that, insofar as he is god, he is not many, not similar, not identical, not different, etc. But what then about the intelligible principles? Why are they also introduced in the first hypothesis? Proclus gives us a clue: “They say that the negations refer to the intelligible gods because they are united to the One and surpass in simplicity and unity all the other divine classes.” But exactly what did Iamblichus mean by that?

In the search for an answer one must examine carefully Proclus’ Commentary on the first hypothesis (*In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6–7), searching for all possible hints to Iamblichus’ interpretation.²⁴ If we bring all the material together,

²⁴ For this research, the study of Dillon (above, note 2) was most welcome.

however scarce and fragmentary it may be, there emerges one feature which sets Iamblichus' interpretation apart from that of Syrianus and Proclus. As we know, in each of the different sections of the first hypothesis different attributes are denied of the One: the many, the whole, the figure, the same and the different, etc. In the interpretation of Syrianus and Proclus, each of these negated attributes correspond in a descending order to the various classes of gods that are revealed in the second hypothesis. Thus "many" corresponds to "the first triad of the intelligible-intellectual gods," and "similar and dissimilar" to "the hypercosmic gods."²⁵ If, then, we deny of the One that it is "similar and dissimilar," we affirm of it that it subsists beyond the order of the hypercosmic gods, and that it is their transcendent cause. Syrianus' interpretation thus manifests clearly the structure of the succeeding deductions, and particularly the remarkable correspondence between the negations of the first and the affirmations of the second hypothesis. For that reason Proclus admires his master's interpretation which, in his view, lays the foundation of a rigorous scientific theology.

Because this hermeneutical scheme is so dominantly present in the commentary on the *Parmenides*, it is difficult to recognize in the text traces of another interpretation, that of Iamblichus. However, if we bring together all the fragmentary information, we may thus reconstruct the main principles of his interpretation. According to Iamblichus, *all* the attributes which are denied of the One God (and of all the gods) are in fact attributes of the νοητόν. Thus he did not diversify the different attributes and assign them to the different levels in the descending theo-ontological hierarchy: that is the original position of Syrianus. In Iamblichus' interpretation the purport of all the successive negations was to deny of the One all the different attributes of the intelligible. Therefore "all the negations are only of the intelligible" and not, as Syrianus and Proclus propose, the first of the intelligible, the second of the intelligible intellectual, the third of

The reason why it is primarily the intelligible that is negated of the One is obvious. For we know how Iamblichus insisted on the proximity of the intelligible to the One. The monad of being, the pure act of being, is so close to the One that it is almost absorbed by it: "the intelligible remains in the One, united to it, coagulated with it, concentrated to it, etc." If, then, we must deny of the One whatever is not one, we must deny those attributes which characterize that ontological level that is so close to it that it is nearly indistinguishable from it. It is therefore fitting that all the negations about the One are in fact attributes of the νοητόν. For what would be venerable (σεμνόν) if we were to deny of the One that it is sensible or corporeal or in time or in motion or that it has qualities or quantities? That the One is none of these is so evident that it does not have to be demonstrated. Neither does it have to be argued that the One is not discursive or lifegiving as is the soul, or thought and ideas as is the intellect. But Parmenides wants to show in this first hypothesis that the One (and the ones) are even beyond the Intelligible, that is the One being. Therefore all attributes related to the intelligible must be denied of it, and that is the most difficult, because from our human approach the One and the Unified seem to be the same.

²⁵ See table of correspondences in Saffrey and Westerink, introduction to *Theologia Platonica* (above, note 2) lxxiii-lxix.

Let us illustrate what seems to be Iamblichus' position with two examples. Parmenides begins the deductions from the first hypothesis by denying of the One that it is "many" (πολλά, 137c.4). But what precisely are these "many" denied of the One?²⁶ For some interpreters, the "many" here stand for the multiple as such, without specifying on what ontological level; others (probably Porphyry) identified this "many" as the "intellectual multiplicity" (νοερὸν πλῆθος): Parmenides, they say, intends to remove the intellectual multiplicity from the first cause in order that it may be only One and superior to the Intellect. But this position is severely criticized by other philosophers, τούτων ἐνθεαστικώτεροι, who certainly must be identified with Iamblichus. They do not accept the identification of the πολλά as νοερὸν πλῆθος. For as they declare: "far prior to the intellectual numbers there are the intelligible monads (νοητὰ μονάδες) from which there has appeared all the intellectual multiplicity arranged in its many orders; it is that multiplicity which is removed from the One, inasmuch as it is next after the One, which the intellectual is not. Nor is it to be wondered at if the One transcends intellectual multiplicity since intelligible monads are also superior to it."²⁷

Another example is the discussion of the significance of the attributes "in motion, in rest, same and other" which are denied of the One in *Parmenides* 139b.4–5. Some philosophers recognized in these attributes the celebrated μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist*. However, here again someone, most probably Iamblichus, reacted against this too easy identification. We know that Iamblichus situated those "genera of being" only on the intellectual level where the differentiation of the forms already starts.²⁸ Therefore we must exclude that Parmenides is referring to those "genera" when he denies "in motion" and "the same and other" of the One. For the intellectual level is too far remote from the One. Only what is immediately akin to the One is venerable enough to be denied of it. "It is therefore necessary that the multiplicity which manifests itself immediately from the One should be most akin to the One, constricted in quantity and incomprehensible in power, in order that through the constrictedness of its quantity it should imitate the lack of quantity of the One and through the incomprehensibility of its power the infinity of the One which is prior to power . . ."²⁹ What, then, is denied of the One, are again the attributes of the νοητόν, the One being.

We may recognize Iamblichus' interpretation also in the discussion of the attributes "equal and unequal" (*Parmenides* 140b). It is not the physical equal or unequal which is denied of the One, nor the mathematical, nor the one established in the reasons of the soul, not even the intellectual form itself. For all these levels of beings are only partial and unworthy of an hypothesis which concerns the One. "For what is so venerable about the One being superior to an intellectual form?"³⁰

26 See, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1089.16–1090.23.

27 *Ibid.*, 6.1090.13–23 (trans. J.M. Dillon).

28 Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.230.5ff.

29 *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 7.1174.5–13.

30 *Ibid.*, 7.1204.19ff.

We now understand better why Proclus in *Platonic Theology* 3.23 maintains that Iamblichus included the intelligible in the first hypothesis and why he criticizes him. To be sure, he agrees with Iamblichus that the denied attributes must correspond to "properties of gods," but he cannot accept that *all* those attributes correspond to properties of intelligible gods. For, as he says, how was it possible to interpret all attributes, for example "to be similar," "to be dissimilar" or "to touch" as referring to the intelligible gods? We do not know how Iamblichus did it, but knowing his extravagant hermeneutical skills, he probably had no difficulties in interpreting "touching" as a characteristic of the intelligible. But, as Proclus remarks, if you follow this line of interpretation you will have to discuss the intelligible gods twice, both in the first and in the second hypothesis. Iamblichus could have replied. Yes, but it will be in a different way: in the first the νοητά are only discussed insofar as they are denied of the One as its most proximate manifestation. In the second they will be introduced in their own right as the One being or Monad of being.

It is most unfortunate that we cannot reconstruct Iamblichus' interpretation of the second hypothesis, and particularly where exactly he situated the transition from the νοητά to the level of the νοερά where the first ἐτερότης entered. However, it seems evident to me that Iamblichus did not interpret the affirmations of the second hypothesis in a sequence corresponding to the negations of the first. Therefore I cannot accept Dillon's suggestion that Iamblichus already foreshadowed Syrianus' interpretation in which "the series of negations in the first hypothesis (and the corresponding assertions in the second) represent the successive levels of the noetic and the noeric realms."³¹

However, we have some valuable information on how Iamblichus understood the transition from the first to the second hypothesis. At the end of the first hypothesis Parmenides, after having deduced all the negative conclusions about the One and having argued that it has no being, cannot be known in any way, and is not even one, raises the question whether all these conclusions are possible about this one (ἢ δυνατόν περὶ τὸ ἐν ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχειν; 142a). They are not possible, Aristotle agrees. About the interpretation of this final and comprehensive negative conclusion, there was a controversy in the Neoplatonic school. Some recognized in this conclusion a fatal blow against the position of an absolute transcendent One. If you posit such a One, you end up with a set of absurdities (ἀδύνατα). Therefore the ὑπερούσιον One is a term without any existence (ἀνύπαρκτον). As we have seen, this was the position of Origen the Platonist who refused to admit a principle beyond the divine Intellect. The true Neoplatonists, of course, fiercely rejected such an interpretation, and they came up with other explanations of this difficult text. Porphyry, as often, insisted on the rhetorical literary composition of the dialogue. By raising this question, he says, Parmenides prepares the transition to the second hypothesis. Iamblichus, however, rejected this interpretation which he considered superficial. He preferred an interpretation that considers not just formal aspects of the texts, but "reality itself." Here is his own solution:

31 Dillon (above, note 2) 42–44.

Others think that this conclusion is common, and comprehensive of all the negations already articulated. For just as there were conclusions for each proposition, so after all of them this conclusion is introduced: that all of these things are impossible about the One—"many," "whole," "shape," "in itself" and "in another . . ." All of these things are impossible about the One, as has been demonstrated. And because of this, these people say, Parmenides asks at this point if it is possible to say that these things are so about the One, and Aristotle replies in the negative. For, in reality, whatever you add to the One is something other than the One; and the One, taking in addition some other things besides what it is, becomes *some* one instead of the simple One, just as "living-being," taking in addition some other thing besides what it is, becomes some "living-being," and equally the simple "good," or "simple equal," or simple "like" or "whole," whenever each takes something in addition, becomes, instead of the simple, "some good," "some equal," "some like"—and this must be said in a general way about all such "simples," just as it must be said about the One. So the single negation, which is comprehensive of all of these additions makes it clear that the One, not being one of all these terms, is the cause of them all. And so the common negation imitates the collective procession of all things from the One, and the manifestation of each thing, both separate and together, which appears according to the appropriate ordering.³²

(In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 7, 517.24–46)

Iamblichus formulates in this text a fundamental theorem about the One which Proclus often uses to develop his own doctrine of the henads. All the henads originate from the One through the different "additions" (προσθέσεις) to the One which specify them and multiply them as "some ones," each having its own ιδιότης.³³ But here again we notice how Proclus uses a Iamblichean theorem to refute his particular interpretation of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

For how is it possible (asks Proclus) to say that the first hypothesis is not solely about the first God, but rather about all the gods? For all of the henads of the other gods coexist with being, so that each god is, whereas only that One may be said to be above being and unparticipated, lest it be some one instead of the simple One. For the one which is together with something else is some one, just as the being which is together with life is living being, and not being itself, and the life which is together with intellect is intellectual life and not simply life. And in general everything taken with a difference is not the same as that which is taken simply, before the difference. For this reason, one must not say that this hypothesis is also about the gods, as some have thought.³⁴

(In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 499.6–15)

The argument Proclus uses here against Iamblichus is in fact entirely based upon a Iamblichean principle. This again shows that the divergence between both philosophers is not about the doctrine of the henads, but about the question of where

³² The English translation (by G. McIsaac) is based upon my Greek retroversion of the Latin translation of William of Moerbeke which will appear in *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale*. I have translated (and corrected) page 517.42–43 as follows: ἡ μία οὖν ἀπόφασις πασῶν τῶν <προς> θέσεων συνεκτικὴ <ἐνδείκνυται ὅτι> τὸ ἐν μηδὲν ὄν πάντων αἰτίον ἐστὶ πάντων.

³³ This doctrine is explicitly attributed to Syrianus in *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 641.20–643.4, but it is evident from the text in 7, pages 516.24–517.46 that it was already developed by Iamblichus.

³⁴ This translation is also based upon my Greek retroversion of the Latin translation.

to situate them in the hypotheses. The position of Proclus is clear: they cannot be together with the absolute One in the first. But what may have been the reasons for Iamblichus to include them in the first? Probably Iamblichus must have insisted that the gods, inasmuch as they are gods, are "unities" beyond being. Therefore, all the negative conclusions we deduce about the One, are also true of all the "ones," however different they may be through the additions. Those negations must not be understood as privations or shortcomings. By denying everything added to the One, we affirm that it is the cause of the specific things of which we deny the attributes. As Iamblichus puts it: "The negation of the additions makes it clear that the One, not being one of all those terms, is the cause of them all." That is why the last negation, which is comprehensive of all negations, manifests the procession of *all* things from the first Cause. And Proclus formulates the same principle thus:

All that Parmenides denies of the One, proceeds from it: for it must itself be nothing of all, in order that all may proceed from it . . . The negations that are assumed in the first hypothesis are therefore generative of the affirmations that will be examined in the second. For whatever the first generates in the first, is generated and proceeds in its proper order in the second, and thus appears the whole order of the gods which subsist from the exalted henad. (In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1076.29–32; 1077.13–18)

Here again we see how Proclus, moving from a Iamblichean principle ("the negations of the additions are generative of the specifications"), comes to the conclusion that "the whole order of gods" proceeds in the second hypothesis. At first his interpretation may seem more coherent than that of Iamblichus. However, we must admit that even Proclus' position raises many problems. If we put the henads themselves in the second hypothesis, are we not bringing them down to the level of the One being? For as Proclus says: "all the henads of the other gods coexist with being; each god *is*, whereas only the One may be said to be above being." (Καὶ γὰρ πᾶσαι αἱ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν ἐνάδες σὺν τῷ ὄντι συνψίστανται ὥστε ἕκαστος θεὸς ἔστιν, In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 499.78). But do not all divine henads as ἀυτοτελεῖς ὑποστάσεις subsist beyond being, even if they are distinguished by different characters that can only be described on the level of the second hypothesis? Is this not a reason to include them in the first hypothesis? Further, there is the notorious difficulty all Proclus scholars struggle with: where exactly have we to situate the henads in Proclus' system? As henads they must be situated beyond the intelligible, beyond even πέρας and ἄπειρον. But in other texts Proclus defends that πέρας and ἄπειρον come first after the One and even specify different types of henads.³⁵ We find a similar ambiguity in his interpretation of the *Parmenides*. The henads are beyond being, and still they are manifested only in the different levels of the One Being. And finally, one may ask, if the second hypothesis is about all the divine henads insofar as they are proceeding on all levels from the νοητόν to the divinized souls and bodies, where does Parmenides discuss the νοητόν and the νοερόν as such?

As we have seen, the main reason why Proclus rejects Iamblichus' interpretation of the first hypothesis is that it takes away the unique transcendence of

³⁵ On πέρας and ἄπειρον in Iamblichus, see the article of G. Van Riel in this volume, pages 31–46.

the First One. Only of this First does the negative discourse hold true. How, then, could Iamblichus put the absolutely transcendent together with the participated henads in the same hypothesis? Is this position not inconsistent with what we know from other texts about Iamblichus, namely that he always insisted on the absolute transcendence of the First?

In fact, as we know from Damascius, Iamblichus made a sharp distinction between the ἀρρητον which is beyond all being, even beyond being one, which is neither cause nor principle of anything, and the One which is the cause of the intelligible being.³⁶ However, Saffrey and Westerink already suggested that for Iamblichus the ἀρρητον could not have been the subject of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.³⁷ The subject of the hypothesis is the One-Cause. We cannot be sure whether Iamblichus held that position. But it certainly is the opinion of Damascius who, as we know, often follows Iamblichus in his interpretation. That the Ineffable is not subject of any hypothesis in the *Parmenides* is evident from many texts in *De Principiis*, for example 1, page 19.1ff. Why, Damascius asks here, should we go beyond the One in our search for the first principle? Already in our effort to grasp the One we encounter all possible difficulties. For, as Plato says in the *Parmenides*, the One, when it exists, is not even one. And if it does not exist, there is no name and no discourse of it. It is thus ineffable and unknowable. Why then are we seeking something beyond this Ineffable? But, as Damascius says, perhaps Plato makes us ascend through this One (διὰ μέσου τοῦ ἐνός) in an ineffable way towards that which is truly ineffable. For just as he has lead us to the One by the suppression of the "many" (the first hypothesis), so he will bring us to the Ineffable by the suppression of the One. Having arrived there Plato remains silent. For there is no way to talk about the Ineffable. It is not a principle of discourse or dialectic; it is not a principle of anything specific, not even of being one. Therefore the Ineffable can as such not be the subject of the first hypothesis: it is only indirectly suggested, at the end of the hypothesis, by the total negation of the One. We learn nothing about it in the dialectic of the *Parmenides*. It is "snatching itself away," as the *Chaldaean Oracles* say.³⁸

If the subject of the first hypothesis is not the Ineffable, but the One-Cause from which "all things proceed in an appropriate order," then it is understandable why all other gods or henadic causes may be included together with it in the first hypothesis. After all there is not a radical difference between God and the gods, the One and the many ones. Proclus, however, does not accept an Ineffable beyond the One. The One-Cause of everything is the Ineffable, as we learn from the last deductions of the first hypothesis. Therefore he must reject all other gods to a lower level in the procession, because, in his view, they are radically different from the absolute and transcendent One from which they proceed.

It thus seems that Proclus' argument *ad hominem* does not hold against Iamblichus: why, Proclus exclaims, can a philosopher who emphasizes that much

³⁶ Damascius (above, page 18) 2, 1.4ff.

³⁷ Cf. Saffrey and Westerink, introduction to *Theologia Platonica* (above, note 12) xxxi-xxxii.

³⁸ In *Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 1067.2-3: cf. *Chaldaean Oracles*, frg.3.1, É. des Places, ed. (Paris 1971).

the transcendence of the First, put the henads together with the First in the same hypothesis? But perhaps Iamblichus' First was so transcendent and so ineffable that it could not even be included in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

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The Transcendent Cause:
Iamblichus and the *Philebus* of Plato¹

Gerd Van Riel

I. The *Philebus* of Iamblichus

Iamblichus' attitude towards the *Philebus* of Plato fits within the general framework of his exegesis of Plato, namely that each Platonic dialogue should be read starting from one principal theme or *skopos*, to which all the details of the text are related.² In the case of the *Philebus*, we have two texts referring to Iamblichus' general interpretation of this dialogue. The accounts they give are not fully coextensive, and even seem to end up in a contradiction. Let us, then, examine them closely.

The first text is taken from the anonymous author of the *Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato* (sixth century), and presents the order in which the works of Plato were to be read according to Iamblichus:³

Ἐσχατον δὲ δεῖ τὸν Φίληβον [sc. πρῶττειν], ἐπειδὴ ἐν αὐτῷ
περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ διαλέγεται, ὃ πάντων ἐπέκειντά ἐστιν· οὐκοῦν καὶ
αὐτὸν δεῖ πάντων ἐπέκεινα καὶ τελευταῖον εἶναι.

¹ I wish to thank Prof. C.G. Steel for his support and his critical remarks on this paper, M. Dubois and G. Shaw for having corrected my English. To the Fund for Scientific Research of Flanders (Belgium), I owe my gratitude for the financial support.

² Cf. K. Praechter, "Richtungen und Schulen im Neuplatonismus" in *Genethliakon für C. Robert* (Berlin 1910) 128-9; see also Iamblichus Chalcidensis in *Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. and trans. (Leiden 1973) 56-7.

³ *Prolegomènes à la Philosophie de Platon*, L.G. Westerink, ed., J. Trouillard, trans. (Paris 1990) chapter 26, pages 26-29 (my translation).

Last of all [i.e. before commencing the reading of the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*] one has to treat of the *Philebus*, because here the discussion concerns the good which is beyond everything; therefore this dialogue should also be beyond all others and the last one.

This text poses an interesting problem. One cannot disregard the reference which is made here to the sixth book of the *Republic*, the only place where Plato mentions the "Good which is beyond being" (509b9). In Iamblichus' opinion, the *Philebus* must be understood by connecting it with this passage. But, strangely enough, the *Republic* itself is absent from Iamblichus' canon⁴—at least as it is presented in the *Prolegomena*, which is intended as a directive for beginning Plato students. According to Iamblichus, so it seems, there was no need for a neophyte in Platonism to read the *Republic*. In return, it is from the *Philebus* that the teaching on the transcendent Good is to be drawn. The *Philebus* seems to have taken over the role played by the short allusion to the Good in the *Republic*.

That this was the view of Iamblichus is confirmed up to a point by the doxography concerning the theme of the *Philebus* with which Damascius opens his *Commentary* on this dialogue:⁵

"Ὅτι ὁ σκοπὸς κατὰ Ἰάμβλιχον καὶ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Συριανὸν καὶ τὸν Πρόκλον περὶ τοῦ τελικοῦ αἰτίου πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν, ὃ ἐστὶ περὶ τοῦ διὰ πάντων διήκοντος ἀγαθοῦ, οὐχ ἀπλῶς δὲ οὕτως· οὐ γὰρ δήπου τοῦ ἐξηρημένου, ἀλλὰ τοῦ κατ' αὐτὰ τὰ ὄντα θεωρουμένου καὶ ἐφ' ὃ σπεύδει τὰ πάντα καὶ οὐ ἐφικνέται· τὸ γὰρ ἐξηρημένον ἀνέφικτον.

The theme, according to Iamblichus and the school of Syrianus and Proclus, is the final Cause of the universe, that is, the Good that permeates everything; with this restriction, however, that it is not of course the transcendent Good, but the Good that is manifested in existing things themselves, to which all things aspire and which they actually attain, the transcendent Good being unattainable.

This passage, too, bears witness to a high esteem for the *Philebus* on the part of Iamblichus, but it presents manifestly a different view on the scope of the dialogue. Here it is stated explicitly that the *Philebus* does not speak of the transcendent Good, whereas this was precisely the account given in the *Prolegomena*. Westerink (*ad loc.*) points out that "if Iamblichus' opinion is correctly reported in *Prolegomena* 26 . . . , the restriction in Damascius' *Commentary* was not made by him, but by Syrianus and Proclus, or by Proclus only."⁶ Now it is possible that this confusion is due to a hasty and over-simplified classification on the part of Damascius (or of the redactor of the *Commentary*, given that the text as it stands consists of the written précis of a series of lectures), presenting as identical the opinions of Iamblichus,

⁴ It neither is a candidate to fill up the lacuna of two missing dialogues in the enumeration: Westerink and Trouillard ([above note 3] lxvii–lxxiv) argued convincingly that it is the *Sophista* and the *Statesman* which are lacking here; see also the contribution of H.J. Blumenthal in this volume, pages 1–13.

⁵ Damascius, *Lectures on the Philebus, Wrongly Attributed to Olympiodorus*, L.G. Westerink ed. and trans. (Amsterdam 1959) chapter 5, pages 1–5 (his translation).

⁶ The same position is held by Dillon (above, note 2) 257–8.

Syrianus and Proclus.⁷ But in my opinion, the two accounts need not be contradictory. It is well possible that both provide true accounts of Iamblichus' opinion about this dialogue. We will elaborate this idea further on.

In any case, what we can readily retain without discussion from the second text—and this will be of great importance—is the idea that the *Philebus* deals with the final Cause of the universe. There is no need to stress that this comes down to a thoroughly metaphysical interpretation of our dialogue, in which constant reference would be made to the Neoplatonic One Good.

To a modern reader this statement may seem rather strange. For the text of the *Philebus* has only a few indications that this dialogue relates to the transcendent Good of the *Republic*. Most modern interpreters adhere to the Thrasyllan sub-title "On Pleasure" (Περὶ ἡδονῆς), and classify the *Philebus* among the dialogues with an ethical drift. Apart from the personal nuances of each interpretation, the scope of the *Philebus* is the question of what the "good" relation is between pleasure and intellect in the good life. Admittedly, there are within this context some traces of a notion of the absolute good, but their function is rather to suggest its existence than to determine its nature. So for example *Philebus* 61a7–b2, where Plato treats of "the way leading towards the residence of the Good." This metaphor is continued in 64a7–66a3: truth, beauty and proportion are to be situated "in the porch of the Good" (*ibid.*, 64c1); and in the final classification of the things which render our life "good" (*ibid.*, 66a4–c10), nothing surpasses measure and the moderate. So Plato does point towards a notion of the absolute Good. But still, the threshold of this absolute Good is never crossed.

On the other hand, the *Philebus* contains a passage in which the problem of the relationship between pleasure and intellect is put on a higher, ontological level (*ibid.*, 23c–30d). Here Plato treats of the constitution of any "mixture." He indicates four principles as responsible for every well-organized whole. The *Limit* and the *Unlimited* are brought together by the principle of the Cause, and the result of their combination is the *Mixture*.

Any metaphysical interpretation of the *Philebus* will start from these articulations, and so does Iamblichus, as we will see. But there still remains a distance to bridge between the ontology presented here and the statement that "the discussion in the *Philebus* concerns the good that is beyond everything." How could Iamblichus maintain this, and how are we to understand that it is precisely this which is the theme of the whole dialogue? We will try to answer this question in two parts. First, the metaphysical interpretation Iamblichus is offering to us is so strikingly opposed to our *prima facie* opinion about this dialogue, that it is worthwhile to see how this interpretation was prepared for by his predecessors. Secondly, we will concentrate on the doctrinal repercussions of the *Philebus* within the system of Iamblichus.

⁷ To Proclus, the given nuance applies without any problem: see, e.g., *In Platonis Rempublicam Commentarii* 1.269.15–22 (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀγαθόν).

II. *The Historical Background*

Let us turn to history first. We already stated that the first readers of the *Philebus* (Thrasyllos *cum suis*) considered this dialogue to be concerned with ethics, and more precisely with the problem of pleasure. At a certain point, however, the history of interpretation switches to an explicitly metaphysical viewpoint, in which the discussion of pleasure becomes a mere illustration. Aristotle, so it seems, has cleared the ground for this transition. Although he does not refer to the *Philebus* in an ontological context, his suggestion that Plato is a follower of Pythagoras "who also has some ideas of his own"⁸ has drawn attention to the use Plato makes of the Pythagorean principles of πέρας and ἀπειρον. Still, this suggestion of Aristotle's had to wait for the marriage of Pythagoreanism and Platonism in the Neoplatonic tradition to be gradually explored and elaborated in connection with the *Philebus*.

The Middle Platonists (among whom are Plutarch and Galen) made use of the ontological principles of the *Philebus* to explain the origin of the sensible world and of the soul;⁹ nothing indicates that the *Philebus* played a role in their exegesis of the intelligible realm.

Plotinus for his part did not introduce many innovations to this scheme. According to him, the *Philebus* treats only of the good "for us," and not of the highest good.¹⁰ But still, he establishes the core of what will allow his successors to valorize the *Philebus*. For in the first place he indicates that the One imposes itself as ὅρος or μετρήσον upon the beings in the conversion.¹¹ This reminds us of the metaphysics of the *Philebus*, although there is no formal reference to the *Philebus* in this context. In any event, the scheme implied here is that of a hierarchical interdependence of limit and the unlimited, in which the lower reality, unlimited in itself, serves as a substratum for the imposition of limit. So the highest level of reality is limit in its pure form, whereas the pure unlimited is to be situated at the lowest level of reality.¹² It is, then, the complete indeterminacy of first matter; it gets its limit and definition from the gradual imposition of the forms, which in turn represent the lower degrees of limit.¹³ Plotinus thus integrates Aristotelian hylemorphism within his system, by making it a clear instance of the interrelation of the broader principles of limit and unlimited.

Now there is a problem in this account of the principles. If the One imposes itself as a limit upon the lower reality which is unlimited in itself, then where does

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1.6.987a29–988a17.

⁹ Plutarch, *De E apud Delphos* 391b; *De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo* 1014c11–d6; 1014e.

¹⁰ Plotinus, *Enneades* 6.7.25.12–3: αὐτὸς γὰρ [sc. ὁ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Φιλήβῳ] οὐ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαθὸν ἐζητεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἡμῶν.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.4.5.33–4; 6.7.30.33.

¹² Cf. Plotin, *Les Deux Matières* [*Enneades* 2.4 (12)], J.M. Narbonne, ed. and trans. (Paris 1993) 24.

¹³ Plotinus, *Enneades* 2.4.15.3–17.

this infinity come from? Clearly Plotinus' answer will always be that everything, even the indeterminate itself, stems from the One, in order to avoid any form of dualism, but in this case there remain occasions for confusion. Let us consider this problem more closely.

The question is related to what is perhaps the central Neoplatonic issue: how can the many come about, out of the One? Plotinus' answer to this question runs as follows. The origin of all things is due to an infinite generative power of the One. As he himself says:¹⁴

And it [the One] must be understood as infinite not because its size and number cannot be measured or counted but because its power cannot be comprehended.
(Plotinus, *Enneades* 6.9.6.10–11)

This infinite power is absorbed in the first place by the Intellect. It gets its existence from the radiation of the One, and takes over its generative power.¹⁵ But as it is too weak to receive the power of the One all at once, it has to break it up into different parts.¹⁶ Thus the primordial multiplicity comes about within the Intellect, and will be extended to all its offspring. But still the problem remains: if the One plays the role of a limit, then what is there to be limited? Where does the indeterminate come from—not the infinity of the power of the One, but the unlimited which will be the substratum of the imposition of limit?

Plotinus states that there is a kind of matter also present in the Intellect (the νοητὴ ὕλη), functioning as a substratum for the existence of the abstract forms, and as the basis of their unity-within-multiplicity.¹⁷ It is governed by the *otherness*, one of the genera of being Plato discusses in his *Sophista*.¹⁸ Up to a point, this theory of intelligible matter can give an answer to our question: the substratum of the forms is constituted together with the Intellect itself, and thus stems from the ἀπειροδυναμία of the One.¹⁹ But then again, this does not solve all the problems. For Plotinus states that the ὕλη νοητή is just an image (εἶδωλον) of the real, first ὕλη, which is the purely infinite.²⁰ One can explain this rather curious formulation by the fact that

14 Cf. 6.7.32.19; 3.8.10.1 and 25–28.

15 *Ibid.*, 6.7.15.18: Δύναμιν οὖν εἰς τὸ γεννᾶν εἶχε παρ' ἐκείνου.

16 *Ibid.*, 6.7.15.20–22: 'Ἄλλ' ἐξ ἐνὸς αὐτοῦ πολλὰ τούτῳ· ἦν γὰρ ἐκομίζετο δύναμιν ἀδυνατῶν ἔχειν συνέθραυε καὶ πολλὰ ἐποίησε τὴν μίαν, ἔν' οὕτῳ δύνατο κατὰ μέρος φέρειν.

17 *Ibid.*, 2.4.2–5.

18 *Sophista* 254b–257a; see J. Bussanich, *The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden 1988) 118–20.

19 Plotinus, *Enneades* 2.4.15.17–20: 'Ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ἡ ὕλη τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ εἷη ἂν γεννηθῇ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀπειρίας ἢ δυνάμεως ἢ τοῦ αἰεί, οὐκ οὕσης ἐν ἐκείνῳ ἀπειρίας ἀλλὰ ποιούντος. Cf. *ibid.*, 5.1.5.6–9: καὶ γὰρ πρὸ δυάδος τὸ ἐν, δεύτερον δὲ δυὰς καὶ παρὰ τοῦ ἐνὸς γεγεννημένη. The Pythagorico-Platonic δυὰς mentioned here is equated by Plotinus to the intelligible matter; cf. Narbonne (above, note 12) 65; Bussanich (above, note 18) 119.

20 *Ibid.*, 2.4.15.20–37: Πῶς οὖν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐνταῦθα [sc. τὸ ἄπειρον]; ἢ διττὸν καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον. Καὶ τί διαφέρει; ὡς ἀρχέτυπον καὶ εἶδωλον. Ἑλλατόνως οὖν ἄπειρον

we would not be able to conceive the ἄπειρον as a notion unless it were also present on the intelligible level; but after all, the "real" ἀπειρία *in se* is contrary to the determination this implies, and cannot therefore be caught in any notion whatsoever. So then, it is first matter which represents the primordial indeterminacy, to which, in the last resort, the infinity of intelligible matter is also due. This, incidentally, is the reason why it is called "matter" (the substratum *par excellence*), even on the intelligible level.

If we then want to know the origin of multiplicity, we should concentrate on the lowest level of reality, and investigate the character of first matter. If this infinity in its pure form is situated on the lowest level of reality,²¹ as the opposite of the One, then the only solution which is left open for a Platonist is to argue that the infinite exists only as a *privation* of limit. Any other solution would lead to dualism. This in fact is Plotinus' view in treatise 2.4 "On the Two Kinds of Matter," the basic text concerning his doctrine of intelligible matter. Here the infinity of matter is equated with στέρησις, at least in this sense, that it is opposed to that which really "is," i.e. the λόγοι.²² But would not the consequence of this position be that multiplicity itself, the existence of which is due after all to infinity, is to be seen as a privation of unity? Then in a sense his own thesis, that all multiplicity derives from the One, collapses. For how can you maintain that the One is origin and cause of all multiple things, if they derive their multiplicity from the absence of the One?

Plotinus himself, so it seems, left open this dilemma. He could have explained the origin of the infinity of matter by linking it to the infinity he attributes to the One itself. In that case, a consistent explanation of multiplicity would have been close at hand. But strangely enough, Plotinus never felt obliged to establish a relation between this notion of the unlimited generative power of the One and the infinity of the matter or substratum.

Iamblichus, on the contrary, clearly recognized the problem and masterfully solved it. From now on, all infinity will be reduced to one single principle, immediately below the One, and at the same level as the principle of limit. Thus infinity is no longer a substratum, but a principle which governs, together with the limit, the constitution of multiplicity out of the One. Very significant for this issue is Proclus' reaction against Plotinus' notion of intelligible matter, which we will quote here as an *entrée en matière* for the discussion of Iamblichus:

τοῦτο; ἢ μᾶλλον ὅσω γὰρ εἰδωλον πεφευγὸς τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἀληθές, μᾶλλον ἀπειρον . . . Τὸ ἐκεῖ οὖν μᾶλλον εἰδωλον ὡς ἀπειρον, τὸ δὲ ἐνταῦθα ἦττον, ὅσω πέφευγε τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἀληθές, εἰς δὲ εἰδωλου κατερρῆ φύσιν, ἀληθεστέρως ἀπειρον . . . Ἀπειρον μὲν δὴ παρ' αὐτῆς τὴν ὕλην λεκτέον ἀντιτάξει τῇ πρὸς τὸν λόγον . . . καὶ τὴν ὕλην ἀντιτεταγμένην τῷ λόγῳ κατὰ τὴν ἀπειρίαν οὐκ ἄλλο τι οὐσαν λεκτέον ἀπειρον.

21 Cf. Narbonne (above, note 18) 82–85.

22 Plotinus, *Enneades* 2.4.16.1–3.

The unlimited is not the matter of the limit: it is its power; neither is the limit the form of the unlimited: it is its existence. Out of both, the being is constituted . . .
(Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne* 3.9.40.4–6)²³

So by the time of Proclus, it has become impossible to say that the infinite serves as the substratum or matter of the limit. On the contrary, there is a pair of contrasting principles at the same level of reality, both of which precede being. The one provides a being with existence, the other with power. Their opposition is not vertical, but horizontal, and they both are to be situated immediately below the One. Exactly this articulation of the principles will be the merit of Iamblichus, as we will see.

III. *The One as the Transcendent Cause*

This is the context in which Iamblichus' interpretation of the *Philebus* is to be situated. Many of the issues he will elaborate are already present in the articulations of his predecessors. But still the merit of the divine philosopher is clearly that he was the first to find in the *Philebus* a consistent answer which covers all the details of the above sketched problem.

To begin with, one should keep in mind the place of the One Good within Iamblichus' thought. It is to be situated above the level of the intelligible (or the intelligible triad, to which we will return later on), and cannot be seen as being coordinate with the other principles. By elaborating things in this manner, Iamblichus accepts the analysis Plato presents in the *Philebus*, since the principle of the "cause" which is mentioned there clearly precedes the triad *πέρας*—*ἄπειρον*—*μικτόν*.²⁴ Furthermore, as this One Good still implies a certain determination, it is transcended for its part—*δαίμονι*—*ὑπερβολῆς*!—by the Ineffable Principle, of which nothing can be stated at all:²⁵

The first principles before the first intelligible triad, are they two in number, the completely ineffable and that which is not co-ordinate with the triad, as is the view of the great Iamblichus in the twenty-eighth book of his most excellent *Chaldaean Theology*?
(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.1.5–8)

The multiplication of principles Iamblichus thus establishes has often been emphasized. Obviously, in Iamblichus' view, even the designation of the principle as "One" is too much to attribute to the first principle.

As a matter of fact, the scope of this argument is not the postulation of the ineffable principle itself. Its ineffability will be agreed upon by all later Neoplatonists. But whereas in these later thinkers the One and Ineffable merge into one single principle, Iamblichus distinguishes them. The problem, then, actually lies

²³ H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, eds. and trans., vol. 3 (Paris 1968) (my translation); cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.384.16–387.5 and *Decem Dubitationes circa Providentiam* 10.34–35 (on the origin of matter, with reference to the *Philebus*).

²⁴ *Philebus* 26e–27b.

²⁵ *Traité des Premiers Principes*, L.G. Westerink and J. Combès, eds., vols. 3 (Paris 1986–1991) 2.1.5–8 (J. Dillon, trans., "Iamblichus of Chalcis (ca. AD240–325)" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. 2, 36.2 [Berlin 1987] 880, with slight modifications); cf. *ibid.*, 2.6.16–23.

in Iamblichus' notion of the One. For the necessity of positing a principle above the One cannot be felt unless one feels that in some way the One, as apophatical as it may be, is already too close to lower reality.

How can this be? Why is not the One an accurate designation of the First Principle? Once more, this question is related to the problem of multiplicity: how can it come about, out of the initial unity? In answering this question, one will have to take as a starting point the role the One plays in the constitution of reality. Certainly, one can always maintain—as Iamblichus did—that a true categorization of the One can only be accomplished through negations, and as a consequence, that the One in itself does not “play a role” in this procession, that it is not “co-ordinate” with the intelligible triad. But still, once the question of the one and the multiple is raised, one has in fact already lowered the status of the One. For in any case, the One will be actually linked to lower reality, albeit only in our way of thinking. It then does make some sense to distinguish between this One and the First Principle, which remains completely absolute.

Within this central problem, Iamblichus' interpretation of the *Philebus* is to be understood. Actually, if one wants to reveal the One as the origin of multiplicity, the terminology and scheme offered by the *Philebus* turns out to be very helpful. For the proper way to explain how the One relates to the multiple, is to call it the Cause of all things. This is not a real determination of the One. It is only a categorization *ex effectibus*, which in no way affects the One itself. The Neoplatonists are well aware of the relativity of the term cause: it is always linked to a *causatum*, and without this there can be no *causans*.²⁶ So if this would be a real determination of the One, then its existence would imply the existence of something else, and its unity would be jeopardized. Proclus will state very clearly that this is not the case: since there is no accurate name for the One, the best one can do is follow Plato in confining oneself to negations. If we are to affirm at least something about the One, we should call it:²⁷

The source of all divinity, because it is the principle and cause of everything and the goal and object of desire for all . . . By these names we do not say what it is, but how the things below it and of which it is the cause, relate to it.

(Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 6.1108.19–1109.14)

Further on in the same work, Proclus points out, in a reference to Iamblichus, that any name attributed to the One would make it “some” one (*aliquid unum*); hence all the determinations should be denied, for “*le Unum nullum ens omnium causa est omnium*.”²⁸ So the denotation of the One as “cause” does not describe the nature of

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 2.112.6–10.

²⁷ Cf. *Théologie Platonicienne*, vol. 3 (above, note 23) 7.30.3–10. The categorization of the One as source (πηγή) is present already in Plotinus (*Enneades* 3.8.10.1–35) and figured also in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (*Oracles Chaldaïques*, É. des Places, ed. [Paris 1971] frg. 30 [and complementary note, page 128]; 37; 49; 52; 56). It is a typical term for a “proof *ex effectibus*.”

²⁸ *Théologie Platonicienne*, vol. 3 (above, note 23) 7.517.43 (τὸ ἐν μηδὲν ὄν πάντων αἰτίον ἐστὶ πάντων)—I have been able to avail myself of the retroversion into Greek of the Latin translation of William of Moerbeke, which Prof. Steel made of the last section of Proclus' *Parmenides Commentary*. This text was recently published in *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 8 (1997) 211–67; see also the contribution of C.G. Steel in this volume,

the One in itself. But still it remains the best way to speak of the transcendent One, if one wants to say anything at all.

If then we apply the name "cause" to the One, we intend to reveal not the One in itself, but solely its relation to the lower, multiple reality. This is seen as the unique position Plato takes in the *Philebus*. We can again enlist the testimony of Proclus: the first principle is not only called "the One" and "the Good," or (as in the *Second Letter*) "that around which everything exists" or "the cause of all beauty;" in the *Philebus*, it is praised "as that which constitutes everything, because it is the cause of all divinity."²⁹

IV. The Triad Πέρας—Ἀπειρον—Μικτόν

But where does the first multiplicity come in? We already saw Plotinus' answer: he situated the real infinity at the lowest level of reality. But then we saw that the vertical opposition between the two extremities of the universe did not entail a clear explanation of the origin of multiplicity out of the One.

Iamblichus' answer takes into account the objections raised, and embraces a much more refined view of the procession of the many out of the One. In the first place, he will distinguish within the Plotinian Intellect (the *ἐν ὄν* of the *Parmenides*) between an intelligible (*νοητόν*) and an intellective (*νοερόν*) level. In the latter, the multiplicity is already established: the *ἐν* and the *ὄν*, the two elements present in the One Being, have become separable, under the influence of the appearance of the Platonic genera of Being which for Iamblichus marks the transition between the *νοητόν* and the *νοερόν*.³⁰ The Being at this level is the pure being (*οὐσία καθαρά*), the first real being.³¹

So the transition from unity to multiplicity has already taken place on this noeric level, and the first appearance of multiplicity will have to be looked for within the *νοητόν*. This level will be the real juncture between the one and the many. Here, as opposed to the *νοερόν* level, Iamblichus says, a distinction between *ἐν* and *ὄν* is impossible. For it is everything at once, not really one, nor really being. Iamblichus characterizes it as the "monad of being," or as the unitary Being (*οὐσία ἀπλῶς*). It is a unity, in a secondary way (*δευτέρα ἔνωσις*), below the real One,³² and is superior to the "genera of being" and to the ideas.³³ So if we want to know what is actually responsible for the constitution of multiplicity, we should examine this level. First,

pages 15–30. The quoted sentence is repeated almost literally at *Théologie Platonicienne*, vol. 3 (above, note 23) 7.1108.24–25: πάντων γὰρ ὄν αἴτιον οὐδέν ἐστι τῶν πάντων.

²⁹ Proclus (above, note 23) 3.7, 29.16–30.2: . . . ὁ δὲ ἐν τῷ Φιλήβῳ Σωκράτης οἶον τῶν ὄλων ὑπόστατιν εὐφημεῖ, διότι πάσης ἐστὶ θεότητος αἰτία (29.28–30.1).

³⁰ Damascius *De Principiis* (above, note 25) 2.93.13–24.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.94.10–17; cf. 90.14–20.

³² *Ibid.*, 3.119.6–28.

³³ Iamblichus, *apud* Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.230.5–12 (= frg. 29); also Proclus (above, note 23) 1.11.52.2–19.

which elements does it contain?—for if it is not the real One, there must be elements in it. And secondly, how can it still be called a unity?—for if the elements are not yet really distinct, the unity should be accounted for. Damascius reports that this was the procedure which Iamblichus followed:³⁴

So someone [Iamblichus] says that one must assume as preliminary the causal principles of both the One Being and the dyadic structure of the elements inherent in it; the dyad of first principles has, then, a distinct existence, prior to the dyad which has just been mentioned [sc. of πέρας and ἄπειρον as elements], even as there exists also the One before the dyad, which Iamblichus postulates before both, to be the cause of the One Being.

(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.25.1–6)

So there are principles preceding the νοητόν, which are responsible for its constitution, and which are present within the νοητόν itself, as its elements. And these principles are the πέρας and the ἄπειρον of the *Philebus*, plus the αἰτία which explains the unity of both:³⁵

For indeed the one principle is prior to the two; and this is the “simply one,” which Iamblichus postulates in between the two first principles and the absolutely ineffable over there. The two principles, on the other hand, may be termed Limit and the Unlimited, or, if one wishes, one and many, the “one” here to be taken as opposed to “many,” not the One which is prior to both these and has nothing opposed to it.

(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.28.1–6)

Thus, the πέρας and ἄπειρον of the *Philebus* are posited as two principles below the One cause, governing the constitution of all multiple beings. The underlying scheme is no longer that of a “hylemorphic” or vertical dichotomy between the highest limit and the lowest infinity, as it was in Plotinus. Instead, a “horizontal” opposition is established at the level immediately below the One, thus clearly stating that all multiplicity stems from the One itself.

To make clear how these first principles come about, out of the One, Iamblichus invokes the account given by the *Chaldaean Oracles*. This “sacred” text speaks of an intelligible triad which consists of ὑπαρξίς, δύναμις and νοῦς.³⁶ The first term of this triad, ὑπαρξίς, is the bare existence, the first stage in the self-constitution of the intellect. Damascius will describe it clearly as the foundation (θεμέλιος) or the bearing surface (ἔδαφος) on which a being is to be constructed.³⁷ The second term of the triad, δύναμις, is the infinite potency to generate all lower things, once the foundation of existence is established. The third term is the actual

³⁴ Dillon, trans. (above, note 25) 881–2, with slight modifications. This text is repeated almost word for word at *ibid.*, 2.27.14–27, and therefore seems to be the paraphrase of a text of Iamblichus himself; cf. Proclus *Theologia Platonica* (above, note 27) 7.1150.31–38 (anonymous reference attributed to Iamblichus by J.M. Dillon, “Porphyry and Iamblichus in Proclus’ Commentary on the *Parmenides*” in *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to L.G. Westerink* at 75, J. Duffy and J. Peradotto, eds. (Buffalo 1988) 36–39.

³⁵ Dillon, trans. (above, note 25) 882, with slight modifications.

³⁶ Frg. 4, É. des Places, ed., with complementary note, page 124.

³⁷ Damascius *De Principiis* (above, note 25) 3.152.13–153.11.

being (οὐσία), the Intellect, containing in itself everything which "is." The testimonies about Iamblichus' doctrine make clear that he saw a close relation between the Chaldaean triad and the principles of the *Philebus*.³⁸ For the "existence" as the ontological foundation, providing the singularity which makes "being" possible, corresponds to the limit which imposes itself upon the lower reality. The ἀπειρά is considered to be identical with the Chaldaean δύναμις. The combined action of both principles gives rise to the third term, the mixture which is the intelligible Νοῦς.

So then, the One as Cause cannot but bring about in the first place something which in its nature is most akin to the One; this should be the bare existence, the delimitation of an entity from other things, which guarantees the preservation of unity. But at the same time, the One's infinity of power is transposed to this entity, thus giving it a potency to come about and to generate lower beings.³⁹ Thus, the principle of ἀπειρά is ultimately connected to the ἀπειροδυναμία attributed to the One ever since Plotinus, and now entails all multiplicity.

This scheme applies to all levels of reality. When the elements which are present in a unitary way in the νοητόν become really distinct in the νοερόν (and in all the lower reality), the distinction between them will follow precisely the structure of the principles. There will be one series of "limit"-like elements, opposed to a series of elements which are unlimited by their nature. Damascius says the following:

For, to put it briefly, if we divide all beings into the unified and the distinct—in any way whatsoever—even if the relation between the distinguished parts is that of cause and effect, the same thing will occur; for we will climb up in any case from two series (στίχοι) and so from the one global distinction, towards two principles, which are preceded by the unique summit, the cause of the combination of both principles and of the twofold offspring of them, as all contrary canals (ὄχετοί), in every contrariety, are divided in two.⁴⁰

(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.25.6–15)

So there are two contrary series (στίχοι) or "canals" (ὄχετοί) pervading all reality, each attached to its own principle. And this primordial opposition is preceded by the one cause. In his treatise "On Mathematics in General" Iamblichus speaks of the limited and the unlimited as the principles of mathematical objects, and immediately adds the following remark: "But each of those [*i.e.* the limited and the unlimited]

³⁸ Cf. Damascius' exposition in *De Principiis* (above, note 25) 2.24.13–24, in an indirect reference to Iamblichus. For Proclus, this concord between the triad of the *Philebus* and that of the *Oracles* has become evident: cf. C.G. Steel, "Υπαρξίς chez Proclus," in *Hyparxis e Hypostasis nel Neoplatonismo. Atti del I Colloquio Internazionale del Centro di Ricerca sul Neoplatonismo*, F. Romano and D.P. Taormina, eds. (Florence 1994) 91–2.

³⁹ The distinction between these two kinds of δύναμις (based on the Aristotelian distinction between active or generative and passive power, or a possibility to come about) is a logical consequence of this "new" hierarchy of the principles. Though this distinction is present in Iamblichus (*apud* Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium*, 9.302.38ss. [*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 8]) he does not elaborate it in the context of the structure of the principles. It is only in Proclus that it will become a main feature in the speculation on this matter.

⁴⁰ The translation is mine.

provides not just one account (λόγος), neither is it the same for all being.⁴¹ Thus, the two principles are not confined to the mathematical objects alone. They are present as explanatory elements (λόγοι) everywhere in reality, but in a different way on each level; their occurrence, say, in the noetic realm, will differ from that in the mathematical sphere (intermediary between the intelligible and the material world), and each stage of reality presents specific genera (οἰκεῖα γένη) of the two principles.⁴²

At its lowest level, the distinction is equated (as it has been ever since Plotinus) with the Aristotelian account of matter and form. Iamblichus refers to it as an opposition between infinity, the fluxus between more and less to which matter in itself is subject, and the definition (multitude and magnitude) it gets from the imposition of the form:

When the form comes down to matter, a power mixed of both comes to be. For in as far as it partakes in the form, the materialized thing is akin to it and receives a multitude and a magnitude. However, in accordance with its own infinity, it partakes in the more and the less, in the relation to other things, and in the change to its opposite.⁴³ (Iamblichus, *apud* Simplicius 6.145.15–19)

So here hylemorphism is restored in its original form. But as opposed to Plotinus, the infinity of matter is no longer solely a privation of all determination. It is now seen as the lowest offspring in the series of the infinite, and thus ultimately it remains connected to the highest principle of infinity.

On the mathematical level, the notion of "quantity" (τὸ ποσόν) consists of a combination of two potencies: the first pervades everything without making distinctions, thereby constituting the "continuum" (τὸ συνεχές). The other one proceeds gradually, halting at each form and making everything a single "one." As such, it is constitutive of the unity of a separate entity.⁴⁴

Thus, a dichotomy is inherent in all being. Every being bears in itself a tension between two tendencies: on the one hand it tends to be limited and determined, on the other hand it has an infinite urge to expand. This tension however does not tear apart a being; on the contrary, without it, there would be no being at all.⁴⁵

All these instances of πέρας and ἄπειρον are to be brought back to their original form in the first principles, and their real character can only be understood in an examination of this highest level. The principles as revealed here, then, not only explain the *modus essendi*, seen from below, but they also serve as a guideline for the *modus cognoscendi*. Proclus informs us about this feature in Iamblichus'

41 Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* 12.25–26; my translation.

42 *Ibid.*, 13.1–14.1.

43 The translation is mine.

44 Iamblichus, *apud* Simplicius 6.135.8–28; the double constitution of the ποσόν in Iamblichus is well attested: see also *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* 28.24–32.7; Simplicius *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium* 6.146.23–28.

45 Cf. P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1 (Paris 1968) 442, note 6.

interpretation of the war between Atlantis and Athens as reported in the *Timaeus*:⁴⁶ one should try to understand it by "investigating the opposition which pervades everything," as there is an analogon to it on every level of reality. And, as Iamblichus says, "you should transpose everywhere the analogies from the human status to the higher reality."⁴⁷

V. The Identity of Principles

What, then, is the character of the original dichotomy? We already saw that, as it is situated immediately below the One, it cannot represent a high degree of multiplicity. Moreover, the Intelligible (νοητόν), which is constituted by the combination of the two opposite principles, is still too close to the One to be called "multiple."

... it is necessary, as it has been stated many times by others, that the multiplicity which manifests itself immediately from the One should be most akin to the One, constricted in quantity and incomprehensible in power, in order that through the constrictedness of its quantity it should imitate the quantitativeness of the One, and through the incomprehensibility of its power the infinity of the One which is prior to power.⁴⁸

(Iamblichus, *apud* Proclus 7.1174.5-13)

This statement has to be flanked by other texts in which Iamblichus affirms a close connection between the Intelligible and the One, so close that one cannot actually separate them. These texts are sufficiently known, and we will quote only one example. In an explanation of the difference between the intelligible and the intellective, Damascius uses the following words:⁴⁹

Iamblichus, too, declared that the Intelligible remains within the One, because it is united to the One and is specified according to the One rather than according to being. Furthermore, there is nothing distinct within the united, be it substance, the intelligible or anything else, and the united has its being by being everything at once.

(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.93.24-94.4)

So the intelligible is to be situated at the same level as the One. For indeed, a real distinction is only possible through the influence of an *alterity* (ἐτερότης). And according to Iamblichus, this "genus of being" manifests itself only in the intellective

⁴⁶ Proclus (above, note 33) 1.77.24-78.26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.25-26 (my translation); cf. Iamblichus, *apud* M. Psellus, Περὶ Ἀριθμῶν, Appendix 1 of his *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in the Late Antiquity*, D. O'Meara, ed. (Oxford 1989) 217-29. For the translation of τὰ πρόγματα, within the context of analogy, as "the higher reality" ("la réalité d'en haut"), see A.J. Festugière, *Proclus, Commentaire sur le Timée*, vol 1 (Paris 1966) 107, note 3.

⁴⁸ Attributed to Iamblichus by Dillon (above, note 34) 41 (his translation).

⁴⁹ The translation is mine. Cf. Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.64.8-9; 90.9-11; 93.24-94.17; 99.8-10; 3.61.4-8; 64.7-14; 119.7-28; for these texts, see *ibid.*, vol. 2, page 64, note 3 (page 245 of the notes complémentaires); Proclus (above, note 23) 3.36-40. Cf. also Proclus *Theologia Platonica* (above, note 27) 6.1054.37-1055.2; 1064.21-1071.3; 7.499.6-17 Steel (= 36.8-18 K-L); Proclus (above, note 23) 3.23.82.4-22; see *ibid.*, 3.17-26.30.

realm, as we have seen. On the other hand, as the intelligible is superior to the "genera of being," the differences we recognize on this level will only be analogical inferences, defective terms which do not cover any real distinction.

This means *a fortiori* that all the principles we have discussed up until now, from the One to the νοητόν, must be actually identical. This thesis can be traced throughout the texts of Iamblichus.

In the first place, the difference between cause and effect, so important for our, human, designation of the One, is said to be no real distinction on the intelligible level. As Damascius writes:

There [sc. in the principles], a determination of cause and effect is not applicable, for at the summit of the intelligible things, Iamblichus, too, did not accept that there would be a determinate principle of cause and effect.⁵⁰

(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.36.10–13)

Also the principles of limit and unlimited are not really distinguished. Damascius speaks of "someone" (Iamblichus) saying that of the two principles [πέρας and ἀπειρον] the first bears the characteristics of limit, whereas the second is rather the opposite, but both of them are "everything at once" (ὁμοῦ πάντα):

"Αμα γὰρ ὁ λόγος οὗτος ἡξίου καὶ τῇ Ἰαμβλίχου ὑποθέσει συνηγορεῖν καὶ τῇ ὁπωσοῦν ἀντιδιαίρει τῶν δυεῖν ἀρχῶν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τότε ἂν τις εἴποι τούτοις ἀκόλουθον, ὥς ἡ μὲν πρὸ τῶν δυεῖν ἀρχῶν ἐνὰς ὁμοῦ πάντα ἦν πρὸ πάντων, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἐπ' ἴσης, ἡ δὲ πρώτη τῶν δυεῖν πάντα μὲν καὶ αὐτῇ, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ περατοειδέστερον, ἡ δὲ δευτέρα πάντα μὲν ὁμοίως, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ ἀπειρότερον."⁵¹

(Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.26.1–8)

This discourse pretended to be a defence of Iamblichus' hypothesis and of the overall opposition of the two principles. For one could also add the following to these statements: the unity (ἐνὰς) before the two principles was everything at once (ὁμοῦ πάντα) which precedes everything, but everything in an equal way, whereas the first of the two [principles] was everything, too, but according to what is more limit-like, and, similarly, the second was everything, but according to what is more infinite.

Finally, it is stated that the level of the intelligible contains everything under one single aspect, namely that of Being (κατ' οὐσίαν).⁵² So the whole level of the principles, from the One cause to the intelligible, is "everything at once," and the identity of the principles consists precisely in the fact that each of them taken separately expresses the whole under its own aspect.

⁵⁰ The translation is mine.

⁵¹ The translation is mine. Cf. Damascius, *De Principiis* 2.12.1–5: Εἰ τοίνυν λέγοι τις τὸ μὲν πάντα ἐν ἐπ' ἴσης εἶναι πάντα ἐν, ἡ δὲ πρεσβύτερα τῶν δυεῖν ἀρχῶν ὑπαρκτικὴ μᾶλλον ἢ πατρικὴ [pro παρακτικὴ AP.C] ἢ περατοειδής, ὥσπερ ἡ δευτέρα τὰ ἐναντία μᾶλλον, ἐκατέρα δὲ ὅμως πάντα ἐν, . . . [this is followed by a typically Damascian critique against the postulation of an opposition on the level of the principles]. See also 2.4.8–5.7; 26.18–27.4. For the expression ἐν πάντα in the tradition before Damascius, see Plotinus, *Enneades* 5.3.15.23; Anonymus Taurinensis, *In Parmenidem* 12.4; Iamblichus, *apud Simplicius In Aristotelis Categoriae Commentarium* 5.116.31–33.

⁵² Damascius, *De Principiis* 8.290.5–9.

Why, then, do we distinguish the different principles? One can say that we, bound as we are to alterity and separation, have to rely on imperfect notions helping us to understand the fullness of the highest reality. But still, why do we use the names of cause, limit, unlimited and intelligible? In fact we already gave the answer in discussing the name of "cause" which is used to designate the One. The terms we apply to the principles are only *functional names*. They cannot be but a transposition of our own categories, relying on the effects we perceive in the concrete reality. The highest reality presents itself now as the Cause, then as the Limit (existence), as the Unlimited (potency) or the Intelligible (Being)⁵³—the determination always increases, but no name truly applies to the Principle. We use these names because in our realm they express the highest conceivable dignity, and help us to understand how the multiple "being" comes into existence. But none of the "principles," as we call them, covers the highest reality as it is in itself. As Proclus puts it in the case of the Unlimited:⁵⁴

All infinitude in things which have being is infinite neither to the superior orders nor to itself.

(Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, proposition 93)

So finally, we have detected not four principles, but four ways of discussing a single principle, which after all remains One. There is a lasting gap between this One and our way of categorizing it. We can only reach it through its effects, which, different as they are from the true nature of the One, we cannot but consider as caused by different principles. So then, the interrelation of the four "principles," as described by the *Philebus*, seems to be the best way to determine the different "functions" of the One within the procession of multiplicity.

VI Conclusion

Can we now understand Iamblichus' thesis about the central theme of the *Philebus*? According to him, this dialogue treated of the transcendent Good as depicted in the *Republic* in this sense, that it reveals the Good as "the final cause of the universe." We saw that this statement does not intend to speak of the One as it is in itself, but still it may be clear that it does somehow take for granted a relationship between the One and the many. So at least one of the reasons why in Iamblichus' view the One and the absolutely ineffable cannot merge into one principle is that one can—and Plato actually does, in Iamblichus' opinion—consider the One as the Cause of all things.

Thus seen, the *Philebus*—the dialogue which contains the most elaborate account of the "cause"—becomes the *locus privilegiatus* in which to find an answer to the question of how the One can bring forth the many. So the real problem at stake

⁵³ Cf. Anonymous Taurinensis in *Parmenidem* 14.4–16.

⁵⁴ Proclus, E.R. Dodds, ed. and trans. (Oxford 1963) 85. Cf. M. Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* 4.19.13–14: [*unum*] *infinitum, interminatum, sed aliis omnibus, non sibi*.

here is the origin of multiplicity, and the whole dialogue is considered to provide an answer to this single issue.⁵⁵

This was also the context in which the triad of πέρας, ἄπειρον and μεκτόν was understood. As opposed to his predecessors, Iamblichus saw that this scheme of the *Philebus* cannot serve the aim of explaining the origin of multiplicity, if the limit and the unlimited are put against each other in a vertical opposition. Iamblichus' answer is ingenious and simple: instead of a vertical hierarchy, one should abstract from the *Philebus* a horizontal dichotomy of limit and unlimited. All infinity can then be reduced to one principle just below the One Cause. Together with the principle of limit, this primordial Unlimited governs the constitution of every being, from the intelligible through the lowest level.

Let us then conclude by returning to our starting point: is there a contradiction between the two accounts of the scope of the *Philebus*? In the first place one should consider that if the name "Cause" only reveals the One as it presents itself to lower reality, and if—as we saw—the other principles, too, represent no real determinations of this level of reality, but only are functional names which help us to understand the fullness of the One, then one has to maintain that the different principles of the *Philebus* speak of the "Good as it is experienced in lower reality." Thus, so it seems, the text of Damascius' *Commentary* we quoted at the beginning, namely that the *Philebus* speaks of the Good which permeates everything, and not of the transcendent Good, does apply fully to Iamblichus' interpretation. But on the other hand, if the underlying referent of the "Cause," the "limit," the "unlimited" and the "intelligible" taken together is the primordial unity of the One itself, then one can also say that after all the scope of the *Philebus* is the transcendent Good, as was affirmed by the author of the *Prolegomena*. It is a matter of emphasis. For the One completely in itself, without any positive determination, is still the same as that One from which all multiplicity stems, and of which all the "principles" are functional exponents. The contradiction between the two texts, then, is only apparent, and the problem is—once again—due to our defective understanding of the true nature of the One, the "Cause" which after all remains transcendent.

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⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, the problem of the one and the many is one of the first questions treated in the *Philebus* (14c7–20a8); Iamblichus may well have found here a valuable support to his thesis—I thank Dr. A. Sheppard for having raised this point in the discussion.

Metafisica e Matematica in Giamblico

Francesco Romano

I. Premessa Metodologica

Prima di affrontare *ex professo* il problema del rapporto tra metafisica e matematica in Giamblico, è opportuno fare qualche considerazione sul significato generale che la nozione di "metafisica" ha nella filosofia di Giamblico, perché—come tutti sanno—tale nozione, che peraltro non corrisponde a nessun termine tecnico nel linguaggio filosofico antico, ha acquisito nei secoli una molteplicità di significati non tutti riducibili a quello originariamente aristotelico. Per potere tentare una definizione di "metafisica" nel senso giamblico (ma la cosa non sarebbe diversa a proposito di qualsiasi altro filosofo neoplatonico), ritengo che si debba partire dalla nozione che ad essa è quasi sempre sottesa, cioè dalla nozione di "intelligibile" (τὸ νοητόν): è infatti quest'ultima nozione che riempie concettualmente quella di metafisica e la rende quindi comprensibile nella sua connotazione semantica e nella sua valenza teorica generale. Io non credo che esista nel linguaggio neoplatonico altro termine capace di sovrapporsi a quello di "metafisica." Da un punto di vista metodologico, dunque, considero "metafisica" in Giamblico tutto ciò che si riferisce e contiene in qualche modo il concetto di "intelligibile." Sulla differenza tra l'intelligibile nel senso neoplatonico e in quello aristotelico, non è qui il caso di soffermarsi: dico semplicemente che le poche volte che Aristotele adopera il termine νοητός nella sua *Metafisica*, o riferisce il pensiero altrui,¹ o indica genericamente il contenuto dell'intelletto, soprattutto dell'intelletto divino o dell'intelletto intuitivo (in quest'ultimo caso quasi sempre in relazione a concetti matematici.² Di tutt'altra portata, sia semantica che teoretica, appare invece l'uso dello stesso termine nei filosofi neoplatonici.

¹ Ad es., di Platone, a 990a31, o di Antistene, a 999b2 e a 1043b30.

² Si veda, ad es., 1036a3, 1072b20, 1076b38.

II. Nozione di "Intelligibile"

La famiglia semantica di νοητός, sia nella forma attributiva che in quella neutro-sostantivata, ha una discreta frequenza negli scritti di Giamblico (una cinquantina di occorrenze) e risulta quasi sempre in combinazione con altri termini, anche qui o in forma attributiva o in sindesi con essi. Tra questi ultimi figurano soprattutto termini quali: πρῶτον, θεός, θεῖον, ἀσώματον, αὔλον, ἀμέριστον, αἰδῖον, οὐσία, ἀρχή, στοιχείον, γένος, παράδειγμα, ἀλήθεια. Quelli prevalenti tra questi sono εἶδος e θεός/θεῖον, prevalenza che incide fortemente sulla relazione che lega la nozione di "intelligibile" con quella di "teologia." Ma per dare un'idea più precisa di che cosa Giamblico intenda di volta in volta esprimere con la famiglia semantica del termine νοητός proviamo brevemente a esaminare qualche brano del *De Mysteriorum*.

A 1.12, pagina 41.10, Giamblico chiama "Principio eterno e intelligibile < delle anime > (τὴν αἰδῖον καὶ νοητὴν αὐτῶν ἀρχήν)" quello a cui gli dèi, "dopo averle chiamate e unite a sé (εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀνακαλούμενοι καὶ τὴν ἔνωσιν αὐταῖς τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς χορηγοῦντες), riconducono (περιάγεσθαι) le anime dei teurghi." Non c'è dubbio che qui il senso dell'"intelligibilità" del Principio dev'essere letto sì in connessione con la sua eternità, ma anche con il fatto che è proprio in virtù della intelligibilità del loro Principio che gli dèi possono "unire" a sé e, quindi, "unificare" con sé le anime dei teurghi. In altri termini, la nozione di "intelligibile" è concepita in chiave metafisica e trascendente, cioè in funzione di quella metafisica della trascendenza dell'Uno, di cui Giamblico è certamente, dopo Plotino, il principale assertore e teorizzatore.

Ancora, a 1.19, pagina 57.16ss., Giamblico fornisce una delle più chiare e inequivocabili, tra quante ne siano state fornite dai teologi antichi, definizioni del rapporto tra dèi visibili, o corpi celesti, e dèi invisibili. È opportuno riportare questo passaggio per esteso, affinché se ne comprenda compiutamente il significato: "Dico, dunque, che le statue visibili degli dèi sono generate a partire dai modelli divini intelligibili (ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν παραδειγμάτων) e intorno a tali modelli (περὶ αὐτά, che potrebbe significare in tale contesto: in rapporto a tali modelli), e, una volta nate, esse si fissano assolutamente in quei modelli, ai quali risale l'immagine che è stata da essi prodotta < in quelle statue visibili >; e pur essendo le stesse, anche se in modo diverso (ἐτέρως τε τὰ αὐτά, appunto perché immagini di quei modelli), quelle statue sono state create per formare un altro ordine, e queste di quaggiù sono in continuità con quei modelli secondo un'unica unità (συνεχὴ τέ ἐστι τὰ τῆδε πρὸς ἐκεῖνα κατὰ μίαν ἔνωσιν), e le forme divine intellettive presenti nei corpi visibili degli dèi preesistono ad essi in modo trascendente (χωριστῶς), mentre i loro modelli intelligibili, che sono privi di mescolanza e sopracelesti, permangono in se stessi tutti insieme nell'Uno (μένει καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἐν ὁμοῦ πάντα, dove suggerirei di accogliere la lezione ἐν ἐνί di M. Ficino) in virtù della loro eterna trascendenza (κατὰ τὴν διαίωναν αὐτῶν ὑπερβολήν)." È assolutamente chiaro che il significato che qui Giamblico intende dare alle forme intelligibili ed eterne concerne non soltanto l'aspetto della loro ineliminabile trascendenza rispetto alle forme intellettive che sono nel mondo di quaggiù, ivi compresi i corpi celesti, che pure possiedono una notevole dose di divinità, ma anche e soprattutto quell'aspetto della loro unione con l'Uno, da cui dipende la loro stessa essenza o realtà. Come dire che il senso metafisico

dell'intelligibile è connaturale a quest'ultimo, soprattutto in funzione dell'Unico Primo Principio da cui tutto discende, sia al livello intelligibile sia al livello intellettuale sia al livello sensibile, che sono appunto i tre livelli che racchiudono l'intera metafisica neoplatonica. La medesima conclusione si può trarre da un altro passo che si incontra a 3.28, pagina 168.3ss., dove, a proposito della differenza tra mantica divina e mantica falsa e ingannatrice, Giamblico afferma che quest'ultima si serve di immagini e di altri strumenti che sono generati dalla materia scelta di volta in volta dai teurghi che ne fanno uso, e che non hanno niente di legittimo, né di perfetto e chiaro, mentre ciò di cui si serve la mantica divina, in quanto ne è autore un dio, "è prodotto da essenze, che sono affini all'Uno e Intelligibili—ἐκ τῶν ἐνοειδῶν καὶ νοητῶν οὐσιῶν παράγεται."

Chiudo quest'esame della nozione di "intelligibile" nel *De Mysteriorum*, richiamando all'attenzione del lettore il capitolo 2 del libro 8, pagina 261.9ss., libro che Giamblico, avviandosi verso la conclusione del suo trattato, dedica—come si sa—quasi interamente all'esposizione sintetica della dottrina astrologica degli antichi Egizi, e quindi alle fonti stesse da lui utilizzate per rispondere a Porfirio. Nel capitolo 2, appunto, si tratta della prima Triade dei Principi divini, che Giamblico presenta come contenuta in alcuni trattati *Ermetici* (che non sembra appartenessero al cosiddetto *Corpus Hermeticum*).³ Io riporto qui il testo nella traduzione di Dillon:⁴ "Prior to the true realities and the universal principles (sc. the Forms), is One God (θεὸς εἷς), pre-cause [Dillon preferisce, a mio avviso ragionevolmente, la congettura προαίτιος di Scott a quella πρώτιστος di É. des Places] of the primal God and King, remaining motionless in the aloneness of his own oneness (ἐν μονότητι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐνότητος μένων). For no *object of intellect* (νοητόν) is attached to him, nor is anything else; he is established as the model for the self-fathering, self-generating and only-fathered God who is the true Good (τοῦ αὐτοπάτορος αὐτογόνου καὶ μονοπάτορος θεοῦ τοῦ ὄντως ἀγαθοῦ); for he is something greater, and primal, and fount of all things, and the base for the primal *objects of intellect*, which are the Ideas." L'unica osservazione che mi sento di fare a questa bella ed efficace traduzione di Dillon è il fatto che egli traduca con le parole "object of intellect" sia il νοητόν di 261.12, sia il νοουμένων di 262.1: ritengo, infatti, che, mentre νοουμένων è riferito alle Idee, νοητόν è, invece, riferito all'intelligibile in relazione all'Uno-Dio, ed ha quindi un significato metafisico più forte. Da questo testo del *De Mysteriorum* Dillon giustamente trae conferma per lo schema metafisico della dottrina dell'Uno, anzi degli Uno, così come ci è attestata da importanti testimonianze in Damascio (*De Principiis* 2.1.4ss.; 2.28.1ss.), e precisamente del Primo Uno (παντελῶς ἄρρετον), del Secondo Uno (τὸ ἀπλῶς ἓν) e dell'Uno Esistente (τὸ ἐν ὄν). Io non intendo in questa sede entrare nel merito della *vexata quaestio* dei molteplici Uno nel pensiero di Giamblico, questione, che, come si sa, si intreccia con l'altra altrettanto *vexata* questione delle Enadi, sulla quale ritengo che abbiano detto parole decisive Saffrey e

³ Per la complessa e difficile questione relativa a questa e ad altre fonti qui indicate da Giamblico, rinvio alla lunga nota 115 annessa da Sodano alla sua traduzione del *De Mysteriorum* (Milano 1984).

⁴ Introduction a *Iamblichi Chalcidensis. In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. (Leiden 1973), riprodotta in *ANRW II* 36.2 (Berlin e New York 1987) 884 [862-909].

Westerink.⁵ Confesso soltanto che, da un punto di vista metodologico, mi sembra che si debbano prendere le testimonianze di Damascio *cum grano salis*, non tanto, cioè, nel senso che Giamblico avrebbe postulato due Uno, come dire due Primi Principi (δύο εἶσιν αἱ πρώται ἀρχαὶ πρὸ τῆς νοητῆς πρώτης τριάδος, come scrive Damascio), il che potrebbe risultare assolutamente incomprensibile per un filosofo neoplatonico (noi sappiamo che Damascio punta spesso a mettere in contraddizione con se stessi i suoi predecessori, Proclo anzitutto, ma anche Giamblico che Proclo considerava certamente il vero maestro degli Ateniesi), quanto piuttosto nel senso che dell'Uno quale Primo Principio è possibile parlare e considerare, ora il suo aspetto di assoluta trascendenza su tutto, compresa la prima Triade intelligibile (e in tal senso esso non potrebbe neppure essere denominato Uno: infatti Giamblico lo chiama, come si visto, παντελῶς ἄρρετον), ora il suo aspetto generativo o produttivo, per cui esso, pur essendo privo assolutamente di alcun rapporto con qualsiasi Intelligibile e con qualsiasi altra cosa, come dice il testo succitato del *De Mystериis*, tuttavia deve svolgere la sua funzione di Prima Causa produttiva anzitutto della Prima Triade e quindi di tutte le Triadi successive. In effetti la denominazione di θεὸς εἷς potrebbe non significare "un dio che è l'Uno" (un dieu qui est l'Un, come traduce des Places, seguito sostanzialmente da Sodano), o, come sembra indicare anche la traduzione Dillon, "un Dio Uno" (One God: confesso, però, che non comprendo bene che cosa significhi esattamente e filosoficamente in inglese questa espressione, anche se sono certo che Dillon interpreta qui Giamblico in funzione di Damascio), bensì proprio alla lettera "un Dio unico," dove il termine θεός sta necessariamente al posto del termine Uno (Giamblico infatti non lo chiama Uno, bensì παντελῶς ἄρρετον) al solo scopo di indicare che trattandosi di una dottrina misterica (ermetica) è quello l'unico linguaggio che si deve e si può adoperare. In altri termini, quel che conta è che si può sì parlare di primo dio o di secondo dio, ecc., ma il vero dio come Principio, o come Pre-causa, così come indica il προαίτιος, non può essere che Unico. Ai fini della nostra tesi, tutto ciò serve a dimostrare che anche in questo passaggio del *De Mystериis*, così tormentato e denso di difficoltà ermeneutiche, la nozione di "intelligibile" dipende dal suo rapporto con il fondamento stesso della dottrina metafisica di Giamblico, ed è, quindi, rivelatrice della sua stessa nozione di metafisica. Mi scuso di questa non breve Premessa e passo subito al tema centrale del mio discorso.

III. Il Rapporto tra Metafisica e Matematica nei Principali Scritti di Giamblico

a) Nonostante che la teorizzazione di tale rapporto sia ovviamente più facilmente reperibile negli scritti matematici, è necessario tuttavia, da un lato non trascurare o, comunque, prendere in seria considerazione gli scritti non matematici, che contengono passaggi utili alla dimostrazione della nostra tesi, e dall'altro lato discriminare tra gli scritti matematici quelli in cui il rapporto tra "matematica" e "metafisica" risulti prevalente e teoreticamente più forte e significativo. Tra questi ultimi apparirà, come vedremo, molto più importante degli altri il *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*, che contiene, al contrario dell'*In Nicomachi Arithmetice Introductionem* e dei

⁵ Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, ed. e trad., vol. 3 (Paris 1978) xi ss.

Theologoumena, un notevole numero di passaggi idonei al nostro scopo. I *Theologoumena*, tuttavia, possono essere considerati come un campo di verifica globale della nostra tesi, dato che essi risultano impostati sull'assunto secondo cui dei numeri è possibile e legittimo costruire una scienza teologica.

b) Degli scritti non matematici, quello che presenta maggiore interesse per noi è la *De Vita Pythagorica*, ma certamente anche *De Mysteriis* 9.4, pur nella sua brevità, ha un'importanza notevole.

Ho evitato scientemente di prendere in considerazione, e quindi ho scartato qualsiasi esame del suo testo, il *Protrepticus*, e ho fatto ciò per l'evidente ragione che gran parte della sua sostanza non è giamblichea. Qualunque sia la soluzione che un giorno si potrà dare al problema del rapporto tra questo testo giamblico e le sue numerose fonti, allo scopo di determinare se vi sia e quale sia l'apporto originale che esso abbia dato alla letteratura protrettica antica e tardoantica, sta di fatto che allo stato delle nostre conoscenze questo secondo libro della *Συναγωγή τῶν Πυθαγορείων Δογμάτων* soltanto in piccolissima parte costituisce uno strumento atto ad arricchire la nostra comprensione storico-teorica del pensiero di Giamblico. Tutto questo non toglie, naturalmente, che la stessa impostazione e la coloritura pitagorica nella quale Giamblico ha saputo, da par suo, calare e adattare il materiale tratto dalle sue diverse fonti, diano all'opera in questione un valore tutt'altro che insignificante dal punto di vista della formazione e dello sviluppo della sua personale e originale dottrina. Ma è ovvio che ai fini del nostro discorso diventava molto rischioso basarsi su testi tratti da questo particolarissimo scritto giamblico.⁶ Passo quindi all'esame di alcuni passaggi della *De Vita Pythagorica*.

c) *De Vita Pythagorica* 12. Questo capitolo della *De Vita Pythagorica* affronta il problema della nascita del termine "filosofia" e del suo vero significato: la tesi di Giamblico è, come si sa, quella comune a tutta la storiografia antica, secondo la quale il primo a usare tale termine fu Pitagora. Giamblico accetta *tout court* tale tesi e la esprime con la formula "si dice che . . .", ma quel che più conta è che egli pone l'accento sul fatto che Pitagora non solo inventò il nome, ma lo attribuì a se stesso—*φιλόσοφον ἑαυτὸν προσαγορεύσαι*:—questo significa, secondo Giamblico, che Pitagora fu anche il primo vero filosofo. Il discorso di Giamblico continua sostenendo che Pitagora non si limitò ad attribuire a se stesso il nome di "filosofo," ma ne spiegò anche il contenuto specifico—*πρᾶγμα οἰκεῖον προεκδιδάσκων*. La traduzione che di queste ultime parole trovo sia in Montoneri ("il suo effettivo significato") che in Clark ("a concern special to him") non mi soddisfa molto, giacché a me sembra che il termine *πρᾶγμα* ha qui il senso forte di "referente reale" della voce "filosofo," cioè di una realtà che appartiene propriamente e specificamente al "significato" di quella voce. Chiunque sia l'autore di questo passaggio della *De Vita Pythagorica*, Giamblico o una delle sue fonti, certamente non ignorava la tesi classica con cui Aristotele nel suo *De Interpretatione* distingueva in maniera squisitamente tecnica le *φωναὶ* dai *παθήματα* τῆς ψυχῆς e dai *πράγματα*.⁷

⁶ Per altre questioni relative al *Protrepticus*, rinvio all'*Introduction* e alle *Notes* di É. des Places e di A. Segonds che accompagnano l'edizione de' *Les Belles Lettres* (Paris 1989).

⁷ Cf. Aristotele, *De Interpretatione* 16a3–8.

Nello spiegare la portata semantica della voce "filosofo," Pitagora, continua Giamblico, distingue diversi modi di essere uomo (παντοδαποὶ [. . .] ἄνθρωποι), tra cui il più "genuino" (ο, come traduce efficacemente la Clark, "of the greatest authority" (εἰλικρινέστατον) è quello che ammette la contemplazione delle cose più belle (τὸν ἀποδεξάμενον τὴν τῶν καλλίστων θεωρίαν) e precisamente il modo di essere dell'"uomo-filosofo." Non c'è, infatti, contemplazione più bella di quella che ha per oggetto l'ordine dell'universo che si riflette nell'ordinato movimento di rivoluzione degli astri. Ma tale ordine dipende dalla partecipazione dell'universo al Primo Principio, che è anche il Primo Intelligibile (κατὰ μετουσίαν μέντοι τοῦ πρώτου καὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ). È a questo punto che Giamblico opera la saldatura tra metafisica (ma si dovrebbe, in effetti, aggiungere la fisica) e matematica: Infatti "quel Primo Principio era <secondo Pitagora> la Natura dei numeri e dei <loro> rapporti, natura che pervade ogni cosa (τὸ δὲ πρῶτον ἦν ἐκεῖνο, ἡ τῶν ἀριθμῶν τε καὶ λόγων φύσις διὰ πάντων διαθέουσα)" (dove io dò al termine λόγων che accompagna ἀριθμῶν, in una coordinazione sintattica forte costituita da τε καί, il significato che in questo contesto gli compete, e cioè quello di "rapporto matematico:" Montoneri traduce: *proporzione* (eccessivo!),⁸ Clark: *rational order*).⁹ Il discorso di Giamblico si conclude con l'osservazione, secondo la quale di tale Bellezza del Primo Principio Intelligibile che è il Numero si può avere sì scienza vera e propria, cioè sapienza (σοφία μὲν ἢ τῷ ὄντι ἐπιστήμη τις), ma si può anche avere vivo desiderio di tale scienza, cioè filosofia (φιλοσοφία δὲ ἢ ζήλωσις τῆς τοιαύτης θεωρίας).

Un approfondimento di questa distinzione tra scienza vera delle cose, da un lato, e filosofia, cioè aspirazione a quella scienza, dall'altro lato, troviamo più avanti al capitolo 29, là dove—prendendo spunto dalla osservazione che i "commentari" scritti dai Pitagorici (τὰ γραφέντα ὑπὸ τῶν Πυθαγορείων ὑπομνήματα), cioè tutta la letteratura attribuita dalla tradizione a Pitagora o da lui ispirata (lo dice esplicitamente Giamblico subito dopo alla pagina 89.2-4: "Se dunque si è d'accordo che le opere di Pitagora che oggi circolano, e quelle che furono scritte a partire dalle sue lezioni [εἰ τοίνυν ὁμολογεῖται τὰ μὲν Πυθαγόρου εἶναι τῶν συγγραμμάτων τῶν νυνὶ φερομένων, τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀκροάσεως αὐτοῦ συγγεγράφθαι], sono la più grande testimonianza della sapienza di Pitagora [περὶ δὲ τῆς σοφίας αὐτοῦ: si noti che qui si attribuisce a Pitagora non già il semplice amore della sapienza [filosofia], bensì la sapienza come tale, il che significa che egli raggiunge quel fine ultimo])—Giamblico torna a trattare appunto della differenza tra sapienza e filosofia, intendendo la prima come "scienza della verità degli enti (σοφίαν δὲ ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ἀληθείας)" e la seconda come "amore della sapienza (οἶονεὶ φιλίαν σοφίας)," e precisamente la prima scienza degli enti che si dicono tali in senso proprio ("degli enti immateriali, ed eterni e che sono i soli principi attivi," in una parola degli Intelligibili), la seconda scienza degli enti che si dicono tali solo per omonimia, essendo partecipi di quelli ("delle forme corporee e materiali, generate e corruttibili, e che non sono mai veramente enti"). Ora, se è vero che

⁸ Cf. Giamblico, *De Vita Pythagorica*, L. Montoneri, ed. (Bari 1973) *ad loc.*

⁹ Cf. *Iamblichus. On the Pythagorean Life*, G. Clark, ed. e trad. (Liverpool 1989) *ad loc.*

Pitagora e i Pitagorici che da lui furono ispirati e istruiti, hanno insegnato tutto ciò attraverso le matematiche, è altrettanto vero e inoppugnabile, pensa Giamblico, che queste ultime, cioè le scienze matematiche, hanno a che vedere o, comunque, sono scienze affini a quella scienza degli Intelligibili e degli dèi (τὴν περὶ τῶν νοητῶν καὶ τὴν περὶ θεῶν ἐπιστήμην) che in ultima analisi costituisce il vero ed effettivo insegnamento dei Pitagorici, e che Giamblico considera la più alta e divina scienza metafisica.

Concludiamo questa parte relativa alla *De Vita Pythagorica* con l'esame di un passaggio della fine del capitolo 32, dove Giamblico, nel chiudere il suo discorso sul metodo didattico e formativo con cui Pitagora preparava i suoi discepoli all'ascesa verso il divino, rivendica all'insegnamento pitagorico delle matematiche una funzione "misterica" (διὰ τῶν μαθηματικῶν ὀργασμῶν) di purificazione e di liberazione della mente dalle passioni che la associano e la inchiodano al corpo. Qualificare l'apprendimento di una certa scienza come un procedimento di natura misterica e iniziatica rientra certamente nella tradizione neoplatonica contemporanea e posteriore a Giamblico (basti pensare a Proclo, a quello che della sua educazione presso Siriano e delle sue virtù morali e catartiche racconta il suo discepolo e biografo Marino: cf. *Vita Procli* 13; 23; 26 e *passim*), ma qui interessa soprattutto notare il legame che unisce questa valutazione teologico-teurgica della matematica al contenuto stesso e alla finalità ultima del suo insegnamento. Si tenga conto che già al capitolo 17 Giamblico aveva presentato negli stessi termini la procedura di accoglienza che Pitagora riservava ai suoi aspiranti discepoli: "Se dunque, dopo essere stato da loro [sc. dai Pitagorici] giudicato nel suo aspetto fisiognomico sulla base della sua conformazione e della sua andatura e di ogni altro movimento e atteggiamento, e dopo avere fatto bene sperare di sé, dopo cinque anni di silenzio (μετὰ τὴν πενταετῇ σιωπῇ) e dopo i misteri e le iniziazioni fatte di così alti insegnamenti matematici (καὶ [τὴν] μετὰ τοὺς ἐκ τῶν τοσῶνδε μαθημάτων ὀργασμούς καὶ μυσείας) e dopo tante e siffatte purificazioni dell'anima provenienti da tale varietà di dottrine (ψυχῆς τε ἀπορρύψεις καὶ καθαρμούς τοσοῦτους τε καὶ τηλικούτους καὶ ἐκ ποικίλων οὕτως θεωρημάτων προοδεύσαντας), da cui si generano in ognuno assoluta acutezza di mente e vivacità d'anima, uno si rivelava ancora pigro e di scarsa capacità di apprendimento, allora i Pitagorici innalzavano a costui una stele e un monumento funebre nella scuola, ecc.," cioè lo cacciavano via dopo averlo colmato d'oro e d'argento (insomma, come si dice dalle nostre parti, gli facevano ponti d'oro per farlo andare via). L'insegnamento matematico dei Pitagorici era, quindi, finalizzato a preparare l'anima al contatto con il divino, alla comprensione cioè dei Primi Principi di quell'ordine intelligibile, di cui gli enti matematici, come Giamblico spiegherà ampiamente nelle opere matematiche (lo vedremo fra poco), altro non sono che immagini e strumenti di mediazione per la comprensione della realtà sensibile. La scienza matematica, almeno nella sua accezione pitagorica (ché esiste, ovviamente, una pratica o tecnica matematica che nulla ha a che fare con quella scienza), è strettamente imparentata con la scienza metafisica che ha per oggetto appunto gli Intelligibili. Lo stesso fatto che si dia, anche se in via teorica, la possibilità di costruire e gestire una *teologia dell'aritmetica* (che tuttavia si estende alle altre tre scienze matematiche, essendo l'aritmetica il fondamento di queste), rappresenta di per sé la necessità di considerare le matematiche come scienze affini alla metafisica (si ricordi che, per i neoplatonici, la teologia costituisce la parte culminante e più nobile

della filosofia, anzi essa è la vera filosofia: nasce di qui, come si sa, la posizione di inferiorità della metafisica aristotelica rispetto a quella platonica). Ma l'applicazione dell'aritmetica alla scienza teologica non costituisce un *unicum* metodologico, perché essa si può applicare anche alle altre scienze, ad esempio alla fisica, all'etica, ecc. Come si sa, sono andate perdute le sezioni della *Συναγωγή* pitagorica di Giamblico che si occupavano di tali argomenti: conosciamo però i titoli di tali scritti a tal punto da poterne trarre un'idea sufficiente sul loro contenuto. Il libro 5 si intitolava, infatti, *Περὶ τῆς ἐν φυσικοῖς ἀριθμητικῆς ἐπιστήμης*, che io traduco *La Scienza Aritmetica applicata alla Fisica* (le altre possibili traduzioni di tale titolo non inficiano il significato che qui gli attribuiamo: *La Scienza Aritmetica Vista come Fisica*, *La Scienza Aritmetica Studiata Secondo i Principi della Fisica*, *La Scienza Aritmetica che si può Trovare nella Fisica*, ecc.); il libro 6 recava questo titolo: *Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἠθικοῖς ἀριθμητικῆς ἐπιστήμης*, cioè *La Scienza Aritmetica applicata all'Etica*; il libro 7, infine, era intitolato *Περὶ τῆς ἐν Θεολογικοῖς* [o secondo il MS fiorentino *ἐν θεοῖς*] *ἐπιστήμης*, cioè *La Scienza Aritmetica Applicata alla Teologia*. Qualunque sia il rapporto tra quest'ultimo scritto perduto della *Συναγωγή* di Giamblico e l'anonimo testo dei *Theologoumena Arithmeticae*, è un fatto che l'intendimento dell'autore appare perfettamente coerente con il progetto da cui è nato l'intero *Corpus* degli scritti di Giamblico. Quel che, invece, non appare con evidenza, ma che per me è di fatto altrettanto evidente, è che l'ordine di applicazione della matematica (nella fattispecie dell'aritmetica, ma, come si è detto, il discorso non cambia) prima alla fisica, poi all'etica e infine alla teologia, è tale che quest'ultima applicazione, cioè quella teologica, costituisce la causa finale, per dirla aristotelicamente, cioè lo σκοπός o, meglio, il τέλος delle prime due applicazioni: il che equivale a dire che in tanto è teoricamente possibile applicare la matematica al campo della filosofia della natura e al mondo morale, in quanto è necessario applicarla alla teologia, e la ragione è del tutto evidente: qualunque mondo inferiore a quello divino altro non è se non una sua derivazione o produzione, e, quindi, lo studio matematico del mondo inferiore prepara allo studio del mondo superiore o divino. E dal momento che stiamo parlando dei *Theologoumena Arithmeticae*, è opportuno esaminare qualche passaggio di questo scritto, sempre in ordine al problema del rapporto tra matematica e metafisica nel pensiero di Giamblico.

d) Anzitutto il brano relativo alle proprietà del numero 1, contenuto alle pagine 2-3 dell'edizione De Falco-Klein:¹⁰ "Esso [sc. l'1] è di fatto forma delle forme (εἶδος εἰδῶν), come creazione per il suo potere creativo e intellesione per il suo potere intellettuale (ὡς τέχνη τις τεχνικῶ καὶ νόησις νοητικῶ) [...]. Come senza l'1 nessuna cosa può assolutamente costituirsi, così senza di esso non ci può essere neppure un qualsiasi atto conoscitivo (ὡς δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ αὐτῆς σύστασις ἀπλῶς τινος, οὕτως οὐδὲ χωρὶς αὐτῆς γνώρισις οὐτινοσούν), come fosse la pura luce, in una parola la cosa più potente fra tutte, e della stessa natura del Sole e con potere egemonico, tale da apparire in ciascuna di queste proprietà simile a dio [...] in realtà l'1 genera se stesso e da se stesso è generato, nel senso che è in sé perfetto e senza né principio né fine (ὡς αὐτοτελής καὶ ἀναρχος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος), e si presenta

¹⁰ Riporto la mia traduzione contenuta nel volume: *Giamblico. Il Numero e il Divino* (Milano 1995).

come causa di stabilità, così come si pensa che sia dio nel processo di attuazione degli enti naturali, cioè conservatore e custode delle loro nature (καθὼς ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἐνεργήμασι τοιοῦτος ἐπινοεῖται, διασωστικός καὶ τῶν φύσεων τηρητικός). I Pitagorici, dunque, lo chiamano non solo dio, ma anche intelligenza, ecc." Non credo sia necessario aggiungere parole di commento a questo brano, se non per dire soltanto che esso sottende un concetto metafisico fondamentale nella filosofia di Giamblico, e dei neoplatonici in generale, concetto che essi ricavano dal Pitagorismo, e cioè che l'unità costituisce la base e la ragion d'essere di qualsiasi ente: ogni ente, infatti, è tale anzitutto perché è uno in se stesso (principio che i medievali poi esprimeranno con la nota formula: *ens et unum convertuntur*, senza però confondere l'unità metafisica, o—come essi la chiamano "trascendentale"—con l'unità matematica).¹¹ Naturalmente qui si aggiunge tutta una serie di concetti per i quali, a partire da questa sua fondamentale proprietà metafisica, l'1 dev'essere considerato e stimato, come giustamente sostengono i Pitagorici, alla stregua di dio, quale causa produttrice e conservatrice delle essenze o nature delle cose. Ma siccome dall'1 nascono tutti i numeri e le varie loro proprietà (anche geometriche, astronomiche e musicali), allora è ovvio concludere che l'intera scienza matematica partecipa di quella fondamentale proprietà metafisica che appartiene all'1/dio (richiamo alla vostra attenzione il θεὸς εἰς di *De Mysteriis* 8.2, che abbiamo già esaminato). Alla luce di questo aspetto metafisico-ontologico dell'1 occorre leggere e intendere anche ciò che i *Theologoumena* affermano più avanti, alla pagina 5, dove si legge che "se il potere di ogni numero è nell'1, allora questo sarà propriamente un numero intelligibile (νοητὸς ἂν κυρίως ἀριθμὸς εἴη), in quanto non manifesta ancora nessuna realtà effettiva, bensì tutte le realtà insieme allo stato mentale (οὐπω τι ἐνεργὸν ἀποφαίνουσα ἀλλὰ πανθ' ὁμοῦ κατ' ἐπίνοιαν)."

Concludiamo quest'esame dei passaggi dei *Theologoumena* con una significativa osservazione che l'Anonimo fa verso la fine dell'opera, alla pagina 80, a proposito del numero 10, quando dice che "giustamente Dio si è servito di questo numero come misura universale e gnomone e regolo, adattandolo al suo disegno creativo (εἰκότως μέτρῳ τῶν ὅλων αὐτῇ καὶ ὥσπερ γνώμονι καὶ εὐθυντηρίῳ ἐχρήσατο πρὸς τὴν πρόθεσιν ἀρμοζόμενος); perciò si scopre, per mezzo dei rapporti numerici relativi al 10, che ogni cosa, dal cielo alla terra, in generale e in particolare, è stata ordinata secondo il numero 10. Ed è per questo—conclude l'Anonimo—che i Pitagorici, quando discutevano in termini teologici (θεολογοῦντες), chiamavano il 10, ora "Cosmo," ora "Cielo," ora "Tutto," ecc. È uno solo, dunque, il nesso che lega la scienza matematica (nella fattispecie quella parte di essa che si occupa del numero perfetto 10), da un lato con la cosmologia e con tutte le scienze fisiche, e dall'altro lato con la teologia, cioè con la scienza dei divini Principi.

¹¹ Cf., ad es., Tommaso d'Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 11, art. 1, ad 1, dove egli, nel distinguere nettamente il valore trascendentale da quello predicamentale dell'unità, dice di accettare il punto di vista pitagorico-neoplatonico secondo cui l'unità, che è convertibile con l'essere, non aggiunge realtà a quest'ultimo, e di respingere il punto di vista contrario di Avicenna.

e) Prima di passare all'esame dell'ultimo gruppo di fonti tratte dal *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*, con le quali cercherò di fornire le dimostrazioni più evidenti del necessario ed effettivo rapporto tra matematica e metafisica in Giamblico, vorrei ritornare brevemente sul *De Mysteriis* per citarne un passaggio, in cui si trova conferma delle conclusioni che abbiamo ricavato dall'esame dei *Theologoumena*, e cioè del fatto che la teologia dell'aritmetica rivela in modo incontrovertibile che esiste, nella mente di Giamblico, l'idea di un legame teoretico tra matematica e metafisica.

Mi riferisco al capitolo 4 del libro 9 del *De Mysteriis*, dove Giamblico, riprendendo in parte una delle sue fonti già esposte e valutate nel precedente libro 8, e precisamente lo stoico e prete egiziano Cheremone, discute della vera scienza astrologica, che egli chiama *tout-court* "la scienza matematica" (ἡ μαθηματικὴ ἐπιστήμη o semplicemente ἡ μαθηματικὴ): "Così come noi confutiamo solitamente gli eristici dicendo che anche le verità hanno per natura l'opposizione di ciò che è loro contrario, e che non sono soltanto gli errori a combattere tra loro, allo stesso modo —scrive Giamblico— noi rispondiamo, anche a proposito dell'astrologia (καὶ περὶ τῆς μαθηματικῆς), che essa è vera, ma che coloro che ne hanno un concetto erroneo (οἱ δὲ πλανώμενοι περὶ αὐτῆς) la contraddicono, perché non sanno niente delle sue verità (οὐδὲν εἰδότες τῶν ἀληθῶν). Ciò è capitato non soltanto a questa scienza, ma a tutte le scienze trasmesse dagli dèi agli uomini: con il continuo progredire del tempo, spesso con tali scienze si è mescolato molto di mortale, che ha come effetto quello di annientare il carattere divino della loro capacità conoscitiva. Tutto questo è certamente possibile, anche se per poco, e nondimeno è possibile che esse conservino una chiara prova della verità (ἔστιν ὁμῶς ἐναργὲς τι τεκμήριον τῆς ἀληθείας διασώζειν). Perché i segni della misurazione dei cicli divini [sc. delle rivoluzioni celesti] sono visibili agli occhi di tutti, quando annunziano le eclissi di sole e di luna e le congiunzioni della luna con le stelle fisse, e l'esperienza acquisita con la vista si accorda con i segni premonitori." Indubbiamente, anche se qui non si tratta tanto dell'astrologia come scienza matematica applicata, quanto piuttosto della tecnica delle predizioni astrologiche, nella quale Caldei ed Egizi erano maestri, tuttavia, da un lato il fatto che Giamblico chiami questo tipo di conoscenza, oltre che divina, "scienza matematica," e dall'altro lato il fatto che egli parli esplicitamente di misurazioni astronomiche, testimoniano chiaramente che Giamblico intende riferirsi alla scienza astronomica, e cioè ad una delle quattro scienze matematiche, anche se nella sua applicazione astrologica. Del resto anche nel *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* Giamblico adopera, oltre al termine "astronomia," ben due volte il termine "astrologia" con evidente riferimento all'applicazione dell'astronomia, quale scienza matematica, al campo dell'astrologia, scrivendo una volta (a 72.19) ἀστρολογικὴ ἐπιστήμη e un'altra volta (a 80.24) semplicemente ἀστρολογία.¹² Ma è giunto il momento di passare ad analizzare i testi più significativi del *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*, nei quali apparirà in maniera solare quale sia la necessaria e stretta connessione tra metafisica e matematica nel pensiero di Giamblico.

¹² Rinvio per questo alla nota 183 della mia traduzione di tale scritto Giambliceo contenuta nel volume citato alla nota 10, ad loc. 72.19.

f) Cominciamo dal capitolo 1, pagine 9-10, dove Giamblico affronta il tema generale della matematica comune, o, come egli la chiama, della "teoria comune delle matematiche" (τὴν κοινὴν [...] τῶν μαθημάτων θεωρεῖν), al fine di scoprire donde essa abbia origine e quali siano le sue funzioni in rapporto, non solo alle singole scienze matematiche, cioè aritmetica, geometria, musica e astronomia, ma anche all'intera filosofia. Su quest'ultimo punto, che è quello che ci interessa più da vicino, ecco che cosa egli scrive (riferisco naturalmente la mia traduzione contenuta nel volume Rusconi già citato): "Presenteremo di ciascuna di tali forme comuni [sc. delle forme proprie della matematica comune, che sono altre dalle forme proprie di ciascuna scienza matematica, anche se le contengono in potenza], l'essenza a cui inerisce ciascun genere o specie delle matematiche (παρδείξομεν τὴν οὐσίαν περὶ ἣν ἕκαστον γένος καὶ εἶδος τῶν μαθηματικῶν ἐνυπάρχει). E non tralascieremo di dire quale sia il contributo di queste forme rispetto all'intero [sc. alla scienza matematica comune], e quale la loro reciproca sistemazione, e quale sia e da dove derivi il loro apparentamento, e da quali principi esse siano tenute insieme, e a quali loro superiori cause esse si riferiscano [...] e perché tale teoria comune sia desiderabile sia per se stessa che attraverso le scienze che da essa provengono, e perché conduca la ragione verso l'intera filosofia e verso l'intera scienza degli enti anche intelligibili (καὶ ὅτι πρὸς πᾶσαν φιλοσοφίαν περάγει τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ πρὸς πᾶσαν τὴν περὶ τῶν ὄντων καὶ νοητῶν ἐπιστήμην). Tali sono dunque—conclude Giamblico—gli obiettivi che vogliamo conseguire in questo libro, ecc." La teoria comune delle matematiche, quindi, conduce la ragione all'intera filosofia, e precisamente—spiega il Filosofo—conduce la ragione filosofica verso la scienza di tutti gli enti, compresi quelli intelligibili: ma come potrebbe svolgere questo suo compito se non fosse capace di affrontare con i suoi propri mezzi almeno le fasi propedeutiche della ricerca e della conoscenza del mondo intelligibile? D'altra parte la matematica comune può portare a compimento questo suo obiettivo solo perché, come affermano alcuni, è riconducibile all'anima, che presenta caratteri affini all'essenza degli enti matematici. È questo un interessante argomento che Giamblico affronterà al capitolo 9, pagina 40.7ss., dove verranno esaminate, e al tempo stesso criticate e corrette, le opinioni di coloro che in un modo o nell'altro mettono in relazione la natura dell'anima con le essenze matematiche. Naturalmente, osserva Giamblico, sbagliano coloro che danno dell'anima definizioni particolari che ne comprendano solo alcuni aspetti matematici, ad esempio quelle che la definiscono "forma dell'assolutamente esteso" (ἰδέαν τοῦ πάντῃ διαστάτου) o "numero semovente" (ἀριθμὸν αὐτοκίνητον) o "armonia esistente nei calcoli" (ἀρμονίαν ἐν λόγοις ὑφειστώσαν), ecc. Occorre, invece, "considerare tutte queste cose come un complesso generale, come se l'anima fosse forma del numerabile (ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἰδέας οὐσης ἀριθμοῦ) [...] Perciò—conclude Giamblico—l'anima coesiste con la geometria e l'aritmetica e l'armonica, donde consegue anche che l'anima esiste in virtù dei calcoli proporzionali (διὰ δὲ τοῦτο γεωμετρικῇ τε ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀριθμητικῇ καὶ ἀρμονικῇ ἀναλογίᾳ συνυπάρχει, ὅθεν δὲ καὶ λόγοις τοῖς κατ' ἀναλογίαν ἢ αὐτῇ ἐστὶ) e ha una certa parentela con i principi ontologici ed è congiunta con tutti gli enti e può assimilarsi a ogni cosa (ταῖς τε ἀρχαῖς τῶν ὄντων ἔχει τινὰ συγγένειαν καὶ πάντων ἐφάπτεται τῶν ὄντων καὶ πρὸς πάντα ὁμοιοῦσθαι δύναται)." Dunque l'anima rappresenta la realtà in cui matematica, da un lato, e ontologia nel suo significato più generale, dall'altro lato,

trovano la loro più cospicua combinazione teorica, sia in ordine alla determinazione della stessa natura dell'anima, sia in ordine alla sussistenza dei valori che sono comuni a tutte le matematiche. Solo chi è capace di concepire una teoria comune di tutte le matematiche ed è, quindi, in grado di valutare appieno la consistenza dei rapporti tra queste ultime e il mondo psichico, riesce a vedere anche il nesso necessario che intercorre tra matematica e metafisica: "[...] ogni delimitazione e determinazione giunge all'anima dai numeri [...] Ed è per questo che l'anima sente anche le armonie e gode delle cose armoniose, in quanto è anch'essa armonica, e riceve il suo essere dai numeri e da altre misure matematiche del genere, che ammettono affinità sia con le forme intelligibili che con le realtà sensibili e le forme materiali (ἐκ τε ἀριθμῶ καὶ ἄλλων τοιούτων μαθηματικῶν μέτρων τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχει, ἅπερ συγγένειαν παρεδέξατο πρὸς τε τὰ νοητὰ εἶδη καὶ πρὸς τὰς αἰσθητὰς οὐσίας καὶ τὰ ἔνυλα εἶδη)."

Tutto il discorso sulla matematica comune si basa, come si può vedere, sul fatto che gli oggetti delle matematiche sono enti reali, e non semplici concetti, e che gli enti matematici in quanto tali sono intermedi tra gli enti intelligibili e quelli sensibili. La "medianità" della realtà matematica, carattere che essa condivide con la realtà dell'anima, pone, tuttavia, il problema di come concepire "dinamicamente" la stessa posizione intermedia della matematica, come determinare, cioè, la funzione di transizione che essa svolge tra i due ordini di realtà in mezzo a cui si colloca. In altre parole, occorre stabilire con precisione se la matematica serve a transitare dal mondo sensibile verso quello intelligibile, o viceversa.

Nel capitolo 13 Giamblico distingue due modi di concepire e intendere i generi (τὰ γένη) della matematica comune, distinzione che si rende necessaria, perché "ciascuna scienza—scrive testualmente Giamblico—trova nei suoi propri generi il metodo di ragionare e dimostrare che le conviene (ἀπὸ τῶν οἰκείων γενῶν ἐκάστη τὸν πρόσφορον ἑαυτῇ τῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν ἀποδείξεων εὕρισκει τρόπον)." Noi chiamiamo "principi" tali generi, quando li consideriamo "cause e fattori dell'intera realtà matematica e della relativa teoria (ὡς αἷτια θεωρῶμεν καὶ ποιητικὰ τῆς ὅλης μαθηματικῆς οὐσίας καὶ τῆς περὶ αὐτὴν θεωρίας)," li chiamiamo invece "elementi," quando li concepiamo come immanenti e costituenti nel loro insieme la realtà e il discorso della scienza matematica (ὡς ἐνυπάρχοντα ταῦτα καὶ συμπληροῦντα τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸν τῆς ἐπιστήμης λόγον νοηται). Di qui la conseguenza, utile ai fini della nostra tesi, che le realtà matematiche oltre ad essere oggetto (cioè elementi) della scienza matematica, anzitutto di quella comune e poi delle singole matematiche specifiche, sono anche, e soprattutto, principi (cioè cause) della scienza matematica, e in quest'ultima accezione sono più affini ai principi intelligibili che non alle cose sensibili a cui vengono applicate. Infatti, anche se risultano "inferiori quanto a perfezione e purezza e semplicità e capacità di massima estensione" rispetto agli intelligibili, tuttavia sono superiori "quanto a ordine, simmetria, natura immobile e fissa, partecipazione pura delle idee, natura incorporea e immateriale, e per dirla in breve, per tutti gli aspetti migliori" rispetto ai sensibili. Come dire che la loro inferiorità rispetto agli intelligibili non inficia per nulla la loro affinità ad essi. Quindi la matematica, che come scienza dei generi matematici ha la loro medesima natura, è strettamente imparentata con i generi intelligibili a cui i generi matematici sono affini. "Anzitutto dunque—scrive Giamblico al successivo capitolo 15, pagina 54.23ss.—proviamo a dire che la matematica si estende all'intera filosofia e ad ogni sua teoria,

relativa sia all'essere che al divenire, e permea l'intera filosofia sia nella sua interezza che nei suoi generi ed elementi e principi (αὐτὴ τε ἡ ὅλη καὶ τὰ γένη αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ αἱ ἀρχαί), per quanti generi e specie matematiche ci siano. Di qui deriva certamente—precisa ancora più esplicitamente Giamblico—anche il fatto che gli uomini si servono delle scienze matematiche, tutte le volte che costruiscono qualche teoria filosofica (ὅταν τινὰ φιλόσοφον θεωρίαν ποιῶνται).” E Giamblico non si limita ad affermare tutto ciò in via generica o semplicemente metodologica, ma si diffonde a darne spiegazioni e dimostrazioni specifiche con dettagli che confermano la nostra tesi. “Le cose, infatti, che sono incorporee e intermedie,—continua a dire—e capaci di adattarsi e assimilarsi a tutto, ci sono di grande aiuto in tutte le scienze filosofiche (πάσας τὰς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἐπιστήμας ἡμῖν μεγάλα συναίρεται). E infatti la matematica predispone e rende idonei ad apprendere la teologia (τῇ τε γὰρ θεολογίᾳ παρασκευὴν προευντρεπίζει καὶ ἐπιτηδεύειν) [. . .] e da un lato libera da ogni legame le nostre facoltà intellettive e le purifica e le collega all'essere (τὰ μὲν νοερά ὄργανα ἀπολύουσιν τῶν δεσμῶν καὶ ἀποκαθαίρουσιν συνάπτουσάν τε πρὸς τὸ ὄν), e dall'altro lato per mezzo della bellezza e del giusto ordinamento proprio delle teorie matematiche avvicina in qualche modo agli intelligibili (τῷ δὲ κάλλει καὶ τῇ εὐταξίᾳ τῶν θεωρουμένων ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασιν πλησιάζουσάν πως τοῖς νοητοῖς).” Non si potrebbe esprimere con maggiore chiarezza e perentorietà la funzione metafisica delle scienze matematiche: sembra che Giamblico abbia in mente, più da Pitagorico che da Platónico, e comunque da Neoplatónico che ha appreso pienamente la lezione pitagorica, l'idea che senza matematica non si dia né filosofia né teologia, che è poi l'idea-cardine di ogni dottrina platonico-neoplatonica da Plotino agli ultimi esponenti delle Scuole ateniese e alessandrina, idea che affonda le proprie radici nel *Timeo* e nel *Parmenide*.

Si tocca a questo punto il *Leitmotiv* dell'intero trattato *Sulla Scienza matematica Comune*. Infatti poco dopo, al capitolo 17, pagina 59.15ss., Giamblico scrive ancora più esplicitamente che “bisogna osservare anche questo, cioè quale mai sia il punto finale di riferimento nello studio della matematica, se essa faccia tutt'uno con l'apprendere i teoremi di tale scienza o se si debbano ridurre questi teoremi a filosofia e se ci si debba proporre di arrivare per mezzo di essi alla contemplazione dell'intelligibile (ἢ εἰς φιλοσοφίαν τις αὐτὰ ἀνάγει καὶ προτίθεται ὁδηγεῖσθαι δι' αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ θέαν): in questo caso, infatti, l'ordine sarebbe diverso, in quanto talvolta esso andrebbe al di là della naturale consequenzialità delle matematiche (ἐνίοτε τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν μαθημάτων ὑπερβαίνουσα).” E al capitolo 18, pagina 62.18ss., a proposito dei metodi che i Pitagorici seguivano nell'insegnamento della matematica, si legge che “Essi facevano un uso scientifico di tali metodi con l'occhio rivolto anche alla filosofia teoretica dell'essere e della bellezza (ἐχρῶντο δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐπιστημονικῶς καὶ μετὰ τῆς θεωρητικῆς φιλοσοφίας τῶν ὄντων καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ στοχαζόμενοι), nella convinzione che bisognasse tenere sempre in gran conto e stima la determinatezza e la concentrazione nella massima brevità, e se c'era da ricavare da quei metodi qualcosa di utile e per se stessi e per i discepoli e per l'intera scienza dell'essere (καὶ πρὸς ὅλην τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἐπιστήμην).” E ancora al capitolo 19, pagina 63.24ss., a proposito della divisione della matematica comune nei suoi generi e nelle sue specie più importanti, Giamblico riprende lo stesso argomento e scrive: “Ebbene, la prima cosa da contemplare di ogni ente matematico e della sua singola proprietà, qualunque

essa sia, è l'aspetto teologico (θεώρημα πρῶτόν ἐστι τὸ θεολογικόν), cioè il suo adattarsi all'essenza e alla potenza degli dèi [. . .] Dopo di che essi [sc. i Pitagorici] cercano di costruire le matematiche che concernono l'essere realmente intellettuale (τὸ νοερὸν ὄντως ὄν) [sc. i concetti puri, tra i quali si trova anche il numero matematico].” Insomma la matematica comune che i Pitagorici anteponevano alle loro dimostrazioni tecniche non era altro che una filosofia vera e propria, nella quale gli enti e i concetti matematici assumevano determinazioni teoretiche e quindi metafisiche: l'espressione linguistica ἡ θεωρητικὴ φιλοσοφία che abbiamo incontrata poco fa ne è testimonianza inoppugnabile. È questa la ragione per la quale, secondo i Pitagorici, la scienza delle matematiche supera abbondantemente le altre scienze, “in quanto precede tutte le altre occupazioni per bellezza e precisione [. . .] Le matematiche dunque—leggiamo al capitolo 26, pagina 84.8ss.—ci sono di grande utilità per quanto riguarda la vita umana nel suo complesso, come risulta chiaro a chi osservi le influenze che le tecniche matematiche hanno sulla nostra vita; e queste influenze non sono meno degne di attenzione, e quelle di maggiore importanza sono la catarsi dell'anima immortale, e la conversione dell'intelletto verso l'intelligibile, e la partecipazione all'attività dell'essere (τὰ δὲ μέγιστα ἡ κάθαρσις ἐστὶ τῆς ἀθανάτου ψυχῆς, καὶ ἡ τοῦ νοῦ περιαγωγή πρὸς τὸ νοητόν, καὶ ἡ μετουσία τῆς τοῦ ὄντος ἐνεργείας).” Le due espressioni tecniche “conversione dell'intelletto verso l'intelligibile” e “partecipazione all'attività dell'essere,” che Giamblico riferisce alle più importanti “influenze” (τὰ ἔργα) delle matematiche, ovvero dell'esercizio di tali scienze (τῶν μαθηματικῶν τεχνῶν), contengono in modo inequivocabile la misura della funzione metafisica dello studio dei numeri. I concetti matematici, anche se inferiori agli intelligibili, non si identificano affatto con i concetti della mente, cioè con i semplici atti intellettivi, perché non provengono, come questi ultimi, per astrazione dalla conoscenza delle cose sensibili: dunque la matematica è diversa per natura da tutte le altre scienze. C'è qui, a mio avviso, una trasparente polemica contro Aristotele e tutta la tradizione peripatetica che consideravano le matematiche un tipo di conoscenza astratta e per nulla aderente alla realtà. Come si sa, il libro 13 (cioè il libro M) delle *Metafisica* di Aristotele è consacrato quasi per intero (solo nell'ultima parte si critica la teoria delle idee come sostanze) alla confutazione delle opinioni di coloro che considerano i numeri sostanze, anzi sostanze separate. Le argomentazioni aristoteliche sono molto complesse e non sempre chiaramente indirizzate a filosofi o scuole determinate: è un fatto, però, che esse investono la concezione platonico-pitagorica della matematica soprattutto nei suoi sviluppi accademici (in Speusippo principalmente). A un certo punto, dopo avere esaminato la impossibilità dei vari modi in cui il numero può essere una cosa sussistente di per sé, Aristotele conclude con questo sillogismo: “Se dunque è necessario che il numero, per esistere come una cosa sussistente di per sé (τῶν ὄντων τι καθ' αὐτό), esista in uno dei modi suddetti, ma se non è possibile che esista in uno di questi modi, è evidente che il numero non ha la natura che ad esso hanno cercato di attribuire quelli che ne fanno qualcosa di separato (χωριστόν)” (1083b19–23).¹³ Che è esattamente la tesi contraria a quella di Giamblico, il quale appunto scrive alla fine del capitolo 28, pagina 89ss.: “I concetti matematici, dunque, che sono immobili in se stessi e inconfutabili, devono essere accordati alle specie e ai generi matematici presi per se stessi, e non bisogna

afferrarli per astrazione dai sensibili (οὐ κατὰ ἀφαίρεσιν ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ταῦτα περιλαμβάνοντες), bensì pensare in modo determinato ad essi come a cose che sussistono in se stesse (ἀλλ' ὀρίσμενως αὐτοῖς ἐπιβάλλοντες, ἅτε δὴ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὑφεστηκόσιν), e non sono affette da movimento, né si identificano con le forme intelligibili e indivisibili o con gli atti intellettivi (τῶν νοήσεων), ma che in funzione degli intelligibili si sviluppano anche attraverso i ragionamenti (τὰς διανοήσεις) che si fanno intorno a questi, e che esercitano in qualche modo questo tipo medio di conoscenza. Tale metodo concettuale e dimostrativo, infatti, è quello matematico ed è notevolmente separato (πολὺ κεχωρισμένη) dai ragionamenti degli altri uomini di scienza." Dunque, la conoscenza matematica, pur essendo intermedia tra intelligenza e sensazione, prende avvio dall'intelligenza (νόησις), cioè dalla conoscenza dell'intelligibile, e si svolge attraverso il ragionamento (διανοήσις) relativo allo stesso intelligibile. Anche qui risulta, quindi, molto più forte il legame tra matematica e metafisica che non quello tra matematica e fisica.

Gli ultimi capitoli del *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* non fanno che rafforzare questa tesi della superiorità della matematica rispetto a tutte le altre scienze, ad eccezione, naturalmente, della teologia. Ma questo vale, ovviamente, per la matematica dei Pitagorici, la quale—come si legge al capitolo 30, pagina 91.3ss.—“non è la matematica che si pratica comunemente (ὁποῖαν οἱ πολλοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν). Quest'ultima infatti è piuttosto tecnica e non ha uno scopo unitario (ἐκείνη μὲν γὰρ τεχνικὴ τὸ πλεον ἔστι καὶ σκοπὸν οὐκ ἔχουσα ἓνα), né tende al Bello e al Bene, mentre quella dei Pitagorici è squisitamente teoretica (θεωρητικὴ τέ ἐστι διαφερόντως, cioè altamente contemplativa), e riconduce ad un unico fine ultimo i suoi propri teoremi (καὶ πρὸς τέλος ἓν ἀναφέρει τὰ ἑαυτῆς θεωρήματα), e fa in modo che tutti i suoi ragionamenti si uniscano strettamente al Bello e al Bene, e si serve di ragionamenti che sono capaci di elevare all'Essere (καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὄν αὐτοῖς ἀναγωῖς).” Lo stesso nome “matematica”—osserva Giamblico al capitolo 34, pagina 96.10ss.—deriva da “mathesis” (μάθησις), cioè “apprendimento” in sé e per sé, che discende propriamente “dall'intelligenza degli intelligibili (ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ τῶν νοητῶν νοήσεως κάτεισι) [...] Ma delle cose di cui c'è intelligenza c'è anche scienza, e di quelle di cui c'è scienza c'è anche apprendimento, e queste fra tutte saranno le sole apprendibili <in senso proprio,> e perciò—conclude Giamblico—sono dette anche matematiche.” Nessun commento potrebbe, più di queste parole, mettere in evidenza la perfetta coincidenza tra conoscenza scientifica e conoscenza matematica.

IV. Conclusione

È giunto il momento di trarre qualche conclusione, anche se provvisoria, da quanto sono andato analizzando e valutando in merito all'idea di una necessaria relazione tra metafisica e matematica nel pensiero di Giamblico.

Anzitutto si può in concreto sostenere che, se è vera la premessa da cui siamo partiti, e cioè che la nozione di “metafisica,” soprattutto in un pensatore neoplatonico come Giamblico, si sostanzia del medesimo contenuto concettuale della nozione di “intelligibile,” è altrettanto vero che la nozione di “matematica,” così come è concepita e teorizzata in chiave squisitamente pitagorica, e di quel pitagorismo che in Giamblico—come del resto in altri filosofi neoplatonici—fa tutt'uno con un certo tipo

di neoplatonismo, non soltanto risulta affine alla nozione di "metafisica," ma addirittura ne costituisce l'aspetto epistemologico (e, vorrei, dire, tecnico-scientifico) più saliente e sintomatico.

In secondo luogo, l'uso che Giamblico fa dei concetti matematici in combinazione con quelli metafisici non lascia dubbi sul valore filosofico generale che egli attribuisce alla teoresi delle scienze matematiche, la quale è imperniata—come si è visto—sulla nozione di "teoria comune delle matematiche." Tutto ciò risulta tanto più evidente quanto più si constata che tale combinazione teoretico-discorsiva tra matematica e metafisica trova la sua maggiore e più esplicita espressione negli scritti matematici di Giamblico, soprattutto, come si è visto, nel *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*. È vero, d'altra parte, che anche in opere non matematiche, come ad esempio la *De Vita Pythagorica* o il *De Mysteriis*, Giamblico espone concetti e dottrine che coincidono sostanzialmente con quelli che troviamo nel *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*; tuttavia l'esame che si è fatto dei passaggi più significativi di quest'ultimo scritto ci ha condotto a risultati assolutamente chiari e incontrovertibili sul senso che bisogna dare all'idea giamblichea del rapporto tra metafisica e matematica, risultati che possiamo sintetizzare in questi termini.

La matematica è, anzitutto, vera scienza filosofica, e non semplicemente tecnica o arte del calcolo: essa, cioè, non serve soltanto a risolvere i teoremi basati sui numeri e sui loro diversi rapporti, ma anche e soprattutto a farci conoscere una realtà ontologicamente concreta ed effettivamente mediatrice fra due realtà opposte, quella intelligibile e quella sensibile. La realtà che è oggetto della scienza matematica, anzi di tutte le scienze matematiche che hanno il loro fondamento nella matematica comune, rappresenta l'anello di congiunzione oggettiva e dialettica (si dia a quest'ultimo termine tutta la pregnanza del suo significato platonico) tra quelle due opposte realtà, e tale medietà non ha solo valore conoscitivo, ma anche metafisico, nel senso che la scienza matematica non costituisce un metodo di conoscenza astratto, come pensano alcuni (soprattutto gli Aristotelici), bensì un vero e proprio sistema di conoscenze indipendenti e autosufficienti perché basate, appunto, su enti distinti, anzi separati dagli enti intelligibili e da quelli sensibili. La mediazione della conoscenza matematica, dunque, ha un valore schiettamente metafisico, così come la conoscenza dei principi sia teologici che fisici e, in generale, di ogni ordine e grado di realtà ontologica. È questa la conclusione ultima alla quale perviene il discorso di Giamblico sulla metafisicità della matematica, se si dà al termine "metafisicità" il significato che esso ha, e non può non avere, in un contesto filosofico neoplatonico, cioè il significato pieno e inoppugnabile di "ordine teologico" e divino. Mi si consenta di chiudere queste pagine con una considerazione che non vuole essere un atto di presunzione: il titolo che ho suggerito per il volume della Rusconi contenente gli scritti matematici di Giamblico, *Il Numero e il Divino*, racchiude un binomio che non vale soltanto come indicazione bibliografica limitata ad alcuni scritti di un maestro

neoplatonico, ma anche come codice di lettura e di interpretazione di tutto il pensiero di Giamblico e, vorrei dire, dell'intera filosofia tardo-neoplatonica, se è vero che questa appare, ed è realmente e interamente, pervasa dall'influenza di Giamblico.

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Iamblichus' Νοεὰ Θεωρία of Aristotle's *Categories*¹

John M. Dillon

In the preface to his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, Simplicius, in the course of reviewing his predecessors in the field, has this to say about Iamblichus:

Following on him (sc. Porphyry), the divine Iamblichus has also himself composed a lengthy commentary on this work, for the most part following the work of Porphyry even to the extent of *verbatim* borrowing, but in some cases criticizing and more clearly elucidating him (διαρρῶν ἀκριβέστερον), while at the same time compressing his lecture-style longwindedness in the refutation of objections, and throughout his work *superimposing upon more or less every section the intellectual interpretation* (νοεὰ θεωρία) of the subject-matter, as well as adding to the work another element over and above these that is useful: for, seeing that Archytas the Pythagorean, even prior to Aristotle, had made the division into the ten primary genera in his work *On the Universe* (Περὶ τοῦ παντός),² he incorporated it into his commentary, and where Archytas had set out clearly by means of examples the distinguishing marks of each of them, and explained their order in relation to each other, the specific differentiae of each, and their common and particular properties, he produces in the appropriate places Archytas' contributions, shows their agreement with Aristotle's doctrine, and, in cases where there is discrepancy (of which there are just a few), he has brought these to the attention of scholars, not neglecting, either, to explain in each case the cause of the discrepancy—and reasonably so, because it is clear all through the work that Aristotle is intending to follow the lead of Archytas.

(Simplicius, *In Categories* 2.9ff.)

¹ Earlier versions of this talk have previously been delivered to audiences at the Institute of Classical Studies in London (February 1986), and in Princeton (December 1987), and have profited much from discussion and criticism at those venues. I am particularly indebted to Prof. S. Strange, at the latter venue, for a penetrating written response, from which I have derived much profit.

² Also entitled, in the *Codex Ambrosianus* and elsewhere, "On the Basic Principles of Discourse, or On the Ten Categories." This has been most recently edited, in both its Doric and its Koine versions, by T.A. Szlezák, *Pseudo-Archytas über die Kategorien. Peripatoi*, test. 4 (Berlin 1972). It is most plausibly dated to the first century A.D., and seems to incorporate the results of the first generation of criticism of the *Categories*, by such men as Andronicus, Ariston, and Eudorus. Iamblichus, of course, took it as genuine.

What can we gather from this account? First, surely, that Iamblichus based his commentary for the most part fairly closely on that of Porphyry. What was the nature of Porphyry's large commentary (which is lost)³ we shall see in a moment. To this capacious framework Iamblichus added (1) certain criticisms or modifications of Porphyry, such as Simplicius periodically reports;⁴ (2) the adducing of the relevant passages of Archytas, which Simplicius tells us that he was the first commentator to do;⁵ and (3) some "higher criticism," or, as Simplicius terms it, "intellectual interpretation" (νοεπὰ θεωρία) of nearly all sections of the work. It is this last aspect of Iamblichus' commentary to which I would like to devote some consideration on this occasion.

First of all, though, let us consider the nature of Porphyry's large commentary. Simplicius gives us a description of it just before discussing Iamblichus:

After these (sc. Plotinus and earlier critics of the work), Porphyry, to whom we are indebted for all that is good, composed with great industry a comprehensive commentary on the book, along with solutions to all the objections proposed, in seven books, that is, the commentary addressed to Gedalius, including also many details concerning Stoic doctrine, according as they are relevant at each point. (Simplicius, *In Categories* 2.5-9)

Porphyry, then, we may gather, is ultimately responsible for the setting out of, and the responses to, all the *aporiai* concocted by the line of critics of the *Categories* in the Middle Platonic period, mainly Lucius and Nicostratus, but also Eudorus before them and Atticus after them, as well as Stoics such as Cornutus and Athenodorus, and following on all of them, Plotinus, in *Enneades* 6.1-3 (and possibly in oral communications as well). This is frequently obvious from Simplicius' account in the course of his commentary, but on the basis of this testimony we may take it to be the case even when no explicit reference to Porphyry is provided. It would seem also reasonable, by the same token, to credit Porphyry with such references to Stoic doctrines as we find in the course of the commentary. And all this is doubtless then to be included in that part of Iamblichus' commentary which he took over from Porphyry virtually unchanged—merely, perhaps, "compressing his lecture-style long-windedness in the refutation of objections."⁶

³ Porphyry's short commentary, in question and answer format, is of course extant (edited by A. Busse in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4.1), and has now received an excellent translation, with introduction and commentary, in the *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* series by S. Strange (London 1992). The bulk of Porphyry's large commentary can, in fact, be recovered with a fair degree of certainty from Simplicius.

⁴ E.g., 129.1; 155.15; 160.10-11; 302.25-6.

⁵ This should imply that all of the references to Archytas in Simplicius' commentary may be attributed to Iamblichus. Simplicius doubtless had access himself to the work of "Archytas," but he is not the sort of man to do again what had been perfectly well done before him.

⁶ Συστέλλων τὴν ὡς ἐν σχολαῖς πρὸς τὰς ἐνστάσεις μακρολογίαν. Presumably this is the meaning of ἐν σχολαῖς. If so, it is an interesting judgement on the nature of Porphyry's discursiveness.

When all this has been added up, and subtracted from the total of Simplicius' commentary, what have we left? Simplicius himself is very modest, and quite explicit, as to what his own contribution is. I quote from slightly further on in the preface:

My aim in this work has been, on the one hand, to derive from the text, as far as I could, a more accurate understanding of what is being said, and on the other to make clearer and more harmonious the profound thought of the author, inaccessible as it is to the majority of people; and thirdly, to compress somehow into smaller compass the vast and varied mass of previous commentaries—not, as did the great philosopher Syrianus, to the minimum possible, but as far as possible so as to leave out nothing essential.

(Simplicius, *In Categories* 13.4ff.)

So then, Simplicius is trying as far as possible to compress his material, even as he has told us above that Iamblichus compressed the longwindedness of Porphyry, as well as clarifying some of his formulations. It is plain that posterity has been spared some truly monstrous works. What, then, if anything, does Simplicius feel that he is adding to this great tradition?

If I have been able to add anything at all, for this I give thanks, after the Gods, to these men, under whose guidance it is that I have raised any points worthy of acceptance or contributed any elucidations worthy of note. I would, however, urge all those who take up this book never to disregard the writings of Iamblichus and Porphyry in favour of these annotations of mine, but to use my work, if at all, merely as an introduction and practice exercise for the more accurate understanding of their utterances.

(Simplicius, *In Categories* 3.10–17)

One cannot help but like Simplicius. We are unable, alas, to take his advice, so we must do the best we can with what he has transmitted to us.

I am not concerned here with the larger question of how much of Iamblichus' commentary we can recover from Simplicius, and from a comparison of his commentary with the surviving portion of the short commentary, in dialogue form, of Iamblichus' pupil Dexippus.⁷ On the present occasion I am only concerned with the securely attested passages of Iamblichus' commentary (such as do not in fact figure in that of Dexippus), which are sufficient to make clear his rather bizarre approach to the subject matter of the *Categories*. These passages have been adequately collected (though not, in my opinion, adequately commented on), by the Danish scholar B.

⁷ The daunting problem of recovering all that could be recovered of Iamblichus' commentary from the the pages of Simplicius is brought home to one by the fact that many sections of Dexippus' commentary appear more or less word for word in Simplicius without any attribution to Iamblichus, where, in effect, Simplicius has no dispute with or demurral from what Iamblichus is saying. Any notion that Simplicius is taking these passages from Dexippus himself, though he does know of his commentary (cf. Simplicius, *In Categories* 2.9ff.), should be dispelled by the circumstance that at least seven passages closely similar or identical to Dexippus are explicitly attributed by Simplicius to Iamblichus (see list provided on page 11, note 14 of my translation of Dexippus). To such passages may also presumably be added all references to Archytas, whom Simplicius tells us Iamblichus was the first authority to make use of.

Dalsgaard Larsen,⁸ and I shall use his numeration, along with the references to Simplicius' commentary.

Iamblichus' techniques of allegorical exegesis of Plato's dialogues, which form the basis for the allegorical method of the later Athenian School, notably Syrianus and Proclus (but also, of course, Simplicius himself, and his mentor Damascius) are reasonably well known by now.⁹ What is less widely appreciated, perhaps, is that he manages to apply much the same method to the rather less amenable subject matter of Aristotle's *Categories*.¹⁰ Certainly, he concerns himself as well with all the traditional subjects of controversy and debate on the work, but in most of this he is content to follow Porphyry, and is therefore not distinguished from him by Simplicius. It is only in the application of *voεπὰ θεωρία* to the subject matter that he really comes into his own.¹¹

Let us first examine some characteristic passages, and then, on the basis of these, try to derive a picture of Iamblichus' method as a whole.

The first issue arising, as we should expect from what we know of Iamblichus' method of commentary,¹² is the definition of the *skopos*, or essential subject matter, of the treatise. In the case of the *Categories*, Iamblichus had before him a long history of controversy as to the subject matter, in the course of which there had been champions of all three possible subject matters for the *Categories* to wit, words, things and concepts.¹³ It seems to have been Herminius, the teacher of

⁸ *Iamblique de Chalcis, Exégète et Philosophe* (Aarhus 1972). Vol. 1 contains the introduction and commentary, vol. 2 contains the actual fragments. Dalsgaard Larsen, however, though making many useful observations, is curiously uninterested in the details of Neoplatonic philosophy, and treats Iamblichus primarily as an exegete, rather than a man who is doing philosophy in the mode of exegesis. He makes no effort to reclaim the passages from Dexippus, though he is quite well aware of them, or to incorporate those that concern Archytas.

⁹ First discussed by K. Praechter, "Richtungen und Schulen im Neuplatonismus," *Genethiakon für Karl Robert* (Berlin 1910) 105–6; but see also my remarks in the introduction to *Iamblich Chalcidensis: in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. (Leiden 1973) 54–66.

¹⁰ His few surviving comments on the *Prior Analytics* (frgs. 137–145) seem, by contrast, to be strictly practical. The subject matter there, presumably, defied all transcendental interpretation.

¹¹ It sounds as if Porphyry did not envisage a "higher" interpretation of the *Categories* at all. The contrast, then, between his exegetical principles and those of Iamblichus would be that much starker than in the case of their respective *Timaeus* commentaries, where Proclus makes a distinction between the "more piecemeal" (*μερικώτερον*) commentary of Porphyry and the "more epoptic" (*ἐποπτικώτερον*) approach of Iamblichus (*In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.204.24ff.), this latter epithet presumably denoting both a more holistic and a more transcendental approach to the subject matter.

¹² See my commentary on *In Phaedrum*, frg. 1, and *In Timaeum*, frg. 1 in *Iamblich Chalcidensis: in Platonis Dialogos Fragmenta* (above, note 9) 248–9 and 264–5.

¹³ *Φωναί, πράγματα, νοήματα*. Simplicius gives these anonymously at *In Categories* 9.4–10.8. Interestingly, Dexippus presents a dialectical survey of all three positions by Sosigenes, one of the teachers of Alexander of Aphrodisias (*In Categories* 7.4–9.24), which one would expect, therefore, to have figured at least in Iamblichus' commentary, but of which no clear record survives in that of Simplicius.

Alexander of Aphrodisias, who first came up with the solution that in a way the subject matter concerns all three classes of entity, and this solution was refined variously by Alexander and later by Porphyry.

Porphyry's definition of the *skoposis* as follows: "It is about the objects of predication (τὰ κατηγορούμενα); these are simple words signficatory of things, *insofar as they are signficatory*, but not insofar as they are simply utterances (λέξεις)." Porphyry is quoted by Simplicius (*In Categories* 10.20ff.) in terms which make it sound as if he is emending Alexander's definition (which was "concerning the simple and most generic parts of speech, signifying simple entities (πράγματα), and the simple thoughts (νοήματα) relative to those simple entities"), but it is not easy to see what substantial matter they are in dispute about, and Simplicius himself says just below (*In Categories* 13.15ff.) that a somewhat amplified version of this formula is the view of a whole chorus of authorities, comprising "both Alexanders (*sc.* Alexander of Aigai as well), Herminius, Boethus, and Porphyry," and that this is assented to by Iamblichus and Syrianus and "my own masters" (*sc.* Ammonius and Damascius).

On the other hand, a tradition stemming from Olympiodorus (*In Categories* 19.36ff.)¹⁴ presents Iamblichus as reconciling from a rather lofty perspective the imperfect and partial views of his predecessors, as if he was the first to come up with this portmanteau definition. If this is not complete fantasy, it may indicate that Iamblichus in his commentary tried to pretend that he was being somewhat more original than he in fact is. As far as we can see, at any rate, Iamblichus in his definition of the *skopos* is not deviating in any substantial way from that of Alexander, as retooled by Porphyry.

The definition of the *skopos* cannot, therefore, really count as part of Iamblichus' distinctive νοερά θεωρία, but it is worth mentioning at the outset, I think, as an indication of the attitude which Iamblichus may have taken up to his predecessors, even when he did not have much to quarrel with them about. For what it is worth, I give the final version of the *skopos*, as presented by Simplicius, as it may be substantially that of Iamblichus:¹⁵

Περὶ τῶν ἀπλῶν καὶ πρώτων καὶ γενικῶν φωνῶν, καθὼς σηματικαὶ τῶν ὄντων εἰσὶν, συνδιδάσκειται δὲ πάντως καὶ τὰ σημανόμενα ὑπ' αὐτῶν πράγματα καὶ τὰ νοήματα, καθὼς σημαίνεται τὰ πράγματα ὑπὸ τῶν φωνῶν.

(Simplicius, *In Categories* 13.13–16)

(It concerns) simple and primary and generic words, insofar as they are signficatory of realities (ὄντα), and it instructs us at all events also about the things signified by them, and about the concepts in accordance with which things are signified by words.

¹⁴ Taken up later by Elias, *In Categories* 130.14ff.

¹⁵ Simplicius does, after all, make an interesting distinction between the first group of authorities, from the Alexanders to Porphyry, saying that Iamblichus "assents" to them (ἐπιψηφίζει), and Syrianus "clarifies" (σαφηνίζει)—either all his predecessors, or just Iamblichus. What we may have here, then, is the Iamblican definition, as "clarified" by Syrianus.

Leaving aside the *skopos*, then, let us turn to examine some examples of the νοερά θεωρήματα in action. We may begin with a question of perennial interest to ancient commentators, whether Aristotle's definition of substance in chapter 5 of the *Categories* (4a10), "that which, being numerically one and the same, is able to receive contraries," really identifies an essential attribute of substance, or simply an accidental one. For one thing, is it applicable to intelligible as well as to sensible matter? For another, is it even applicable to the substances of the heavenly regions, or to such substances as fire or snow? This latter objection, at least, probably goes back to Lucius and Nicostratus,¹⁶ while Plotinus is cast by Simplicius (*In Categories* 115.24–116.10),¹⁷ and presumably by Iamblichus himself before him,¹⁸ as the protagonist of the former. The particular point made by Plotinus (in *Enneades* 6.1.2.15–18) to which Iamblichus is replying here is that, even if "being, while numerically one and the same, receptive of contraries" identifies a *characteristic* of substance, it does not describe its essence, its τί ἐστίν.

The first line of response to this, relayed by Dexippus (pages 57.18–59.8), and so presumably adopted by Iamblichus as at least a preliminary defence,¹⁹ is that Aristotle is only here concerned with sublunary, physical substance, and should not be held to be defining the essence of eternal, simple substances as well. Further, as regards the heavenly bodies, and fire and snow, such characteristics as circular motion, or heat cannot count as one of a pair of contrary qualities in these cases, as they are essential to the composition of those bodies.²⁰

However, Iamblichus does not stop there, but takes the offensive, proceeding, as Simplicius says, Πυθαγορικώτερον—on more Pythagorean lines (116.25ff. = frg. 33).²¹ He professes, by the employment of analogical reasoning

16 It is anonymous in Simplicius, *In Categories* 114.21ff.

17 Though also anonymously, for whatever reason (φασίν), but he represents *Enneades* 6.1.2.15–18 pretty closely.

18 Dexippus (5.20ff.) presents this as an *aporia* of Plotinus, which would seem to clinch the matter.

19 Dexippus is, of course, quite capable of drawing directly on Porphyry as well, but since Dexippus' arguments here (especially at 58.24ff.) go beyond what is to be found in Porphyry's short commentary (99.1–100.8), I would take it that Iamblichus took over and elaborated Porphyry's arguments.

20 This is an ingenious point, but it does not quite solve the problem, it seems to me, since we are not given an example of what would be a pair of contrary qualities to which the sun, or fire, would be hospitable.

21 He prefaces this, as so often, by adducing Archytas (*In Categories* 116.11–24), whose formulation he finds superior to Aristotle's, both because he adds διαμένουσιν τῶν ἐναντίων δεκτικὰν, as it eliminates the secondary substances from consideration (since they do not "outlast" changes in qualities), and because he adds οὐ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ χρόνον, thus eliminating the non-temporal level of substance from consideration. Archytas is thus praised, once again, for superior clarity. It is almost as if Iamblichus recognised with half his mind that "Archytas" was later than Aristotle, and thus able to "improve" on him. Why, otherwise, except through weakness of intellect, would Aristotle fail to follow his lead?

(δι' ἀναλογίαν),²² to discern the co-existence of contraries at the level of intelligible substance as well—to wit, Motion and Rest, Sameness and Otherness, the very μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist* which Plotinus in *Ennead* 6.2 adopted as the "categories" of the intelligible world. The only difference, Iamblichus maintains, is that on the intelligible plane the contraries are present, not successively, but simultaneously.²³ He goes on to discern the coexistence of contraries also in the substance of the heavenly bodies, the distinction from the intelligible realm being that there the contraries coexist in a simple entity, while in the celestial realm they exist in different parts at different times (*In Categories* 117.27–30).²⁴ At the lowest level, which is the physical, the opposites can be present only alternately.

This passage is a good example, I think, of the νοερά θεωρία at work. Iamblichus' focus of interest is ontological rather than logical, and he delights in seeing the same feature—in this case, the ability to receive contraries—manifested analogically at various levels of reality: "this property of substance is common to every (level of) substance" (τὸ ἰδίωμα τοῦτο τῆς οὐσίας κοινὸν κατὰ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν) as he says (*In Categories* 118.2).

To turn now to the category of Quantity, his argument in favour of weight (ρόπή) being classed as a third type of quantity,²⁵ along with μέγεθος and πλήθος (representing continuous and discrete quantity respectively) is another interesting example of his method (*apud* Simplicius, *In Categories* 128.16–129.7 = frg. 36). First of all, he claims Archytas (page 25.1–3) as his authority for this triadic division (against Porphyry, Cornutus and probably Alexander).²⁶ Then he straightway relates this to ontology by seeing a distinction between weighted and weightless quantities at various levels of reality: the four elements having relative weight and lightness, as against the heaven, which is weightless; among types of motion, the rectilinear ones, involving weight, as against the circular, which is weightless; and then, rising to the level of immaterial essence, the Soul, which has an inclination (ρόπή) towards what

22 One may see a connection here with his procedure in the *Timaeus Commentary*, where he discerns the conflict (ἐναντιώσεις) between Atlantis and Athens as being reflected analogously at all levels of being, right up to the dyad that follows immediately upon the One (Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.77.24ff. = *In Timaeum*, frg. 7).

23 *In Categories* 116.29: οὐ παρὰ μέρος ἀλλ' ἅμα.

24 In this connection he shows quite a detailed acquaintance with the technical terminology of astronomy/astrology, bandying about such terms as ἀπόκλιμα, ἀντιμεσουράνημα, and ἀντιπερίσταςις.

25 That is, one can have measurements of weight, such a mina or a talent, as well as those of size or number.

26 In this connection, we may note that Athenodorus of Tarsus is recorded (*In Categories* 128.8) as "agreeing with" Archytas in proposing ρόπή as a third class of quantity, which can be taken, I think, as a pretty good argument for dating pseudo-Archytas later than Athenodorus (late first century B.C.), and is so taken by Szlezák ([above, note 2] 121)—though, as Szlezák also points out (page 120), the triad of number, size and weight is perfectly common in the Classical period, and is employed at various points in the dialogues by Plato (e.g. *Euthyphro* 7b–c, *Republica* 10.602d, *Philebus* 55e), which would add Platonic authority to this amplification.

is below it or above it, as against Intellect, which is unaffected by such inclinations, and thus ἀρρεπές.

A little further on (*apud* Simplicius, page 135.8–28. = frg. 37), Iamblichus gives us an “intellectual” explanation²⁷ of the fact that “of quantities, some are discrete, others continuous”:

Since the power of the One, from which all quantity derives, extends alike through all things, and demarcates each thing in its procession from itself, insofar as it penetrates totally indivisibly through all things, it generates the continuous, and insofar as it performs a single and indivisible procession without interval; whereas insofar as it halts in its procession at each of the forms and defines each and makes each of them one, in this aspect it produces the discrete; so in virtue of being the single dominant causal principle of these two activities it produces the two types of quantity.

(Simplicius, *In Categorias* 6.4b20)

He continues this line of thought for some while longer, linking the two classes of quantity in the universe in various ways with the processive and static aspects of the One, ending with the following interesting remark: “For the potency of the intelligible measurements comprises at the same time both the remaining and the processive elements in one and the same entity; for which reason, if one attributes just one or the other of these to the intelligible and divine measurement, in the case of assigning the unmoving ones alone, one becomes deceived by the errors of the Peripatetics, and in the case of the processive ones, by those of the Stoics.” He thus satisfactorily puts both of the chief rivals of Platonism in their place, criticising on the one hand the Peripatetic Unmoved Mover, and on the other the dynamic Active Principle of the Stoics.

The νοερά θεωρία here, then, consists in identifying the characteristics of being discrete or continuous as aspects of the power of the One, active at every level of reality, and thus gives a metaphysical underpinning to the rather bald and unpretentious text of Aristotle. It also furthers another constant aim of Iamblichus in his exegesis, which is to emphasise the unity underlying each category—something that was frequently challenged by hostile critics.

We may turn next to a long passage (*apud* Simplicius, *In Categorias* 216.6–219.35 = frg. 65), in which Iamblichus presents an account of “the more intellectual causal principles” (νοερώτεραι αἰτίαι) of Quality. His aim here is to establish the substantial existence of qualities as objectively existent *logoi* in the universe—as against the criticism, voiced by Plotinus among others (*Enneades* 6.1.10.54ff.), that “quality is a kind of non-substantial characteristic” (χαρακτήρ τις οὐκ οὐσιώδης). With this aim in view, he turns first to a critique of those who hold various unsound views about quality. In quite an elaborate doxography, he isolates five classes of thinker who offend in this way, beginning with the Eretrian School, Dicaearchus and Theopompus, who deny any substantial existence to qualities, and proceeding through a second, anonymous group, to the Atomists and Epicureans, Academics,²⁸

²⁷ Simplicius actually speaks of him here as “exhibiting his θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη.”

²⁸ Presumably members of the New Academy (later Platonists should be referred to, one would think, as Πλατωνικοί), but if so, this is a little strange. They are commended for introducing the concept of ἐκτά, or “possessions,” as a term for qualities of all sorts, both permanent states, such as

and finally Stoics (who take all qualities as material states of πνεῦμα), all of whom had in one way or another an inadequate grasp of the concept of Quality.

He then turns (*In Categories* 218.5ff.) to the commendation of Aristotle's own doctrine, which he describes as "admirable" (θαυμάσια), since he declares qualities to be immaterial λόγοι. How he can possibly derive this message from chapter 8 of the *Categories* is explained by the fact that he is able to adduce the corresponding section of the *Metaphysics* (4.14.1020a33ff.) where Quality is discussed from a somewhat different angle. Porphyry had already remarked (*apud* Simplicius 213.10ff. = frg. 70) that the account of Quality in the *Categories* is ἐννοηματικός (by which he seems to mean something like "subjective," or "reflecting people's concepts"), as opposed to that given in the *Metaphysics*, which is οὐσιωδής, "objective," or "reflecting substantial reality." For Iamblichus, it would seem, both expositions of Quality are concordant, and οὐσιωδής. He takes Aristotle's formulation, "a quality is that in virtue of which things are said to be qualified (ποιοί)," as a recognition that qualities are λόγοι which impose form on (εἰδοποιοῦσιν) qualified things (*In Categories* 218.8–9), and he links this with Aristotle's first definition of quality in *Metaphysics* Δ as "the *differentia* (διαφορά) of primary being." It is the peculiarity of qualities both to possess real existence (ὑπόστασις) and to exercise that existence inseparably from the matter they are qualifying. They are thus immanent λόγοι, not transcendent Forms.

On the other hand, he distinguishes qualities from what he calls "the reason-principle inherent in the shape" (ὁ κατὰ τὴν μορφήν λόγος, *In Categories* 219.10), which he characterizes as something lifeless and devoid of activity (ἄψυχος καὶ ἀνενέργητος). I presume that by this he means simply the structural proportions or other visible features of an object, which supervene on the imposition of quality by the *logos* in question. He only mentions this latter entity because, although Aristotle, he claims, distinguishes these senses of *logos*, many people confuse them.

Again, at *In Categories* 271.6ff. we are given what Simplicius calls Iamblichus' θεωρητικώτεροι ἐπιστάσεις, his "more theoretical interpretation," of the fourth class of qualities, that is, "shape and the external form of each thing" (σχῆμά τε καὶ ἡ περὶ ἕκαστον ὑπάρχουσα μορφή), set out by Aristotle at 10a11–26. Here Iamblichus takes his start from the observation that Plato in the *Timaeus* (55dff.) postulates σχήματα,²⁹ that is, the primary shapes formed by combinations of triangles, as the causal principles of the differences between bodies, deriving all qualitative *differentiae* from the differences between the basic σχήματα. Plato, however, says Iamblichus, would distinguish between purely mathematical σχήματα,

wisdom, and temporary conditions, such as walking or sitting. The reason that this terminology seems hardly suited to Academic sceptics is that he goes on, after commending them for identifying these ἐκτά with the Forms, to criticize at least some of them (*In Categories* 217.24ff.) for saying both that the Forms are "possessed" (ἔχουσιν) and are "separate" (χωριστά). They should have distinguished more clearly between "forms-in-matter" or λόγοι, which is what these ἐκτά really are, and transcendent Forms. But one does not have the impression that the New Academy concerned itself with such questions.

²⁹ In fact, Plato does not happen to use the term σχήματα to describe the basic shapes anywhere in the passage 55d–57d, but merely σώματα or εἶδη. This, however, does not disturb Iamblichus.

which would serve as the transcendent causes of the physical shapes of bodies, and the immanent σχήματα, which are material and physical and involved in motion. Aristotle, Iamblichus has to admit, does not here recognise immaterial or mathematical σχήματα as causal principles,³⁰ but only immanent, enmattered (ἐνυλα) ones, which come into being with bodies, and define and shape their surfaces. On the other hand, he maintains, Aristotle is not declaring the shapes actually to be bodies, as do the Stoics, because Aristotle classes bodies under Quantity, not under Quality.

Aristotle's doctrine, then, says Iamblichus (*In Categorias* 271.23ff.), is median between that of Plato, which takes shapes as being entirely immaterial, and that of the Stoics, which holds them to be material. But Iamblichus plainly feels that Aristotle is not expressing himself here with sufficient clarity, and he adduces the formulation of Archytas to throw light on what Aristotle really means.³¹ Archytas declares that this species of Quality does not consist in *shape* (ἐν σχήματι), but rather in *shaping* (ἐν σχηματισμῷ),³² indicating a distinction between the constitution of the shapes and the actual shapes in bodies. Even so, however, the shapes being dealt with here are not the original *logoi*, which would be analogous to the Platonic "primary bodies," but those shapes which supervene upon the shaped bodies.

Time forbids the examination of much more of Iamblichus' exegesis on the present occasion,³³ but I feel that, in conclusion, I should not neglect a topic on which Iamblichus has a good deal to say that is interesting, that of Time itself. R. Sorabji has subjected Iamblichus' doctrine of Time to a fascinating examination in chapter 3 of his major synoptic study, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*,³⁴ but I think that there is still something to be said on the subject from a Neoplatonic perspective.

30 In fact, as we know, Aristotle was particularly sarcastic about the efficacy of the basic triangles, cf. *De Caelo* 3.7–8.305b27ff. We may note, incidentally, that, though Plato nowhere uses the term σχήματα to describe the primary bodies, Aristotle in this passage does.

31 This passage is of particular interest, as being one of the comparatively few places where a degree of criticism of Aristotle is evident. Plainly if Aristotle is deviating in doctrine from the divine Plato, he cannot be correct. It is not his business to "mediate" between Plato and the Stoics!

32 Iamblichus is here getting a good deal of mileage out of pseudo-Archytas' bald statement (*In Categorias* page 24.19): καὶ τῆς ποιότητος διαφορὰ τέσσαρες· τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῆς ἐστὶν ἐν πάθει, τὸ δὲ ἐν ἔξει, τὸ δὲ ἐν δυνάμει, τὸ δὲ ἐν σχηματισμῷ. It is highly unlikely that he intends here any such contrast with σχῆμα as Iamblichus is attributing to him. Indeed, this constitutes a good example of Iamblichus' creative use of Archytas to buttress his imaginative interpretation of Aristotle.

33 There are interesting passages of νοερά θεωρία also at *In Categorias* 146.22ff., where Simplicius describes Iamblichus as "advancing doctrines of a more theoretical nature" about Quantity (θεωρητικώτερον . . . ἐπιβάλλον); at *ibid.*, 327.7ff., where we get what he refers to as a θεωρητικώτερα τεχνολογία of Iamblichus about action and affection; and at *ibid.*, 374.7ff. we are given Iamblichus' νοερά θεωρία of "having." All of these passages exhibit the same features as those we have discussed.

34 (London 1983) 33–45.

The question of the nature and status of Time arises, of course, in connection with the discussion of the category "when," which is passed over in very summary fashion by Aristotle (if, indeed, it is Aristotle at all) at *In Categories* 11b10. The fact that Aristotle has nothing to say on the subject in the *Categories* gives commentators a free hand, which they exercise with the help of his discussion of Time in the *Physics*. Iamblichus applies to the subject the same νοερά θεωρία which he employs for the rest of the work. In all cases he is concerned with discerning the real οὐσία behind the physical manifestations, employing for this purpose, as is his policy, the insights of "Archytas." Since "Archytas" had the benefit, in all probability (as I remarked earlier), of at least the first generation of commentary on the *Categories*, his treatment of all the categories, including Time, is more structured than that of Aristotle, and is further influenced by the Stoic theory of categories, which presented them unequivocally as modes of *being*. "The 'when,'" says Archytas (*In Categories* 352.24ff. = 29.11ff.), "and Time in general, contain as a characterizing property (ἴδιον) the indivisible and the insubstantial (τὸ ἀμερές καὶ τὸ ἀνυπόστατον)." He defines it as "a kind of number of movement and in general the interval (διάστημα) of the nature of the universe."

Iamblichus fastens on this characterization of time as both ἀμερές and ἀνυπόστατον. The same thing, he says (*In Categories* 353.19ff. = frg. 110), cannot be both, since partlessness is a characteristic of real being, which is an hypostasis. Archytas must therefore in fact be talking about two levels of time,³⁵ and this gives Iamblichus the opportunity to introduce his theory of intellectual time, as archetype of the time that we experience in the physical world.³⁶

As in the case of Quality, or any of the other categories, Iamblichus wants to take Time, as manifested in this realm, to be an emanation of an intellectual archetype, or Form, of Time. This entity is not, as Plotinus would have it (in *Enneades* 3.7.11), identical with the life of the Soul, but is rather the ordering principle of the psychic realm, "which measures becoming (γένεσις), first that of the Soul, and secondly the becoming proceeding from it" (Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physica Commentaria* 793). It is only at this latter stage that time becomes insubstantial, a continuous flow of evanescent "nows." Strictly speaking, it is not even the lower, or participated time, that flows, but the things which participate in it.

"Where," he asks, "should we think that the flow and shifting (ἐκστασις) of Time occurs? We shall say, in the things which participate in Time. For these are always coming into being and cannot take on the stable nature (οὐσία) of Time without changing, but touch that nature with ever different parts of themselves" (*apud*

³⁵ Archytas, of course, is talking about nothing of the sort, any more than he was making a distinction between σχῆμα and σχηματισμός earlier (cf. above, note 32). The two epithets are for him virtual synonyms, and refer to exactly the same sort of time. This is just another nice example of the creative interpretation of Archytas. On Iamblichus' use of Archytas here, see P. Hoffmann, "Iamblique Exégète du Pythagoricien Archytas: Trois Originalités d'Une Doctrine du Temps," *Les Études Philosophiques* (1980) 302-23.

³⁶ This exegesis of Iamblichus is also preserved by Simplicius in his *Commentary on the Physics* 792.20-793.23 (= frg. 108). All these texts are conveniently collected, with translation and comment, in *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, S. Sambursky and S. Pines, eds. (Jerusalem 1971).

Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physica Commentaria* 787.17–20 = frg. 107.37–43).³⁷ Iamblichus is thus able to accept previous definitions of Time as “the measure of motion,” or “the circuit of the heavens,” or whatever, as describing, if anything, the lower level of time, while he is primarily concerned with intellectual Time, as causal principle of this lower time.

It was Sambursky³⁸ who seems to have first made the suggestion that there is a “strong resemblance” between Iamblichus’ concept of the two levels of Time and the analysis of Time by J.E. McTaggart, as set out in his article, “The Unreality of Time.”³⁹ Sambursky suggests, specifically, that McTaggart’s “B-series” of temporal expressions, which express simply an order of events, such as “before,” “after,” “simultaneous with,” or conventional dating expressions, such as “Sept. 8, 1995,” can be compared with Iamblichus’ notion of intellectual time.

I must confess that I do not see this at all. McTaggart is surely concerned with distinguishing two ways of looking at time as manifested in the physical world, and his distinction derives whatever validity it has from its efficiency in doing that. Iamblichus, on the contrary, is concerned with this very curious entity, the intellectual monad of Time (which he also discusses in his *Timaeus Commentary*, à propos *Timaeus* 37d),⁴⁰ the characteristic of which is to comprehend as a whole, statically, and from above in the intellectual realm, all the flux of physical events. It might be described as “sempiternity,” in contrast to eternity. Indeed, Iamblichus is at pains to distinguish it from eternity, of which it is in fact the primary image. What may have induced Sambursky to think of McTaggart is something that Iamblichus says in the course of *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii*, frg. 63 (from Simplicius):

We too agree that there is an order of time—not, however, an order which is ordered, but one which orders, nor one which follows upon principles which lead it, but which is a leader of, and senior to, the things brought to completion by it. Nor do we believe it to be that order which is parcelled out individually in reason-principles or motions or other distinct powers, but that which is preserved complete in its entirety in accordance with the productions of the demiurge as a whole. The notion of “before” and “after” in this order we do not understand in the sense of changes involving movements, nor in any other such sense, but we define it as the sequence of causes, and the continuous concatenation of creations and the primary activity and the power which brings motions to fulfilment, and all things of this sort.

However, it can readily be seen, I think, that the purposes and thought-worlds of McTaggart and Iamblichus are very far apart, despite the interesting point of comparison in the matter of redefining “before” and “after.”

³⁷ Translation Sorabji (above, note 34) 38.

³⁸ Sambursky (above, note 36) 21 note.

³⁹ *Mind* 17 (1908) 457–74 (revised and reprinted in *The Nature of Existence*, vol. 2 (London 1927) chapter 3.

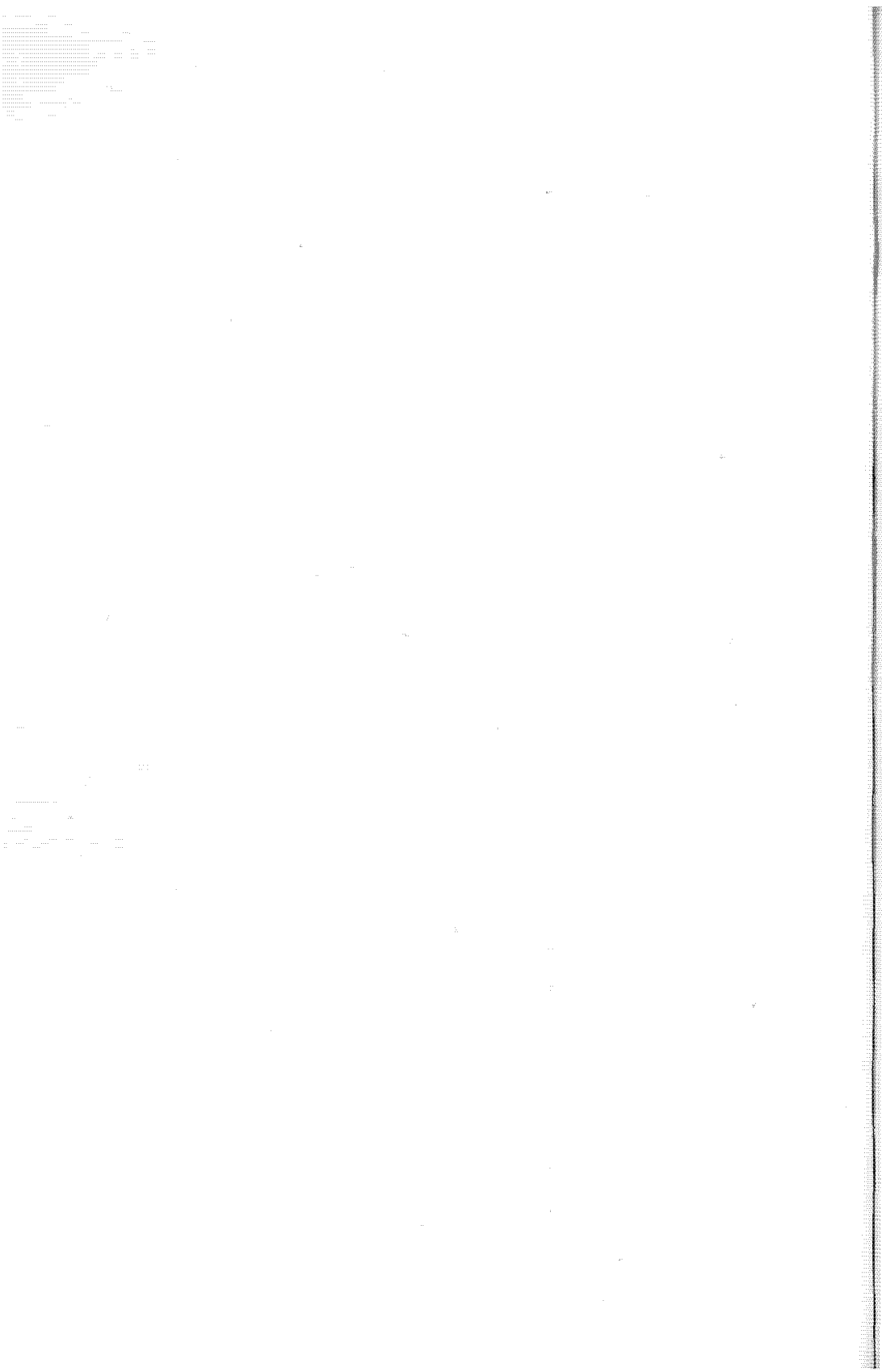
⁴⁰ Of which *verbatim* extracts are preserved by Simplicius in his *Physics Commentary*, 792.20–795.3, as well as near-*verbatim* reports by Proclus in his *Timaeus Commentary* 3.30.30–32.6 and 33.1–30 (= Iamblichus, *In Timaeum*, frg. 64).

It is worth bearing in mind that Iamblichus gives us a similar treatment of Place (which, again, Simplicius characterizes as νοερά Θεωρία, at *In Categories* 361.7). As in the case of Time (and indeed as in the case of Quality), we must see Place not just as a mere limit of bodies, but rather as an active principle descending from above, both keeping separate bodies distinct and holding individual bodies together, "a corporeal power which supports bodies and forces them apart and gathers them up when they fall and collects them together when they are scattered, at once bringing them to completion and encompassing them on all sides," to quote the rather turgid phraseology of his *Timaeus Commentary*.⁴¹ We must see Place, then, as an entity operative at every level of the universe, up as far as the intelligible realm (Intellect is the "place" of the Forms), if not even to the level of the One itself (if that is what we may assume from Simplicius' expression at *In Categories* 364.3: ἐπ' ἐκείνον τὸν θεῖον τόπον).

These, then, I think, constitute a set of useful examples of the νοερά Θεωρία in action. It will be seen that it is Iamblichus' purpose to salvage Aristotle, reconciling him both with his perceived doctrine elsewhere (as, for example, in the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*), and with that of Plato and the Pythagoreans. The aim is to establish a metaphysical framework for the interpretation of the *Categories*, revealing the hidden levels of truth inherent in it. This is achieved, of course, at the cost of ignoring what seems to us the essentially anti-metaphysical, as well as tentative and exploratory, nature of the *Categories*, but it would be somewhat anachronistic to condemn Iamblichus too severely for that. The text of the *Categories* had been a battleground for at least three hundred years before his time, from the period of Andronicus, Ariston and Eudorus of Alexandria, and the Stoic Apollodorus of Tarsus, in the first century B.C., through that of the Platonists Lucius and Nicostratus, and then Atticus, and the Stoic Cornutus, and lastly Alexander of Aphrodisias, in the first and second centuries A.D., down to Plotinus and Porphyry in his own day, with every phrase and word of the text liable to challenge and requiring defence. Iamblichus' distinctive contribution is to take the *Categories*, as a coherent description of reality in the Neoplatonic sense, and that, bizarre as it may seem to us, is not really all that more perverse than many of the various ways in which the work had been treated in the centuries before him.

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⁴¹ Frg. 90 (*apud* Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physica Commentaria* 639.23–640.11): δύναμις σωματοειδής, ἀνέχουσα τὰ σώματα καὶ διερείδουσα, καὶ πίπτοντα μὲν ἀνεγείρουσα διασκορπιζόμενα δὲ συνάγουσα.



La Νοερά Θεωρία di Giamblico, come Chiave di Lettura delle
Categorie di Aristotele: alcuni esempi¹

R. Loredana Cardullo

I. Premessa

Sul perduto commentario alle *Categorie* di Giamblico, i cinque commentari in lingua greca che ci sono stati tramandati sotto i nomi dei neoplatonici Ammonio, Filopono, Olimpiodoro, David [Elias] e Simplicio testimoniano abbondantemente.

Tra gli autori summenzionati, tuttavia, soltanto Simplicio pone l'accento su quella che era la caratteristica peculiare dell'esegesi giamblichea di questo trattato aristotelico, e cioè sulla cosiddetta νοερά θεωρία, la quale consisteva in una sorta di speculazione di tipo e di livello intellettuale, che guidava e sorreggeva l'intera interpretazione di Giamblico, distinguendola da quelle degli altri commentatori. Giamblico, in sostanza, non si limitava—come altri esegeti—a dare del tema di volta in volta affrontato un'interpretazione circoscritta e parziale, limitata cioè ad un solo ambito e livello d'indagine, ma lo analizzava e lo scandagliava nelle sue implicazioni logiche, fisiche, etiche e metafisiche, dandone in tal modo un'esegesi più speculativa e più approfondita. Questo è almeno il giudizio che ne dà Simplicio, il cui *Commentario alle Categorie* costituisce la fonte primaria di questa nostra indagine.

L'espressione νοερά θεωρία, che Simplicio sceglie e adopera più volte nel corso del suo commentario per caratterizzare l'esegesi di Giamblico e per metterne in evidenza la superiorità e la profondità speculativa, rispetto a quelle di altri esegeti, era già espressione giamblichea: la troviamo infatti nel *De Mysteriorum* dove sta ad indicare temi o argomenti altamente speculativi per la cui comprensione è necessaria, appunto, un'interpretazione che proceda dal νοῦς (*De Mysteriorum* 1.2, 6.8–11), una sorta di

¹ Alcuni passaggi del presente contributo ripropongono, a volte anche alla lettera, argomentazioni già contenute ed esposte nel mio recente studio su *Siriano esegeta di Aristotele. I Testimonianze e Frammenti dei Commentari perduti all'Organon* (Firenze 1995), che è stato pubblicato dopo questa *Il Iamblichus Conference*.

speculazione pura e incontaminata, com'è quella, ad esempio, alla quale pervengono le anime degli evocatori degli dèi quando ricevono l'"epifania" degli arcangeli, che sono, tra gli intermediari fra dèi e uomini, i più vicini agli dèi (*De Mysteriis* 2.9, 87.18–88.2).

L'espressione viene applicata da Simplicio all'esegesi giamblichea, e soltanto a questa, quattro volte, e precisamente alle pagine 2.13; 361.7; 364.6; 374.7 del suo *Commentario alle Categorie*. Tuttavia il riferimento alla *voepà θεωρία*, anche quando non è esplicito, sembra essere sempre sottinteso e implicito in tutti i contesti in cui Simplicio riporta, spesso anche testualmente, le opinioni e le interpretazioni di Giamblico.

In questa relazione verranno esaminati ed illustrati alcuni passi del *Commentario* di Simplicio—quelli che contengono l'espressione *voepà θεωρία*, e qualche altro in cui la sua applicazione è evidente,—che rivelano in modo chiaro ed esemplare questa particolare esegesi "intellettuale" o metafisico-teologica, che Simplicio, appunto, definisce *voepà θεωρία* e che il maestro della Scuola di Siria applicava metodicamente ai testi che leggeva, compresi quelli di argomento logico, come nel caso delle *Categorie*. Tali passi ci consentiranno anzitutto di cogliere la singolarità dell'esegesi giamblichea ma anche, nel contempo, di sottolinearne le analogie e le divergenze rispetto ad altre importanti esegesi, quali quella porfiriana, soprattutto, ma anche quella successiva di Siriano, che sono l'una più filologica e volutamente limitata alla dimensione logico-linguistica, l'altra di impostazione metafisica, come quella giamblichea, ma meno condizionata di quella dall'esigenza di conciliare in tutto, o "a tutti i costi," aristotelismo e platonismo.

Prima di affrontare, però, i contesti relativi a Giamblico è opportuna una breve premessa sulla nostra fonte, il *Commentario alle Categorie* di Simplicio, e sul giudizio che Simplicio vi pronuncia nei riguardi di Giamblico e della sua esegesi del trattato aristotelico.

II. La Testimonianza di Simplicio sulla *Noepà θεωρία* di Giamblico, nella sua Applicazione alle *Categorie*

Il *Commentario alle Categorie* di Simplicio rappresenta una fonte preziosa per chi voglia ripercorrere e ricostruire, sulla base di informazioni attendibili e dettagliate, la storia della tradizione commentaria relativa al trattato aristotelico sulle categorie. L'ingente materiale di frammenti e di testimonianze ivi contenuto, che interessa pressoché tutti i commentatori antichi del trattato, è infatti indispensabile per fare luce sulla tradizione dei commentari alle *Categorie* aristoteliche e soprattutto per conoscere la diversa ricezione che questo trattato ha avuto da parte di personalità e di "scuole" di orientamento diverso.

Dei commentatori che lo precedono Simplicio, all'inizio del suo commentario (*Commentario alle Categorie* 1.1–2.29), ci fornisce una accurata e ragionata rassegna. L'ordine nel quale Simplicio menziona i vari esegeti non è quello cronologico; gli autori sono raggruppati sulla base dei diversi metodi esegetici e delle differenti finalità dei loro commenti; ne risulta un ordine che va dall'autore del commento più semplice e più letterale a quello del commento più "scientifico" e approfondito. Ecco, nell'ordine, gli esegeti passati in rassegna da Simplicio: Temistio è citato quale rappresentante di quel gruppo di commentatori che si sono limitati a tradurre in

linguaggio più chiaro l'espressione letterale (τὴν λέξιν) di Aristotele (*ibid.*, 1.8–10), che non è sempre di facile comprensione. Porfirio, con il *Commentario alle Categorie* “per domanda e risposta,” viene invece collocato tra coloro che si sono preoccupati di svelare anche le nozioni (τὰς ἐννοίας) aristoteliche, ma soltanto quelle espresse dallo Stagirità in modo conciso (*ibid.*, 1.10–13). Alessandro di Afrodisia, Ermino e Massimo, discepolo di Edesio, menzionati insieme, avrebbero affrontato, anche se moderatamente, alcuni punti particolari del trattato aristotelico (*ibid.*, 1.13–15), mentre l’“ammirevole” (ὁ θαυμάσιος) Boeto, il peripatetico, ne avrebbe fatto oggetto di più profonda speculazione (*ibid.*, 1.17–18). Seguono poi quei commentatori—rappresentati in modo esemplare dai medioplatonici Lucio e Nicostato—che si sono limitati a polemizzare contro Aristotele sollevando soltanto aporie, “senza circospezione (οὐδὲ εὐλαβῶς), ma, piuttosto, con violenza (καταφορικῶς) e in maniera impudente (ἀπηυθριακῶς),” su tutte le sue affermazioni (*ibid.*, 1.18–22). Dopo di loro, “il grande” (ὁ μέγας) Plotino, sottopose le *Categorie* alle ricerche più serie, dedicandovi i tre trattati *Sui generi dell'essere* (*Ennead* 6.1–3) (*ibid.*, 2.3–5). Dopo Plotino viene citato una seconda volta Porfirio—che Simplicio definisce qui emblematicamente “causa per noi di ogni bene (ὁ πάντων ἡμῖν τῶν καλῶν αἴτιος)” —come autore di un altro commentario alle *Categorie*, non pervenutoci, diviso in sette libri e dedicato a Gedalio, più completo e più elaborato del primo, nel quale venivano risolte senza risparmio di fatica (οὐκ ἀπόνως) tutte le obiezioni che erano state sollevate contro Aristotele (*ibid.*, 2.5–8).

A questo punto Simplicio menziona, con un appellativo che in questo contesto è riservato solo a lui, “il divino” (ὁ θεῖος) Giamblico, il cui commento alle *Categorie*, pur rifacendosi in misura considerevole, spesso quasi alla lettera, al sopracitato e già notevolmente apprezzato *Commentario a Gedalio* di Porfirio, lo supera in scientificità (*Commentario alle Categorie* 2.9–15). Giamblico, precisa Simplicio, ha aggiunto dappertutto, quasi in tutti i punti principali, la sua νοερὰ θεωρία, e cioè quel tipo di “speculazione intellettuale,” di considerazione di livello superiore, cioè a dire metafisico o, meglio, teologico, che, come abbiamo già precisato, si caratterizza per essere condotta sui tre differenti livelli—fisico, etico, metafisico,—che il buon esegeta ha il dovere di ritrovare in ogni testo commentato.² Questa particolare interpretazione,

² In nota alla traduzione francese del passo (*Simplicius. Commentaire sur les Catégories d'Aristote*, I. Hadot, trad., fasc. 1 [Leiden, New York e Köln 1987] 6, nota 17), I. Hadot afferma che: “l'‘exégèse qui s'élève au point de vue de l'intellect' n'est autre chose qu'une interprétation qui se situe au niveau de ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui la métaphysique et que les Anciens appelaient la théologie.” Probabilmente, quindi—come suggerisce ancora Hadot (*ibid.*), basando la sua argomentazione sulle importanti conclusioni di K. Praechter (“Richtungen und Schulen im Neuplatonismus,” *Genethliacon für Carl Robert* [Berlin 1910] 105–56)—l'esegesi giamblichea delle *Categorie* viene definita da Simplicio “intellettiva” e, pertanto—come vedremo—da lui preferita a tutte le precedenti, per la ragione che essa viene condotta sui tre differenti livelli—fisico, etico, metafisico—che il buon esegeta ha il dovere di ritrovare in ogni testo commentato. Per aver teorizzato ed applicato nei suoi commentari questa regola fondamentale, Giamblico è stato considerato da Praechter un innovatore nell'ambito dell'interpretazione di Platone. Lo stesso tipo di valutazione dà A.C. Lloyd (*The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* [Oxford 1990] 31): “What Iamblichus described as the ‘intellectual theory,’ and therefore the highest discursive interpretation of a given notion, means what we should call the metaphysical interpretation [...]. It embraces just this demonstration that the same notion appears in different and appropriate forms at the different levels.” Ancora, per B. Dalsgaard Larsen (*Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et Philosophe* [Aarhus 1972]) la νοερὰ θεωρία con la quale Giamblico amplia l'orizzonte delle interpretazioni porfiriane è una “considération finale de nature plus principielle et plus théorique,” la quale scaturisce da una valutazione delle varie

che P. Hoffmann definisce una "exégèse qui s'élève au point de vue de l'intellect," che Dillon chiama "transcendental exegesis," e che Lloyd riteneva una "intellectual theory," è ciò che determina la posizione privilegiata che Simplicio assegna a Giamblico tra gli altri commentatori delle *Categorie*.

Poco più avanti Simplicio, dichiarando gli obiettivi e le motivazioni dell'ulteriore commento alle *Categorie* che egli si appresta ad aggiungere alla già lunga lista di quelli esistenti, dichiara di aver consultato alcuni dei lavori appena menzionati, ma di aver preso a modello il commentario di Giamblico, da cui spesso cita anche testualmente. La sua predilezione per l'esegesi giamblichea egli la manifesta anche nell'attribuire costantemente a Giamblico l'appellativo di θεῖος.³ Nel prediligere il commento di Giamblico rispetto a quello di Porfirio, Simplicio, probabilmente, rispecchia e rafforza quello che era un luogo comune di quest'ultima fase del neoplatonismo e che David, nel suo commento all'*Isagoge* di Porfirio (92.4), esprime attraverso una sentenza della Pizia: ἐνθους ὁ Σύρος, πολυμαθὴς ὁ Φοῖνιξ.

L'espressione τὸν ὑψηλὸν νοῦν con la quale poco più avanti, a pagina 3.6, Simplicio qualifica l'interpretazione di Giamblico è un ulteriore indice della singolarità del commentario di quest'ultimo, nonché della venerazione che Simplicio nutre per la sua fonte. Scopo di Simplicio non è, infatti, quello di fornire la semplice esegesi del testo di Aristotele, ma quello di ottenere una migliore comprensione di ciò che gli altri esegeti hanno scritto su quel testo ed in special modo di ciò che Giamblico ha insegnato in proposito. Per esplicita dichiarazione del suo autore, perciò, il *Commentario alle Categorie* di Simplicio vuole fornire una spiegazione chiara e accessibile della dottrina aristotelica delle categorie mediante una dettagliata, ragionata e talora testuale disamina delle interpretazioni date dagli altri esegeti. Ma poiché, tra tutti gli esegeti, soltanto Giamblico ha interpretato quest'opera da un punto di vista propriamente metafisico (vedi νοερά θεωρεῖν), Simplicio ritiene necessario tenere nella massima considerazione le opinioni di quell'antico maestro e renderle intelligibili alla grande massa dei non filosofi, dato che egli considera il pensiero (τὸν νοῦν) che

interpretazioni che sono state proposte dai diversi commentatori sul testo aristotelico in rapporto ad un orizzonte più ampio qual è quello della dottrina pitagorico-platonica. Da parte sua, J.M. Dillon ("Iamblichus of Chalcis (ca. 240–325 A.D.)" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, H. von W. Haase e H. Temporini, ed., vol. 2.36 [Berlin e New York 1987] 904–07 [862–909]) definisce questa caratteristica dell'esegesi di Giamblico una "transcendental exegesis" e ne riferisce alcuni esempi.

³ Anche se, com'è osserva G. Fowden ("The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," *JHS* 102 [1982] 36), rappresentava più una convenzione che un'eccezione il fatto che i platonici tardoantichi si riferissero a Giamblico come ad un uomo "divino" (θεῖος) o "ispirato dagli dei" (ἐνθους); sull'appellativo di θεῖος in generale, cf. O. Weinreich, "Antikes Gottmenschen-tum," *Neue Jahrbuch für Wissenschaft* 6 (1926) 633–51; L. Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ANHP. *Das Bild des "Göttlichen Menschen" in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (Wien 1935); G.A. Paterson, *The "Divine Man" in Hellenistic Popular Religion* (Madison, NJ 1983). Per l'attribuzione dell'appellativo a Giamblico e ad altri filosofi, cf. Hadot (sopra, nota 2) 5, nota 16; *Prolegomenes à la Philosophie de Platon*, L.G. Westerink, ed. e J. Trouillard, trad. (Paris 1990) 45, nota 1, con riferimento a pagina 1.1 del testo, dove si dice che l'epiteto elogiativo δαιμόνιος, che si può tradurre con "geniale" in quanto indica qualcuno che possiede il carattere di un genio, e cioè di un *daimon*, serve in questo passo, e in altri analoghi, a sminuire il valore di Aristotele in rapporto a quello di Platone, ma anche a quello di Giamblico, entrambi qualificati come divini (θεῖοι). Cf. anche Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, H.D. Saffrey e L.G. Westerink, ed., vol. 1 (Paris 1968) 141, nota 5.

Giamblico esprime nel suo commentario alle *Categorie* di Aristotele sublime (ὕψηλόν) e quindi inaccessibile ai più (τοῖς πολλοῖς ἄβατον).

Nella formulazione della νοερὰ θεωρία, e, in generale, nella valutazione complessiva che Giamblico dà delle *Categorie* aristoteliche, un ruolo di primo piano —stando sempre alla testimonianza simpliciana—è giocato da Archita, la cui interpretazione influenza in modo massiccio e determinante la lettura giamblichea del trattato aristotelico. Giamblico infatti—aggiunge Simplicio (*Commentario alle Categorie* 2.15ss.)—supera tutti i precedenti commentatori ed inaugura un nuovo modo, più profondo e, quindi, più scientifico, di leggere il trattato aristotelico, perché segue puntualmente le argomentazioni del pitagorico Archita, il quale, prima di Aristotele, ha scritto un trattato di contenuto analogo a quello delle *Categorie*, il Περὶ τοῦ παντός (*ibid.*, 2.15–25). Si tratta—come noi oggi sappiamo con certezza dagli studi di H. Thesleff e di W. Burkert e, soprattutto, di T.A. Szlezàk—di uno scritto pseudopitagorico allora datato tra il I secolo a.C. e il II d.C., anche se Giamblico—e con lui altri filosofi—è fermamente convinto della sua autenticità e, di conseguenza, del fatto che la dottrina aristotelica dei dieci generi supremi dell'essere sia fortemente debitrice, nella fattispecie, nei confronti di questo scritto di Archita e, in generale, nei confronti della dottrina di Pitagora.

Considerare Aristotele un seguace di Archita, come attesta Simplicio a pagina 2.24–25 (dove dice che “Aristotele vuole seguire Archita assolutamente”) ed in altri luoghi, o del pitagorismo *tout-court*, significava per Giamblico collocare lo Stagirita sulla stessa linea di pensiero che univa già Platone a Pitagora in un rapporto di continuità dottrinale. Egli infatti tendeva ad interpretare tanto Platone quanto Aristotele in un'ottica “pitagorizzante,” ritenendo entrambi i filosofi eredi e depositari di quell'antica sapienza di matrice orientale che sarebbe stata rivelata anticamente dagli stessi dèi a Pitagora, e da Pitagora all'umanità.

Il fatto che Giamblico abbia inaugurato questa tendenza ad inquadrare la dottrina delle categorie di Aristotele nell'ambito di una concezione di origine pitagorica, qual era appunto quella del presunto Archita, può essere spiegato più facilmente se si considera che lo stesso Giamblico è stato, in quest'età, il più forte sostenitore dell'unità dottrinale di platonismo e pitagorismo, come dimostra il suo progetto della Συναγωγή τῶν Πυθαγορείων Δογμάτων. Una tale tendenza era rafforzata probabilmente dal fatto che esisteva già una più antica tradizione esegetica, risalente ad Antioco di Ascalona, che voleva che l'aristotelismo fosse filiazione del platonismo. Anche per questa ragione, quindi, Giamblico non ritiene che la logica aristotelica possa essere considerata una scienza autonoma, circoscritta cioè al solo ambito logico-linguistico-grammaticale e avente un suo statuto autonomo, ma la considera piuttosto intimamente connessa alla metafisica e da essa dipendente. E per tale motivo egli la confronta continuamente con la metafisica pitagorico-platonica, allo scopo di mostrarne l'affinità e la continuità dottrinale.

III. Esame di Alcuni Contesti

III.1 L'Interpretazione dello Skopos delle Categorie

Il primo dei contesti esaminati riguarda l'interpretazione dello *skopos* delle *Categorie*. In esso non troviamo l'espressione $\nu\omicron\epsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}$ $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ a qualificare l'esegesi giamblichea, tuttavia noi crediamo che egualmente l'intera testimonianza possa rappresentare un esempio chiaro di quella che era la particolare speculazione intellettuale di Giamblico.

La ricerca dello *skopos* (termine che assume per lo più il significato di scopo, fine, proposito, progetto, disegno, mira, bersaglio, ma, talvolta, anche quello di soggetto, tema, argomento) costituiva il primo passo verso la comprensione del testo che si andava a leggere. "Lo scopo, infatti—afferma Simplicio (*Commentario alle Categorie* 8.13–15)—se compreso correttamente, determina e indirizza la nostra capacità razionale, affinché non veniamo trascinati invano di qua e di là, ma riferiamo ogni cosa ad esso." Simplicio si appresta ad esporre quella che i commentatori neoplatonici, unanimemente, ritengono essere la giusta interpretazione dello $\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\omicron\varsigma$ delle *Categorie*.

Precedentemente, alle pagine 9.4–13.11, l'esegeta ha già iniziato l'esame di tale questione e ha fornito il quadro delle diverse interpretazioni: "È chiaro infatti che—esordisce Simplicio—il discorso concerne dieci cose semplici ($\pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}$ $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha$ $\tau\iota\nu\omega\acute{\nu}$ $\acute{\alpha}\pi\lambda\omega\nu$), che sono dette generi in quanto sono le più universali ($\delta\omicron\lambda\iota\kappa\acute{\omega}\tau\alpha\tau\alpha$)" (*Commentario alle Categorie* 9.6–7); tuttavia, continua Simplicio, tra gli interpreti, alcuni hanno ritenuto che Aristotele intendesse parlare di semplici "voci" o parole ($\phi\omega\nu\alpha\iota$), altri degli "enti" ($\delta\upsilon\nu\tau\alpha$) che da quelle voci sono significati, altri ancora di semplici "concetti" ($\nu\omicron\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$).

Secondo l'esegesi di Simplicio—ma si tratta di un'interpretazione condivisa anche dagli altri commentatori delle *Categorie*⁴—ciascuna delle tre soluzioni è vera e accettabile per certi aspetti, errata e criticabile per altri; la giusta interpretazione, pertanto, deve tener conto di tutte e tre le interpretazioni "parziali." Tralasciamo la lunga e dettagliata disamina simpliciana di ciascuna delle tre interpretazioni e passiamo subito alle opinioni di Porfirio e di Giamblico, riservandoci di confrontare la testimonianza di Simplicio con quelle fornite allo stesso proposito rispettivamente da David [Elias], Filopono e Olimpiodoro; tale raffronto infatti ci consentirà di attribuire egualmente a Giamblico l'esegesi più completa, più intellettuale e metafisica della questione, cioè quella $\nu\omicron\epsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}$ $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ che altrove il commentatore ateniese considera prerogativa del maestro della scuola di Siria e che qui non coglie, convinto com'è di poter ascrivere già a Porfirio l'opinione che gli altri invece tramandano come giamblichea.

⁴ Per la discussione relativa allo $\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\omicron\varsigma$ delle *Categorie* negli altri commentari greci alle *Categorie*, cf. Ammonius, *In Categorías* 8.22–13.1; Philoponus, *In Categorías* 8.27–12.11; Olympiodorus, *Prolegomena* 18.21–22.2; David [Elias], *In Categorías* 129.7–132.4. Tra gli studi sull'argomento si vedano P. Hoffmann, "Catégories et langage selon Simplicius. La question du 'skopos' du traité aristotélicien des 'Catégories,'" in *Simplicius* (sopra, nota 1) 61–90, e Ch. Evangelou, *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry* (Leiden e New York 1988) 23–34.

Secondo Simplicio è a Porfirio che bisogna attribuire la teorizzazione definitiva della giusta interpretazione dello σκοπός delle *Categorie*. Il contributo decisivo di Porfirio sarebbe quello di avere dimostrato che il discorso di Aristotele verte principalmente sulle φωναί; ma poiché le φωναί sono considerate καθὸ σημαντικά, vengono anche coinvolti nella discussione sia i referenti diretti delle "voci," e cioè i *significata* (i νοήματα), sia i referenti indiretti di esse, e cioè i *nominata* (i πράγματα). L'espressione καθὸ σημαντικά, che Porfirio introduce a precisazione della definizione data dai predecessori (Alessandro di Afrodisia, Alessandro di Ege, Ermino e Boeto), serve tuttavia ad evidenziare la priorità del legame tra φωναί e νοήματα su quello tra φωναί e πράγματα nella struttura della significazione, e a mostrare come nelle *Categorie* il riferimento alle realtà sia solo marginale, non essendo queste considerate per sé, bensì solo in quanto sono significate dalle parole e dai concetti. Ciò spiega come mai Porfirio venga invece collocato da Filopono e da David [Elias] tra i sostenitori della tesi περὶ νοημάτων, e da Olimpiodoro tra quelli della tesi περὶ φωνῶν.

Il divino Giamblico, aggiunge subito dopo Simplicio, approva (ἐπιψηφίζει) tale interpretazione. È ovvio, quindi, che per Simplicio Giamblico non è il padre della "sintesi veritiera." Gli altri commentatori, invece, attribuiscono proprio a Giamblico, e non a Porfirio, la giusta interpretazione dello σκοπός e concordano nel definire τὸν σκοπὸν τὸν Ἰαμβλίχειον περὶ φωνῶν καὶ πραγμάτων διὰ μέσων νοημάτων ((Olympiodorus, *In Categorias* 41.10–13; Philoponus, *In Categorias* 9.12–15, David [Elia], *In Categorias* 130.14–131.14). Ciò che distingue la definizione giamblichea da quella porfiriana, e che, secondo i commentatori alessandrini, fa di essa la vera definizione "unificante" è l'espressione διὰ μέσων νοημάτων. "Avec cette formulation—commenta Dalsgaard Larsen⁵—il se passe notamment deux choses: la première: il y a maintenant une véritable *combinaison* de trois grandeurs: le mot, la chose et le concept; la deuxième: le concept a une fonction d'*intermédiaire*." Per Giamblico, quindi, obiettivo del discorso aristotelico sarebbero le realtà significate, in quanto è alle realtà che, in ultima analisi, rimandano i concetti significati dalle voci. Con questa opinione, pertanto, Giamblico supererebbe la cosiddetta interpretazione "nominalista" o "concettualista" che taluni attribuiscono ad Alessandro e a Porfirio,⁶ a

5 Sopra, nota 2, 239–40.

6 J. Pinborg (in *Logica e Semantica nel Medioevo* [Torino 1984] 25) sostiene che Porfirio ha certamente interpretato le *Categorie* di Aristotele sulla base dell'interpretazione nominalistica che ne avevano dato gli stoici; a tal proposito l'autore rimanda a A.C. Lloyd, il quale (in "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic," *Phronesis* 1 [1955] 58ss. e *Phronesis* 2 [1957] 146ss.) ha mostrato come logica stoica e logica neoplatonica convergano in più punti: "Egli [Lloyd] interpreta questo fatto come un naturale sviluppo della filosofia neoplatonica, che aspirava a liberarsi dalle implicazioni ontologiche presenti nella logica di Aristotele e a far sue alcune parti della dottrina stoica [. . .]. Più avanti, alle pagine 42–3, sempre in relazione al "nominalismo neoplatonico," Pinborg precisa che "i neoplatonici sembrano affermare che i calcoli logici costruibili mediante i concetti aristotelici non riguardano propriamente l'essenza intelligibile del mondo: le definizioni aristoteliche dei termini logici sono infatti 'concettuali,' non 'essenziali,' e questo vale anche per le *Categorie* che non sono perciò un'opera di filosofia, ma di logica. [. . .] Incomincia così a farsi strada una concezione della logica come scienza autonoma, con un proprio oggetto specifico: la logica diventa il calcolo—estensionale—dei concetti, valido per il mondo sensibile, ma non per quello intelligibile, in cui sono decisivi i caratteri intensionali (ad esempio: l'idea generica contiene in atto le proprie *differentiae*; non così, invece, il genere logico). In questo senso è possibile parlare

favore di una teoria "realista" della conoscenza che, secondo Dillon,⁷ gode dell'approvazione degli aristotelisti moderni e che, come ritiene ancora Dalsgaard Larsen, in definitiva restituirebbe più fedelmente il pensiero stesso di Aristotele. "Jamblique—precisa al riguardo Dalsgaard Larsen—évite de laisser le mot se rapporter directement aux choses, de sorte que le concept n'a pas de fonction, en même temps qu'il évite de laisser le mot se rapporter au concept d'une telle manière qu'il perd sa référence à la réalité."

Che si debba a Giamblico la definizione unificante dello σκοπός è ancora testimoniato da David [Elias], il quale attribuisce espressamente al maestro di Siria l'espressione πάντα μῆξαι (*In Categorias* 130.14ss.), e cioè l'esortazione ad unire le tre interpretazioni parziali dello σκοπός. Poco più avanti, nello stesso contesto, David [Elias] attesta che fu Giamblico il primo ad esigere che si individuasse in ciascuno dei dialoghi platonici un solo *skopos* (*ibid.*, 131.11–12: ἐν γὰρ τοῖς σκοποῖς τῶν Πλάτωνος διαλόγων παντὸς βιβλίου ἓνα βούλεται [scil. Giamblico, nominato poco prima] εἶναι τὸν σκοπόν). È probabile, quindi, che il significato tecnico che il termine σκοπός assume in questi commentari più tardi sia un'eredità giamblichea.⁸ Anche l'anonimo autore dei *Prolegomena Philosophiae Platonicae*—che Westerink situa nell'entourage immediato di Olimpiodoro e di Elias,—richiamando alla memoria il paragone tra il dialogo e l'essere vivente, che lo stesso Platone aveva suggerito in *Fedro* 264c.2–6 ed illustrato nel *Timeo*, ribadisce—senza nominare Giamblico ma confermando nella sostanza la testimonianza esplicita di David [Elias], *In Categorias* 131.11–13—che, così come l'essere vivente ha nel Bene il suo unico fine da perseguire, allo stesso modo anche il dialogo deve avere necessariamente un unico fine, e cioè un unico σκοπός, che l'esegeta deve individuare e utilizzare come chiave di lettura di tutto il testo che si appresta a commentare. La stessa immagine viene riferita anche da quei commentatori della scuola ateniese che, come ha dimostrato definitivamente Praechter dipendono da Giamblico, e precisamente da:⁹ *In Rempublicam* I.6.26ss.; 11.9ss. e *In Parmenidem* 659.15ss.; Hermeias, *In Phaedrum* 9.8ss. e 11.17ss. In Ermia, il cui commentario al *Fedro* deriva dalle

con Lloyd, di un 'nominalismo' neoplatonico: la logica rientra nell'ambito della dialettica, non della scienza." Sull'ambiguità dei termini "nominalismo" e "concettualismo," cf. Lloyd (*ibid.*) 69.

⁷ Dillon (sopra, nota 2) 904, cita le opinioni di G.E.R. Lloyd, *Aristotle. The Growth and Structure of his Thought* (Cambridge 1968) 113: "The Categories are primarily intended as a classification of reality, of the things signified by terms, rather than of the signifying terms themselves." Prima di Lloyd, questo problema era stato affrontato da J.L. Ackrill (citato anch'esso da Dillon, *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione* [Oxford 1963; ultima ristampa 1989]), il quale afferma che: "Though the items in categories are not expressions but 'things,'" the identification and classification of these things could, of course, be achieved only by attention to what we say" (pagina 78).

⁸ Nell'introduzione all'Anonimo, *Prolegomènes à la Philosophie de Platon* (L.G. Westerink, ed. e J. Trouillard, trad. [Amsterdam 1962] lxvi) Westerink dice: "Puisque c'est Jamblique qui a donné au terme sa valeur technique et qui a systématiquement défini le σκοπός de chaque dialogue, il est pratiquement certain que c'est lui qui a établi cette liste de règles; la première règle, l'unité de σκοπός, lui est précisément attribuée par Elias (131.10–13)."

⁹ Sopra, nota 2, *ad loc.*

lezioni di Siriano su quel dialogo, viene nominato Giamblico come colui il quale ha individuato lo *skopos* unitario del *Fedro* nel παντοδαπὸς καλός.

La testimonianza degli Alessandrini, tesa a distinguere l'interpretazione giamblichea da quella porfiriana come più approfondita e più estesa, e non circoscritta al solo dominio logico, appare più convincente di quella di Simplicio; Giamblico avrebbe concepito le *Categorie* come un trattato completo nel quale logica, teoria del linguaggio o linguistica e metafisica si intersecano costantemente ed occupano uno spazio analogo richiamandosi a vicenda; Porfirio invece, pur non disconoscendo il riferimento delle categorie alla sfera metafisica, ritiene che comunque l'ambito primario dell'indagine aristotelica in questo scritto rimanga quello logico-linguistico.

È inoltre probabile che l'interpretazione "realista" che Giamblico dà dello σκοπὸς delle *Categorie* derivi dallo Pseudo-Archita. Già Simplicio, come abbiamo già precisato, presentando l'esegesi di Giamblico, l'aveva collegata a quella di Archita ed aveva fatto dipendere dall'influenza dell'interpretazione propria del presunto pitagorico la particolare νοερά θεωρία del maestro di Siria. Ora, discutendo la questione relativa al "titolo" del trattato, Simplicio muove, alle pagine 17-8, una critica alla definizione porfiriana di "categoria," citando Archita come colui che invece ha inteso bene di quale tipo di predicazione Aristotele intenda parlare nelle *Categorie*, non cioè di una predicazione qualunque, ma di una predicazione i cui termini non sono convertibili. Più precisamente, secondo la critica di Simplicio, se accettiamo la definizione porfiriana di categoria—"si dice categoria ogni semplice parola significante che venga espressa e detta della cosa che essa significa,"—dovremo ammettere che il discorso di Aristotele riguarda qualsivoglia tipo di predicazione, e pertanto, anche quel tipo di predicazione in cui l'universale funge da soggetto e il particolare da predicato, come nel caso della proposizione "l'uomo è Socrate," il che è impossibile, perché la predicazione categoriale alla quale si fa riferimento nelle *Categorie* è quella in cui il particolare (sostanza prima) funge sempre e soltanto da soggetto, mentre l'universale (genere o specie = sostanza seconda) funge sempre e soltanto da predicato; e la categoria è propriamente ciò che viene predicato del soggetto. Questa concezione—che, sottolinea Simplicio, Porfirio non ha colto nei suoi commenti alle *Categorie* ma che è però presente nell'*Isagoge*—comporta che la predicazione non si riduca alla semplice attribuzione linguistica di un predicato ad un soggetto, ma esprima la "partecipazione" del soggetto al predicato. È corretto dire "Socrate è uomo" perché ciò significa che l'individuo particolare Socrate partecipa del genere uomo, ma la frase non può essere convertita, ossia non è possibile invertire tra loro soggetto e predicato. E Archita ha inteso perfettamente la questione, tant'è che ha intitolato il suo libro, di contenuto analogo a questo di Aristotele—al quale, peraltro, dice Simplicio, lo stesso Aristotele si rifà (Simplicius, *In Categorias* 13.23-24: ὁ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης κατηγοροῦσθαι),—Περὶ τῶν Καθόλου Λόγων. In questo passo Simplicio non nomina Giamblico e tuttavia, più avanti (*Commentario alle Categorie* 53.9-18), il commentatore ascrive al maestro della scuola di Siria, che cita testualmente, la stessa teoria—qui attribuita ad Archita,—secondo la quale la predicazione è una partecipazione: "[...] quando, infatti, diciamo che Socrate è uomo—afferma Giamblico *apud* Simplicio—non diciamo che egli è l'uomo-genere, ma diciamo che partecipa dell'uomo-genere (ἀλλὰ μετέχειν τοῦ γενικοῦ)." Secondo Giamblico la predicazione implica e rivela dunque la relazione ontologica tra soggetto e predicato, che da un punto di vista platonico-neoplatonico significa la

partecipazione del particolare sensibile all'universale intelligibile. Commenta Dalsgaard Larsen: "La prédication pose la question fondamentale de la hiérarchie ontologique, dont la ligne ascendante implique un accroissement de l'être. Elle concerne donc aussi les réalités ontologiques." Come sappiamo, tra coloro i quali sostengono la possibilità di armonizzare platonismo e aristotelismo, Giamblico si spinge oltre ogni limite, negando perfino che Aristotele abbia criticato la teoria platonica delle idee e suscitando, per questo, le critiche dei neoplatonici posteriori (cf. David [Elias], *In Categorias* 123.1–3); anzi, a proposito delle *Categorie*, come vedremo più avanti a proposito della categoria del "dove," Giamblico giungerà addirittura a sostenere che le categorie aristoteliche, retamente intese, si riferiscono in modo primario e principale al mondo intelligibile. È questa una delle manifestazioni più chiare della giamblichea *νοερά θεωρία*.

In conclusione, si potrebbe ipotizzare che i commentatori alessandrini abbiano ritenuto Giamblico e non Porfirio l'autore della interpretazione unificante dello σκοπός delle *Categorie*, perché, forse, a loro parere, l'esegesi di Giamblico avrebbe messo in evidenza la relazione ontologica che è sottesa alla predicazione, laddove, invece, Porfirio, spinto dalla preoccupazione di deontologizzare la logica aristotelica, al fine di renderla compatibile col platonismo, avrebbe sottolineato l'aspetto meramente logico-linguistico del discorso di Aristotele. Simplicio, come abbiamo visto, non distingue a tale proposito l'opinione di Giamblico da quella di Porfirio, così come fanno invece gli Alessandrini, ma ritiene che in questa occasione il maestro di Siria si sia limitato a condividere l'opinione del predecessore. Pur non adoperando, per definire l'esegesi giamblichea, la stessa espressione—*νοερά θεωρία*—che Simplicio privilegia e utilizza più volte a tale scopo, gli Alessandrini si rendono in quest'occasione testimoni di quella medesima interpretazione più "noetica" di Giamblico che in altri luoghi Simplicio ha evidenziato come più completa e più approfondita di altre.

III.2. Su 'Ομώνυμα e Συνώνυμα

Il secondo contesto rientra nel commento simpliciano al primo lemma delle *Categorie*. Il brano commentato (*Categorias* 1a.1: ὁμώνυμα λέγεται ὡν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν) ha sollevato tra gli interpreti numerose difficoltà; Aristotele, infatti, inizia il suo trattato con una breve premessa su alcune nozioni, e precisamente gli "omonimi," i "sinonimi" e i "paronimi," che non sembrano collegarsi tematicamente al soggetto dell'opera. Già, come riferisce Simplicio in apertura del suo commento al passo in questione (*Commentario alle Categorie* 21.1–3), Nicostrato e i suoi seguaci (οἱ περὶ τὸν Νικόστρατον) avevano criticato questa parte preliminare del trattato, chiedendosi come mai Aristotele, invece di introdurre subito il suo discorso sulle categorie, si fosse preoccupato di spiegare gli omonimi i sinonimi e i paronimi.

Questo non era il solo problema che l'esordio delle *Categorie* aveva suscitato tra gli antichi commentatori; un altro interrogativo verteva sull'esclusione dei polionimi e degli eteronimi, che Speusippo—al quale viene attribuita la più completa classificazione dei nomi in relazione ai concetti da loro espressi—aveva invece elencato ed illustrato insieme agli omonimi, ai sinonimi e ai paronimi, e cioè alle tre nozioni privilegiate da Aristotele. Era inoltre necessario capire anche come mai Aristotele avesse parlato di ὁμώνυμα, συνώνυμα e di παρώνυμα, e cioè di "cose"

omonime, sinonime e paronime, e non piuttosto del "fenomeno" dell'ὁμωνυμία, della συνωνυμία e della παρωνυμία. Altre discussioni aveva poi sollecitato la definizione fornita in proposito da Aristotele, per la quale esistevano concreti problemi testuali.

Sofferamiamoci sulla prima delle difficoltà enumerate, e precisamente su quella sollevata da Nicostrato e seguaci; Simplicio vi contrappone subito le diverse interpretazioni che, rispettivamente, Porfirio (*Commentario alle Categorie* 21.5–21), Andronico (*ibid.*, 21.21–22) e Giamblico (*ibid.*, 22.1–9) hanno dato del significato e dell'utilità dell'esordio delle *Categorie*, per poi esporre la propria opinione (*ibid.*, 22.14ss.). Tralasciamo di riportare le soluzioni date dagli altri esegeti e passiamo subito a Giamblico.¹⁰

Secondo il "divino" Giamblico, la discussione aristotelica sugli omonimi e sui sinonimi trova la sua giustificazione nel fatto che il termine stesso di κατηγορία—come anche il verbo κατηγορεῖν—si predica in modo omonimo delle dieci categorie (*Commentario alle Categorie* 22.3–6): esse infatti differiscono tra loro per il genere che rappresentano e per le realtà che si sussumono sotto di esse, e non hanno in comune che il nome di "categorie." Pur presentando anche una traccia di sinonimia, condividendo cioè, oltre al nome, anche alcune proprietà, come quella di "essere predicate delle realtà sussunte sotto di esse" (*ibid.*, 24.2–3), e di essere i generi sommi della predicazione (*ibid.*, 24.3–6), la loro caratteristica peculiare è comunque quella di essere termini omonimi. Secondo Giamblico, perciò, senza un'adeguata conoscenza degli omonimi e dei sinonimi, non sarebbe possibile comprendere né la proprietà principale (τὸ ἰδίωμα) della categoria, né tanto meno come le categorie abbiano in comune tale peculiarità e quale sia la relazione che le collega agli ὄντα. Tra le categorie e gli enti, infatti, secondo Aristotele, c'è sia un rapporto di sinonimia (ad esempio fra i generi e le specie di una stessa categoria, ossia tra i predicati di una stessa colonna = predicazione essenziale o in senso proprio), sia un rapporto di omonimia (quando la predicazione avviene tra *items* di categorie diverse, ossia tra predicati appartenenti a colonne diverse = predicazione accidentale o in senso improprio), e in questo caso enti diversi per definizione ma denominati allo stesso modo, apparterranno a categorie diverse, come l'uomo in carne ed ossa e l'uomo dipinto, i quali condividono lo stesso ὄνομα di animale, ma non la stessa definizione dell'essenza (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας) che corrisponde a quel nome.

Fin qui Giamblico si limita a giustificare e a chiarire il ragionamento e l'argomentare aristotelico. Tuttavia in altri contesti egli utilizzerà la nozione di omonimia, illustrata da Aristotele nelle *Categorie*, anche per indicare il rapporto che lega gli enti sensibili agli enti intelligibili, caricandola quindi di un senso diverso, non più esclusivamente logico-linguistico, ma metafisico. Nel *Commentario all'Introduzione all'Aritmetica di Nicomaco*, a pagina 6.4, ad esempio, facendo sua una concezione di Pitagora, Giamblico afferma che la parola ὄντα denota tanto le cose immateriali ed eterne che costituiscono anche la sola parte attiva dell'essere, cioè gli enti incorporei, quanto le forme corporee e materiali, generate e corrutibili, che sono chiamate enti per omonimia (ὁμωνύμως), in quanto partecipano dei veri enti (κατὰ

¹⁰ Per la discussione completa delle diverse argomentazioni si rinvia a R.L. Cardullo (sopra, nota 1).

μετοχὴν αὐτῶν οὕτως καλούμενα).¹¹ Anche tra sensibili e intelligibili vige quindi un rapporto di omonimia. Ma se è giusto e corretto dire che tra categorie e realtà sensibili esiste un rapporto di omonimia, consistente nel fatto che a cose diverse per definizione e appartenenti per ciò stesso a categorie diverse, può essere applicato uno stesso nome—come nell'esempio, riferito da Aristotele, dell'uomo sensibile e dell'uomo dipinto, che sono detti entrambi "animali"—non è però possibile intendere allo stesso modo e nello stesso senso l'omonimia che esiste tra le realtà sensibili e quelle intelligibili. Infatti l'omonimia che c'è tra l'immagine e il suo modello acquista nella speculazione metafisica giamblichea una funzione e un senso diversi, non più legati alla sfera logico-linguistica—come si è già detto,—ma appropriati alla dimensione metafisica, in quanto rivela la differenza ontologica che esiste tra i due diversi livelli di realtà e, nel contempo, anche la loro συνέχεια, sancita dalla partecipazione del livello inferiore a quello superiore.

L'omonimia viene quindi ontologizzata e caricata di un senso diverso, profondamente metafisico.

Anche nel *Commentario alle Categorie* di Simplicio è possibile trovare traccia di questa trasposizione ed applicazione a livello metafisico del concetto di omonimia attuata da Giamblico; nei passi interessati, come nel brano sopra menzionato del *Commentario all'Introduzione all'Arithmetica di Nicomaco*, l'omonimia sta ad indicare la partecipazione di realtà di tipo e di livello diverso ad un principio unico e supremo. Si tratta di quel tipo particolare di omonimia che Simplicio e Siriano indicano con l'espressione—già aristotelica ma da essi intesa in un senso squisitamente neoplatonico—del πρὸς ἓν λέγεσθαι. Entrano qui in gioco tutte quelle categorie che, oltre ad essere passibili di essere divise, come generi, nelle loro specie, possono anche essere divise, come voci omonime, nei loro diversi significati, come il ποιόν (il "quale") e l'ἔχειν (l'"avere"), ad esempio. A proposito di queste due categorie, infatti, Aristotele dice che esse πολλαχῶς λέγονται, e cioè si dicono in molti modi. Ora, secondo Giamblico, riguardo a queste categorie occorre distinguere ed isolare come fenomeno a sé stante quel tipo particolare di omonimia che è rappresentato dal πρὸς ἓν λέγεσθαι; bisogna cioè differenziare i veri e propri significati omonimi di una voce da quelli che tali non sono, ma che piuttosto si riferiscono all'unità del genere, come sue differenze, e che quindi, diversamente dagli omonimi, si lasciano ricondurre alla medesima categoria. Gli omonimi infatti non appartengono alla stessa categoria, mentre i cosiddetti πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα si collocano a metà strada tra gli omonimi e i generi, senza essere però del tutto diversi da questi. In una testimonianza di David [Elias] (*In Categorias* 226.9ss.) sull'esegesi delle *Categorie* di Siriano, questi afferma chiaramente che "le cose che derivano dall'unità e sono in rapporto all'unità (cioè i τὰ ἀφ' ἑνὸς καὶ πρὸς ἓν), essendo intermedie tra omonimi e generi, possono essere denominate con i nomi degli estremi," e cioè sia omonimi che generi.

Il richiamo ai πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα rivela una sorta di continuità ontologica e di analogia tra realtà di livello diverso—sensibile, psichico, intellettuale, divino,—che sono tuttavia intimamente collegate tra loro, in quanto tutte si riferiscono ad un principio unico, supremo e principale. Infatti la realtà inferiore partecipa di quella ad

¹¹ Per il passo completo, cf. F. Romano, *Giamblico. Il numero e il divino* (Milano 1995) 206-09.

essa superiore, e tutte partecipano del principio supremo. L'esame della categoria dell'"avere" offre quindi a Giamblico lo spunto per esprimere questo concetto, e a noi l'opportunità di osservare ancora una volta in azione la sua νοερά θεωρία, applicata alle categorie e ad alcune nozioni illustrate da Aristotele in relazione a queste —nella fattispecie l'"omonimia." L'esegesi di Giamblico dimostra come tali nozioni possano e debbano sconfinare dal ristretto ambito nel quale erano state enunciate o adoperate, e trovino applicazione, con valenze e significati diversi, in altri domini, via superiori a quello logico-linguistico. Quest'ultimo dominio, con tutto il suo apparato, deve quindi servire da spunto e da trampolino di lancio per speculazioni di altra e più sottile natura. Ma analizziamo in dettaglio l'argomentazione di Giamblico.

III.3.. Sulla Categoria dell'"Avere" (Ἐχειν)

"Probabilmente—afferma Giamblico secondo Simplicius, *In Categorias* 438.18ss.—il fatto che l'avere si dica in molti modi non significa che esso si dica in molti sensi e per omonimia. Infatti tutti i modi che Aristotele enumera rientrano nel genere dell'avere." Per tale ragione Aristotele, quando nella sezione finale del trattato elenca le differenze dell'avere, le considera sempre—secondo Giamblico—come differenze di uno stesso genere e le riconduce tutte all'unità del genere, dal quale dipendono e con il quale condividono in senso analogo, il nome.

L'avere infatti sembrerebbe essere una "voce omonima," in quanto si assume secondo diversi significati; tuttavia, quando analizziamo questa categoria in maniera più speculativa e più approfondita, o, se vogliamo, più "noetica" (νοερά θεωρία), ci accorgiamo che i vari sensi o significati di essa si rifanno tutti ad un senso unico e principale, che corrisponde alla forma stessa del genere avere, cioè fanno tutti capo alla medesima categoria e non sono propriamente delle voci omonime.

Non si deve far consistere la natura dell'avere soltanto in relazione a noi e al nostro corpo, avvertiva Giamblico in Simplicius, *In Categorias* 374.24ss.; in funzione del corpo infatti essa subirebbe una restrizione. Occorre invece considerare l'avere a livelli più alti (lett. ἀνωτέρω δὲ ἔτι [...] τὸ ἔχειν θεωρητέον). Perché l'avere riguarda sì in primo luogo il nostro corpo, per cui noi diciamo di "avere" un mantello o un anello o dei calzari; ma esso si osserva, analogamente, anche in altri domini, più elevati di quello corporeo: si osserva infatti nei livelli psichico, noetico e divino, in senso certamente diverso ma purtuttavia analogo. Diciamo infatti che l'anima "ha" in sé i suoi principi razionali; e ancora, che l'intelletto "ha" in sé i principi intelligibili; e in senso ancora differente ma sempre analogico, attribuiamo l'avere a Dio, Principio supremo, il quale "ha" in sé—nel senso che la circonda come in un abbraccio e la contiene dentro di sé,—tutta la realtà, da quella intelligibile, a quella psichica a quella sensibile e materiale.

Nella sua esegesi della categoria dell'"avere" Giamblico intende sottolineare quella che è la caratteristica principale di questa categoria e come a partire da essa sia possibile considerare i vari τρόποι elencati da Aristotele come specie del medesimo genere e non come suoi significati omonimi o equivoci. Tale proprietà, condivisa da tutti gli esempi di "avere" illustrati dallo Stagirita, consiste nel possedere (*scil.* nell'avere) qualcosa di non congenito, di non connaturato all'essenza di chi possiede; in tal modo l'avere si osserva, in un senso non omonimo ma bensì analogo, in più domini: anzitutto nel nostro corpo, ma anche nella nostra anima (che possiede

molteplici potenze e vite e corpi, in modo non congenito ma accessorio, e che essa depone quando le accade di trasmigrare da un corpo ad un altro) e nella natura del cosmo (che possiede i singoli corpi come altro da sé); va da sé che le realtà superiori a quelle summenzionate assumono l'avere in senso analogo. Le cose superiori e più nobili, precisa infatti Giamblico a conclusione dell'intera sua argomentazione (Simplicius, *In Categorias* 375.33-34), possiedono sempre le cose inferiori, che di quelle partecipano.

Tale interpretazione ci consente quindi di sussumere i vari modi o sensi dell'avere sotto il medesimo genere supremo, come significati o modi che derivano da esso e si riferiscono ad esso. Anche in questo caso si tratterebbe di quel particolare tipo di omonimia che i neoplatonici successivi definiranno, con un'espressione di matrice aristotelica ma riveduta e utilizzata in senso neoplatonico, ἀφ' ἐνὸς καὶ πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα. Dalle considerazioni giamblichee emerge inoltre, nel contempo, l'analogia tra l'avere e l'essere avuto da una parte, e il circondare e l'essere circondato dall'altra. Ciò che "ha," "ha" in sé, come suo ricettacolo, ciò che "è avuto," e ciò che "è avuto" "è avuto" da ciò che lo "ha." Come dire che il corpo "ha" un mantello e che questo mantello "è avuto" da colui che lo "ha;" e che, a sua volta, il corporeo "è avuto" dall'anima, che lo "ha," e che l'anima "è avuta" dall'intelletto che la "ha;" e infine che tutto questo, e cioè il mondo fisico, quello psichico e quello intellettuale, "è avuto" da Dio che lo "ha" come primo ricettacolo.¹²

Questa particolare lettura giamblichea dell'avere, definita espressamente da Simplicio teoretica o speculativa e intellettuale (*Commentario alle Categorie* 376.12: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὁ Ἰάμβλικος θεωρητικῶς ὄντως καὶ νοερώς ἐπεσκέψατο), presenta diverse affinità con l'esegesi giamblichea del "dove," alla quale facciamo qui, in conclusione, un rapido ma esemplificativo accenno.

III.4. Sulla Categoria del "Dove" (Πού)

L'ultimo contesto tratto dal *Commentario* di Simplicio, emblematico per la νοερά θεωρία di Giamblico, riguarda l'esegesi della categoria del "dove," o "spazio." Esso va da pagina 361.7 a 364.35 del testo simpliciano e può essere confrontato con un frammento del perduto *Commentario al Timeo* di Giamblico, riferito sempre da Simplicio alle pagine 639.23-640.11 del suo *Commentario alla Fisica* di Aristotele.¹³

Nel nostro contesto principale (*In Categorias* 361.7ss.) Giamblico sottolinea la superiorità dello spazio sulla materia; esso è infatti incorporeo ed è causa della coesione dei corpi che contiene in sé, come condizione del loro esserci e della loro estensione. Lo spazio circonda i corpi e li sorregge, pertanto li precede da un punto di vista ontologico. Poiché, come sosteneva anche Archita, i corpi si muovono e sono nello spazio, questo necessariamente li precede e si pone rispetto ad essi come qualcosa di superiore. Lo spazio ha infatti un'esistenza a sé stante, che non dipende

¹² Per l'interpretazione giamblichea della categoria e dell'omonimia dell'"avere" si vedano le considerazioni di M. Narcy, "L'Homonymie entre Aristote et ses Commentateurs Néo-platoniciens," *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 1 (1981) 35-52, e di C. Luna, *Simplicius. Commentaire sur les Catégories*, I. Hadot, trad., fasc. 3 (Leiden, New York e Köln 1990) 90ss.

¹³ Per questi due frammenti giamblichi si veda S. Sambursky, *The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem 1982).

da quella dei corpi. Esso è quindi la prima delle cose esistenti perché tutte le cose che esistono "sono nello spazio o non sono senza spazio" (Archita in Simplicius, *Commentario alle Categorie* 361.24). Le nature incorporee come lo spazio, precisa Giamblico, precedono sempre quelle corporee.

Ora, questa considerazione dello spazio come limite che non soltanto circonda i corpi dall'esterno ma che, nello stesso tempo, li penetra dal di dentro eccitandoli al movimento, non viene da Giamblico limitata al solo spazio fisico, bensì allargata, o meglio, elevata ad altri e più alti livelli ontologici. Le entità di secondo grado sono sempre contenute infatti in quelle superiori ed hanno in esse il loro spazio. Così il mondo fisico è circondato dalla realtà superiore dell'anima ed è contenuto in essa come in uno spazio, e l'anima, a sua volta, è contenuta nell'intelletto, che costituisce una realtà e uno spazio ancora superiori. Procedendo ancora più in alto nella gerarchia metafisica neoplatonica, perveniamo allo spazio supremo, che contiene in sé tutto in forma unitaria e che Giamblico identifica con Dio.

IV. Rilevi Conclusivi

A conclusione di questa parziale indagine sull'esegesi giamblichea delle *Categorie*, possiamo affermare come proprio questo approccio più intellettuale, più noetico, che Simplicio definisce νοερά θεωρία, sia ciò che ci consente di contraddistinguere in modo emblematico l'interpretazione di Giamblico da quelle di altri commentatori. I contesti da noi esaminati ci hanno dato l'opportunità di confrontare, sia pure per sommi capi, alcuni parametri esegetici propri di Giamblico con alcune interpretazioni di Porfirio, da un lato, e di Siriano dall'altra. Certamente, un esame più completo della fonte simpliciana ci permetterebbe di formulare giudizi più precisi in proposito. Tuttavia, già dai contesti qui analizzati è emersa con evidenza l'assoluta diversità della esegesi giamblichea da quella porfiriana delle *Categorie*. Porfirio infatti esamina con particolare cura i lemmi del trattato commentato, sottoponendo ogni singola espressione, ogni singola parola, ad un esame che è prima di tutto filologico, poi filosofico, ma sempre circoscritto all'ambito logico-linguistico nel quale esso si trova e rientra. L'esegesi di Giamblico, invece, mira a collegare in maniera inscindibile l'ambito della speculazione logico-linguistica a quello della riflessione metafisica, trasponendo i principi e le leggi dell'uno nell'altro dominio, e viceversa, allo scopo di rendere chiara l'analogia e la partecipanzione vigente tra i vari livelli della realtà, considerati platonicamente come ordinati in senso gerarchico e strettamente collegati secondo un rapporto di immagine e modello, o di principio e principiato.

Ma l'esegesi di Giamblico si distingue anche da quella di un suo successore e per molti versi seguace, Siriano di Atene, la cui esegesi si colloca comunque in larga misura sulla stessa falsariga dell'interpretazione metafisica del maestro di Siria. Nonostante i diversi punti di contatto tra Giamblico e Siriano, emerge infatti una differenza sostanziale tra i due esegeti, che dipende in larga misura dal diverso atteggiamento che ciascuno di essi manifesta nei confronti di Aristotele. Siriano infatti appare meno preoccupato di Giamblico dall'esigenza di conciliare aristotelismo e platonismo, e ciò lo porta a dare probabilmente una interpretazione più obiettiva—e per ciò stesso più critica e spesso polemica—delle teorie logiche di Aristotele. Giamblico invece utilizza espressioni e concezioni aristoteliche in chiave neoplatonica,

per dimostrare in ultima analisi come l'aristotelismo, se correttamente interpretato, possa accordarsi col platonismo, anche nelle sue concezioni metafisiche. Ed è anche a questo scopo che Giamblico dà del primo trattato dell'*Organon*, classicamente inteso come il più antiplatonico dello Stagirita, un'esegesi più speculativa, atta a dimostrare come anche le teorie aristoteliche più squisitamente logiche possano trovare applicazione nella metafisica platonica e rappresentare per essa degli strumenti argomentativi e dimostrativi di importanza e validità fondamentali.

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**Giamblico contro Plotino e Porfirio:
Il Dibattito sull'Atto e sul Movimento
(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 301.20–308.10)**

Daniela P. Taormina

I. Introduzione

Nella *Risposta alla Lettera Inviata da Porfirio ad Anebo e Soluzione delle Questioni Poste in Essa*,¹ Giamblico dedica un'intera sezione alla classificazione dei "generi superiori"² e, per introdurla, affronta la "questione dei movimenti attivi o passivi" posta da Porfirio. Tuttavia non la giudica utile per la classificazione che vuole stabilire e allega tre ragioni. Innanzi tutto Porfirio ha sovvertito l'ordine dell'indagine e, anziché domandare quali sono le proprietà degli esseri superiori dapprima secondo l'essenza, poi secondo la potenza e infine secondo gli atti, ha parlato soltanto delle proprietà degli atti negli "elementi ultimi." In secondo luogo, nei generi superiori, non c'è l'opposizione dell'agire e del patire e le ἐνέργειαι, assolute e immutabili, sono considerate anche senza la relazione con l'opposto. Infine non è possibile attribuire a questi generi movimenti che provengano "dall'agente e dal paziente." Neppure per l'anima—continua Giamblico—ammettiamo che l'autocinesi (αὐτοκίνησις) sia prodotta da ciò che muove e da ciò

¹ Ritengo utile tornare al titolo originale dell'opera (d'ora in poi semplicemente *Risposta*) e abbandonare quello, fuorviante, di *De Mysteriis* in uso a partire dalla traduzione di M. Ficino. È un'esigenza già manifestata dagli specialisti, in particolare da H.D. Saffrey che anche recentemente l'ha ribadita in "Florence, 1492: réapparait Plotin," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 2 (1995) 147–8.

² Si tratta, come è noto, degli dèi che sovrintendono alla teurgia e che corrispondono, nell'interpretazione di Giamblico, alla terza ipotesi del *Parmenide*. Sono arcangeli, angeli, demoni, eroi, anime divine. Cf. Giamblico, *apud* Proclo, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 1054.34ss. = *In Parmenidem*, fr. 2 in *Iamblichi Chalcidensis: In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. (Leiden 1973).

che è mosso, ma la supponiamo semplice, senza relazione con altro e astratta dall'agire su di sé e dal patire da sé (*Risposta* 1.4, pagina 11.17ss.). A questo punto Giamblico ha tradotto nel proprio linguaggio il problema posto da Porfirio. Egli, cioè, ha inserito la questione dei movimenti attivi o passivi in una struttura ontologica rigidamente regolata dal rapporto οὐσία—δύναμις—ἐνέργεια che conduce ad una classificazione dei generi superiori κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, ovvero secondo un ordine gerarchico, il che non lascia spazio alla classificazione di Porfirio basata sull'opposizione tra azione e passione.

La posta in gioco nel dibattito tra i due filosofi è, allora, la contrapposizione tra questi due modelli classificatori e il problema è di ordine ontologico-teologico. Ammettere, per i generi superiori, movimenti che vengono dall'agente e dal paziente, come fa Porfirio, significa per Giamblico mettere in crisi la trascendenza di questi generi che egli vuole difendere. In tale direzione egli sostiene che a questo livello ontologico esistono un'ἐνέργεια assoluta, scissa da qualunque forma di passione e avulsa da qualsiasi implicazione con il movimento, e un movimento che non si origina dall'agire e dal patire. Date come acquisite nella *Risposta*, queste nozioni sono state già collaudate e dimostrate da Giamblico nel corso di un dibattito a più voci del quale rimane traccia nella sezione del *Commentario alle Categorie* di Simplicio sul ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν.³ Qui lo scarto tra Giamblico e Porfirio si definisce all'interno di una prospettiva d'insieme articolata; Porfirio mette in causa la dottrina di Plotino sull'atto, l'agire e il movimento ma, allo stesso tempo, Giamblico omologa la posizione di Porfirio a quella di Plotino e accusa entrambi di avere aderito a tesi stoiche.

Di questa controversia, mai esaminata nel suo complesso, vorrei dare qui una prima lettura e soffermarmi, in particolare, sui problemi connessi all'esegesi della definizione aristotelica del movimento come *atto imperfetto* (*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 301.20–308.10). Si tratta, per altro, di problemi che hanno costituito nell'ultimo ventennio l'oggetto di una discussione intensa⁴ e stupisce che i recenti

³ Cf. *In Categorias*, frs. 84–98, *Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et philosophe*, B. Dalsgaard Larsen, ed. (Aarhus 1972). Sui temi affrontati da Simplicio in questa sezione del *Commentario* (295.1–334.5), cf. N. Vamvoukakis, "Les Catégories Aristotéliciennes d'Action et de Passion vues par Simplicius" in *Concepts et Catégories dans la Pensée Antique*, P. Aubenque, ed. (Paris 1980) 253–69.

⁴ Mi riferisco, in particolare, alla discussione in lingua inglese alla quale hanno partecipato, tra gli altri, G. Ryle, *Dilemmas* (Cambridge 1954) 102; J.L. Ackrill, "Aristotle's Distinction Between *Energeia* and *Kinesis*" in *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, R. Bambrough, ed. (London 1965, 1979²) 121–41; P.S. Mamo, "Energeia and Kinesis in *Metaphysics* Θ 6," *Apeiron* 4 (1970) 24–34; M.J. White, "Aristotle's Concept of *Theoria* and the *Energeia-Kinesis* Distinction," *Journal of History of Philosophy* 18 (1980) 253–63; R. Polansky, "Energeia in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 9," *Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1983) 160–70; L.A. Kosman, "Substance, Being and *Energeia*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1984) 121–49; D. Charles, "Aristotle's Distinction Between *Energeia* and *Kinesis*: Inference, Explanation and Ontology in Language and Reality" in *Greek Philosophy* (Athens 1985) 173–81; M.A. Stone, "Aristotle's Distinction Between Motion and Activity," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 2 (1985) 11–20. A questi lavori aggiungerei anche M.T. Liske, "Kinesis und *Energeia* bei Aristoteles," *Phronesis* 36 (1991) 161–78 e C. Natali, "Movimenti ed Attività. L'Interpretazione di *Metaphysica* Θ 6," *Elenchos* 12 (1991) 67–89. È, invece, diversa l'impostazione storiografica di altri due importanti studi sul problema: P. Aubenque, *Le Problème de l'Être chez Aristote* (Paris 1962, 1972²) 412–43 e R. Bague, "Note sur la Définition du Mouvement (*Physique* 3.1–3)" in *La Physique d'Aristote et les Conditions d'une Science de la Nature*, F. De Gandt et P. Souffrin, edd. (Paris 1991) 107–12.

studiosi abbiano per lo più ignorato il dibattito riferito da Simplicio nel quale sarebbe forse stato possibile trovare elementi di chiarificazione. Da parte mia, comunque, mi limiterò a leggere Simplicio per mostrare che nel perduto *Commentario alle Categorie*, Giamblico risolve il problema ontologico di *Risposta* 1.4 facendo leva sull'analisi linguistica relativa all'area semantica di ἐνεργεῖν e di κίνησις. Egli determina, infatti, il significato delle nozioni di *atto* (ἐνέργεια), *attualizzazione* o *attualità* (ἐντελέχεια), *in atto* (ἐνεργεία), *azione* (ποίησις) per ridefinire, rispetto ai suoi interlocutori, i rapporti tra atto e movimento, giustificare la diversa accezione che questi termini assumono in rapporto a ciascun livello della gerarchia ontologica e dimostrare l'esistenza di atti ἀπόλυτοι e ἄτρεπτοι e di una κίνησις che non si origina dall'agire e dal patire.

II. Il problema

La questione che Giamblico analizza nel perduto *Commentario alle Categorie* e sulla quale conduce la polemica contro Plotino, Porfirio e gli Stoici, verte sulla relazione tra agire, patire e movimento ed è costruita intorno ad un'alternativa: l'agire e il patire sono, oppure non sono, due specie del movimento?

L'impostazione e la contestualizzazione del problema sono precisate da Simplicio, *In Categorias* 301.20ss. Egli riferisce l'aporia discussa da Giamblico in questi termini:

Se, d'altra parte, anche l'atto è considerato, [per determinare il genere],⁵ più proprio dell'azione per questo motivo, perché indica l'agire secondo movimento, ma non l'agire dopo il movimento, come l'azione, si sarebbe dovuto considerare il movimento un genere a parte nelle categorie; infatti come gli altri [generi] ineriscono alla sostanza, così [inerisce alla sostanza] anche il movimento, nel quale sono anche l'agire e il patire: entrambi infatti sono nel movimento.
(Simplicio, *Commentario alle Categorie* 302.6-10)⁶

Attribuita ad autori che non vengono citati e a Plotino, l'aporia risulta connessa ad un duplice problema, definitorio ed esegetico. Descrivere rigorosamente il movimento e le sue proprietà implica una concezione dell'agire, dell'atto, dell'azione e del patire che, a sua volta, condiziona la definizione stessa del movimento. Le due prospettive, teoricamente indissociabili, sono complementari anche nei testi di Platone e di Aristotele che Plotino e gli altri interlocutori di Giamblico leggono e utilizzano per

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 301.31-33: ἡ δὲποίησις καὶ τὸ ποιεῖν [...] οἰκειότερα [...] τοῦ ποιούντος εἰς γένους ἀφορισμέν.

⁶ Questo, come gli altri passi di Simplicio citati nelle pagine seguenti, sono tradotti qui per la prima volta in lingua moderna. Si tratta di un testo di non facile interpretazione linguistica. La sintassi è spesso contorta, paratattica è vero, ma con molte parti sottintese. Anche l'uso delle congiunzioni si rivela talvolta opinabile non solo per chi è abituato a leggere la lingua classica, ma anche per chi ha consuetudine con altri testi filosofici della tarda antichità. Ma l'ostacolo maggiore è rappresentato dall'uso dei pronomi. Spesso Simplicio sintetizza con un semplice αὐτός interi spezzoni linguistici e chiede al suo lettore il massimo della concentrazione. In altre parole chi non segue il suo percorso mentale si trova sbalzato fuori dai tradizionali binari linguistici. Per tutte queste ragioni ho ritenuto opportuno, in questa prima, certo non definitiva, interpretazione, proporre una lettura quanto più possibile aderente al testo, al costo di potere apparire ingenua nel riportare elementi (ad es. μέν, δέ, οὕτως) superflui in traduzioni più elaborate.

risolvere l'aporia. Si tratta di *Teeteto*, 156a ss., dove Platone suggerisce una possibile divisione della κίνησις in ποιεῖν e πάσχειν, e di *Sofista* 248a ss. dove l'agire e il patire sono considerati due modi del movimento. L'esegesi, latente, di questi passi condiziona la lettura, esplicita, di Aristotele il quale, per definire il movimento, usa le nozioni di atto e di *entelechia*. In *Fisica* 201b31-32, *De Anima* 417a16 e 431a6, *Metafisica* 1048b30 e 1066a20-21, il movimento è "atto imperfetto" (ἀτελὴς ἐνέργεια); in *Fisica* 201a13-15 e 257b8, esso è "ἐντελέχεια di ciò che è in potenza" e "ἐντελέχεια imperfetta del mobile." La discussione si concentra proprio su questi testi e sul significato che, in essi, assumono le espressioni ἀτελὴς ἐνέργεια e ἐντελέχεια. La sezione delle *Categorie* sul ποιεῖν e sul πάσχειν (11b1ss.) costituisce il rovescio di questa definizione del movimento e fornisce gli strumenti per chiarire il significato di agire e patire, ma anche quello delle espressioni *atto, azione, agente, in atto* e quello di *passione e paziente*.

Il rapporto tra queste nozioni costituisce l'antefatto immediato dell'aporia riferita nel *Commentario alle Categorie* 302.6-10, l'avvio del percorso che Simplicio ricostruisce: dal momento che si ammette che dopo la sostanza viene ciò che inerisce ad essa, anzitutto la *quantità* (ποσότης), e consideriamo la *quantità* un genere a sé stante e poi, per le stesse ragioni, si ammette che la *qualità* (ποιότης) è un genere a sé stante, allo stesso modo bisogna considerare anche l'atto (ἐνέργεια) e l'agire (τὸ ποιεῖν) che vengono dopo la sostanza. Ma allora, ciò significa che si deve considerare come genere l'agire (τὸ ποιεῖν), l'agente (τὸ ποιῶν) oppure l'azione (ἡ ποίησις), così come la *qualità* era genere e il *quale* (τὸ ποιόν) che deriva da essa? L'analisi linguistica dei tre termini conduce ad una prima, provvisoria, soluzione. L'agente comprende il soggetto che agisce e forma una nozione composta che unisce sia l'agente che l'atto; l'azione indica sia l'atto che il risultato dell'atto o dell'agente; l'agire significa l'atto *in fieri* (τὴν ἔτι γινομένην ἐνέργειαν). L'azione e l'agire sono, quindi, nozioni più semplici rispetto a quella di agente, essi non comportano nessuna composizione e per questa ragione sono più propri dell'agente per determinare il genere.⁷

Tuttavia, è proprio questa assimilazione tra l'agire e l'atto *in fieri* e il rapporto tra l'azione e la *qualità* e tra l'agire e il *quale* a generare l'aporia di Plotino riferita da Simplicio nel *Commentario alle Categorie* 302.6-10 e posta dallo stesso Plotino in *Enneade* 6.1.15. Quest'ultimo parte da un'argomentazione analoga a quella riferita da Simplicio, probabilmente derivante dalla stessa fonte,⁸ e sviluppa una concatenazione logica che, scandita in quattro passaggi, chiarisce la sintesi di Simplicio.

i. a) Tra *quantità* e *quanto*, *qualità* e *quale*, *azione* e *agire* esiste un'analogia che si regge sul fatto che in ciascuna coppia i primi termini ineriscono alla sostanza e i secondi termini derivano dai primi; b) nelle prime due coppie il secondo termine (cioè *quanto* e *quale*) è un genere distinto; quindi c) anche nel caso della coppia *azione/agire* il genere è l'agire.

⁷ Simplicio, *Commentario alle Categorie* 301.20-302.4.

⁸ É. Bréhier, *Le Philosophie de Plotin* (Paris 1948) ad loc., ritiene che il testo di Plotino sia un *extrait résumé* di un commentatore di Aristotele al quale ha attinto anche Simplicio. L'ipotesi è accolta anche da W. Theiler in *Plotins Schriften* (Hamburg 1967) 4b.445.

ii. Ma Plotino fa pesare su questo argomento una contraddizione: in realtà il genere della *qualità* è sia il *quale* (ad es. il bianco) che la *qualità* (ad es. la bianchezza), dunque non si può concludere che il genere dell'azione è l'agire, come vuole la tesi i.c) e mantenere, allo stesso tempo, l'analogia tra l'azione e la *qualità* e tra l'agire e il *quale*, come vuole la tesi i. a).

iii. Per superare la difficoltà, Plotino spiega che *agire* significa *essere in azione* (ἐν ποιήσει εἶναι), cioè essere *in atto* (ἐνεργεῖα) e costruisce una nuova analogia, tra *qualità* ed *atto*. Entrambi ineriscono alla sostanza e se, in virtù di questa caratteristica, la *qualità* è una categoria, per le stesse ragioni anche l'atto sarà una categoria. Dunque la categoria non è agire, bensì atto.

iv. Un ultimo procedimento di sostituzione porta all'aporia: se l'atto, la *qualità* e la *quantità* sono ciascuna un genere perché ineriscono alla sostanza, per quale ragione il movimento, che inerisce alla sostanza non sarà, anch'esso, un genere a parte?⁹ In *Enneade* 6.1.19.5-12, Plotino risponderà che il movimento è un genere a parte e considererà l'agire la prima classe di movimenti e il patire la seconda.

Su questa impostazione e soluzione del problema Giamblico esprime disappunto:

Ma coloro che dicono queste cose, come Plotino, non adoperano le ipotesi di Aristotele. Egli dice, infatti, che il primo motore e agente è immobile. Perciò anche l'agire da se stesso è separato dal patire e non sono entrambi subordinati a un unico genere, sicché non è necessario ricondurli entrambi ad uno, ma è necessario distinguerne due, come anche Aristotele li ha distinti separatamente.

(apud Simplicio, *In Categorias* 302.10-15)

L'intenzione di Giamblico è evidente. Egli vuole cogliere l'occasione, che l'aporia offre, per approfondire il problema dei rapporti tra movimento, agire e patire al livello dei primi principi. Con tale intenzione presenta la sua analisi delle soluzioni che i predecessori hanno esperito di fronte allo stesso problema. Si tratta di tre risposte diverse. L'una, fornita dagli Stoici e da Plotino, che confonde movimento, atto e azione; l'altra, di Teofrasto, che per un verso separa il movimento dall'atto e, per un altro, lo include nell'atto; e un'altra ancora, di Porfirio, che non considera l'agire e il patire *semplicemente* come specie del movimento. Questa analisi è condotta in vista di un duplice obiettivo. Il primo, manifesto, è mostrare che gli Stoici, Plotino e Porfirio giungono, per vie diverse, ad un esito comune, ed è errato. Ma questa critica è usata anche ad un secondo, più sottile, livello in funzione della teoria dei primi principi, allorché Giamblico vuole difendere la propria immagine del mondo intelligibile rispetto a quella fornita da Plotino e da Porfirio. In questa duplice prospettiva, egli procede prima all'analisi della posizione di Porfirio e, poi, a quella di Plotino e degli Stoici.

III. La controversia. Giamblico contro Plotino, Porfirio e gli Stoici

3.1.1. La risposta di Porfirio. Nel *Commentario alle Categorie per questioni e risposte*, Porfirio sembra ritenere il movimento una quantità accidentale¹⁰ e considerare, di conseguenza, l'agire e il patire due categorie distinte dal movimento.¹¹ Autore di una breve σύνολος sui libri della *Fisica* di Aristotele relativi al movimento, Porfirio è criticato da Temistio per non aver rispettato quegli argomenti con i quali Aristotele dimostra che il movimento è continuo, che si stende in un certo tempo, che non è costituito di movimenti indivisibili e che passa dalla potenza all'*entelechia*, pur mantenendo un aspetto potenziale.¹² Sul movimento come *entelechia*, Porfirio insiste: "il movimento è *entelechia* di ciò che è in potenza in quanto tale,"¹³ "il movimento si dà di ciò che è in potenza, quando qualcosa che è in *entelechia* si attua, o come sé o come altro, in quanto mobile."¹⁴ La nozione di "atto imperfetto" non è esclusa, ma sovrapposta a quella di *entelechia*: "il movimento è per un verso *entelechia* imperfetta, per un altro atto perfetto. Tuttavia, se è atto di ciò che è in potenza, e ciò che è in potenza è imperfetto, in che modo l'atto di ciò che è in potenza potrebbe essere atto perfetto? In generale, infatti, se fosse atto imperfetto, l'atto sarebbe di ciò che è imperfetto."¹⁵

Queste sono le coordinate generali entro le quali, nel perduto *Commentario alle Categorie in Sette Libri*, Porfirio affronta l'aporia formulata da Plotino. Per risolverla egli utilizza, ancora una volta, gli strumenti concettuali forniti dalla *Fisica*, in particolare la definizione specifica dei movimenti per colpo (κατὰ πληγὴν):¹⁶

In alcuni casi sembra che il movimento nell'agire e nel patire sia uno e continuo, come nei movimenti per colpo, cioè nel lancio e nella spinta; quale, infatti, è il movimento di colui che lancia il legno, tale è anche quello di ciò che è lanciato, e quale è la spinta di chi spinge, tale è anche quella di ciò che è

10 Cf. Simplicio, *Commentario alle Categorie* 105.2ss.

11 Cf. *ibid.*, 141.5–142.14; si veda in proposito Ch. Evangeliou, *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry* (Leiden, New York, København e Köln 1988) 158–61 e 171.

12 Cf. Temistio, *In Libros Aristotelis De Anima Commentaria* 16.19–31 = fr. 439, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, A. Smith, ed. (Stuttgartiae e Lipsiae 1993). Sul passo cf. P. Moraux, "Porphyre, Commentateur de la Physique d'Aristote" in *Aristotelica. Mélanges offerts à Marcel De Corte* (Bruxelles e Liège 1985) 227–39 e O. Ballériaux, "Thémistius et le Néoplatonisme. Le ΝΟΥΣ ΠΑΘΗΤΙΚΟΣ et l'Immortalité de l'Âme," *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 12 (1994) 183–85.

13 Simplicio, *In Aristotelis Physica Commentaria* 414.19–20 = fr. 153.7–8 (= F. Romano, *Porfirio e la Fisica Aristotelica. In Appendice la Traduzione dei Frammenti e delle Testimonianze del "Commentario alla Fisica"* [Firenze 1985] fr. 39). Simplicio riferisce che Porfirio ha tratto questa lezione di Aristotele, *Fisica* 3.1.201a10 da alcuni manoscritti che, conosciuti anche da Alessandro di Afrodisia e da Temistio, riferiscono che il movimento è "entelechia," e l'ha adottata per analogia con *Fisica* 201b5 dove lo stesso Aristotele chiama il movimento *entelechia*.

14 Simplicio, *In Aristotelis Physica Commentaria* 422.23–24 = fr. 154.5–7 Smith (= fr. 40 Romano).

15 *Ibid.*, 415.6–10 = fr. 153. 39–44 Smith (= fr. 39 Romano).

16 Cf. Aristotele, *Fisica* 7.2.243a11ss.

spinto, perciò ciascuno dei due [movimenti] è uno e continuo; l'essere, invece, non è lo stesso in relazione a ciò che colpisce e a ciò che è colpito, ma la passione è propria di ciò che viene colpito, l'azione di ciò che colpisce. E dunque l'agire e il patire non appartengono semplicemente ad un solo genere del movimento, ma c'è una differenza.

(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 302.18–25)¹⁷

3.1.2. La controrisposta di Giamblico. Contro questa soluzione del problema Giamblico reagisce. L'obiezione è radicale: "la soluzione è cercata lontano" (νόρρωθεν ἀναγομένη). Porfirio ha, cioè, cercato di risolvere un problema ontologico con una spiegazione di ordine fisico. Questa spiegazione è ulteriormente indebolita da altri fattori: procede da nozioni che non sono né del tutto evidenti né fedeli all'insegnamento di Aristotele¹⁸ e generalizza a tutto il movimento i risultati di un'analisi, parziale, sui movimenti per colpo. Alla debolezza degli strumenti metodologici corrisponde una debolezza degli strumenti concettuali. I capi d'accusa sono quattro: Porfirio ha utilizzato nozioni che erano servite agli Stoici per individuare nel movimento il carattere comune dell'agire e del patire, ha egli stesso subordinato l'azione al movimento, ha considerato mobile l'agente e ha confuso la causa del movimento con il movimento. Insomma, Porfirio ha commesso lo stesso errore degli Stoici, dal quale ha tratto conclusioni meno radicali.

Per ricondurre il problema al proprio ambito, l'ontologia, e mantenere la tesi della distinzione tra agire, patire e movimento, Giamblico intraprende una nuova analisi dei termini azione (ποίησις) e movimento. L'esame di queste due nozioni nel mondo sensibile e nel mondo intelligibile consente di porre le premesse per una prima soluzione del problema:

[...] non se quella data azione è così fatta, lo è già anche tutta l'azione, né si dovrebbe cominciare dalle azioni che vengono per ultime (dico da quelle secondo colpo e spinta), né si dovrebbe dar ragione agli Stoici sui punti in cui noi argomentiamo diversamente da loro, per esempio che l'agente agisce per una qualche certa prossimità e per contatto. È meglio, infatti, dire che non tutto agisce mediante prossimità e contatto,¹⁹ bensì che l'azione avviene secondo l'attitudine dell'agente al paziente,²⁰ e che molte cose operano senza contatto, quelle che tutti sappiamo, e che anche per le cose per le quali noi vediamo gli agenti aver bisogno di una giustapposizione, il contatto avviene per accidente, perché le cose che partecipano della potenza dell'agire o del patire sono nel luogo. Tali, infatti, sono i corpi e le cose che partecipano delle potenze attive o passive; invece per le cose per le quali la distanza dei corpi non impedisce per nulla che l'una agisca, l'altra patisca e riceva l'atto dell'agente, per queste cose l'atto è senza scarto e senza ostacolo, come le corde della lira si congiungono pur

¹⁷ Il passo corrisponde a *In Categorias*, fr. 71 Smith.

¹⁸ Cf. Simplicio, *In Categorias* 302.25–27.

¹⁹ Le linee 28–32 corrispondono a *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, H.F.A. von Arnim (Leipzig 1903–1924) 2.342.

²⁰ L'espressione κατ' ἐμπτηδεότητα τοῦ ποιοῦντος πρὸς τὸ πάσχον ricorre anche in *Risposta* 4.8, pagina 192.2; si veda anche *ibid.*, 5.7, pagina 207.13. Sull'uso di ἐμπτηδεότης in Giamblico, le occorrenze del termine e la bibliografia relativa, mi permetto di rinviare al mio "Le δυνάμεις dell'Anima. Psicologia ed Etica in Giamblico" in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, H.J. Blumenthal e E.G. Clark, edd. (Bristol 1993) 40 e 46, nota 65.

essendo distanti l'una dall'altra e la nafta riceve da lontano la forma del fuoco. Anche molte cose che sono congiunte non agiscono, come l'empastro o qualche altro farmaco dei medici che venga applicato ad una pietra. Se, dunque, anche le cose congiunte spesso non agiscono e le cose non congiunte agiscono, l'azione principalissima non è colpo e spinta, e per le cose nelle quali vediamo uno colpire, neanche per queste il contatto è la causa, ma l'affinità con la potenza dimostra allora anche l'efficacia dell'agire. Se invece qualcuno volesse sostenere che la sostanza dell'agente e del paziente è la medesima, anche il motore sarebbe mosso e il mosso muoverebbe e tutto dappertutto sarebbe sia motore che mosso e tutti gli assiomi relativi al movimento sarebbero annullati, come il fatto che il movimento da qualcosa va anche verso qualcosa e come il fatto che altro è il principio del movimento e altro il movimento come prodotto dal principio. Mentre relativamente a quelle cose le cui cause sono separabili dal movimento, a maggior ragione [gli assiomi relativi al movimento] sarebbero annullati. Dunque non bisogna abbandonare quelle vere opinioni che separano il principio dai generi e distinguono ogni principio secondo la sua natura. Se, infatti, si dovesse anche supporre che il movimento sia una mescolanza prodotta sia dall'atto dell'agente sia dal cambiamento del paziente, questa generazione non sarebbe nelle cose semplici e non mescolate. [Il movimento] essendo una mescolanza sia dell'agente che del paziente sarà escluso a buon diritto dai primi generi come secondo, appunto come anche tutte le altre cose composte. Non bisogna dunque concedere che il movimento contenga le azioni e le passioni e che le unisca le une alle altre secondo una sola continuità, né che sia comune alla sostanza di entrambe o che si divida in esse, e che delle cose che sono in esso [sc. nel movimento] una parte mostri l'azione e l'altra mostri la passione. Infatti secondo tutti questi modi il movimento diventa qualcosa di comune dell'agire e del patire, mentre il movimento è separato dall'agente e dal paziente in quanto sta a metà tra entrambi, procedendo per un verso dall'agente, per un altro verso producendo la passione nel paziente. Dunque come il motore e il mosso sono nella realtà due, così anche l'agente e il paziente sono divisi in due. (apud Simplicio, *In Categorias* 302.28-303.30)²¹

La confutazione ha, qui, un versante positivo. Essa consente a Giamblico di utilizzare alcuni elementi di una prima definizione, in negativo, dell'azione e del movimento per configurare le implicazioni insite nella definizione, in positivo, delle due nozioni.

L'azione non avviene, come sostiene Porfirio, per prossimità o per contatto. Al livello superiore della gerarchia ontologica la nozione stessa di contatto sembra esclusa e sostituita con il suo opposto. Il dato è suggerito dalla forma avverbiale ἀναφῶς che, riferita qui a esseri che si presuppongono noti (pagina 302.33: "[...] molte cose operano senza contatto, quelle che noi tutti sappiamo"), è utilizzata nelle altre opere di Giamblico proprio per caratterizzare l'azione divina: le potenze degli dèi si estendono attraverso tutte le cose e agiscono su tutte, ma *senza contatto*,²² gli dèi disperdono la materia *senza avere contatto* con essa.²³ Al livello inferiore della

²¹ Il testo corrisponde al fr. 85 Dalsgaard Larsen. L'autore include nel frammento anche *In Categorias* 302.18-25, relativo a Porfirio. Tuttavia, mi sembra che allo stato attuale delle ricerche non ci siano elementi sufficienti per stabilire se Simplicio citi Porfirio direttamente, o attraverso Giamblico.

²² Cf. Giamblico, *apud* Proclo, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.156.31ss. = *In Timaeum*, fr. 17.

²³ *Risposta* 5.4, pagina 202.2. Cf. anche *ibid.*, 3.31, pagina 178.2 dove Giamblico afferma che i teurgi non hanno contatto con vanità, lusinga, violenza.

gerarchia, invece, il contatto, determinato dall'esistenza nel luogo dei corpi e di ciò che partecipa delle potenze attive o passive, è solo una causa accidentale dell'azione. La prospettiva porfiriana che considera l'azione un fenomeno fisico è, dunque, inadeguata e ad essa Giamblico sostituisce una nuova delimitazione, stabilita a partire dalla condizione che l'azione presuppone e che risiede nell'attitudine dell'agente al paziente.

Lo stesso schema esplicativo è applicato alla definizione di movimento. Assimilare, con Porfirio, la sostanza dell'agente (= ciò che colpisce) e quella del paziente (= ciò che è colpito) comporta una triplice identificazione. L'identificazione tra l'azione e la passione dell'agente, l'identificazione tra il motore e il mosso, l'identificazione tra il principio, o la causa, del movimento e ciò che è prodotto dal principio. Di contro, Giamblico distingue per un verso il motore e il mosso e, per un altro verso, il ποιοῦν (= cause del movimento), la ποίησις (= ciò che deriva dal ποιοῦν e produce la passione del paziente), il πάσχον e la passione del πάσχον. Sulla base di questa precisazione semantica, il movimento è escluso dall'intelligibile e costituisce una dimensione fondamentale del mondo sensibile. Esso è medio tra il ποιοῦν e il πάσχον, il mezzo attraverso il quale si manifesta l'essenza del ποιοῦν e la τροπή del πάσχον. È un σύμμεκτον, e quindi non può figurare tra i generi primi. Su questo punto Giamblico insiste anche in altre opere: la κίνησις, in quanto genere dell'essere, è esclusa dall'intelligibile ed è prodotta verso il più basso grado dell'ordine intellettuale, ovvero al limite inferiore degli intelligibili²⁴ o nel demiurgo.²⁵

Questi sono i punti fermi che Giamblico ha stabilito e sulla base di essi affronta in modo diretto la soluzione che Plotino stesso ha dato dell'aporia.

3.2.1. La risposta di Plotino. In *Enneade* 6.1.15, Plotino pone l'aporia sul movimento: il movimento è un genere degli esseri? La risposta, come si è accennato, è positiva. Il movimento è il genere al quale si subordinano l'agire e il patire. Plotino perviene a questo risultato attraverso due argomenti.²⁶ Il primo consiste nell'assimilare atto e movimento ed è esposto in *Enneade* 6.1.16. Alla definizione aristotelica del movimento come atto imperfetto, Plotino contrappone la teoria secondo la quale il movimento è un atto perfetto e atemporale. La dimostrazione è condotta utilizzando l'esempio del cammino (βάδις) che Plotino trova, probabilmente, in Aristotele²⁷ ma che stravolge. Laddove Aristotele considera il movimento da un luogo ad un altro, dall'inizio alla fine del percorso, Plotino lo considera indipendentemente dal suo risultato e, in tale prospettiva, ritiene che "[. . .]

²⁴ Apud Proclo, *Théologie Platonicienne*, H.D. Saffrey e L.G. Westerink, ed., vol. 5.30 (Paris 1987) 112.16-17.

²⁵ Cf. Giamblico apud Damascio, *Dubitaciones et Solutiones* 2.149.25 = *In Parmenidem*, fr. 6a.1.

²⁶ Mi limito a riferire la struttura e le tesi principali dell'argomentazione plotiniana. Per una più approfondita trattazione del problema cf. Evangelidou (supra, nota 11) 118-24.

²⁷ P. Henry e H.R. Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera* (Oxford 1964-1982) ad loc., rinviando ad Aristotele, *Metafisica* 1048b29ss. L'intreccio dei testi che Plotino legge è, comunque, assai complicato e non è del tutto certo che egli conoscesse questo passo della *Metafisica*, tanto più che l'esempio ricorre anche in *Etica Nicomachea* 1174a30ss.

il cammino è cammino sin dal suo inizio" (... βάδις ἐξ ἀρχῆς βάδις ἦν); esso ha già avuto, di per sé, una certa estensione. Se bisogna percorrere uno stadio e non lo si è ancora percorso tutto, ciò che difetta non è il cammino e neanche il movimento, ma la quantità del cammino che si deve compiere. *Ciò che si sta muovendo* (ὁ κινούμενος) implica il *si è già mosso* (ἤδη κέκινηται). Sulla base di queste premesse, in *Enneade* 6.1.22.3ss., Plotino definisce in breve il movimento come il progresso dalla potenza a ciò che è detta essere la potenza.

Questa prima assimilazione tra movimento ed atto, fornisce la premessa in base alla quale Plotino analizza l'opinione di coloro che considerano l'atto un relativo e l'agire una categoria e sviluppa il secondo argomento che porta alla dimostrazione della sua tesi. Si tratta di un'argomento per analogia. Il movimento, come l'atto, è un relativo e l'essere mosso, come l'agire, è una categoria. Ma l'agire e il patire sono due modi dell'essere mosso e, di conseguenza, non costituiscono due categorie distinte. Essi designano, piuttosto, due classi di movimenti.

3.2.2. La controrisposta di Giamblico. Il primo nodo problematico della tesi plotiniana che Giamblico affronta è l'assimilazione di movimento ed atto. Essa costituisce, come si è visto, il fondamento su cui si regge tutta la sequenza argomentativa che Plotino costruisce sicché, quando Giamblico interviene su questa assimilazione per rescinderla, spezza anche tutta quanta la sequenza e interviene sulle conseguenze che essa comporta.

Questa strategia è conseguita per stadi successivi e attraverso l'effetto incrociato di metodi confutatori differenziati. Gli strumenti di cui Giamblico si avvale in una prima fase della critica sono logici e vengono supportati dal ricorso all'autorità di Aristotele. I sei enunciati che egli riferisce differenziano il movimento e l'atto e mostrano che l'esegesi plotiniana di *Metafisica* 1048b29ss. è non-aristotelica. Simplicio riferisce di seguito la tesi di Plotino e la critica di Giamblico:

Il grande Plotino, invece, dice che Aristotele rifiuta di considerare il movimento come un genere per il fatto che il movimento è detto atto imperfetto. "Se è così dice, niente impedirebbe di porre in primo luogo l'atto, e di subordinare il movimento, in quanto una specie dell'atto, essendo atto imperfetto."²⁸ Contro queste cose Giamblico oppone: "cominciamo, dice, col considerare se il movimento viene detto atto imperfetto in quanto soggiacente nella stessa natura o piuttosto in quanto collocato in una natura del tutto inferiore. E, infatti, se è detto imperfetto in quanto soggiacente nella stessa natura, niente impedisce di porre in primo luogo l'atto come genere, e di subordinare il movimento come specie; se invece è collocato in un altro genere, l'atto non può essere genere del movimento. (1) Se dunque il movimento tende verso il fine in quanto generato a cause di esso e non avendolo ancora in sé, mentre l'atto sta fermo secondo il fine, essendo pieno di se stesso e della propria perfezione, allora ciò che è assolutamente perfetto non avrebbe alcuna comunione di natura con ciò che si spinge verso la perfezione. (2) E se l'atto ha in sé la forma compiuta, mentre il movimento va verso la forma, avendola solo in potenza e secondo un'attitudine materiale e priva di forma, risulterebbe allora chiaro che le cose stanno così come si è detto. (3) E ancora, se mai il movimento è considerato nello scorrere ed essendo divisibile in continuità verso

28 Cf. Plotino, *Enneade* 6.1.16.1-4: Εἰ δέ τις λέγοι τὴν κίνησιν ἀτελῆ ἐνέργειαν εἶναι, οὐδὲν ἐκώλυε τὴν μὲν ἐνέργειαν προτάττειν, εἶδος δὲ τὴν κίνησιν ὡς ἀτελῆ οὖσαν ὑποβάλλειν, κατηγοροῦντά γε αὐτῆς τὴν ἐνέργειαν, προστιθέντα δὲ τὸ ἀτελές.

sempre continuo [movimento] all'infinito, mentre l'atto esistesse secondo un solo limite, avendo l'essere da se stesso e al tempo stesso riunendo tutto l'uno secondo se stesso, neppure così l'atto sarebbe genere del movimento. (4) E se il movimento è diviso e infinito e indeterminato, mentre l'atto è indivisibile e finito e piace all'identità,²⁹ in che modo l'uno sarebbe genere dell'altro? (5) Se invece anche il movimento ha l'ipostasi mescolata con il contrario, e dal contrario passa sempre verso il contrario, come nel caso in cui dal bianco si genera il nero (infatti il movimento dall'uno verso l'altro non è né l'uno né l'altro degli estremi, ma mescolanza dei due), mentre l'atto essendo del tutto non mescolato e stando fermo secondo uno dei contrari esistesse senza ammettere nulla della natura contraria, in che modo l'atto potrebbe essere genere del movimento? (6) Anche se si dicesse che il movimento si estende parallelo al tempo in quanto si può estendere, mentre l'atto si estende all'eternità esistendo inesteso e essendo presente identico tutt'intero nell'adesso, nemmeno così ci sarebbe una qualche natura omogenea delle cose eterne e delle cose nel tempo, ancor più se l'atto preesiste immoto contenendo contemporaneamente in un'unica immobilità il principio e la fine del movimento, mentre il movimento è suddiviso nello scorrere che va avanti secondo il numero.

(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 303.32–304.28)

Questa prima distinzione tra movimento ed atto costituisce le coordinate entro le quali Giamblico affronta un secondo nodo problematico insito nella tesi plotiniana: l'assimilazione tra l'essere in movimento e l'essere in atto, parallela e complementare all'assimilazione tra il movimento secondo l'essere mosso e l'atto. Il problema è, ancora una volta, di ordine ontologico e per risolverlo Giamblico muove dall'analisi linguistica dei termini *atto* e *in atto* e la usa come ulteriore metodo di confutazione contro Plotino. Il richiamo all'autorità di Teofrasto sostiene la validità generale dell'operazione:

Ma, dice Giamblico, Plotino sembra non essere d'accordo con le più pure dottrine dell'atto, ed orientarsi verso la nozione secondo la quale alcuni³⁰ definiscono l'essere in atto secondo l'essere in movimento e identificano il movimento secondo l'essere mosso e l'atto, la qual cosa è lontana dall'essere vera. E, ancora, si dovrebbe dar credito a Teofrasto. Infatti egli ritiene che il movimento, da una parte, è separato dall'atto e che il movimento, dall'altra parte, è anche atto in quanto incluso in quest'ultimo, ma l'atto non è anche movimento: infatti è la sostanza e la forma propria di ogni cosa che è l'atto di ogni cosa, senza che questo sia movimento. E infatti la perfezione non viene limitata ad essere presente anche nelle cose intelligibili e in quelle che sono immote per natura; ed anche tra le cose sensibili ci sono molte cose come queste, ad esempio la perfezione rispetto alla figura della statua: infatti la figura sta ferma rispetto a quella stessa perfezione.

(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 304.28–305.4)³¹

Giamblico sembra muoversi qui fuori dalla logica formale, che renderebbe tra loro incompatibili i tre enunciati attribuiti a Teofrasto, e adottare una chiave di lettura

²⁹ Cf. Giamblico, *apud* Proclo, *In Platonis Timaeum Commenatrii* 1.440.16ss. = *In Timaeum*, fr. 46.

³⁰ Probabilmente si tratta degli Stoici.

³¹ Le linee 304.32–305.4 corrispondono al fr. 152 in *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence*, W.W. Fortenbaugh e al., edd., vol. 2 (Leiden, New York e Köln 1992).

ontologica che, basata sulla distinzione tra l'intelligibile e il sensibile e sulle caratteristiche di ciascun livello della gerarchia degli esseri, tende a determinare i diversi significati che uno stesso termine assume in relazione a ciascuno di questi livelli. In questa prospettiva gli enunciati di Teofrasto sono tra loro compatibili e forniscono a Giamblico la sintesi autorevole di una teoria sul movimento da contrapporre a quella di Plotino.

Il primo enunciato di Teofrasto dice che il movimento è separato (χωρίζεσθαι) dall'atto. Giamblico lo riprende ma, invertendone i termini, introduce un trattamento teologizzante della nozione di atto: l'atto è astratto (ἐξηρημένον), o separabile (χωριστόν), dal movimento.³² Questo atto che non è movimento è un atto che esclude qualsiasi connessione con la potenza, un atto, quindi, che non è neppure, a rigore, in atto. Esso è atto puro. La dimostrazione, condotta sul terreno linguistico, sembra diretta in primo luogo contro la teoria dei primi principi di Plotino che ha sovrapposto all'opposizione tradizionale dell'essere in potenza e dell'essere in atto l'opposizione, nello stesso essere in atto, della potenza e dell'atto. Per Plotino l'essere intelligibile è in atto, ma è anche atto, grazie ad una potenza produttrice che esso possiede da se stesso. In questa prospettiva l'atto, come ha osservato Narbonne, è ciò che è opposto, nell'ambito stesso dell'attualità, alla potenza produttrice dell'atto.³³ Di contro, Giamblico ammette solo l'opposizione dell'essere in potenza e dell'essere in atto: ciò che è in atto si contrappone a ciò che è in potenza e la perfezione, essendo di ciò che è imperfetto, contiene una relazione con il contrario. L'atto, invece, è assoluto rispetto a se stesso, non è detto rispetto a nessun contrario e dà la perfezione a ciò che è in atto.³⁴ Esso è astratto dal movimento e, dunque, anche dal tempo. "[...] infatti ciò che nel tempo è il *nunc*, ciò significa concepire l'atto nel movimento" dice Giamblico contro coloro i quali *non si rammentano* in che senso le intellezioni sono dette atti e adducono l'indivisibilità della loro conoscenza e contemporaneamente e nel presente e nel passato insieme.³⁵

Il secondo e il terzo enunciato di Teofrasto dicono che il movimento è anche atto, in quanto incluso in esso, ma l'atto non è anche movimento. Le due citazioni aprono lo spazio a una concezione della dualità di atto e movimento in grado di rendere conto della tensione tra i due termini. Essi forniscono, cioè, un criterio dinamico di questa dualità che Giamblico sfrutta per stabilire una serie di distinzioni a proposito degli atti che procedono dall'atto puro. Quest'ultimo è al di fuori di un movimento (κινήσεως ἐκτός), gli altri, invece, "sono considerati non senza movimento" (οὐκ ἄνευ κινήσεως θεωροῦνται). Gli esempi addotti sono tratti, come in Plotino,³⁶ dalla psicologia e riguardano l'intellezione,³⁷ l'immaginazione e la

³² Apud Simplicio, *In Categorias* 305.9.

³³ Cf. l'interpretazione di J.M. Narbonne, *La Métaphysique de Plotin* (Paris 1994) 31, su *Enneade* 2.5.1.28-29; 2.31-33; 3.30.

³⁴ Apud Simplicio, *In Categorias* 305.4-14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.16-19.

³⁶ Cf. *Enneade* 6.1.18.8-12; 15-22; 19.43ss.

³⁷ Giamblico chiarisce e approfondisce i problemi connessi all'intellezione e al pensare, ai quali qui accenna, apud Simplicio, *In Categorias* 314.10ss.

sensazione: "[...] ad esempio diciamo che l'immaginazione e la sensazione secondo la passione sono movimenti, secondo la forma sono atto, e così alcuni atti li diciamo inseparabili dai movimenti (*ἀχωρίστους τῶν κινήσεων*), altri li diciamo separabili (*χωριστάς*) [...]"³⁸ Separabile/inseparabile coesistono, a questo livello del reale, sotto rapporti differenti. Giamblico spiega, infatti, che gli atti sono inseparabili dai movimenti in quanto conducono alla perfezione dei movimenti, precedono i movimenti e li portano verso l'atto, ma essi sono separabili dai movimenti perché sono di natura semplice e perfettamente immoti. Al livello, inferiore, delle realtà materiali, l'assimilazione di atto e movimento è ammessa e Giamblico parla di atti indivisibili e in massa, e di atti che consistono nel divenire e che sono atti di generazione, "i quali—aggiunge—anche sono chiamati movimenti."³⁹

Al modello a due termini, atto e movimento, Giamblico ha dunque sostituito un modello più complesso, che si articola intorno a un terzo termine, l'ordine gerarchico delle sostanze:

[...] Né, infatti, vi sarebbe un unico genere delle cose indivisibili e divisibili, né di quelle che sono nell'essere e di quelle che sono nel divenire, né lo stesso atto potrebbe essere indivisibile ed estendersi alle cose divisibili e tutte le parti contemporaneamente potrebbero esistere in ciò che è in divenire. Tutto ciò, infatti, distrugge la natura degli enti e non conserva l'essenza dell'atto.

(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 305.32–306.2)

La distinzione tra *atto* e *movimento*, e tra *atto* e *in atto* in rapporto ai diversi livelli ontologici offre a Giamblico i punti d'appoggio sui quali far leva per riportare la discussione al problema di partenza—l'agire e il patire sono generi del movimento?—e mettere alla prova la validità intrinseca della tesi plotiniana. L'esame delle conseguenze che questa tesi comporta conduce ad una nuova distinzione semantica tra *atto* e *azione* che colpisce la sinonimia tra *essere in atto* (*ἐνεργεῖα*) e *agire, esercitare un'attività* (*ἐν ποιήσει εἶναι*), sostenuta da Plotino in *Enneade* 6.1.15.9–10:

D'altra parte—dice Giamblico—è anche evidente che fare del movimento il genere comune delle azioni e delle passioni è contrario all'opinione di Aristotele sia a quella esposta altrove sia a quella esposta ora nella divisione delle categorie: l'agire e il patire non sarebbero più, infatti, due generi, ma il movimento sarebbe unico prima di loro. All'essere mosso in generale estendono le cose pazienti e agenti considerate secondo un movimento, ad esempio il passeggiare, e considerate secondo la relazione, ad esempio essere circondato, lo stare seduto: queste cose, infatti, sono miste di passioni e di atto, non dell'atto in senso proprio, ma di quello mescolato alla passione. Ma anche il dire l'atto a proposito delle sole azioni è detto senza esame sufficiente: né, infatti, ogni atto è azione, e certamente non l'intellezione, né ogni azione è atto; infatti alcune sono anche azioni passive.

(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 306.2–306.12)

Il primo ordine di problemi che Giamblico individua nella soluzione plotiniana dell'aporia è in parte risolto. All'assimilazione plotiniana tra movimento ed atto, che comporta la trasposizione di concetti fisici al livello intelligibile, l'attribuire la stessa

38 *Ibid.*, 305.21–23.

39 *Ibid.*, 305.30–31.

natura alle cause e a ciò che le cause realizzano, il non mantenere immobile la causa del movimento e l'aver abolito la nozione di atto puro, Giamblico ha contrapposto un modello teorico che permette di differenziare movimento ed atto e di spiegare i rapporti reciproci tra i due, ancorando tali rapporti alla gerarchia delle sostanze. Ma questa teoria non è dimostrata compiutamente se non viene risolto un altro problema che Plotino e gli Stoici hanno posto allorché hanno applicato il concetto di ἀτελής all'ἐνέργεια. In questa prospettiva, Giamblico discute la definizione che gli Stoici, e anche Plotino, danno del movimento.

3.3.1. La risposta degli Stoici. L'elemento qualificante della dottrina stoica del movimento consiste nell'aver considerato il movimento impresso o subito come carattere comune dell'agire e del patire.⁴⁰ Il movimento è atto⁴¹ e la passione è movimento.⁴² Sono questi i tratti teorici in base ai quali Giamblico ha accostato Stoici e Plotino, e ora conferma questa interpretazione sul terreno dell'esegesi. Il passo di Aristotele è, ancora una volta, la definizione di movimento come atto imperfetto; il problema è chiarire in che senso il movimento è atto:

E gli Stoici, dice Giamblico, non afferrano bene il movimento quando dicono che il movimento si considera imperfetto non perché non è atto, infatti essi dicono che è del tutto atto, ma perché ricomincia di nuovo a ciascun istante, non per mettere capo a un atto (infatti è già atto), ma per attuare in qualche modo l'altro, che è dopo di esso.⁴³ Questo affermano gli Stoici.

(*apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 307.1-6)

Plotino non è citato, tuttavia in *Enneade* 6.1.16.4-8 egli riferisce, sotto la formula generica λέγεται, la stessa dottrina. Il parallelismo con il testo di Giamblico è evidente:

Plotino, *Enneade* 6.1.16.4-8

τὸ γὰρ ἀτελὲς λέγεται περὶ αὐτῆς [scil. κινήσεως], οὐχ ὅτι οὐδὲ ἐνέργεια, ἀλλὰ ἐνέργεια μὲν πάντως, ἔχει δὲ καὶ τὸ πάλιν καὶ πάλιν, οὐχ ἵνα ἀφίκηται εἰς ἐνέργειαν—ἔστι γὰρ ἡδη—ἀλλ' ἵνα ἐργάσῃται τι, ὃ ἕτερόν ἐστι μετ' αὐτήν.

Giamblico, *apud* Simplicio, *In Categorias* 307.1-5

Καὶ τῆς κινήσεως [...] οὐ καλῶς οἱ Στωικοὶ ἀντιλαμβάνονται λέγοντες τὸ ἀτελὲς ἐπὶ τῆς κινήσεως εἰρῆσθαι οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνέργεια· ἔστιν γὰρ πάντως, φασίν, ἀλλ' ἔχει τὸ πάλιν καὶ πάλιν, οὐχ ἵνα ἀφίκηται εἰς ἐνέργειαν (ἔστι γὰρ ἡδη), ἀλλ' ἵνα ἐργάσῃται που ἕτερον, ὃ ἐστι μετ' αὐτήν.

40 Cf. (supra, nota 19) 2.497 = Simplicio, *In Categorias* 306.14-15.

41 *Ibid.* = Simplicio, *In Categorias* 306.16.

42 Cf. (supra, nota 19) 1.205; 3.412. Sul rapporto tra movimento e passione si veda lo studio, fondamentale, di A.M. Ioppolo, "L'ὁρμή πλεονάζουσα nella Dottrina Stoica della Passione," *Elenchos* 16 (1995) 23-55.

43 Il passo corrisponde a (supra, nota 19) 2.498.

Il problema, qui, non è tanto di stabilire se Giamblico ha attinto da Plotino, o se entrambi dipendano da una fonte comune; è, piuttosto, l'uso che Plotino fa della dottrina che Giamblico attribuisce agli Stoici. In *Enneade* 6.1.16.8ss., infatti, Plotino per interpretare l'esempio aristotelico del *cammino* assume proprio questa dottrina e la porta alle sue estreme conseguenze. Se bisogna percorrere uno stadio, e non lo si è ancora percorso tutto, ciò che difetta non è il cammino e neanche il movimento, ma la quantità del cammino che si deve compiere. Di per sé il cammino ha già avuto una certa estensione, e il movimento pure. Giamblico ha così dimostrato la paternità stoica della dottrina plotiniana.

3.3.2. La controrisposta di Giamblico. Questo accostamento circoscritto tra Plotino e gli Stoici introduce un secondo ordine di problemi che Giamblico individua nell'indagine dei suoi avversari. Nel momento in cui essi interpretano la definizione di movimento come "atto imperfetto," applicando il concetto di ἀτελής all'ἐνέργεια, considerano anche che ciò che è in atto si accresce ad ogni istante. Essi snaturano, di conseguenza, la nozione di atto. Ma in questa concezione è in gioco anche la prospettiva teleologica del problema: il movimento, considerato nell'istante, e completamente definito in ciascun istante, è infatti svincolato da una considerazione qualitativa sulla totalità del movimento e sulla sua causa finale. Le obiezioni di Giamblico sono riferite da Simplicio in questi termini:

In che modo, dice Giamblico, è possibile dire imperfetto l'atto, che è il più perfetto di tutti? In che modo essendo nell'agire si accresce di nuovo a ciascun istante, come le cose che procedono secondo il numero? In generale il movimento è detto imperfetto dagli antichi non per contraddistinguerlo dall'atto, infatti non potrebbe essere detto atto, bensì "entelechia imperfetta," perché c'è da una parte l'*entelechia* che è la continuità della perfezione secondo la forma, dall'altra una che conduce da ciò che è mobile in potenza verso la forma, ed essendo movimento è detta *entelechia* imperfetta per contraddistinguerla dall'*entelechia* perfetta, così come il movimento di incisione e di forgiatura della statua è movimento e *entelechia* imperfetta, la forma di questa e la stessa statua sono *entelechia* perfetta. E perciò Aristotele ha definito il movimento *entelechia* del mobile in quanto mobile, cioè *entelechia* che permane sempre nell'imperfetto, quella che è separata dall'atto. Né poi ogni movimento è imperfetto, ma se lo è, è quello che ha inizio e limite; perciò quello del cielo in nessun modo è imperfetto, esistendo sempre nel fine. Turba il presente discorso il fatto che ciò che è in atto si mescola con l'atto: infatti ciò che passa da ciò che è in potenza a ciò che era in potenza, questo è detto in atto, sia forma sia passione sia riposo (infatti il bronzo passando da ciò che è in potenza verso ciò che è in atto e divenuto statua giunge a forma compiuta, ciò che è riscaldabile allorché sia riscaldato è avanzato sino [a giungere] alla passione, e ciò che è in atto diventa riposo del movimento, quando ha compiuto tutto il ciclo sino alla medesima), ma ciò che è in atto differisce dall'atto, in quanto ciò che è in atto esiste rispetto a ciò che è in potenza, mentre l'atto è per se stesso.

(apud Simplicio, in *Categorias* 307,6-27)

Nel corso della controrisposta, Giamblico ha cambiato i termini del problema. Alla domanda dei suoi interlocutori—in che senso il movimento è *atto imperfetto*?—ha sostituito un nuovo interrogativo: in che senso il movimento è *entelechia imperfetta*? Per rispondere egli lavora alla precisazione semantica dell'espressione *entelechia* e presuppone, ancora una volta, una distinzione ontologica. L'*entelechia* è perfetta e imperfetta. L'una indica l'attualità, il risultato di un processo. L'altra, l'*entelechia* imperfetta, assume un senso dinamico e designa l'attualizzazione, cioè il processo

verso un risultato determinato. Questa spiegazione è, però, insufficiente. Giamblico rischierebbe, infatti, di cadere in una tautologia e di definire il movimento come il movimento attraverso il quale una certa cosa, ad esempio la statua, si attualizza se non rispondesse ad un altro interrogativo: di cosa il movimento è *entelechia*? La risposta che fornisce è quella che trova confezionata in Aristotele: il movimento è *entelechia* del mobile in quanto mobile. Ad essa aggiunge una precisazione. Si tratta dell'*entelechia* che permane sempre nelle cose imperfette e che è separata dall'atto. L'argomentazione si chiude con la critica a Plotino:

Tu non stai considerando l'opera del movimento in quanto mobile né la stai congiungendo con la potenza, poiché non è affatto intero in quanto mobile; né dunque stai considerando l'*entelechia* come del mobile.

(apud Simplicio, *In Categorias* 308.1-3)

Giamblico, limitandosi dapprima ad una serie di distinzioni preliminari e approfondendo poi i singoli elementi concettuali e le implicazioni sottese nella teoria dei suoi avversari, ha condotto ad uno scacco il pensiero di coloro che confondono movimento, atto e azione. Ma allo stesso tempo, attraverso questa lunga confutazione, ha anche elaborato una nuova teoria del movimento e dell'atto.

IV. Conclusione

In questa direzione, la soluzione dell'aporia costituisce anche il punto d'avvio per l'elaborazione di una teoria che consente a Giamblico di differenziare il movimento, l'agire e il patire. La critica, infatti, ha fornito innanzitutto i materiali per definire le nozioni di *in atto*, *azione*, *entelechia*; e per riservare a ciascuna di queste espressioni un uso specifico:

1.1. L'*in atto* si correla all'*in potenza*. Esso è la trasformazione da ciò che, in potenza, può raggiungere la forma compiuta. Tuttavia, è la privazione di un movimento anteriore che presuppone e in tal senso è *riposo*.

1.2. L'*azione* avviene secondo l'attitudine dell'agente al paziente e, quindi, essa può anche essere un'azione passiva. Sulla base di questo criterio l'*azione* si differenzia dall'*atto*: non ogni *atto* è *azione*, né ogni *azione* è *atto*.

1.3.1 L'*entelechia imperfetta* è l'attualizzazione, nel senso che essa è il movimento che conduce da ciò che è mobile in potenza verso la forma, cioè il processo verso un risultato. Permane sempre nelle cose imperfette.

1.3.2. L'*entelechia perfetta* è l'attualità, nel senso che essa è la continuità della perfezione secondo la forma. Nella statua, ad esempio, essa è la forma della statua e la statua stessa.

Queste precisazioni semantiche, frutto di una distinzione ontologica, sono riutilizzate per fissare la definizione di *atto* e quella di *movimento* e per differenziare le due nozioni:

2. La differenza tra movimento ed atto. Il movimento tende verso un fine, va verso la forma completa, è continuo e divisibile all'infinito, illimitato e indefinito, va da un contrario all'altro. Progredisce. L'atto ha le caratteristiche opposte. È immobile nel proprio fine, possiede in se stesso la forma completa, è stabile e chiuso nei propri limiti; indivisibile, limitato e identico a sé. È immobilità. Il movimento è, dunque, un genere irriducibilmente opposto all'atto ed è, rispetto all'atto, di natura inferiore.

3. Lo statuto dell'atto:

3.1 L'atto è separato dal movimento, mentre il movimento è anche atto perché è incluso in esso.

3.2 La gerarchia di atti ha al proprio vertice l'atto puro che, scisso da ogni forma di movimento, esclude qualsiasi connessione con la potenza. Da esso procedono altri atti separabili dai movimenti. A questo secondo livello si pongono sia atti separabili veri e propri, che sono di natura semplice e perfettamente immoti, sia atti inseparabili dai movimenti, che conducono alla perfezione dei movimenti e portano i movimenti verso l'atto.

4. Lo statuto del movimento:

4.1 Il movimento è, secondo la definizione di Aristotele, *Fisica* 257b8, "entelechia del mobile in quanto mobile," cioè un'entelechia incompiuta, in corso di compiersi, perché è inferiore all'atto.

4.2 La gerarchia di movimenti che presuppone un primo motore e agente immobile. Escluso dall'intelligibile, il movimento del cielo è perfetto e ad esso seguono i movimenti imperfetti, che hanno inizio e fine.

Giamblico ha così rescisso il nesso tra movimento ed atto ed ha definito ciascuna delle due nozioni in rapporto all'ordine gerarchico della sostanza. Ha, cioè, applicato il principio teorizzato anche in *Risposta* 13.15ss. secondo il quale le essenze generano gli atti e "procurano la distinzione ai movimenti, agli atti, agli accidenti." Secondo lo stesso principio non bisogna riferire al movimento la causa dell'ordine dei generi. Ma, poiché i generi non esistono che relativamente alla sostanza, perché questa ha l'essere per se stessa, mentre essi non esistono che relativamente ad essa e concorrono, nella loro relazione con essa, a formare una serie coordinata e una, deduciamo—dice Giamblico—l'ordine dei generi dal posto di ciascuno di essi in rapporto alla sostanza.⁴⁴

Gli stessi presupposti sono utilizzati per indebolire anche il rapporto tra agire e patire. Per compiere questo passo ulteriore, Giamblico recupera inoltre la dottrina di Archita⁴⁵ la rielabora e mostra la differenza tra le categorie dell'agire e del patire, le attività che sono subordinate a ciascuna di esse e quelle che nascono da una interazione tra le due. Su questo nuovo terreno, Giamblico continua la critica a Plotino.⁴⁶ A questi oppone una *divisione più tecnica* delle proprietà dell'agire e del patire, impostata ancora una volta sulla base di una differenziazione gerarchica. Nella sostanza intelligibile l'agire e il patire sono *semplici*, ciascuno di essi ha la causa "in maniera propria e in primo luogo a partire da sé e interamente da sé, e l'ha soltanto in sé e la spinge verso tutte le cose in maniera perfetta in sé."⁴⁷ Solo negli esseri

⁴⁴ Apud Simplicio, In *Categorias* 341.13–17.

⁴⁵ Non si tratta, come è noto, di Archita di Taranto (IV sec. a.C.), ma di uno pseudografo vissuto, secondo P. Moraux (*Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, vol. 2 [Berlin 1984] 608) nel II sec. d.C. e autore di uno scritto sulle *Categorie* che Giamblico riteneva autentico. Si vedano in proposito: T.A. Szlezák, *Pseudo-Archytas über die Kategorien* (Berlin e New York 1972) e I. Hadot in *Simplicius. Commentaire sur les Catégories*, traduction commentée sous la direction de I. Hadot, fasc. 1 (Leiden, New York, København e Köln 1990) 5–7.

⁴⁶ Cf. frs. 89–98.

⁴⁷ Apud Simplicio, In *Categorias* 315.20–22.

composti l'agire e il patire sono in correlazione.

Giamblico ha ristrutturato il rapporto tra movimento ed atto, e tra movimento agire e patire, ma la partita contro Porfirio e Plotino non è ancora chiusa. Nel momento in cui egli, rispetto a costoro, mira ad affermare la propria organizzazione del mondo divino riutilizza questi argomenti. Questa strategia complessiva emerge anche in *Risposta* 1.4 dove Giamblico riprende sinteticamente e presuppone i temi dibattuti e dimostrati nel *Commentario alle Categorie*. Innanzitutto il principio d'attività secondo il quale si risale dalle sostanze agli atti, ai movimenti, agli accidenti. In secondo luogo la nozione di atto puro, scisso da qualunque relazione con la potenza e avulso da qualsiasi implicazione con il movimento, e la nozione di agire semplice. Infine la teoria del movimento e della gerarchia dei movimenti che porta, anche in altre opere, a considerare l'intelletto κίνησις ἀκίνητος e l'anima κίνησις αὐτοκίνητος⁴⁸ e a negare drasticamente che si possano attribuire ai generi superiori movimenti attivi e passivi. Nel corso della *Risposta* il problema emerge più volte. Nel 1 libro, ai capitoli 10–14 egli afferma, contro Porfirio, che gli dèi non sono soggetti al patire in alcun modo, né nel senso di una controdistinzione rispetto a ciò che è soggetto al patire, né nel senso che essi, naturalmente soggetti al patire, ne siano liberati.⁴⁹ Gli esseri che sono assolutamente superiori—Giamblico insiste—non sono capaci di agire gli uni sugli altri o di ricevere alcunché gli uni dagli altri.⁵⁰

Il primo round della controversia si conclude su questi temi, ma il problema dei rapporti tra movimento, agire e patire si ripresenterà tra i neoplatonici con altri protagonisti. Damascio scarcerà l'equivalenza tra "essere in movimento" e "agire" e l'identificazione di potenza e movimento e criticherà Siriano e Proclo⁵¹ che, proprio identificando atto e movimento, avevano negato la presenza dell'atto nell'Uno.⁵²

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48 Cf. Giamblico, *apud* Proclo, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 2.250.21ss. = *In Timaeum*, fr. 55.

49 Per un'analisi di questa sezione rinvio a H.D. Saffrey, *Plan des livres I et II du "De mysteriis" de Jamblique in Zetesis* (Antwerpen e Utrecht 1973) 289 (adesso in H.D. Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* [Paris 1990] 117). Proclo, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.156.31ss. (= Giamblico, *In Timaeum*, fr. 17) attribuisce a Giamblico una dottrina analoga: tutto ciò che è divino deve necessariamente agire e non patire perché, per l'agire, sia esente dall'insufficienza della materia, per il non patire, sia esente dal genere di efficacia propria alle cose materiali.

50 *Risposta* 5.5, pagina 204.2–4.

51 Si veda Damascio, *De Principiis* 2, pagine 79.7–87.24 contro Proclo, *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentarii* 7.1154.6–10 e 1172.17–23.

52 Voglio ringraziare la dott.ssa E. Bonanno, che ha rivisto la traduzione dei passi di Simplicio e mi ha comunicato osservazioni preziose. Il testo è stato letto anche dal dott. M. Christiansen, che ringrazio per le suggestioni che mi ha fornito.

Phantasia and Mathematical Projection in Iamblichus¹

Anne Sheppard

Proclus in his commentary on Euclid gives *φαντασία*, "imagination," an important role to play in mathematics. My aim in this paper is to investigate the background to this idea and to see how far it was already present in Iamblichus.² I shall begin with the relevant passages of Proclus since they are the best known testimony to the connection between *φαντασία* and mathematical projection. In two passages in particular (*In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 51.9–56.22 and 78.20–79.2) Proclus expounds the idea that when we are doing geometry the figures about which we are thinking are projections in the imagination of innate intelligible principles.³ If we are thinking about a circle, for example, we are thinking about a figure with extension and shape. Attributes such as extension and shape cannot belong to the intelligible principle of circularity. While such intelligible principles remain the ultimate objects of mathematical thought, ordinary geometry deals neither with these principles nor with the extended, imperfectly circular shapes found in the physical world. Its objects have an intermediate status which Proclus explains by describing them as projections in the *φαντασία*. Another, relatively well-known

¹ Translations from Proclus, *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* follow the translation by G.R. Morrow (Princeton 1970) except that I render *λόγοι* by "principles" rather than "ideas." Translations from other texts are my own.

² For earlier discussions of this issue, see W. Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen* (Frankfurt 1985) 256ff., I. Mueller, "Mathematics and Philosophy in Proclus' commentary on Book I of Euclid's *Elements*" in Proclus, *Lecteur et Interprète des Anciens*, J. Pépin and H.D. Saffrey, eds. (Paris 1987) 305–18, D.J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1989) 132–34, and H.J. Blumenthal in *Aristotle and the Later Tradition*, H.J. Blumenthal and H. Robinson, eds. (Oxford 1991) 199.

³ For discussion of these passages, see G. Watson, *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway 1988) 119–21; O'Meara (above, note 2) 166–69.

passage compares the figures projected in the imagination to images reflected in a mirror:

Therefore just as nature stands creatively above the visible figures, so the soul, exercising her capacity to know, projects on the imagination, as on a mirror, the principles of the figures; and the imagination, receiving in pictorial form these impressions of the ideas within the soul, by their means affords the soul an opportunity to turn inward from the pictures and attend to herself. It is as if a man looking at himself in a mirror and marvelling at the power of nature and at his own appearance should wish to look upon himself directly and possess such a power as would enable him to become at the same time the seer and the object seen. In the same way when the soul is looking outside herself at the imagination, seeing the figures depicted there and being struck by their beauty and orderedness, she is admiring her own principles from which they are derived; and though she adores their beauty, she dismisses it as something reflected and seeks her own beauty.

(*In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 141.2–19)⁴

φαντασία is also compared to a mirror at *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 121.2–7:

And thus we must think of the plane as projected and lying before our eyes and the understanding (διάνοια) as writing everything upon it, the imagination becoming something like a plane mirror to which the principles of the understanding send down impressions of themselves.

It has already been pointed out, particularly by O'Meara in *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, that the same ideas are found in Syrianus. Syrianus' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* M includes, not surprisingly, a good deal of argument defending the Platonist view that the objects of mathematics exist independently of particulars and are not, as Aristotle thought, simply derived from abstraction (ἀφαίρεσις). At 91.11–92.10 Syrianus argues that alongside the Platonic Form of Largeness in the διάνοια there is another Largeness which exists in the φαντασία. At 91.23 Syrianus calls this Largeness τὸ φανταστὸν εἶδος, "the form in the imagination," and uses the verb συνυφίσταται of its mode of existence (cf. συνυφιστάμενον at 91.13). Geometry is concerned with these φανταστά. Being too weak to use thoughts independent of imagination (ταῖς ἀφαντάστοις νοησέειν) it spreads out the principles (λόγους) into imagined and extended shapes and sizes and examines them in that way. At this point in his exposition Syrianus wants to bring out the inferiority of the φανταστά to the objects of διάνοια and that, I think, is why he uses the verb παρυφίσταται at 91.3 to describe their mode of existence compared to τοῖς οὐσιώδεσι λόγοις τῆς διανοίας, "the real principles of understanding." However the φανταστά in their turn are superior to the objects of sense-perception and Syrianus goes on to say that it is only when the φαντασία is inadequate that there is any need to draw a diagram on a board. The implication is that the really good mathematician works out his proofs using visual images "in his head" without recourse to drawing diagrams. Even that kind of mathematician is inferior to the thinker who can contemplate Largeness

⁴ This passage has been discussed in A. Charles, "L'Imagination, Miroir de l'Âme selon Proclus" in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris 1971) 241–51 and J. Cocking, *Imagination* (London 1991) 67.

without visualising anything at all. The Divided Line of Plato's *Republic* is evidently in the background of Syrianus' discussion here, as has already been pointed out by Praechter.⁵ However there is no mention of *φαντασία* or any cognate word in Plato's discussion of mathematics and indeed Plato labels the part of the soul concerned with mathematics *διάνοια*, a term used here by Syrianus for a higher faculty. Plato, notoriously, fails to give a clear account of the objects of *διάνοια* in the Line although he describes mathematicians as using visible forms as images of "the square itself" and "the diameter itself" (*Respublica* 510d–e). The late Neoplatonic doctrine that mathematicians deal with projections in the *φαντασία* of higher intelligible principles is a classic case of expanding and interpreting a puzzling passage of Plato with results which go well beyond anything in Plato's text: *διάνοια* deals with Forms and principles, mathematicians use images of those Forms and principles in the *φαντασία* and the perceptible diagrams mentioned by Plato are used only when *φαντασία* cannot adequately visualize the figures concerned.

We shall see shortly that Iamblichus too was concerned with the exposition of the Divided Line. Before I discuss the relevant text from Iamblichus and attempt to distinguish the contributions to my subject made by Iamblichus, Syrianus and Proclus, I propose to go back to Plotinus. Consideration of some aspects of his view of *φαντασία* will help us to trace the gradual development of the idea of mathematical projection.

Plotinus has a distinctive view of *φαντασία*. Like other Neoplatonists, he locates it at a crucial point in the soul, between the rational and irrational faculties. However he is unusual in taking the view that there are actually two "image-making powers" (*φανταστικά*), one for the higher soul and one for the lower (*Enneades* 4.3.31). Like Proclus at *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 141.2–19 and 121.2–7 Plotinus compares the *φανταστικόν* to a mirror (*Enneades* 4.3.30.2–11).⁶ For Plotinus an intellectual act (*νόημα*) without parts is "unfolded" by verbal expression (*λόγος*) which shows the intellectual act in the *φανταστικόν* "as if in a mirror." The image of the mirror goes back to Plato and Watson has rightly drawn attention to the importance in this context of *Timaeus* 71b where the liver which receives imprints and images from the mind is compared to a mirror.⁷ The mirror image is used in the *Republic* too, most strikingly at 10.596d–e where Plato uses it for a telling condemnation of the artist's ability to copy what he sees. Plato's argument against painting and poetry as mimetic in Book 10 itself depends on the metaphysics of Books 5–7 and draws on the ontological and epistemological distinctions made in the analogy of the Divided Line. Mirrors are not mentioned in the account of the Divided Line at the *Republic* 509dff. but images in water, τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα, are cited, along with shadows as examples of the objects with which the very lowest section of the line, *εἰκασία*, deals. Reflections in water

⁵ In his *RE* article, "Syrianos" vol 4A/2 (Stuttgart 1932) 1752.

⁶ Cf. also *Enneades* 1.4.10. For Plotinus on *φαντασία*, see H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology* (The Hague 1971) 88–95, Watson (above, note 3) 97–103 and J.M. Dillon, "Plotinus and the Transcendental Imagination" in *Religious Imagination*, J.P. Mackey, ed. (Edinburgh 1986) 55–65 (reprinted in J.M. Dillon, *The Golden Chain* [Aldershot 1990] xxvi).

⁷ Watson (above, note 3) 11–13.

are not very different from reflections in mirrors and indeed the two are coupled together at the *Republic* 402b and *Theaetetus* 206d. Plato would surely have accepted reflections in mirrors among the objects of εἰκασία. Two passages of Plutarch of Chaeronea, *Quaestiones Platonicae* 1002a and *Quaestiones Conviviales* 718e, compare mathematics and its objects to mirrors in which the intelligibles are reflected. What Plotinus and Proclus have done is to transfer the image of the mirror to the realm of φαντασία, encouraged to do so no doubt by the comparison of the liver to a mirror in *Timaeus* 71b.

The later Neoplatonic connection between the mirror and mathematical projection could be seen as developing both Plotinus' brief remarks at *Enneades* 4.3.30.2–11 and the Middle Platonic use of the mirror image which appears in Plutarch. Plotinus never explicitly links φαντασία with mathematics nor, as far as I can see, does Porphyry. Proclus, at *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 56.23–57.4 distinguishes his view of "geometrical matter" from Porphyry's but does not explain what view Porphyry held.⁸ Proclus himself both at *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 141.2–19 and, more clearly, at 121.2–7 uses the mirror to illustrate how mathematical figures are projected in the φαντασία. We can see the beginnings of the mathematical projection idea and a related use of the mirror image, in connection with exposition of the Divided Line, in a passage of Iamblichus to which I now turn. In the *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*, a work which O'Meara has argued formed Book 3 of a large work *On Pythagoreanism*,⁹ Iamblichus expounds the nature of mathematical objects, basing himself on an account of the Divided Line. The passage which concerns us reads as follows:

οὐ γὰρ δὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἡ σκία, ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τῷ ἐδάφει αἰσθητῷ ὄντι καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἢ ἐν τῷ κατόπτρῳ ἢ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι, ἅπερ ἦν καθ' ἑαυτὰ αἰσθητά. οὕτως οὖν καὶ τὰ μαθηματικά, ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς ἰδέαις ἔοικε φαντάζεσθαι, καὶ ἐπ' ἐκείναις ἔχειν τὸ ἐπείρεια· οὐ γὰρ δεῖ ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν κατὰ ἀφαίρεσιν ἐπινοεῖσθαι αὐτά, ἀλλ' ὑποβάντα ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδεῶν τὸ εἰδωλικὸν ἔχειν ἀπ' ἐκείνων, τῷ προσειληφέναι καὶ μέγεθος καὶ ἐν διαστάσει φαντάζεσθαι.
(Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* 34.4–12)

For the shadow does not exist in itself but either on the ground which is perceptible in itself or in the mirror or in stretches of water, which are perceptible in themselves. So in this way too the objects of mathematics, just as they seem to appear as images in the Ideas, also have their foundation in them; for they should not be thought of by abstraction from perceptible things but coming down from the Ideas they have their quality as images from them, with the addition of size and appearing in extension.

Here the obvious analogy between the reflected objects of the lowest part of the Line and mathematical objects is made quite explicit. As in Syrianus, the claim that

⁸ I. Mueller (in "Aristotle's Doctrine of Abstraction in the Commentators" in *Aristotle Transformed*, R. Sorabji, ed. [London 1990] 478–9) argues that Porphyry accepted a version of Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction, citing Proclus, *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 56.23–57.4 and Porphyry, *In Ptolemaei Harmonica* 13.15–14.28. The latter passage however shows only that Porphyry gave an Aristotelian account of the role of φαντασία in concept-formation, not that he applied this to mathematics. See also H. Dörrie, *Porphyrios' "Symmiktá Zetēmata"* (Munich 1959) 7–8.

⁹ O'Meara (above, note 2) chapter 2.

mathematical objects are derived from the Forms or Ideas is explicitly opposed to the Aristotelian view that they are derived by abstraction from the objects of perception. The Ideas are seen as the "surface" or "screen" on which mathematical images appear, just as shadows and reflections appear on perceptible objects such as the ground, mirrors and stretches of water. The parallel between the two types of image is developed at 34.13–18:

ὅπερ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδώλοις τὸ ἀμενῆν καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἀνεπέριστον, τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς τὸ ἐνογκὸν καὶ διαστατόν· ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο σπεύδει πρὸς τὸ δογκόν καὶ ἀμερές, ἐπαναπαύεσθαι ἔοικεν ἐν τῇ τῶν ἰδεῶν ἀμερείᾳ, ὡς αἱ σκῆαι ἐν τῇ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀντιτυπία.

For what the quality of being unstable and unsupported in itself is in the images of perceptible things, this the quality of having mass and extension is in intelligible things; but when this too hastens towards the absence of mass and being incomposite, it seems to come to rest on the incomposite nature of the Ideas, just as shadows come to rest on the hard surface of the perceptible things.

Iamblichus has reversed the idea found in Plutarch. For him it is not mathematical objects but the Ideas themselves that are like a mirror. Iamblichus uses only the verb *φαντάζεσθαι*, not the noun *φαντασία*. He does not seem here to have developed the full theory of mathematical projection which we find in Syrianus and Proclus, although he is well on the way towards it.

The transfer of language from one level of the Divided Line to another is a natural move for an interpreter to make. We can see something similar happening in a passage of Philoponus cited by both Praechter and O'Meara in connection with Syrianus on mathematical projection.¹⁰ At *In De Anima* 58.7–13 Philoponus distinguishes between the extended principles (λόγοι . . . διαστατοί) of the Forms which are to be found in our *φαντασία* and the incomposite and unextended principles found in the rational part of our soul. The geometer, he says, discusses the extended Forms in the *φαντασία* while the "first philosopher" (i.e. the metaphysician) will discuss the Forms in the rational part of the soul and the demiurgic Forms which are their archetypes. Philoponus makes no reference here to Syrianus or to any other named philosopher. Rather surprisingly, he combines the distinction between extended and unextended Forms with an "Aristotelian" abstractionist account of how the mathematician grasps figures such as the triangle and the circle. It looks as though by this time Syrianus' and Proclus' view of the metaphysical status of mathematical objects had become standard school tradition but not their psychological account of how the mathematician arrives at his subject-matter.¹¹ It is interesting that Philoponus, like Syrianus, mentions the *ἀβάκιον*, a board for drawing diagrams. In Syrianus geometry has recourse to the board when *φαντασία* is inadequate and proves unable to visualise its objects adequately in the imagination. In Philoponus the board becomes an image: "<the geometer>," he

¹⁰ Praechter (above, note 5) 1752; O'Meara (above, note 2) 133, note 44.

¹¹ For Philoponus' abstractionism, see *In De Anima* 57.28–58.6 and Mueller (above, note 8) 465–67 and 473–4. Cf. Ammonius, *In Porphyrii Isagogen sive V Voces* 11.31–12.6 and 41.10–42.26.

says, "uses the φαντασία as a board" (ὡς . . . ἀβάκῳ κέχρηται τῇ φαντασίᾳ). Philoponus, or the tradition on which he is drawing, has transferred the board from the level of perceptibles to the level of φαντασία, just as earlier Proclus, following the lead given by Iamblichus and by Middle Platonism, had transferred the mirror from the very lowest level of the Divided Line to the level of mathematics, which for him is also the level of φαντασία.

The notion of mathematical projection may also lie behind Iamblichus' use of the term προβάλλει at *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* 43.21 and 44.9, in a context where he is discussing the role of ἀνάμνησις in mathematics. I have not found any other evidence specifically for the connection of φαντασία with mathematical projection in Iamblichus. Such other evidence as we have for Iamblichus' views of φαντασία does however offer a context into which the role of φαντασία in mathematics fits very nicely. First there is a passage from the commentary on the *De Anima* ascribed to Simplicius. (The question of the real author of this commentary is not relevant to my purpose here and I shall not discuss it but I shall refer to the author as ?Simplicius to indicate that his identity is uncertain. Similarly I shall refer to the author of the commentary on *De Anima* 3 ascribed to Philoponus as ?Philoponus.) At ?Simplicius, *In De Anima* 214.18–20 we find the following:

καὶ γὰρ εἰ καὶ τὰς λογικὰς ἡμῶν, ὡς ὁ Ἰάμβλῆχος βούλεται, ἀποτυπῶνται ἐνεργείας πάσας, ὅμως κατὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἀπεικονίζεται εἶδη μορφωτικῶς καὶ μεριστῶς.

For even if, as Iamblichus wants, it (*i.e.* φαντασία) takes an impression of all our rational activities, nevertheless it produces images of Forms which have shape and parts in the manner of perceptible things.

This rather brief allusion is filled out by a longer passage in Priscian's *Metaphrasis* 23.13–24.20. Priscian presents as "the views of Iamblichus" (τὰ Ἰαμβλίχεια) the idea that φαντασία has a dual role. On the one hand it awakens reflections (ἐμφάσεις) from perception to δόξα, and on the other it holds out secondary reflections of νοῦς to δόξα. According to Priscian Iamblichus saw φαντασία as existing as a subsidiary to all the powers of the soul and as characterised by its power to form images. (The term I have translated "existing as subsidiary" is παραπέφυκεν; cf. Syrianus' use of παρυφίσταται noted earlier.) As Priscian indicates, the link between φαντασία and perception is Aristotelian but the idea that φαντασία also receives images from higher parts of the soul is Neoplatonic. This idea is not exclusive to Iamblichus, for it is already present in Plotinus' doctrine of the two "image-making powers." However later philosophers evidently associated the idea with Iamblichus in particular and it provides the context for mathematical projection as one instance of the receiving of such images. I do not think that either the author of the commentary on the *De Anima* ascribed to Simplicius, whoever he may be, or Priscian is talking specifically about mathematical projection. Some passages of the *De Mysteriis*, particularly 3.14, mention the ability of the φαντασία, or the φανταστικόν as Iamblichus calls it in 3.14, to receive impressions from the gods when in a state of inspiration. This would be another, different way in which the φαντασία receives images from higher faculties.

Iamblichus does then provide all the materials for the theory of mathematical projection which we find in Syrianus and Proclus. His overall picture of *φαντασία* provides the context and his discussion of Plato's Divided Line in the *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* can certainly be read as implying the theory. He does not describe *φαντασία* itself as a mirror in which the mathematical images are projected in the way that Proclus does but Proclus' comparison is a natural development from Iamblichus, Plotinus and Middle Platonism. Like Syrianus, Iamblichus is defending a Platonist view of the objects of mathematics against Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction.

I said earlier that Iamblichus in *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* had not quite developed the theory of mathematical projection as it appears later but was well on the way towards it. This does seem to me a correct account based on the evidence we have although any conclusions about Iamblichus' views in this area must be qualified in view of the sparse and fragmentary nature of our evidence. My account may be confirmed by consideration of the views of a philosopher I have not yet mentioned who, it might be thought, is a necessary link in the chain from Iamblichus to Syrianus and Proclus. I mean Plutarch of Athens whose views on *φαντασία* are briefly reported in ?Philoponus, *In De Anima* 515.12ff. The author of this commentary reports that Plutarch thought the *φαντασία* was "double; its upper limit, or starting-point, is the limit of the intellectual, and its other limit is the highest part of the senses" (*ibid.*, 515.12–15). This might sound rather as though Plutarch, alone among the later Neoplatonists, followed Plotinus' view that there are two "image-making powers." In fact the following lines of the commentary make clear that, as H.J. Blumenthal has expressed it, "The duality, which at first sight appears to be one of being, is rather one of function."¹² In fact Plutarch's view is very like the view of Iamblichus, as reported by Priscian. According to ?Philoponus, Plutarch compared the *φαντασία* to two lines, one from above and one from below, meeting at a point. The point is one in so far as it is a single point, but two in so far as it may be taken either with the upper or with the lower line. Similarly the *φαντασία* can be taken both as one (*i.e.* as one faculty) and as two in so far as on the one hand it gathers into one what in perceptible things is divided, and on the other receives an impression of the simple and, as one might say, unitary quality of the divine in imprints and different shapes (*ibid.*, 515.20–29). I want to focus on the last clause here, which in Greek reads:

τῶν δὲ θεῶν τὸ ἀπλοῦν καὶ ὡς ἂν τις εἴποι ἐνιαῖον εἰς
τύπους τινὰς καὶ μορφὰς διαφόρους ἀναγράφεται.
(?Philoponus, *In De Anima* 515.28–29)

This seems to me to express the Iamblichean idea that *φαντασία* transmits images of higher powers although the mention of "the simple and unitary quality of the divine" perhaps suggests not images from νοῦς but images from a still higher realm. In other words, the closest Iamblichean parallel might be the divinely inspired *φαντασία* of *De Mysteriis* 3.14. Τύποι and μορφαί are regular late Neoplatonic terms for the imprints

¹² "Plutarch's Exposition of the *De Anima* and the Psychology of Proclus" in *De Jamblique à Proclus* (Geneva 1975) 134.

and shapes with which φαντασία deals.¹³ Plutarch's view, as reported, is consistent with a theory of mathematical projection although it does not itself express such a theory.¹⁴ Is it significant that Plutarch's parallel with lines meeting at a point is drawn from mathematics? O'Meara has argued convincingly in *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, that Iamblichus gave a distinctively mathematical turn to Neoplatonism. He sees this "mathematization" as both maintained and at the same time significantly altered in Syrianus and Proclus.¹⁵ We do not know enough about Plutarch to be able to say whether he simply continued the Iamblichean mathematical approach or whether he began to move in the slightly different overall direction taken by his pupils. However his use of a mathematical analogy for φαντασία does suggest that he shared the mathematical interests of his predecessor and successor.¹⁶ In Plutarch of Athens, as in Iamblichus, we find a context within which the theory of mathematical projection fits very well. Philosophical theories often develop gradually, particularly within a school tradition like later Neoplatonism. We cannot label either Iamblichus or Syrianus definitively as "the inventor of mathematical projection" and attaching such labels is perhaps less important than understanding the background and context within which a theory develops. I have argued that the theory of mathematical projection which we find in Proclus and Syrianus has at least an Iamblichean background. This is not a new claim but I have been trying to illuminate that background more fully than previous scholars have done.¹⁷

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¹³ Cf. A. Sheppard, "Phantasia and Analogia in Proclus" in *Ethics and Rhetoric*, D. Innes, H. Hine and C. Pelling, eds. (Oxford 1995) 345.

¹⁴ O'Meara (above, note 2) 134, note 45 is wrong to suggest that it does.

¹⁵ Cf. Mueller (above, note 2).

¹⁶ For one comment, at least, by Plutarch on Euclid, see Proclus, *In Primum Euclidis Librum Commentarius* 125.16 and cf. O'Meara (above, note 2) 170.

¹⁷ I am grateful to other participants at the conference, especially M.J. Edwards and C.G. Steel, for their comments and for corrections of some of my errors. For further discussion of Iamblichus on φαντασία and inspiration, see "Phantasia and Inspiration in Neoplatonism" in *Festschrift for J. Whittaker, Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition*, M. Joyal, ed., forthcoming.

Jamblique, Doxographie et Philosophie dans le *Traité De l'Âme*

Annick Charles-Saget

Il est impossible de lire un texte, un fragment de Jamblique ou une doctrine qu'on lui attribue, sans se trouver renvoyé à la même question: est-ce là philosopher? Il ne s'agit pas seulement de la théurgie ou de l'intégration des rites et oracles. La distinction traditionnelle entre les philosophes et les "théurgistes" ne suffit pas, puisque cette distinction ne peut que *résulter d'un rapport au savoir* qui lui est antérieur et qui, chez Jamblique, laisse place, ou demande place pour les rites et leur mode d'unification. Dans son introduction à l'édition des fragments des commentaires aux dialogues de Platon, J.M. Dillon parle de Jamblique comme d'un "philosophe de second rang."¹ Que signifie? Assurément autre chose que la mise au second rang de la philosophie elle-même.

Si nous reprenons les éléments originaux de la pensée de Jamblique, selon ce qui lui est désormais attribué en propre, nous pouvons rassembler ses apports sous deux rubriques:

- l'une qui concerne la constitution plus complexe du système,
- l'autre qui indique les nouveaux modèles de pensée.

Dans la constitution plus complexe du système, on peut distinguer ce qui relève d'une élaboration des paradoxes et ce qui constitue des propositions de continuité pour la systématisation elle-même. En somme, ce qui touche aux extrêmes et ce qui assure les médiations. L'élaboration des paradoxes renvoie, en effet, à la réflexion sur les termes extrêmes du système: le Principe (l'Un-Bien) et le Mal. Chaque penseur néoplatonicien est contraint, par le caractère instable de la pensée, à reprendre, réarticuler, la liaison/déliaison du Principe avec ce qu'il engendre, ou la liaison/déliaison de l'en-deçà avec ce qui est. Je laisserai de côté ces extrêmes.

A l'intérieur du système lui-même, on accorde à Jamblique d'avoir explicité, ou, pour parler comme *Timée*, d'avoir parfois "comblé" certains intervalles: ainsi,

¹ *Iamblichi Chalcidensis: in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. (Leiden 1973) vii.

Jamblique aurait distingué deux principes, l'Un ineffable et l'Un présidant au monde noétique; il aurait, selon Damascius, proposé la médiation de la dyade πέρασ/ἄπειρον; son rôle à l'égard de la doctrine proclienne des hénades demeure questionné; dans l'intelligible, il aurait insisté sur la distinction entre intelligible et intellectif; enfin, pour faire bref, il aurait eu souci de la variété des âmes, entre l'âme totale et les âmes particulières.

Cette complexité croissante du système exigeait que soient utilisés de nouveaux modèles de pensée. Nouveaux ou nouvellement réinterprétés. Combler des intervalles est une opération qui a toujours, depuis le *Timée*, exigé un modèle. Et l'on sait que, pour Jamblique, le modèle s'incarne au moins dans un nom propre, celui de Pythagore. Mais s'il y a bien chez Jamblique, ainsi que l'indique D.J. O'Meara, une renaissance de Pythagore,² cette renaissance implique de nécessaires anachronismes, eux-mêmes porteurs d'inévitables ambiguïtés.

Ma question se transforme donc en celle-ci: *Que devient la relation de la philosophie à son modèle quand cette relation est archaïsante?* Platon s'inspirait de la recherche des mathématiciens de son temps et non de Pythagore, qui est à peine cité. Quand Jamblique insiste sur le modèle pythagoricien, non seulement comme modèle de vie, mais aussi comme modèle de pensée, nous pouvons donc nous interroger sur l'apport de cette référence quant à la philosophie et nous demander si ce que gagne le "système" n'est pas ce que peut perdre la pensée. Ne s'agit-il pas de composer, concilier, aménager, mettre en résonance, organiser une doctrine, plutôt que de donner vie à une pensée?

I. Traits propres au Traité De l'Âme

Nous avons si peu d'ouvrages continus de Jamblique que ma question peut apparaître non pertinente ou même de mauvaise foi. Dans notre dernier colloque, j'insistais sur une qualité intellectuelle de Jamblique:³ son ouverture à la diversité des modes d'expression de l'âme humaine et son refus d'écarter, au nom d'une certaine tradition ascétique de la philosophie, la diversité des modes d'action et d'expression. Une des exigences fondamentales pour Jamblique serait alors la διαίρεσις, ou la διάκρισις, liées à un souci de ne pas jeter au néant des différences secondes, ce dont il accuse d'ailleurs Plotin. Jamblique refuse ce mode d'ἀφαίρεσις plotinienne.

De quelle manière Jamblique parvient-il à transformer ce refus? Il m'a semblé honnête d'interroger le *De l'Âme*, dans la mesure où nous avons là un exposé suffisamment continu, structuré, où le rappel scolaire des doctrines laisse place à l'énonciation de préférences philosophiques significantes. Ce n'est pas du Diogène Laërce, mais cependant est-ce plus qu'un ouvrage traitant de *sujets* philosophiques?

Nous interrogerons d'abord le plan, puis choisirons deux chapitres où les critiques de Jamblique deviennent philosophiquement significantes. Plus précisément,

² Pythagoras Revived: *Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1989).

³ A. Charles-Saget, "La Théurgie, Nouvelle Figure de l'Ergon dans la Vie Philosophique," *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, H.J. Blumenthal et E.G. Clark, eds. (Bristol 1993) 107-15.

si la *διάκρισις* est ici la méthode, l'exigence qui la promeut ouvre-t-elle un espace philosophique?

Le traité s'accorde un matériau très ample puisqu'il veut "embrasser toutes les catégories d'opinion" qui ont eut l'âme pour objet—*πάντα περιλαβεῖν τὰ γένη τῶν δοξῶν* (*De l'Âme* 363.9)—il est donc d'abord une doxographie et les doctrines sont loin d'être toutes classées, décrites ou orientées vers l'unification d'une pensée, à la manière dont procède Aristote par exemple. Le traité présente toutefois deux caractères qui, par leur articulation, lui donnent sa forme propre:

- dans son plan, il suppose une conjonction du théorique et du mythique,
- dans ses références, il met l'accent sur les platoniciens et leurs divergences, ce qui permet de dépasser la doxographie, dans la mesure où Jamblique souligne son choix.

II. *Le Théorique et le Mythique*

Le caractère scolaire du plan de Jamblique a été magistralement mis en lumière par le Père A.J. Festugière.⁴ En comparant les plans si proches du *De l'Âme* de Tertullien et du traité *De l'Âme* de Jamblique, Festugière montre que l'élément capital de ces traités, la suite "nature de l'âme—incarnation de l'âme," se retrouve dans les *Placita* comme dans l'hermétisme, et que ce cadre scolaire a donné place, chez Tertullien comme chez Jamblique, en raison d'une même référence au platonisme, à une dernière partie qui traite de l'eschatologie. En quoi cette suite, et l'ajout de cette dernière partie, ont-ils chez Jamblique une signification philosophique propre?

Dans le plan, se succèdent quatre parties:

- 1) l'âme et ses puissances,
- 2) la descente des âmes,
- 3) la vie de l'âme dans le corps,
- 4) l'eschatologie.

Aller des opinions des philosophes aux mythes de l'en-deçà et de l'au-delà, c'est assurément un choix scolaire et presque populaire. Mais c'est surtout manifester l'effacement de la différence philosophique entre discours dialectique ou théorique, et discours mythique. La conjonction des modes de pensée du *Phédon*, de *République* 10 et du *Timée* a produit cet effet de discours vraisemblable où les éléments imaginaires, mythiques ou cosmiques, appartiennent à une doctrine dès qu'ils trouvent une justification partielle.

Il ne suffit pas, par exemple, que l'immortalité de l'âme signifie la possibilité d'une connaissance des formes, éprouvée ici et maintenant, il faut aussi "compléter" l'ici et maintenant par l'avant et l'après. Que la même exigence de pensée ne puisse oeuvrer dans les deux cas est oublié au profit d'une assimilation de l'intelligible et du simplement pensable, au sens de "cohérent."

Plotin maintenait la différence lorsqu'il montrait comment l'imagination est une manière pour l'âme de feindre d'aller plus loin que le réel, ainsi, à propos du monde, de faire comme si l'on pensait la ligne des pôles au-delà ou en-deçà du Nord

⁴ *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, tome 3 (Paris 1953) 1.26. Toutes les citations sont faites selon la traduction de A.J. Festugière (177-248). Le texte grec est celui de Stobée, Wachsmuth, ed. (Berlin 1884).

ou du Sud.⁵ Dans une conception de l'enveloppe circulaire du monde, il est aussi peu sérieux de "prolonger" la ligne des pôles que, dans une pensée de l'âme, de prolonger la vie avant ou après. L'attitude de Plotin était sans doute fort rare en son temps. Celle de Jamblique relève d'un platonisme plus commun.

III. Jamblique et les Platoniciens

Aussi faut-il choisir dans le traité *De l'Âme* quelques passages révélateurs de la différence jamblichéenne. En effet, lorsque les opinions des philosophes sont quasi contemporaines, Jamblique propose une réaction personnelle à leur égard. Certaines doctrines, en revanche, sont si éloignées qu'elles ne demandent rien d'autre qu'un exposé et quelque raison pour être justifiées: par exemple, si l'âme est composée d'atomes, ceux-ci sont sphériques (*De l'Âme* 363.11-18).

Mais il est un moment où disparaît l'indifférence du doxographe, un point où l'appel à l'élévation montre que nous arrivons là où la question de la vérité va nécessairement se poser. "Allons, élevons-nous donc jusqu'à la substance incorporelle par elle-même, distinguant en ordre, dans ce cas aussi, toutes les opinions sur l'âme" (*De l'Âme* 365.5-7). Dans cet examen, Jamblique se détermine nettement *par opposition* aux derniers néoplatoniciens influents, Numénios, Plotin et Porphyre. La critique de Plotin, qui est la plus vive et la plus claire, marque le premier développement propre à Jamblique. Elle sera pour nous le fil d'Ariane permettant de saisir ce à quoi tient Jamblique, en délimitant ce qu'il refuse. Trois textes sont ici particulièrement éclairants. Ils concernent, comme pour respecter la triade οὐσία-δυνάμεις-ἐνέργειαι,⁶ le premier, l'essence de l'âme incorporelle, le second, les puissances irrationnelles et le dernier, les actes de l'âme.

Dans le premier texte, il est question de la différence, de l'indépendance de l'âme par rapport à l'intellect:

Maintenant en vérité, la doctrine qui du moins est opposée à la précédente fait de l'Âme une entité à part, en ce qu'elle est née seconde après l'Intellect selon une autre hypostase, et regarde ce qui, de l'Âme, est accompagné de l'Intellect comme suspendu à l'Intellect, avec la faculté d'exister en propre d'une manière indépendante; elle sépare aussi l'Âme de tous les genres supérieurs et lui assigne, comme définition propre de son essence, soit le moyen terme entre les genres divisibles et indivisibles et entre les genres corporels et incorporels, soit la somme totale des raisons universelles des êtres, soit ce qui, après les Idées, est au service de Dieu pour la création du monde, soit la Vie qui, ayant jailli de l'Intelligible, possède elle-même la propriété de vivre, soit encore la procession des genres de tout l'être réellement être vers une forme d'existence inférieure. C'est du côté de ces opinions que se tournent résolument, comme on le voit si l'on suit avec compétence la trace de leurs doctrines, tant PLATON lui-même et PYTHAGORE qu'ARISTOTE et tous les ANCIENS dont on célèbre, pour leur sagesse, les noms fameux. Quant à nous, dans toute

⁵ *Enneades* 6.6.17.5-7: "Nous parlons de ligne infinie, non qu'il y en ait une qui soit telle, mais c'est qu'il est possible, étant donnée la plus grande, en l'occurrence celle du Tout, d'en imaginer—ἐπινοῆσαι—une plus grande."

⁶ Cf. D.P. Taormina, "Le Δυνάμεις dell'Anima. Psicologia Etica in Giamblico" in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods* (note 3 ci-dessus) 30-47.

l'entreprise de ce traité soucieux de vérité, nous essaierons de nous conformer à ces doctrines.
(Jamblique, *De l'Âme* 365.23-366.12)

Entre les termes et thèmes importants, nous relevons que l'âme est une entité à part; il faut une autre hypostase pour l'intellect; l'âme indépendante se sépare des autres genres supérieurs; son caractère propre consiste à accomplir une procession vers une forme d'être inférieure.

La seconde référence et réticence apparaît à propos de la négligence de Plotin à l'égard des puissances irrationnelles et son souci de la pure raison. Jamblique résiste à l'image-idée des vies qui, après la mort, se perdent:

PORPHYRE et PLOTIN déclarent qu'à chaque partie du Tout sont envoyées par l'âme (du Tout) les puissances appropriées, et précisent que les vies qui, de quelque manière que ce soit, ont été ainsi envoyées vont se perdre et n'ont plus d'existence, à peu près de même que les fruits issus de la semence quand celle-ci a reflué sur elle-même. Mais peut-être bien pourrait-on former la conjecture nouvelle que ces vies, elles aussi, continuent d'exister dans le Tout et n'y sont pas détruites.
(Jamblique, *De l'Âme* 370.5-13)

Comment ne pas retrouver ici un refus d'assimiler âme et intellect, une volonté de ne pas réduire au néant ces puissances irrationnelles (sensation, représentation, souvenir) qui ont été le tissu de la vie et le support des actions rituelles?

Cependant, Jamblique maintient que l'âme possède des formes de vie "qui sont selon son essence" (*De l'Âme* 371.21), comme l'enthousiasme et les intellections immatérielles. Mais ces activités divines ne sauraient permettre de négliger la diversité du moins divin—et le souci d'en rendre compte.

C'est alors que Jamblique propose:

une autre opinion, qui ne serait pas à rejeter—*ἄλλη δόξα οὐκ ἀπόβλητος*: classant les âmes par genres et espèces—*κατὰ γένη καὶ εἶδη*, elle ferait la différence entre les actes parfaits des âmes universelles, les actes purs et immatériels des âmes divines, les actes efficaces des âmes démoniques, les actes valeureux des âmes héroïques, les actes conformes à la nature mortelle des âmes présentes dans les animaux et les hommes, et ainsi de suite pour le reste.
(Jamblique, *De l'Âme* 372.15-20)

Ce chapitre, intitulé chez Stobée "sur les actes de l'âme," insiste tout particulièrement sur le souci de l'ordre, de la *τάξις*.⁷ C'est un souci qui sera repris par Proclus. Ainsi, la prop. 203 des *Éléments de Théologie* décrit l'ensemble de la multiplicité psychique—*πάν τοῦ ψυχικοῦ πλῆθος*—depuis les âmes des dieux jusqu'aux âmes particulières.

Quelle différence faut-il noter? Proclus, dans les *Éléments de Théologie*, part d'une détermination de l'essence (le rapport âme/intellect) pour en déduire les trois classes exposant les variations de ce rapport. S'il utilise (*Proposition* 185) des termes mythiques (notamment l'image du *Phèdre* où des âmes sont dans la suite des dieux—*ὁπαδοί*), l'image est liée à une détermination d'essence (participer toujours ou parfois de l'intelligence divine). Jamblique, en revanche, après avoir donné le premier rang

⁷ Ce thème de la *τάξις* des dieux, démons, héros est analysé pour lui-même in *De Mysteriorum, É. des Places*, ed. (Paris 1966) en particulier 1.19-2.2.

aux âmes "universelles"—τῶν ὅλων, reprend une hiérarchie mythologique sans plus: dieux, démons, héros, hommes (*De l'Âme* 372.15–55).

IV. Images et Mythes

Reprenons notre question: "qu'est-ce que philosopher pour Jamblique?" Le chapitre "sur les actes de l'âme," en raison de sa double distance à Plotin et à Proclus, peut nous permettre de faire quelques suggestions.

Notons un caractère bien connu, et apparemment extérieur au mode du philosophe: les références répétées aux Anciens. Ainsi,

οἱ ἀρχαιότεροι (451.1),

τῶν πρεσβυτέρων (455.20, 457.10, 457.16, 457.17, 458.6),

οἱ παλαιότατοι (384.27),

οἱ παλαιότεροι (455.12, 456.20, 457.12),

références dont la densité est la plus grande dans le chapitre sur le jugement, le châtement, la récompense, c'est-à-dire dans un lieu où le philosophique est indissociable du mythique. Mais ici aucune notation sur la différence entre châtement et purification, entre raconter et analyser, donc aucun essai d'allégorie. La voie choisie consiste à justifier le récit, à le rendre vraisemblable par des raisons partielles. Une certaine cohérence prend la place d'une pensée.

Cette cohérence se déterminerait selon deux exigences: établir une hiérarchie, justifier cette hiérarchie par une mise en relation de chaque être et de ses "caractères" propres. L'archaïsme de Jamblique prend alors une forme philosophique en ce que le mythe et ses images deviennent le destin de la pensée, comme son accomplissement. Si le mouvement, le "progrès," des Physiciens d'Ionie a consisté à abandonner les généalogies hésiodiques ou homériques pour passer à des productions physiques, Jamblique effectue ici le mouvement inverse: des recherches conceptuelles âme/intellect, il passe à la proposition d'une procession de cohortes imaginaires—dieux, démons, héros. On revient aux images, aux rapports de puissance et donc au culte des plus grands. La piété peut se substituer à la pensée. Les figures mythiques ont simplement quelques propriétés correspondant à leur rang, "conformes à leur nature," qui valent parfois pour un simple redoublement du nom. Ainsi, "les actes purs et immatériels des âmes divines, les actes valeureux des âmes héroïques, les actes conformes à la nature mortelle des âmes présentes dans les animaux et les hommes" (*De l'Âme* 372.17–20).

Ainsi, le mythique et le métaphysique jouent un jeu croisé et la philosophie s'embarrasse d'un surnaturel qui n'est pas intelligible. Chez Plotin, le rapport âme/intelligence signifiait l'intériorité de ce qui pense et de ce qui est pensé: l'âme dépasse l'extériorité de la reconnaissance du divers, telle qu'elle est éprouvée dans la perception ordinaire, pour habiter un espace où elle sait reconnaître l'intelligible comme ce qui nourrit sa vie et donne de soi-même sa marque de lumière. L'eschatologie n'est pas nécessaire, ni la descente première: ce sont des expériences d'élévation ou de retombée qui scandent la vie de la pensée (Plotin, *Enneades* 4.8.1), celle-ci se maintenant jusqu'au bout dans son effort d'unification.

Le choix de Jamblique apparaît en pleine lumière à propos du jugement des âmes: Jamblique rapporte que, pour Platon, pour Plotin, il n'est pas besoin de juges (*De l'Âme* 454.26). Les âmes particulières, exhaussées au-delà des mirages du

corps, savent d'elles-mêmes ce qu'elles sont. Mais, pour sa part, Jamblique ajoute "selon ceux d'entre eux qui se montrent plus exacts"—ἀκριβέστεροι—le châtement se fait par "l'Intellect qui gouverne en roi l'ordonnance générale du Monde"—τοῦ νοῦ τοῦ βασιλεύοντος καὶ τῆς ὅλης διακοσμήσεως (*De l'Âme* 454.30). Il y a plus d'"exactitude" à proposer une instance extérieure, supérieure, royale, c'est-à-dire à reprendre l'image d'un pouvoir total qui juge un de ses sujets.

V. Le Figuratif

Ces remarques sur l'emprise des ordres mythiques pourraient trouver un complément dans la notation des liens très prégnants entre une figure et ses propriétés —les *ιδιώματα*. C'est une forme de piété scrupuleuse tout autant que de pensée rigoureuse, que de se soucier des justes attributs. On pourrait, en insistant dans la même veine, considérer que le traitement des "mathématiques" relève du même souci figuratif: contrairement à Proclus, Jamblique insiste fort peu sur les démonstrations et reprend chez les Anciens ce que j'appellerais des images dégénérées, images qui signifient hors d'elles-mêmes et sans richesse mathématique propre, qui ont perdu le lien entre présentation et démonstration. C'était une des forces des mathématiques pythagoriciennes que de *faire voir* une propriété mathématique. L'exemple de la somme des gnomons impairs,

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{ol ol ol} \\ \text{o ol ol} \\ \text{o o ol} \end{array} \qquad 1+3+5+\dots+(2n-1)=n^2,$$

a ici valeur paradigmatique pour montrer la convergence possible entre produire une figure, voir et penser. En revanche, la lecture de la décade, dès qu'elle dépasse la simple reconnaissance du caractère de nombre-somme, devient un puzzle de curiosités, où l'on peut retrouver des propriétés connues par ailleurs (p. ex. les proportions), mais non les penser.⁸ Les jeux de correspondances, les analogies sans règle, créent le tissu le plus flou des relations indéfinies.

$$\begin{array}{c} 1 \\ 2 \ 3 \\ 4 \ 6 \ 9 \\ 8 \ 12 \ 18 \ 27 \end{array}$$

Que Jamblique ait été sensible aux voix de son temps, au besoin de réconfort dans l'image que Plotin n'avait pas justifié malgré ses nombreuses métaphores, qu'il ait été convaincu du caractère extrême, ou extrémiste, de l'exigence plotinienne, certes on peut le reconnaître. Mais on ne peut confondre la vie intellectuelle de Plotin et la parole érudite de Jamblique. La philosophie suppose, de quelque manière qu'elle se dise, une animation réciproque de l'âme et de l'intellect. Pousser à la limite,

⁸ Nous trouvons, dans *The Theology of Arithmetic: on the Mystical, Mathematical and Cosmological Symbolism of the First Ten Numbers*, R. Waterfield, trad. (Grand Rapids 1988) une préface de K. Critchlow, très éclairante pour la lecture de ces "figures."

l'affirmation de l'indépendance de l'âme chez Jamblique mettrait en question la possibilité de la philosophie.

De même le souci archaïsant des figures. C'est assurément un lieu commun platonicien que le philosophe ne peut ni s'arrêter ni revenir aux images. Or le souci de hiérarchie, malgré son caractère formel, trouve un lieu presque naturel avec l'image. Posons que la succession est liée à une discontinuité des images ou figures. La hiérarchie apparaît alors comme la proposition la plus fréquente pour résoudre la dispersion des opinions et celle des êtres, mais elle a pour effet pervers de lier la pensée à la recherche de l'ordre ou de la vouer, comme disait Platon, aux distributions des prix. Une sorte de topologie se crée, qui conforte les hiérarchies par les deux moyens qui les explicitent et les relient entre elles: la détermination des attributs essentiels, c'est-à-dire différentiels, et les analogies qui s'instituent entre hiérarchies comparées. C'est par là que Jamblique est plus que doxographe. Ce n'est pas une raison suffisante pour le dire philosophe.

Nous assistons dans son oeuvre à une sorte d'inversion des allégories: alors qu'autrefois une figure s'effaçait dans le discours interprétatif de l'exégèse, le discours, désormais, recherche ses figures. C'est un reproche que l'on fera à Proclus. Il reste que la philosophie est en question, ou en péril, quand l'autrement-dit prend le masque des dieux.

Jámbrico y el Descenso del Alma: Síntesis de Doctrinas y Relectura Neoplatónica

Francisco García Bazán

Comenzaré recordando un pasaje del *De Anima* en el que Jámbrico al tratar de las funciones y operaciones (ἔργα) del alma desliza una corta frase sobre la opinión de los gnósticos acerca de la causa de la caída del alma, en medio de otras pertenecientes a conocidos filósofos griegos. Si la importancia que le atribuyo a algunos aspectos del pasaje no me desvía, entonces, sería posible avanzar sobre otros rasgos del pensamiento temprano de Jámbrico que se pueden relacionar con este texto.

Al examinar los actos del alma en relación con su sustancia propia dice en este momento Jámbrico:

Platón y Pitágoras colocando al frente la sustancia del alma como sobrenatural y generadora de la naturaleza enseñan que sus actividades son más dignas y más venerables que las de la naturaleza. Tampoco la hacen originarse desde la naturaleza, sino que sostienen que ella dirige desde sí y en sí las propias actividades y que cuantos movimientos hay en ella bellos y sabios poseyéndolos por encima de la naturaleza, la exaltan en sí misma.

Pues bien, ya también entre los platónicos muchos disienten, unos, como Plotino y Porfirio, congregando en un solo orden y en una sola idea las especies, las partes y las actividades de la vida, y otros, como Numenio, haciéndolas esforzarse en la lucha, otros, como los discípulos de Atico y Plutarco, poniéndolas de acuerdo a partir de los que se combaten. Éstos igualmente dicen que puesto que preexiste a los movimientos desordenados e irregulares, ellas avanzan para adornarlos y ordenarlos y de este modo combinan el concierto a partir de ambos, siendo causa de las operaciones de los descensos, según Plotino, la alteridad primera, pero según Empédocles, la huida primera de Dios, según Heráclito, el reposo en el cambio, según los gnósticos, un desvarío o una desviación y según Albino, el juicio errado del libre albedrío. Sin embargo, los que se distinguen de los anteriores, por su parte, agregan el mal al alma a partir de los apéndices venidos de afuera, según Numenio y Cronio; en ocasiones de los cuerpos mismos también, según Harpocración, y de la

naturaleza y de la vida irracional, la mayor parte de las veces, según Plotino y Porfirio.¹

El comentario con su correspondiente doxografía, llega cuando Jámblico ha definido la naturaleza del alma y de acuerdo con ella las facultades y actos que le corresponden y el modo como le pertenecen, por oposición con otras corrientes de pensamiento. En esta situación ya le será posible abordar más adelante la enseñanza sobre el descenso.

Si Aristóteles, debemos entender a diferencia de todos los demás, ha proporcionado una caracterización del alma sobre las notas del movimiento (κίνησις), el conocimiento (γνώσις) y el carácter sutil (λεπτότης) o incorpóreo (ἀσώματος), esta definición confusa e incompleta, se puede perfeccionar, si nos orientan el rigor metódico y reflexivo y la tradición. Comienza, por lo tanto, Jámblico con el estudio del alma como sustancia (οὐσία). Elimina las posturas corporalistas por insuficientes y las distingue de las posturas mejor sustentadas que consideran distintamente la esencia del alma como incorpórea y autosubsistente, separada del cuerpo y autónoma. En este plano se colocan los platónicos. Pero advierte enseguida, que afirmar la homeomería anímica sobre la base de la sola incorporeidad sin tener en cuenta la claridad y distinción que corresponde a la concepción independiente del alma es fuente de confusión e indiferenciación interna. Ha sido este el error de Numenio, de Plotino, de Amelio y de Porfirio que al no haber mostrado la distinción debida entre el Intelecto y el alma, han hecho que ésta sea al mismo tiempo que alma, Bien, Intelecto, dios, ángel, demon y héroe.² Este procedimiento ha impedido definirla como lo que es, o sea, una realidad propia, separada de lo superior a ella, el *nous*, y diferente también de lo inferior a ella, el cuerpo, porque es “el término medio” (τὸ μέσον) entre lo divisible e indivisible,” un mixto de intelecto y cuerpo como *logos*. No el ser que realmente es, sino un modo de ser que se presenta en diferentes estados. Visión intelectiva inestable. Principio de vida y movimiento como sustancia intermedia que tanto puede permanecer firme en la captación intelectiva total consciente, conservando íntegras sus facultades y actividades superiores, como siendo ella misma autopercebirse con debilidad, automanifestándose igualmente como vida con capacidades y actos inferiores. Su sustancia propia es *intermedia*, entonces, porque tanto no cambia como entidad que ve, cuanto esa misma visión muestra diversos y peculiares grados entitativos de perfección y claridad. Por eso, a la inversa, si por un lado es débil en su condición ruin, por otro, por su condición de mixto, aspira a la

¹ Cf. Ioannis Stobaei, *Anthologium*, C. Wachsmuth y O. Hense, eds., vol. 1 (Berlín 1884) 374.14–375.18. Los ecos de Plotino, *Enéada* 4.8.1 y 5, se hacen sentir. Sobre los testimonios de Numenio, frs. 42 y 43, ver mi versión y comentario en *Oráculos Caldeos con una Selección de Testimonios de Proclo, Pselo y M. Itálico*. Numenio de Apamea, *Fragmentos y Testimonios* (Madrid 1991) 288–9.

² “Según esta opinión el alma en su sustancia entera en nada difiere del Intelecto, de los dioses y de los géneros superiores” (*De Anima* 365.19–21) y ver C.G. Steel, *The changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Bruselas 1978) 23ss., teniendo en cuenta a P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1 (París 1968) 339, nota 4.

elevación de sus potencias y actos peculiares. Entidad doble, al mismo tiempo inmutable y mudable, indivisible y divisible, notas que caracterizan al Intelecto y al cuerpo, respectivamente, y que no la confunden, por lo tanto, con ninguno de ellos. Si esta esencia propia no se conoce, tampoco se conocerán sus propiedades internas y se difundirá la confusión de lo indistinto, a lo que ha colaborado una vertiente platónica.³

Esta posición se ratifica cuando se aborda el otro tema central de la primera parte del escrito, la reflexión sobre las potencias anímicas. Pues si se considera con Platón y Pitágoras que el alma se presenta en sí o en un cuerpo, lo mismo sucede para sus potencias. Pero éstas son diferentes de acuerdo con las diferencias de modos de ser del alma, correspondiéndole tanto las facultades racionales como las no racionales, pues lo que no le corresponde propiamente es la facultad inteligible.⁴

3 "Sin embargo la doctrina que al menos se opone a ésta separa al alma en tanto que genera segunda desde el Intelecto como una realidad diferente, e interpreta lo de ella junto al Intelecto como dependiente del Intelecto, junto con la existencia totalmente propia, la separa también de todos los géneros superiores, y le asigna una definición propia de su sustancia, bien el término medio entre lo divisible e indivisible <y de los géneros corpóreo e incorpóreo, o la plenitud de las razones universales, o el servicio para la demiurgia después de las ideas, o la vida que tiene vida en sí misma habiendo venido de lo inteligible, o bien la procesión de los géneros del ser realmente total en una sustancia inferior. El mismo Platón, Pitágoras, Aristóteles y todos los antiguos de los que se celebra el gran nombre por su sabiduría se vuelcan enteramente sobre estas doctrinas, si se rastrean sus doctrinas detenidamente. Nosotros trataremos de componer un tratado sobre ellas de acuerdo con la verdad" (*De Anima* 365.22-366.11). Y refiriéndose al alma particular: "Lo que es producido desde los géneros universales más divinos como alguno diría con conceptos innovadores" (*De Anima* 367.3-4). Ratifican esta postura los testimonios de Simplicio (*De Anima* 3.2a) y Prisciano en el Comentario sobre la imaginación... de Teofrasto (cf. E. Lévéque en *Les Ennéades de Plotin*, M.N. Bouillet, ed., vol. 2 [París 1859] 631, nota 2). La explicación de Jámbrico sobre la opinión similar de Aristóteles se encuentra asimismo en Simplicio, *De Anima*, prefacio (*ibid.*, 631, nota 5), a lo que se debe agregar la interpretación que hace de la lógica surgida de la conjunción de Platón con Aristóteles a través del Pseudo Arquitas (cf. Simplicio, *In Aristotelis Categorías Commentarium* 2.9-26 (I. Hadot, *Simplicius, Commentaire sur les Catégories*, vol. 1 [1990] 5-7) y ver B. Dalsgaard Larsen, "La Place de Jámbrico dans la Philosophie Antique Tardive" en "De Jámbrico à Proclus," *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* 21 [Genève 1975] 11ss.). Sobre la definición neoplatónica escolar del alma como intermediaria retomada en sentido propio por Jámbrico, cf. Porfirio, *Sententiae ad Intelligibilia Ducentes* V y ver A. Smith, *Porphyrus's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague 1974) 47ss.

4 "Plotino le quita las potencias irracionales, las sensaciones, las representaciones sensibles, los recuerdos y los razonamientos. Sólo lo razonable puro tiende hacia la esencia pura del alma, en tanto que posee una potencia connatural a la idea de la sustancia del alma... Platón produce potencias de sí mismas y de los vivientes, dividiendo cada una según el tipo de vida. Plotino y Porfirio declaran que las potencias convenientes a cada parte del universo son emitidas por el alma y precisan que las vidas, como quiera que esto sea posible, que según este modo han sido emitidas, se desvanecen como sucede a los seres naturales salidos de la semilla cuando la semilla corre subiendo hacia sí. Pero quizás se podría pensar innovadora y no inverosímilmente que éstas también existen en el universo y que no se destruyen. Tales siendo las potencias más comunes hay también otras potencias del alma que le son propias, sin constituir, sin embargo, una parte esencial, como la memoria que es retención de la imagen" (*De Anima* 369.20-370.13). Ver asimismo Simplicio, *In Aristotelis Categorías Commentarium* 374.24ss. (Lévéque [más arriba, nota 3] 637, nota 2 y A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 3 [París 1953] 196). La caracterización de Jámbrico de las potencias anímicas según Plotino es bastante completa e indica cómo ha cambiado su exposición en relación con Platón al haberse aproximado a la psicología aristotélica (cf. H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology. His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* [The Hague 1971] 20-44). Cf. D.P. Taormina, "Le Dynamis dell'Anima. Psicologia ed Etica in Giamblico" en *The Divine*

Pero también el alma se distingue por sus actividades. De este modo al haberse admitido con Platón que el alma tiene una vida doble,⁵ independiente y en comunicación con el cuerpo, se puede advertir que poseerá también funciones que ejecuta que son sólo de ella (el entusiasmo y la intelección inmaterial) y otras que son comunes a ella y al ser animado, como la sensación, aunque entendiendo que la causa de estos actos es el alma según sea la modalidad de existencia que posea en cada caso.⁶

Ahora bien, si según la independencia o composición se advierte que hay diversas actividades del alma de las que siempre ella es el origen, se debe sostener que estos actos serán diferentes por su perfección y serán diversos, porque admiten una clasificación según géneros y especies anímicos: unos serán del alma universal, otros, puros e inmateriales de las almas divinas, y diferentes los eficaces de los demonios, los grandes de los héroes, los mortales de los animales y hombres y los restantes.⁷

Es ahora cuando Jámblico teniendo presente un momento clave en el desarrollo de la enseñanza de Plotino sobre el alma, la *Enéada* 4.8: "Sobre la bajada del alma a los cuerpos," completa el cuadro de los actos que cumplen las almas y con ese fin toma en cuenta el origen de su estado actual en el mundo. Al ampliar el enfoque introduce, entonces, un nuevo elemento de análisis que se relaciona con el descenso del alma y que anticipa así su subsiguiente tratamiento. A esta observación preliminar pertenece, pues, el contenido del pasaje leído. Pero para esclarecer su

Iamblichus. Philosopher and Man of Gods, H.J. Blumenthal y E.G. Clark, eds. (London 1993) 30ss.

⁵ Cf. *De Anima* 368.3. Ver *De Mysteriis* 3.3.

⁶ Cf. *De Anima* 370.14–372.2. Cf. asimismo *De Mysteriis* 3.4–5 teniendo en cuenta las distinciones de A. Sheppard en *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods* (más arriba, nota 4) 138–43.

⁷ "Pero habría otra opinión no desechable, la que clasificando los actos de las almas según géneros y especies, haría unos los de las almas totalmente universales, otros, los puros e inmateriales de las almas divinas, diferentes los actos eficaces de las demoníacas, los grandes de las heroicas, los mortales de los animales y de los hombres, e igualmente los restantes. Hechas estas divisiones también los enlazados a éstos encerrarán la distinción semejante. Porque los que extienden por doquier un alma única y la misma en género o especie como parece hacerlo Plotino... Pero los que habiéndolas distribuido con superior firmeza y habiendo sostenido que las procesiones primeras, segundas y terceras de las sustancias anímicas proceden hacia adelante dirán (...) que los actos de las almas universales, divinas e inmateriales se completan también en la esencia, pero de ningún modo estarán de acuerdo en que los de las particulares en una sola especie y divididas en los cuerpos serán idénticos con los actos que cumplen... Digamos ya también, por consiguiente, que los actos de las almas universales y más divinas son no mezclados por la pureza de su esencia, pero que los de las materiales y divisibles no son igualmente puros. Y los de las almas que ascienden y se liberan de la generación se despojan por lo demás de los cuerpos, los de las que descienden se entrelazan y entremezclan a los cuerpos de múltiples formas. Y los de las almas que tienen por vehículo espíritus de forma constante también por medio de ellos realizan fácilmente lo que han querido y muestran sin trabajo sus actos de lo alto; pero los de las almas sembradas en cuerpos más sólidos y presas en ellos se impregnan de algún modo de su naturaleza. Del mismo modo los de las almas universales convierten hacia sí lo que gobiernan, pero los de las particulares se convierten hacia los cuerpos que cuidan" (*De Anima* 372.15–374.8). Ver *De Mysteriis* 1.4, 2.1–2 y más arriba, nota 3.

sentido en el aspecto al que nos vamos a limitar en la exposición, es oportuno recurrir a lo que opinan sobre el descenso del alma inseparable de su concepción cosmológica propia Plotino y los gnósticos en comparación con Jámblico.

Concepción Cosmogónica y Descenso Anímico

a) *Plotino*

Plotino considera que el alma como irradiación o imagen del Intelecto, inmortal e incorpórea, es una y múltiple. Una por esencia y múltiple por las manifestaciones de una unidad que siempre permanece. La multiplicidad virtual es propia del alma como uno y todo y la multiplicidad actual como animadora del mundo sensible como un todo que se extiende temporal, espacial e individualmente de forma inseparable del uno y todo anímico. De esta manera la descripción de la cosmogonía va acompañada de la descripción según el orden lógico de sucesivas psicogonías.⁸

El alma del universo como visión directa y permanente del Intelecto es un Logos universal, la razón total cósmica que se refleja inmediata y sensiblemente en las esferas y cuerpos celestiales. De este modo la astronomía que incluye número, figura, proporciones y movimientos, será la *episteme* que discursivamente traduce la pureza, inmortalidad y eternidad de los cambios ordenados de la zona superior del universo, arrastrada por el movimiento estable y circular del alma, siempre firme y que no se inclina hacia afuera del Intelecto y la Tierra participa de la naturaleza de los astros.⁹

El mundo inferior a los astros, sin embargo, es el mundo de la generación y de los movimientos irregulares de los individuos en los que se combinan orgánicamente nacimiento, crecimiento, declinación y muerte y en el que se repite inagotablemente el reemplazo de los individuos y sus capacidades en el tiempo y el espacio, y esto desde el hombre hasta los organismos vivientes mínimos que pululan en la Tierra.

Lo señalado es posible, porque la vida, es decir, la presencia de su principio, el alma, llega hasta los confines de la materia sensible.¹⁰

Hay que distinguir, por lo tanto, la generación de la materia a partir del alma como su postrer imagen indefinida y amorfa, de su información por la naturaleza que le otorga la primera vislumbre de organización vital, corporal y específica. Del mismo modo igualmente se debe distinguir la generación del cuerpo orgánico, instrumental y de especificidad particularizante, por los *λόγοι σπερματικοί*, incapaz

⁸ Por una parte cf. *Enéadas* 4.3.9.12-51 y 10.113 (puede verse F. García Bazán, *Neoplatonismo y Vedānta. La Doctrina de la Materia en Plotino y Shankara* [Buenos Aires 1982] 42-44), por otra, cf. *Enéadas* 4.2.1.42ss. y 2.40ss.; 4.9.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 3.8.4 y 5; 6.3.16.13-24 (*Respublica* 525a y ss.) y antes 4.7.10.41ss.; 4.4.22.15 hasta 27 al final y 6.7.11 y 12.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 3.4.1 y nota 8 más arriba.

de elevarse sobre la capacidad vegetativa anímica, de la animación de esas mismas razones seminales por el alma que le ha tocado en parte o su alma particular, que le proporciona vida orgánica individual.¹¹

Se dan, por consiguiente, en las *Enéadas* sucesivas irradiaciones o manifestaciones en degradación de un alma única que permanece firme junto al Intelecto: 1) el alma sin ningún tipo de resistencia llega hasta el límite en el que su poder de expansión o difusión se extingue: el sustrato material; 2) el alma se ve a sí misma borrosamente como una vida dadora de vida al cadáver material; 3) el alma desgrana sus capacidades intelectiva-racional, sensitiva y apetitiva animando por partes las moradas que le ofrece su anterior autoconciencia general, confusa o específica; 4) el alma con plena claridad de visión directa ejercita su capacidad intelectiva manifiesta en el movimiento inmutable de las esferas y menos evidente en el gobierno de los seres inferiores del universo sin dejar de ocuparse de él, pero de ninguno en particular. Este es el ideal que duerme en cada hombre y que es idéntico al que cumple el alma universal.¹²

El tema relevante del descenso del alma, por lo tanto, según Plotino, no toca al alma del universo, pero tampoco al alma natural, que prosigue con normalidad el proceso anímico de emanación por contemplación, como totalidad productiva de los organismos específicos, sino que corresponde a las almas que vienen a vitalizar a esos organismos y que poseyendo capacidades de ejercicio incorpóreas, sin embargo, las ponen al servicio de las partes y así se particularizan, con ello animan y embellecen al mundo, pero también rebajan su potencia preocupándose o limitándose a una parte.¹³ Por eso la venida de las almas es al mismo tiempo voluntaria y forzosa. Voluntaria porque hay capacidad para regir a la parte y esto lleva a un movimiento espontáneo de descenso en el todo ordenado naturalmente, forzosa, porque hay un llamado desde el cuerpo orgánico que exige el descenso para completarse. Este aspecto del descenso no es ciertamente querido por el alma animadora, puesto que no es lo mejor para ella, ya que implica el riesgo de la reencarnación y el encierro cósmico cíclico, pero se combina con el anterior y esto le posibilita mejorarse por la virtud de manera que consiga recuperar su verdadera esencia para residir en el cuerpo particular como si no estuviera en él, sino gobernándolo como alma universal. Pero el perfeccionamiento virtuoso sería incompleto, si no se pudiera experimentar el arquetipo de la virtud presente en cada

¹¹ Cf. *Enéadas* 4.4.13.14 y 20 y 3.8.2.27-34. Al hablar de "cuerpo específico" nos referimos al conjunto que Plotino denomina "tal cuerpo," es decir, el "cuerpo vivificado" o "caracterizado," más formado que el simplemente viviente y que se ofrece como el receptáculo conveniente para recibir al alma particular. Ver las indicaciones de Blumenthal (más arriba, nota 4) 61 y 65 y el largo desarrollo de J. Igal, "Aristóteles y la Evolución de la Antropología de Plotino," *Pensamiento* 35 (1979) 315-46. Las diversas exégesis gnósticas de *Génesis* 2.7 en torno a la plasmación del hombre y al "soplo de vida" que sobreviene al pneumático y así deja de ser reptante, tienen en cuenta implícitamente esta concepción antropológica (cf. A. Orbe, *Antropología de San Ireneo* [Madrid 1969] 67ss.).

¹² Cf. *Enéadas* 4.8.1.45-7.33; 3.9.3.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 4.7.13; 3.1.8; 3.4.1-6; 4.3.4 y 6 y 14 y 15.

forma humana inteligible e incluso elevarse más arriba, hasta unificándose plenamente entrar en contacto con lo Uno, por eso, queda una garantía y la caída del alma no es total y su parte inteligible permanece siempre en lo alto. Se trata de una difusión cuyo centro permanece estable para poder intelectivamente recomponerse.¹⁴

Tiene razón, por lo tanto, Jámblico cuando como hemos visto, alude en el pasaje que nos ocupa por dos veces a la causa de la caída del alma para Plotino. Una vez se refiere a la causa inmediata y real, el alma vegetativa que como principio de la generación orgánica apela a la animación que le brinda el descenso del alma del individuo¹⁵ y, la otra, a la causa mediata y última, a la alteridad o diferencia, principio del sustrato material, que desde la materia sensible se organiza por los λόγοι σπερματικοί específicos y llama a los principios anímicos particulares que le dan vida orgánica.¹⁶

b) Los Gnósticos

Pero lo descrito en las *Enéadas* no funciona igualmente entre los gnósticos. En este tema de la cosmogonía y el descenso del alma la realidad actúa al revés para los gnósticos, por eso Plotino se irrita contra estos aparentes platónicos y no sabe muy bien adónde asestar los golpes de su crítica.

Para el gnóstico primero se cumple el descenso del Intelecto a causa de la caída (σφάλμα) de Sofía u ocultamiento del Pleroma, después viene la creación demiúrgica visiblemente plasmada (material y psíquica), corrupta, ilusoria, falsa y transitoria, aunque al mismo tiempo, paralela y encubiertamente al servicio de la liberación del nous/pneuma, como cumplidora del plan salvífico de Sabiduría o la dispensación (οικονομία) del Logos.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 4.8.5 al comienzo y ver F. García Bazán, "La Descente et l'Ascension de l'Âme selon Plotin et la Polémique Antignostique" en *Psychanodia. Religions Mystériques et Destinée Eschatologique de l'Âme*, a aparecer en *Analecta Lovaniensia Periodica* con la coordinación de A. & D. Sismanian. Sobre la parte que no desciende del alma cf. *Enéadas* 4.7.4.31-32 y 13.12-15; 4.8.4.31-32 y 8: "Y si hay que tener la osadía de expresar con más claridad el propio parecer en contra de la opinión de los demás, ni siquiera el alma humana se adentró toda ella en el cuerpo, sino que hay algo de ella que está siempre en la región inteligible;" *Ibid.*, 3.4.3 al final; 4.1; 4.3.12 al comienzo; 2.9.2, etc. En relación con las formas inteligibles de los individuos cf. *ibid.*, 5.9.12-13; 5.7; 4.3.5.

¹⁵ Cf. *Enéadas* 3.4; 3.3.12 y 13.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 2.4.16 al comienzo y ver 5.1.1 y 5.2.2.4-7 (García Bazán [más arriba, nota 8] 15ss.).

¹⁷ Cf. *Tratado Tripartito* (Nag Hammadi Codex 1.5) 95.38-104.3. Sobre *oikonomia*, cf. J. Fantino, *La Théologie d'Irénée. Lecture des Écritures en Réponse à l'Exégèse Gnostique. Une Approche Trinitaire* (Paris 1994) 85ss.

Plotino o bien porque no lo conocía por sus lecturas limitadas de las enseñanzas de los discípulos de Valentín a los que combate,¹⁸ o bien porque le resultaba difícil de encuadrar dentro de sus esquemas mentales, expone confusamente estas ideas.

Insiste en que el alma Universal no se inclina, dobla o tuerce hacia abajo (νεύσις κάτω), como darían a entender los gnósticos como consecuencia de la caída de Sofía, que la que desciende es el alma particular, y se preocupa, por consiguiente, en fustigar, no la causa de la caída del alma/Sofía, sobre lo que nada dice, sino la causa de la creación del mundo por el demiurgo ignorante a partir de la sustancia material que obedece, sin saberlo, a la Madre/Sophía Achamoth, que lo inspira.¹⁹ Todo lo dicho, por otra parte, reconoce el antecedente previo de la caída de Sofía y el descenso de sus miembros pneumáticos en una mezcla corrupta y engañosa que los dispersa y oculta, hechos previos que combinados con el designio de Sofía en favor de los pneumáticos incorruptibles tanto en la plasmación antropológica como cósmica, les permitirá liberarse de una providencia inferior y demiúrgica que los oprime y está destinada a consumirse y les posibilitará la redención rescatándolos en el Pleroma.²⁰

En este punto parece que Jámblico dispuso de una información que Plotino no pudo manejar. Es cierto que Jámblico equipara el alma particular de los pensadores griegos con el *nous/pneuma* de los gnósticos; pero esto es más un síntoma polémico y una ratificación de la precisión de su información sobre el tema que prueba de confusión, porque caracteriza con exactitud la causa de su descenso, antecedente inconfundible de los gnósticos comparados con los griegos.

En primer lugar, tanto Jámblico como Plotino, aunque este último argumente contra seguidores de Valentín, son rigurosamente técnicos al referirse a estos pensadores como los "gnósticos," o sea, como "los que poseen el conocimiento,"²¹ pues ésta es su denominación propia y no las particulares derivadas de maestros y

18 Cf. *Enéadas* 2.9.10, 11 y 12 y F. García Bazán, *Gnosis. La Esencia del Dualismo Gnóstico* (Buenos Aires 1978) 206-14, ratificado ahora por M. Tardieu, "Les Gnostiques dans la Vie de Plotin" en *Porphyre. La Vie de Plotin*, L. Brisson y otros, eds., vol. 2 (París 1992) 519-20 y 544-5.

19 Cf. *Enéadas* 2.9.4.

20 Cf. *Tratado Tripartito*, más arriba, nota 17. La inclinación de Sophía cubre una trayectoria circular de caída de 180° sin abandonar el Pleroma. Recupera, por lo tanto, su postura original y eternamente firme, en dos movimientos consecutivos de ascenso, 90° por la επιστροφή-μετάνοια y los otros 90° por la providencia superior que se despliega en el tiempo escatológico, completando un círculo que envuelve al círculo cósmico que una vez completada su función cooperadora de la salvación, desaparece. Se explica de este modo la importancia que adquieren los datos astrológicos en documentos como el *Discurso sobre el Octavo* y el *Noveno* (Nag Hammadi Codex 6.6) y el *Pensamiento Trimorfo* (Nag Hammadi Codex 13), ver más abajo.

21 Cf. *Testimonio Verdadero* (Nag Hammadi Codex 9.3) 36.8-9; Plotino, *Enéadas* 2.9.15.23-25; *Evangelio de la Verdad* (Nag Hammadi Codex 1.3) 21.10-11; Clemente de Alejandría, *Stromateis* 3.30.1; Ireneo de Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* 1.11.1; Hipólito, *Elenchos* 5.6.4-5, etc.

escuelas que les atribuyen y ponen de relieve los diversos heresiólogos desde Justino de Roma, Ireneo de Lyon e Hipólito de Roma.²²

El gnóstico es “el que tiene el conocimiento,” porque ha pasado de la ignorancia al saber, de la tiniebla a la luz, lo que lo transforma: “Como sucede con la ignorancia de una persona, que una vez que conoce se desvanece su ignorancia, como se desvanece la oscuridad cuando aparece la luz, del mismo modo también se desvanece la deficiencia ante la perfección.”²³

Por supuesto, que este retorno o desocultamiento de la luz no sólo transforma, sino que asimismo posibilita la profundización de la naturaleza luminosa como una gradual transformación espiritual o iluminación progresiva de la intimidad reconocida, por ese motivo: “No sólo es el bautismo el que libera, sino también la gnosis” y los ritos de iniciación a partir del bautismo son inseparables del conocimiento en el ámbito inteligible hasta rematar en el seno paterno, la Barbelognosis que permite la pronunciación del Nombre indecible del Padre Uno al conocersele como él lo ha querido desde siempre.²⁴ Esta es también la razón por la que sostenían los gnósticos “amigos” de Plotino, que “Platón no había penetrado la profundidad del ser inteligible.”²⁵

Pero Jámbllico tiene noticias de algo que Plotino asimismo sospecha, pero que no sabe explicar, que hay para los gnósticos una causa del descenso del alma y la caracteriza como: “un desvarío (παράνοια) o desviación (παρέκβασις) del alma.”

La erudición insondable del Festugière quedaba perpleja ante ambas expresiones y sólo atinaba a decir que Plotino no registra este vocabulario en *Enéadas* 2.9.²⁶

B.A. Pearson más recientemente, advertido por M. Tardieu, se refería a esta alusión de Jámbllico, señalando junto con otros argumentos la importancia que este maestro neoplatónico reviste para atar cabos sueltos en las vinculaciones entre los gnósticos y los pensadores neoplatónicos y viceversa.²⁷

22 Iniciando la línea cf. Justino de Roma, *Prima Apología pro Christianis* 26 y *Diálogo con Trifón* 35.6.

23 Cf. *Evangelio de la Verdad* 24.32–25.3. Ver asimismo 21.25–22.19.

24 Cf. Clemente de Alejandría, *Extractos de Theodoto* 78.2 y particularmente: *Testimonio Verdadero* 55.8–9 y 69.7–28; *Pensamiento Trimorfo* (Nag Hammadi Codex 13) 45.12–20 y 48.15–35; *Las Tres Estelas de Set* (Nag Hammadi Codex 7.5) 127.13–24; *Discurso sobre el Octavo y el Noveno* (Nag Hammadi Codex 6.6) 62.33–63.14; *Oración de Acción de Gracias* (Nag Hammadi Codex 6.7) 63.33–65.7.

25 Cf. *Enéadas* 2.9.6 y Porfirio, *Vita Plotini* 16.

26 Cf. Festugière (más arriba, nota 4) 210, nota 2. Puede agregarse que en ninguna otra parte de sus lecciones. Lévéque ([más arriba, nota 3] 645, nota 3) remitía a *Enéadas* 2.9.10 que se refiere a la caída de Sofía y de sus miembros a causa de ella, pero no a la causa de ésta como un “desvarío o desviación” que es lo que Jámbllico ilustra con exclusividad como fuente indirecta.

27 Cf. “Theurgic Tendencies in Gnosticism and Iamblichus’ Conception of Theurgy” en *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, R.T. Wallis y J. Bergman, eds. (Albany 1992) 267.

En el tema de la causa del traspíe de Sabiduría, sin embargo, hay una referencia desafortunada de San Ireneo que no sólo aleja de la letra de Jámblico, sino que asimismo ha sido motivo de desorientación para los intérpretes que han querido entender el motivo del desliz de Sofía.

Escribe San Ireneo que unos valentinianos dicen:

El Intelecto reflexionaba comunicar también al resto de los eones la grandeza del Padre, cuán grande e inmensa fuese su existencia y que entendieran de qué manera era sin principio, inabarcable e incomprensible. Pero el Silencio lo retuvo por voluntad del Padre, porque quería conducirlos a todos al pensamiento y al deseo de la búsqueda del mencionado Prepadre. Los demás eones igualmente, de modo parecido, de cierto modo deseaban pacíficamente ver al emisor de su simiente e informarse sobre la raíz sin principio. Pero se adelantó mucho el último y más joven eón de la Dodécada emitido por el Hombre y por la Iglesia, es decir, la Sabiduría, y experimentó una pasión sin la unión con su cónyuge, Deseado. Lo que había comenzado con los que estaban en torno al Intelecto y la Verdad, se concretó en ésta que cambió, con excusa por amor (*ἀγάπη*) pero habiendo sido por audacia (*τόλμα*), porque no tenía comunidad con el Padre perfecto, como la tenía el Intelecto. La pasión era búsqueda del Padre, pues quería, como dicen, comprender su grandeza. Puesto que no podía, por haberse lanzado a una empresa imposible, estaba en una lucha intensísima a causa de la grandeza del Abismo, de la inescrutabilidad del Padre y del amor (*στοργή*) hacia él, de modo que tendía a ir siempre más adelante por la dulzura de aquél, hasta que al fin habría quedado absorbido y disuelto en la sustancia total de no haberse encontrado con la Potencia que consolida y conserva a las totalidades fuera de la inefable Grandeza.²⁸

Los valentinianos de la noticia de Hipólito de Roma ofrecen el mismo contenido sobre el origen de la caída de Sabiduría, pero una versión diferente en la que no hay mención de la "audacia."²⁹

Los Extractos de Theodoto se refieren al mismo tema en relación con el conocimiento: "Pero el Eón que quiso captar lo que está sobre el conocimiento llegó a ser ignorante y amorfo. Por lo tanto produjo un vacío de conocimiento que es sombra del Nombre, que es el Hijo, la Forma de los Eones. De este modo el nombre particular de los Eones es la pérdida del Nombre. Así, pues, en el Pleroma, si existe unidad cada uno de los Eones tiene la plenitud propia, la pareja (*συζυγία*). Por esto dicen que cuanto proviene de la pareja es plenitud, pero cuanto viene de uno solo es imagen."³⁰

Estas explicaciones nos orientan mucho mejor hacia el contenido de la causa del traspíe de Sofía que las noticias explicativas de San Ireneo y que en confirmación el *Tratado Tripartito* como una respuesta reflexiva al alegato antignostico de Plotino, describe de este modo:

28 Cf. *Adversus Haereses* 1.2.1-2.

29 Cf. *Elenchos* 6.30.6-7.

30 Cf. Clemente de Alejandría, *Extractos de Theodoto* 31.3-4 y 32.1. Idéntica combinación de conocimiento y deseo voluntario se ratifica en las diversas recensiones del "Apócrifo de Juan," *Papyrus Berolinensis* 36.16-37.18 (= *Nag Hammadi Codex* 3.14.9-15.9 y 2.9.25-10.7).

Esto sucedió a uno de los Eones que intentó comprender la inconcebibilidad y darle gloria, y asimismo la inefabilidad del Padre, [y] era un Logos de la Unidad [y] era uno, aunque sin existir a partir del acuerdo de las Totalidades ni desde el que los produjo, pues el que produjo el Todo es el Padre. Porque este Eón estaba entre aquéllos a los que le fue dada la sabiduría [y] que existían previamente cada uno en el Pensamiento, puesto que porque ha querido ellos han sido producidos. Por esto recibió una naturaleza sabia; para examinar el orden oculto, puesto que es un fruto de sabiduría; porque la voluntad libre que fue generada con las Totalidades era causa para éste para hacer 76 lo que quisiera, sin ninguna restricción para él. Porque la elección (προαίρεσις), entonces, de este Logos era buena. Una vez que se lanzó para dar gloria al Padre, aun cuando hubiera emprendido algo que superara su capacidad al querer producir un ser perfecto, a partir de un acuerdo en el que no estaba y sin poseer el control. Pues este Eón era el último al haber sido producidos para asistencia mutua y era el más joven de edad. Y antes de que engendrara algo otro para la gloria de la voluntad y de acuerdo, empero, con las [Totalida]des actuó irreflexivamente, por un amor (ἀγάπη) desbordante, y avanzó hacia lo que rodea a la gloria perfecta, porque no fue contra la voluntad del Padre que este Logos fue engendrado, es decir, que tampoco contra ella iba a avanzar. Pero el Padre lo había producido para que estas cosas que sabía que eran necesarias sucedieran. Pues ciertamente el Padre y las Totalidades se separaron de él, para que sea afirmado el límite que el Padre había establecido, porque éste no existe a partir de captar la inaccesibilidad, sino por la voluntad 77 del Padre, y además para que sucedan las cosas que han llegado a ser, para una organización (οἰκονομία) futura, pues no convenía que no existiera, en la manifestación del Pleroma. Por consiguiente no es conveniente censurar (κατηγορεῖν) el movimiento que es el Logos, si[no] que es conveniente que digamos sobre [el] movimiento del Logos que es causa de una organización que ha sido destinada a existir. Porque, de una parte, el Logos se generó como ser perfecto, como uno [so]lo para la gloria del Padre, que lo ha querido, y estaba satisfecho con él, por otra parte, lo que quiso retener y alcanzar lo engendró como sombras, imágenes (εἰδωλον) y semejanzas, porque no fue capaz de sostener la visión de [la] luz, pero miró a la profundidad y dudó. A partir de aquí hubo una división y una desviación. De esta duda y división <nacieron> olvido e ignorancia de sí mismo y <de lo> que es. Pues su movimiento hacia arriba y su intento por comprender lo incomprensible quedó firme para él y estaba en él. Pero las enfermedades que le persiguieron cuando estuvo fuera de sí, han tomado nacimiento de su duda, es decir, <de que no fue capaz de aproximarse> a las glorias del Padre, aquél cuya eminencia es ilimitada.³¹

(*Tratado Tripartito* 75.19-77.33)

Este pasaje pertenece dentro del escrito a la sección que se ocupa de la "generación imperfecta del Logos."³² La sección comienza ratificando la naturaleza del "tercer fruto."³³

El adverbio de modo "irreflexivamente" (*Tratado Tripartito* 76.19) traduce la expresión parafrástica copta HEN OUMENTOČ MMEEUE, literalmente, "con grandeza mental," "con mente señorial," o si se prefiere, "pensando poderosamente,"

³¹ Sobre nuestra traducción de éste y otros escritos gnósticos, cf. A. Piñero, J.M. Torrents, F. García Bazán, *Textos Gnósticos. Biblioteca de Nag Hammadi I. Escritos Filosóficos y Cosmológicos* (Madrid 1997).

³² *Tratado Tripartito* 74.18-80.11.

³³ *Ibid.*, 74.18-22: "Porque los Eones, por otra parte, se han dado a luz de acuerdo con el tercer fruto por el libre albedrío de la voluntad y por la sabiduría con que los favoreció por su Pensamiento."

forma reflejada por la versión copta que parece haberse inspirado en *Respublica* 6.486a: μεγαλοπρέπεια διάνοια.

Es decir que el último de los eones, el Logos que es Sabiduría/Razón, avanza con mente libre de sujeción, porque su conducta es el resultado de un simultáneo acto libre de imprudencia que no refleja una realidad superior. La irreflexión o imagen vacía iniciada en un imprudente deseo (ἄσοφία) al que ella misma alienta con su vacuidad, lo ha llevado a sufrir un traspíe (σφάλμα) origen de un cosmos fantástico e ilusorio, ya que al tropezar con el mismo obstáculo (σκάνδαλον) que ha generado, ha caído, se ha inclinado o doblado hacia adelante, debe recuperar su posición primera enderezándose (διόρθωμα) y con su actividad rescatar lo que le es propio y hacer desaparecer la causa y consecuencias de la caída que son "imágenes, sombras e ilusiones, faltas de logos y de luz, que pertenecen al pensamiento vano . . . son a partir de lo que no existió para volver de nuevo a lo que no existirá" (*Tratado Tripartito* 78.32-79.2). Todo esto ha seguido un proceso de rescate en el que los elementos en relación con las virtudes del orden pneumático, la potencia intelectual escindida del fundamento inteligible y la recuperación de la unidad eterna, para siempre sin posibilidad de ruptura o inamisible, es puesta al descubierto y con ello también el absurdo de la preocupación por el cosmos sensible y racional, pasajero por ser corrupto, surgido de un acto fallido que tan ridículo es sostener que ha sido creado como que ha sido fabricado.

Mientras que Plotino parece haber conocido ejemplares de la doctrina valentiniana sintéticos o mediocres,³⁴ Jámblico parece que en este punto clave para la polémica de los neoplatónicos contra los gnósticos, ya que se trata de la razón precósmica por la que se explica por qué: "el creador del mundo y el mundo son malos," ha leído y comprendido un material más apropiado que le permite sintetizar la idea de la causa de la caída de Sofía y del descenso de sus miembros (= al descenso de las almas) con una precisión que completa a Plotino y corrige la imagen engañosa heredada a partir de Ireneo de Lyon al estar de acuerdo con las fuentes originales.

Es posible, por lo tanto, que la confrontación de ideas haya seguido con esta corriente del neoplatonismo en términos de diálogo, y que las distinciones entre ambas posiciones hayan ganado en claridad teórica mutua.

c) Jámblico

El filósofo originario de Calcis, como lo hemos visto, quiere facilitar una doctrina sobre el alma que supere a la poco clara de sus antecesores platónicos basándose en la tradición. Con este fin se afirma en la definición general de la sustancia del alma como "intermedia," naturaleza peculiar en la que estriban las propiedades de sus facultades y actos, una vez que se atiende a los diferentes géneros de almas (universal y particular) y a sus clases (alma del universo y alma natural; almas divinas, demoníacas, heroicas y angélicas; almas de vivientes mortales). La

nitidez de la definición, por una parte, con el apoyo de la clasificación, por otra, le da una precisión a su tentativa con los que cree superar los ensayos bien encaminados, pero imprecisos de Plotino y sus seguidores. Al ingresar, pues, en el tratamiento de las diferencias sobre el descenso de las almas, escribe:

Plotino, Porfirio y Amelio sostienen que todas las almas a partir del alma hipercósmica se instalan en los cuerpos en las mismas condiciones (ἐνίσης). Pero de otro modo parece que el *Timeo* produce el primer plan (ὑπόστασις)³⁵ de las almas, puesto que el Demiurgo las distribuye a todas en relación con las familias superiores (κρείττονα γένη) y a través de todo el cielo y en todos los elementos del universo. Por consiguiente la siembra demiúrgica de las almas se dividirá de acuerdo con las divinas demiúrgias y la primera procesión de las almas coexistirá, llevando ésta consigo lo que acoge a las almas: el alma universal, al mundo entero, y las almas de los dioses visibles, a las esferas celestes, las de los elementos a los elementos mismos junto a los cuales también han sido reunidas por la suerte las almas de acuerdo con cada sorteo individual, a partir de los cuales, pues, se realizan los descensos de las almas, diferentes de acuerdo con los diferentes sorteos, como lo da a entender claramente la ordenación del *Timeo*.³⁶

(Plato, *Timaeus* 377.11ss.)

Es decir que expansión cósmica y animación del universo coexisten, pero en un escenario que ofrece dos actos diversos: 1) se da el espectáculo total ordenado por el alma universal y dentro de este cuadro el que ofrecen las almas particulares superiores con sus facultades y conductas perfectas, las de las estrellas, las de los planetas y las de los seres encósmicos sobrenaturales (dioses, demonios, héroes y ángeles) y 2) con posterioridad llega el acto siguiente en el que las almas particulares de los vivientes mortales reunidas según la jerarquía que les ha tocado en suerte en los astros, comienzan su diseminación o descenso en el mundo sublunar, para permitir el despliegue vital del mundo visible natural según lo quieren los dioses.

Las almas están en cuerpos porque el Demiurgo, que capta la totalidad del mundo inteligible, las ha sembrado allí.³⁷ Pero la novedad de Jámblico en contraste especialmente con Plotino y sus seguidores, consiste en admitir que de acuerdo con la tradición registrada en el *Timeo*, es el Demiurgo el que ha distribuido previamente a las almas, con una jerarquía y orden que proviene de la divina voluntad de

³⁵ Cf. H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, repr. (Oxford 1992) s.v., ὑπόστασις 2.3.

³⁶ Sobre las familias superiores ver asimismo *De Mysteriis* 1.3, 4 (con la discusión sobre las distinciones lógicas), 8, etc. y ver F.W. Cremer, *Die Chaldäischen Orakel und Jamblich De Mysteriis* (Meisenheim am Glan 1969) 80 y nota 357. Jámblico interpreta al *Timeo* 41e-42a teniendo presente la lectura de Plotino, *Enéadas* 3.4.6.17-34, la que a su vez reinterpreta según las ideas que se sugieren en *De Mysteriis* 3.28.16-21 y 9.6. Es diferente la interpretación de J.F. Finamore, *Jamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico 1985) 60-123, quien privilegia en su exégesis el fr. 85 del *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* de Proclo.

³⁷ Cf. *Timeo* 41d-e y ver los frs. 34, 36 y 44 sobre Jámblico en el *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* de Proclo (ver *Jamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. [Leiden 1973] 136-39 y 148-9). Sobre "elementos" como los astros, cf. *Oráculo Caldeo* 39 y ver G. Dellinger, voz *stoicheion*, G. Kittel y G. Friedrich, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 7.679-682.

distribución por él representada y no por la representación directa del alma,³⁸ por lo tanto, las formas de su descenso y retorno, el "camino hacia abajo y hacia arriba" con Heráclito,³⁹ no es simplemente el resultado de una cosmología basada en la contemplación, sino el origen de una cosmología que obedece al orden providente de la voluntad de los dioses, para que los dioses ofrezcan su profundidad invisible y estable como un espectáculo a través de las almas ordenadamente divididas en la procesión.⁴⁰ Por eso según que ellas acojan voluntariamente ese designio racional e intelectivamente no cognoscible, su descenso habrá sido espontáneo, siguiendo el movimiento de una procesión que es querida por el orden natural, o según que se reaccione contra él, ha sido forzado o no querido.⁴¹

Ahora bien, una vez que las almas se unen a los cuerpos hay que admitir como Plotino que en el caso del alma del universo el lazo es simple, pero que en los seres particulares es doble, porque el alma se ata a lo ya atado por la naturaleza, por eso cada alma dirige y actúa de acuerdo con su rango.⁴²

Este esquema comprensivo indicado explica también la diversidad de los descensos por los fines soterico-cosmológicos, puesto que están al servicio de la recuperación del orden original: el alma descende pura cuando viene a purificar, conservar y perfeccionar; no es totalmente impasible, si es para corregir al cuerpo y es impulsada a su pesar cuando es para castigo y juicio.⁴³ Fines, coherentemente, que están en correspondencia con las formas de vida anteriores al *primer encuentro*, porque se implantan impolutas las de aquellos que alcanzan nuevas iniciaciones, pero llenas de pasiones las carnales.⁴⁴

Y los modos de incorporación de las almas, bien sea en relación con el momento temporal o con la manera de ingreso a que obedecen, muestran también en

38 Sobre la siembra ver igualmente Numenio fr. 13 y Plotino, *Enéadas* 5.8.5. Jámblico distingue tres momentos conceptualmente diferentes: Alma como mónada imparticipada, firme en identidad y visión (fr. 54), Alma y primera procesión: "la primerísima entrada en el ser" (fr. 88.7—Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia* 69, 81, 84 y 85) y la que descende en el mundo sublunar.

39 En relación con la importancia cósmica y ritual del fr. 60 de Heráclito. Cf. *Las Tres Estelas de Set* 127.20–21 y *Discurso sobre el Octavo y el Noveno* 56.14–22 y ver más abajo nota 44.

40 Contrástese con Plotino, *Enéadas* 3.8.7: "que las realidades que llegan a ser en cuanto son imágenes de los seres muestran que el que produce no tiene como fin, respecto de lo producido, las producciones ni las acciones, sino que produce la obra para ser contemplada."

41 Cf. *ibid.*, 2.9.8.39–43 y ver Jámblico, fr. 88.

42 Cf. *De Anima* 379.12–25, ver *Enéadas* 2.9.7.

43 Cf. *De Anima* 380.6–14 y 454.10–22; 455.1–5; 455.7–12; 455.18–25 y 455.25–456.19; 456.22–28.

44 Cf. *De Anima* 380.19–29, de nuevo la distinción entre primera procesión y descenso sublunar. Sobre νεοτελείς, cf. fr. 7 (Hermias) y ver *Fedro* 250e, en el medio cristiano, G.W.H. Lampe, *Lexicon Patristicum* (Oxford y New York 1961, repr. 1976) 904–905. Se reactualiza el origen esporádicamente por la teúrgia—cf. *De Mysteriis* 1.12.21; 4.2 y la distinción de 5.15; ver más abajo, nota 63—hasta alcanzarse el origen primordial de los retornos cósmicos.

Jámblico una originalidad que depende de su entendimiento sistemático del alma y de sus diversas jerarquías. Por eso en cuanto al tiempo la incorporación es progresiva, pues de no ser así cualquier alma podría habitar en cualquier cuerpo. Es la madurez somática la que retiene su modo propio de vida.⁴⁵ Concordantemente la simbiosis señalada es la que reclama que las almas incorporadas se distingan por la forma propia como usan al cuerpo para cumplir sus funciones en el compuesto.⁴⁶

Obviamente siendo diferente la distribución de las almas en las familias superiores e inferiores, la posibilidad de convivencia entre las almas humanas y divinas durante el transcurso de los períodos cósmicos ofrecerá dificultades prácticas y de comprensión, pero no originalmente, por eso Jámblico resuelve el obstáculo ratificando la posibilidad de la convivencia como se da en el comienzo.⁴⁷

Por otra parte, el fenómeno de la muerte, la cesación y separación de la vida en el compuesto psicosomático del viviente mortal, es lógicamente para Jámblico indisoluble del alma como inmortal, pero asimismo una consecuencia confirmatoria de su teoría general, por eso la preexistencia anímica independiente exige que cada alma con sus propias potencias recupere su lugar primero en las moradas astrales correspondientes, siendo, podría deducirse, la luna la residencia de la vida irracional particular.⁴⁸ Y es en esta reconquista paradigmática de la historia primordial del cosmos como viviente animado que debe cuidarse y conservarse como donación divina, en donde la enseñanza sobre el vehículo etéreo, exigencia intermediaria de un cuerpo sutil tanto antropológica como teúrgica que colabora en esta tarea, reclama sus derechos a la existencia permanente.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Cf. *De Anima* 381.6-14. Diversamente lo resuelve Plotino, al apoyarse en la visión borrosa de la naturaleza y el relajamiento de las capacidades anímicas en la existencia, lo que permite que un cuerpo de animal e incluso de planta pueda reclamar y albergar a un alma superior. Por eso admite la reencarnación entre los diferentes reinos, lo que Jámblico rechaza.

⁴⁶ Aquí Jámblico ratifica la enseñanza general, cf. *De Anima* 382.11-16.

⁴⁷ Cf. *De Anima* 382.18-24. Esta preocupación por la *politeia* está también presente en el *Tratado Tripartito* 59.11-16; 71.18-23, etc., ver F. García Bazán, "Voies de l'Ésotérisme Occidental: les Communautés Initiatiques Gnostiques et Hérmetico-Gnostiques," *Politica Hermética* 9 (1995), aunque en contraste Jámblico, como Plotino (cf. Porfirio, *Vita Plotini* 12 y *Enéadas* 1.2.1-2), han tratado de ofrecer una respuesta también inmanente (ver D.J. O'Meara, "Aspects of Political Philosophy in Iamblichus" en *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods* [más arriba, nota 4] 65-73).

⁴⁸ Cf. *De Anima* 384.19-28. Sobre la importancia de la luna como la residencia de las almas más próximas a la caída véase Plutarco, *De Facie* 942-943. También Dillon ha prestado atención a esta obra en relación con el *De Anima*, pero en otra dirección (cf. "The Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory" en *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, B. Layton, ed., vol. 1 [Leiden 1980] 357-65). Cf. Proclo, fr. 70 de *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii*.

⁴⁹ Cf. *De Anima* 385.1-10. Sobre ἀγγελὸς = ἄγγελον, cf. *Oráculo Caldeo* 157.

Finalmente, entonces, las explicaciones dadas acerca del retorno de las almas son como consecuencia de la doctrina de la esencia del alma y sus capacidades la imagen invertida de la enseñanza sobre el descenso y su ratificación.⁵⁰

Podría sostenerse, entonces, en la línea de relectura neoplatónica, que en tanto que para Plotino el movimiento anímico de descenso y ascenso se justifica en la debilidad de visión de la hipóstasis alma, como un Logos que dificultosamente capta la plenitud de la Prónoia inteligible, para Jámblico el mismo fenómeno se transforma, justificándose en la necesidad de respetar la intimidad inescrutable de una Providencia que es antes voluntad de donación plena que totalidad inteligible.

Jámblico y la Tradición Primordial sobre el alma: Plotino, los Gnósticos y los Oráculos Caldeos

Jámblico hace una referencia precisa a los gnósticos en *De Anima* 375.9, según se ha visto, aunque se pueden asimismo adivinar otras alusiones menos visibles en este escrito.⁵¹

B.A. Pearson en el trabajo anteriormente citado proporciona sugerencias en relación con el extenso fragmento del *Marsanes* (*Nag Hammadi Codex* 9) referente a las formas que adquiere el alma en su descenso y a los ritos acompañados de fórmulas orales y movimiento que permiten su ascensión. Esto parece una buena pista, pero ella reclama nuevas orientaciones.⁵²

Llama igualmente la atención que Dillon se refiera en varias oportunidades al lenguaje "gnóstico hermético" de Jámblico en la *Respuesta del Maestro Abamón a la*

50 Cf. asimismo nota 43 y *De Mysteriis* 8.8. Sobre el vehículo astral, cf. en general F. García Bazán, *El Cuerpo Astral* (Barcelona 1993) y en Jámblico en particular, Finamore (más arriba, nota 36).

51 Cf. *De Anima* 456.4-11. La distinción de dos tipos de teúrgia (cf. Smith [más arriba, nota 3] 92ss.) y los acentos polémicos recogidos en *De Mysteriis*, en donde también aparece la expresión "pleroma de los dioses," puede haber tenido presente tanto el exclusivismo gnóstico rechazado por los neoplatónicos (cf. *Enéadas* 2.9.15) como la diferenciación establecida por el hermetismo gnóstico entre iniciación gnóstica y grados de iniciación pleromática (cf. *Discurso sobre el Octavo y el Noveno* 62.33-63.14: "Y el que no hubiera sido engendrado primeramente por Dios, llegue a serlo por las 'Doctrinas generales' (λόγος γενικός) y las 'Detalladas' (ἐξοδιακός). El no podrá leer lo que hay escrito en este libro, aunque su conciencia esté pura en él y no haya nada que sea vergonzoso ni lo consienta; pero de acuerdo con los grados (κατὰ βαθμός) avanzará, entrará en el camino de la inmortalidad y de este modo ingresará en la intelección de la Ogdóada que revela a la Enéada." Ver nota 56.

52 Cf. Wallis y Bergman (más arriba, nota 27) 263-66 y ver nuestra introducción a la versión española de este escrito. Si se tienen además en cuenta los progresos acerca del conocimiento de *Sobre la Escuela Pitagórica de Jámblico* (cf. D.J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* [Oxford 1989]), no se ve claramente si la obra de Jámblico precedió al *Marsanes* o viceversa, lo cierto, sin embargo, es que el escrito gnóstico se incluye dentro de un grupo de obras sucesivamente redactadas y posteriores a *Enéadas* 2.9, que comprende el *Tratado Tripartito*, las *Las Tres Estelas de Set* y ella misma.

Carta de Porfirio a Anebón, obra anterior al *De Anima*, sugerencia, además, que igualmente reclama una explicación.⁵³

Parece ser que Jámbllico, igual que Plotino en *Enéada* 4.8, ha tomado los relatos verosímiles del *Fedro* y *Timeo* platónicos tratando de mostrar el fondo compatible de dos versiones aparentemente antitéticas. Pero lo que Plotino resuelve teóricamente y dentro de una tradición de exégesis restrictivamente helénica, Jámbllico lo integra religiosamente ateniéndose a una tradición primordial universal. Entre ambos están los gnósticos que dan una solución teosófica justificada por la tradición adámica.⁵⁴

La biblioteca de Nag Hammadi nos ha ofrecido una interesante novedad en el códice 6, cuyos tres últimos escritos son hermético-gnósticos, con lo que se confirma que los gnósticos con anterioridad a autores eclesiásticos como Arnobio y Lactancio consideraron a las escrituras inspiradas por Hermes como gnósticas aplicando a la literatura hermética el mismo método de exégesis pneumática que les reprochaba Hipólito de Roma que aplicaban a otras escrituras religiosas.⁵⁵ Jámbllico puede haber conocido este tipo de literatura hermético-gnóstica. El *Discurso sobre el Octavo y el Noveno*, por ejemplo, dice:

Porque veo, veo profundidades indecibles . . . ¿Cómo te describiré el Todo? Yo soy [el Intel]lecto y) veo otro Intellecto que mueve al alma. Veo al que arrebató en un santo éxtasis . . . He encontrado el principio de la potencia que está sobre todos los poderes, el que no tiene principio. (57.31-58.13)⁵⁶

53 Cf. *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, ([más arriba, nota 37] 13) y su más reciente puesta al día en *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, W. Haase y H. Temporini, eds., 36.2 (Berlín y New York 1987) particularmente 871ss.

54 Sobre Plotino como exégeta, cf. *Enéadas* 5.1.8-9, sobre las *Las Tres Estelas de Set* ver 118.10-25 y notas 1 y 2 de nuestro comentario a la versión española. "Religiosamente" quiere decir en este caso: "retomar cuidadosamente" (Cicerón, *De Natura Deorum* 2.28.82), cf. F. García Bazán, "Religión" en *Enciclopedia Iberoamericana de Psiquiatría*, G. Vidal y otros, eds., vol. 3 (Buenos Aires 1995) 1560-73.

55 Cf. *Elenchos* 5.7.16 y ver M. Marcovich, *Hippolytus Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (Berlín 1986) 37.

56 Véanse además *Discurso sobre el Octavo y el Noveno* 52.1-6; 55.24-56.22; 57.11-18; 60.17-61.17 con nuestros comentarios a la traducción castellana y véase Jámbllico, *De Mysteriis* 5.26 (sobre los grados de la oración) y 8.1-3 (sobre la derivación divina) y ver nota 52 y más abajo nota 62. Sobre Jámbllico y el hermetismo cf. G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge 1986) 131-41. Pero, en realidad, el vocabulario tan peculiar del *De Mysteriis* 8.1-3 que se suele vincular con Porfirio, *Historia de la Filosofía*, libro 4, fr. 18 (ver A.Ph. Segonds apéndice a Porphyre, *Vie de Pythagore* [París 1982] 193-4 y el esfuerzo desesperado de A.R. Sodano, *Giamblico, I Misteri Egiziani. Abamnone lettera a Porfirio* [Milano 1984] 367-72), en relación con las entidades divinas superiores y su régimen de emisión, se ha desarrollado previa y originalmente entre los gnósticos. 'Αυτογενέτωρ y αὐτογεννήτος (= αὐτόγονος) y αὐτοπάτωρ, como imagen del Prepadre, cf. *Eugnosto el Bendito* (Nag Hammadi Codex 3.3) 75.3-7 (paralelamente, *Apócrifo de Juan* 34.8; 35.8; Ireneo de Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* 1.14.3), dice: "Se ve en sí mismo, como en un espejo, habiendo aparecido en su imagen en tanto que Padre en sí mismo (αὐτοπάτωρ), o sea, autoengendrador (αὐτογενέτωρ) y Enfrente de la vista (ἀντωνός)" (ver asimismo 77.15: αὐτογεννήτος). Προπάτωρ: "Prepadre (προπάτωρ), porque el Padre es el principio (ἀρχή) de lo que es manifestado. El es, efectivamente, el sin principio

El instrumento básico que Jámblico parece haber explotado racionalmente es el del esclarecimiento de la naturaleza de la noción del *metaxy* aplicado al modo de ser intermedio del alma, pero que excede a su realidad, puesto que se trata de una intuición fundamental para explicar la continuidad del dinamismo de lo real. No se trata de una intuición filosófica nueva, pues tanto Platón como Plotino habían tenido el concepto en cuenta en relación con la definición de lo demoníaco, pero sin extraerle las virtualidades que ofrecía para entender mejor los momentos del desarrollo de la realidad.⁵⁷

Los gnósticos clarividentes en éste como en otros aspectos del conocimiento, percibieron que no es posible que el Padre único se revele distintamente en el Hijo (= *Nous*), si previamente no le acompaña la Intención (= *Prónoia*, *Enthymesis*, *Ēnnoia*) de conocerse como Intelecto. La *Prónoia*, unión aperceptiva de voluntad y pensamiento, pero distinta del Padre, es cognoscitivamente preinteligible y posibilidad como Madre/Espíritu, de la autogeneración y regeneración del Hijo.⁵⁸

Las exigencias intelectuales de la procesión, *προβολή* o *prolatio* gnóstica, que exceden las condiciones de la *apórroia* plotiniana, se detienen correctamente en el límite de la esfera del Pleroma que se debe recuperar, puesto que los gnósticos entienden el conocimiento en principio transformador como la *νόσις* platónica, pero la gnosis final, lograda por los ritos secretos, es una ascensión o profundización de la plenitud que remata en la unión distinta de cada Eón en el seno paterno, que es como el Padre se quiere realmente conocer.⁵⁹

Jámblico parece haber admitido la condición impuesta por el pensamiento gnóstico de la importancia irremplazable del concepto de mediación para explicar el

(ἀναρχος), el Prepadre" (74.22–75.3)—siete paralelos en Ireneo de Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* 1.1.1; 2.1; 12.3 (*bis*), 12.4; 13.6; 14 (*bis*), que obviamente es "preexistente" (προόντος) e inengendrado (ἀγέννητος) (75.8–9). Pero asimismo es αὐτοφυής y αὐτόκτιστος: "Este es otro principio del conocimiento en relación con el Autoengendrado (αὐτογέννητος). El primero que apareció antes que el Todo en lo Ilimitado (ἀπέραντον) es autoconstituido (αὐτοφυής), Padre autocreado (αὐτόκτιστος), pleno de irradiante, inefable luz" (76.13–19) (cf. con *De Mysteriorum* 1.3 y *Oráculo Caldeo* 39: αὐτογενέθλος). Desde luego lo que explica Damascio en *De Principiis* sobre los dos unos y el todo inteligible, expresando lo mismo, está despojado de compromisos terminológicos y es así más artificial (cf. L.G. Westerink y J. Combès, *Damascius, Traité des Premiers Principes*, vol. 2 [París 1989] 1ss. y 25 y 27–28). La importancia que asimismo se da en el *Discurso sobre el Octavo y el Noveno* a la astrología y en otros escritos, como el *Pensamiento Trimorfo* anunciando la conclusión próxima del mundo señala asimismo interesantes semejanzas.

57 Cf. Platón, *Banquete* 203e–204b y Plotino, *Enéadas* 3.5 y *De Mysteriorum* 1.5 (16.5–17.20) y 5.18, en relación con la teurgia. La preocupación en relación con los dioses ya está en Platón, *Leyes* 10 y *Epínomis*, como señala Steel (más arriba, nota 2).

58 Cf. *Pensamiento Trimorfo* que presenta precisamente a la *Proténnoia* o Preconocimiento del Padre, como triforme por sus tres poderes: el del ser que se quiere conocer, el del deseo de conocer y el del conocimiento del ser que se desea. Se trata de la tríada de la *τριδύναμις* del Pensamiento preinteligible que se encuentra en el *Apócrifo de Juan*, *Zostrianos*, *Las Tres Estelas de Set*, *Marsanes*, *Anónimo de Bruce*, etc. y en el escrito aludida como *Voz* en el silencio del Primer Pensamiento. Puede verse nuestra versión y comentario en español.

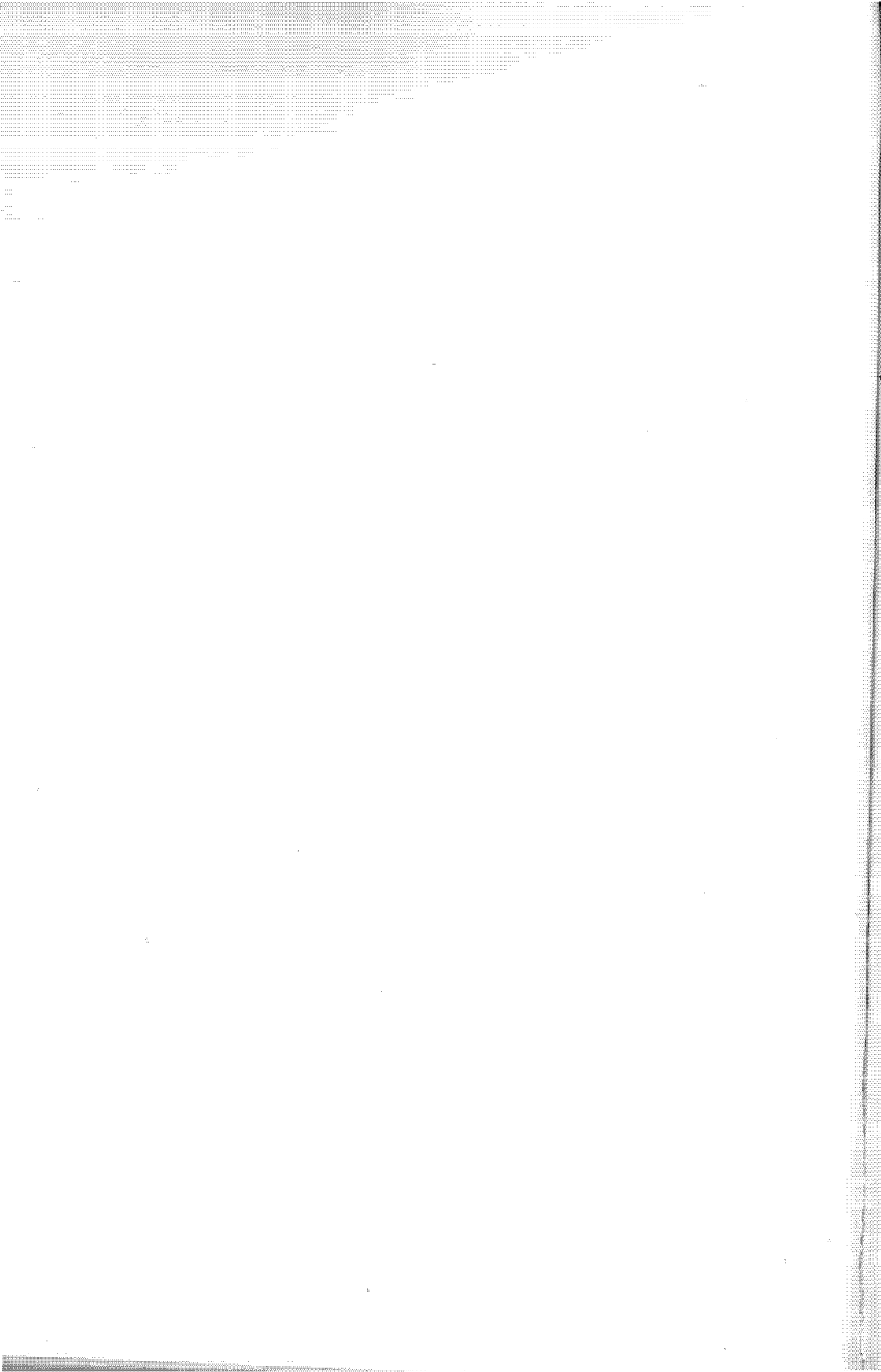
59 Cf. *Tratado Tripartito* 127.25–129.33 y relacionar con nota 51.

Este nudo de influencias doctrinales en Jámblico, neoplatónicas, gnósticas y caldaicas, mostraría el espíritu de diálogo y la fecundidad que su ejercicio cumple entre grupos de una espiritualidad próxima, pero asimismo ratificaría la significación de los gnósticos para la historia de la filosofía, ya que los contactos históricos entre el gnosticismo y el platonismo, conflictivos o amistosos, no se redujeron a los solos testimonios de la polémica antignóstica de Plotino, sino que reclamaron respuestas gnósticas que llegaron a suavizar el trato en la primera etapa del neoplatonismo hierático y a confirmar también ecos de incompatibilidad doctrinal en Porfirio y Proclo.⁶⁴

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Caldeos 120, 158 y 193, sobre el vehículo astral; *Oráculos Caldeos* 110, 113, 130 y 164, relacionan el descenso del alma y la teúrgia; *Oráculo Caldeo* 153, sobre los teúrgos y la fatalidad; *Oráculo Caldeo* 111, sobre la unión con el Sol; *Oráculos Caldeos* 107, 108, 109, 112, 119, 125, en relación con la actividad teúrgica; *Oráculo Caldeo* 118, sobre el sueño; *Oráculo Caldeo* 157, el cuerpo como vasija (ver nota 49).

⁶⁴ Cf. Porfirio, *De Abstinencia* 1.113–118 (ver el comentario de Steel [más arriba, nota 2] 38) y Proclo, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 1.333.6–9 (cf. L. Brisson, "Proclus et l'Orphisme" en *Proclus Lecteur et Interprète des Anciens*, J. Pépin y H.D. Saffrey, eds. [París 1987] 90, nota 37 a continuación de A.J. Festugière).



Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3.333.28ff.: The Myth of the Winged Charioteer according to Iamblichus and Proclus¹

R. M. van den Berg

In his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* 43c-d,² Proclus Diadochus takes issue with Plotinus on the question of whether or not some part of our soul always remains unaffected (*ἀπαθής*) and always exercises intellection (*ἀεὶ νοεῖν*). As is well-known, Plotinus originated the unorthodox view that some part of our soul always remains in contact with the world above. Because some part of us is also part of the higher realm of Intellect (*Nous*), this physical world can never affect our entire souls, no matter what happens to our bodies. The real sage is Intellect and, always exercising intellection, he enjoys perpetual happiness, even if because of unconsciousness, sickness or magic art, he is not aware that he does so.³ Having just discussed the two circles of the Same and the Other which, according to the *Timaeus*, constitute our soul and the different ways in which the movements of those two circles may be hampered when influenced by the body, Proclus, starting from this discussion, speaks freely against Plotinus and Theodorus. Anyone who wishes to maintain that something in us stays always unaffected and enjoying intellection fails to take into account the fact that Plato employs only two circles to make up the substance of the soul, two circles that may both be affected. His view, he continues, is in accordance with that of Iamblichus: "The divine Iamblichus is quite correct therefore, in attacking those who hold this opinion." As such, this argument would be enough to refute Plotinus. As are all Neoplatonists, Plotinus and Proclus are in agreement that Plato simply cannot be wrong and that a philosopher's task is to

¹ I am indebted to the participants in the conference for their stimulating criticism, especially to J.F. Finamore and C.G. Steel. I also wish to thank P.A. Meijer for his valuable advice.

² *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3.333.29ff.

³ *Enneades* 1.4.4-5, cf. e.g., J.M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge 1967) 139-52, especially 146-52.

clarify Plato's real meaning. One cannot deny that Plato in the *Timaeus* leaves no room for a third, unaffected aspect of the human soul, which means that, according to Neoplatonic standards, Plotinus' view must be wrong. Proclus proceeds, however, to give three more arguments why Plotinus must be wrong: (1) Plotinus cannot explain that we err, if something in us stays free from passions; (2) Plotinus' claim would imply that everybody is happy at this very moment, *quod non*; (3) Plotinus neglects the charioteer myth in Plato's *Phaedrus*, from which we may infer that our soul is not always in the same state. It is commonly agreed that Proclus borrowed these arguments from Iamblichus, probably from his commentary on the *Timaeus*.⁴ This passage is, therefore, considered to be a testimony to Iamblichus' psychology (*In Timaeum*, frg. 87), and a very important one at that, because Iamblichus is often considered to be responsible for the restoration of the more orthodox point of view in Neoplatonism on the soul after the "heresy" of Plotinus. Though the content of this passage is much discussed, the attribution to Iamblichus is easily taken for granted. We are offered no real arguments why it should be from Iamblichus. Only Steel offers some explanation.⁵ According to him, it is apparent from the structure of the text that Proclus adopted the arguments of Iamblichus. Steel does not, however, explain what exactly he means by this. Personally, I do not see any pressing indication in the text in favour of this attribution.⁶

My aim in this paper is to show that much of this fragment is more likely to be attributed to Proclus than to Iamblichus, especially the third argument that rests on an

⁴ Cf. A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste III, Les Doctrines de L'Âme* (Paris 1953) 252, note 3; Iamblichus Chalcidensis in *Platonis Dialogos Commentarium Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon., ed. (Leiden 1973) 382-3 and "Iamblichus of Chalcis (ca. 240-325 A.D.)" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. 2, 36.2 (Berlin and New York 1987) 894, C.G. Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius, and Priscianus* (Brussels 1978) 39, and J.F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico 1985) 149.

⁵ Steel (above, note 4) 40, note 32.

⁶ During the discussion of this paper three arguments have been put forward:

(1) It has been pointed out to me that the combination of the myth of the winged charioteer from the *Phaedrus* and the two circles of the soul from the *Timaeus* recurs elsewhere in Iamblichus, e.g. in *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3, frg. 59. This, however, is no proof that our passage originates from Iamblichus, because from *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3.59.6ff. it follows that the connection of the two passages dates at least from Porphyry. Besides, in our text, the images are not combined, but referred to as two independent arguments against Plotinus.

(2) The notion of sin (e.g., frg. 87.12, τὸ ἀμαρτάνων ἐν ἡμῖν) would be typical of Iamblichus. This simply is not true. The verb ἀμαρτάνω and its derivatives occur frequently in Proclus. In *Hymn* 1.35, for example, he prays to be purified of all sin; the notion is used *passim* in the eight doubt of the *Ten Doubts concerning Providence* (the Greek version of Isaac Sebastokrator has ἀμαρτάνω and its derivatives, the Latin version of Moerbeke has *peccare* and derivatives). See also Proclus' allegorical interpretation of Pandaros' violation of the cease-fire in the *Iliad* (*In Platonis Rempublicam Commentarii* 1.100-106 *passim*).

(3) Γάρ in line 12 would be an indication of an indirect quotation ("The divine Iamblichus is quite correct, therefore, in attacking those who hold this opinion; for [γάρ] what element in us is that sins . . ."). It may be an indication if what follows is in line with what we know from Iamblichus' psychology. It is, though, not necessarily an indication, certainly not if what follows is not in accordance with Iamblichus' psychology. Γάρ may just introduce three more arguments, taken from other sources than the *Timaeus*, to show that Plotinus is wrong and Proclus and Iamblichus are right.

interpretation of the *Phaedrus* myth of the charioteer. Furthermore, as a result of a critical re-examination of the attribution of the text to Iamblichus, I hope to show that, concerning unaffected souls, Iamblichus holds a middle position between Plotinus and Proclus instead of being completely in agreement with Proclus and totally opposed to Plotinus, as Proclus wants us to believe.

I. The *Phaedrus* Myth

The third argument against Plotinus is based on the myth of the charioteer and his winged horses taken from Plato's *Phaedrus*. P.A. Bielmeier,⁷ followed by B.D. Larsen,⁸ has given Iamblichus the credit of being the first philosopher to have paid proper attention to the *Phaedrus* as a work of philosophy in a separate commentary. Before Iamblichus, the *Phaedrus* would have been considered as an immature work of Plato's youth and therefore rather neglected by philosophers, although it was studied fervently by rhetoricians. This view, though it flatters Iamblichus, seems to be incorrect.⁹ The work was immensely popular in Middle Platonist circles: to Philo, for example, the whole of Plato was contained in the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus* myth,¹⁰ Atticus produced a commentary on it as did his pupil Harpocration.¹¹ Whatever the case may be, Iamblichus' commentary was to have a profound influence on later Neoplatonists. As is so for all commentaries by Iamblichus, his one on the *Phaedrus* has not been preserved as a whole. All we have are some scraps, most of them from Hermeias' commentary on the same work. However, this material, together with supporting evidence from other works by Iamblichus, seems to me to differ on two major points from the interpretation we find here in Proclus and which is ascribed to Iamblichus. It runs thus:

(A) τίς δὲ ὁ ἡνίοχος τῆς ψυχῆς; ἄρ' οὐ τὸ χαριέστατον ἡμῶν καὶ ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις κεφαλαιωδέστατον; καὶ πῶς οὐ τοῦτο ρητέον, εἴπερ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πᾶσαν ἡμῶν διακυβερνῶν τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ κεφαλῇ τὸν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον ὄρων καὶ πρὸς τὸν "μέγαν ἡγέμονα" τῶν θεῶν ὁμοιούμενος. "ἄρμα πτηνὸν ἐλαύνοντα" καὶ "πρῶτον" ἡνίοχον "ἐν οὐρανῷ πορευόμενον" εἰ δὲ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκρότατον ὁ ἡνίοχος, οὗτος δέ, ὡς ἐν Φαίδρῳ λέγεται, ποτὲ μὲν μετέωρος φέρεται <καὶ> αἶρει "τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰς τὸν ἔξω τόπον" ποτὲ δὲ δύνει καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ χολαίαν καὶ πτερορρυτίσεως <ἀναπλήσει ξυνορίδα>, δῆλον τὸ ἐκ τούτων συμβαίνειν, ὅτι τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκρότατον ἄλλοτε ἔχειν ἀναγκαῖον.

(Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3.334.15ff.)

⁷ *Die Neuplatonische Phaidrosinterpretation* (Paderborn 1930) 7.

⁸ *Jamblique de Chalcis. Philosophe et Exégète*, vols. 2 (Aarhus 1972) 361-2.

⁹ I owe this point to Prof. D.T. Runia.

¹⁰ D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden 1986) 374.

¹¹ H. Dörrie and M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert nach Christus*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt 1993) 197-8.

(A) And what is the charioteer of the soul? Is it not the most attractive, and, one might say, consummate part of us? And how can we avoid this conclusion, if indeed this is what directs our whole being and with its own head views the supraccelestial sphere and is assimilated to the "great leader" of the gods, who "drives a winged chariot" and "journeys through the heaven as a first" charioteer? And if the charioteer is the highest element in us, and he, as is said in the *Phaedrus*, sometimes is carried up aloft and raises "his head into the region outside," while at other times he descends and (fills his pair) with lameness and moulting, it plainly follows that the highest element in us experiences different states at different times.¹²

One might paraphrase the argument thus: if the human soul is to be compared to a charioteer and his two horses, and if the charioteer, sometimes even raising his head into the region outside, is the most important part of this combination, he must be analogous to the highest part of the soul. If the charioteer, his head included, sometimes crashes into the world of becoming, thus not able to look into the region outside and to contemplate the Ideas anymore, this means that the whole soul, its best part included, descends into the world of becoming, losing contact with the realm above. Obviously, even our best part is not unaffected (*ἀπαθής*), but in different states at different times. If Plotinus claims that part of us always partakes of *Nous*, he is at odds with Plato and must, therefore, be wrong. Though this interpretation of the myth seems to make sense, it does not seem to me to be fully in harmony with Iamblichus' views on two points: (1) Iamblichus does not consider the charioteer, nor his head, as the highest part of the human soul; (2) to Iamblichus, the downfall of the charioteer and his horses does not necessarily indicate a change in the state of the soul.

To start with the first point: according to Hermeias, Iamblichus holds the helmsman to be the highest part of the soul, not the charioteer:

(B) 'Ο θεῖος Ἰάμβλιχος κυβερνήτην τὸ ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀκούει ἡνίοχον δὲ τὸν νοῦν αὐτῆς· τὸ δὲ "θεατῆ" οὐχ ὅτι καθ' ἑτερότητα ἐπιβάλλει τούτῳ τῷ νοητῷ ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐνοῦται αὐτῷ καὶ οὕτως αὐτῆς ἀπολαύει· τούτο γὰρ δηλοῖ τὸν κυβερνήτην τελειότερόν τι τοῦ ἡνίοχου καὶ τῶν ἵππων· τὸ γὰρ ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνοῦσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς πέφυκεν.
(In *Phaedrum*, frg. 6 = Hermeias, In *Phaedrum* 150.33ff.)

(B) The divine Iamblichus takes the "helmsman" as being the one of the soul; its intellect is the charioteer; the expression "visible" is used not to signify that it directs its gaze on the object of intellection as being other than it, but that it is united with it and appreciates it on that level; for this shows that the "helmsman" is a more perfect entity than the charioteer and the horses; for it is the essential nature of the one of the soul to be united with the gods.¹³

Hermeias is commenting on Plato's *Phaedrus* 247c7 here. Plato's text is somewhat problematic at this point and so is the question of what text of this passage Iamblichus had before him. Modern editions of Plato read: "true being, visible for the helmsman of the soul, the *Nous*, only" (οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα, ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη μόνῳ θεατῇ νῶ). The codices, however, read θεατῇ, a dative of θεατῆς "spectator," instead of

¹² Dillon, trans. (above, note 4) 201.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 97.

θεατή, a nominative of θεατός, "to be seen," "visible." A dative "spectator" is very hard to explain in this sentence and this is the reason why the nominative "visible" is preferred. Nevertheless, Dillon recognising this problem, defends the reading of θεατή, because Hermias quotes it twice that way.¹⁴ This argument, though, does not bear much weight. The only difference between the dative and the nominative is the iota. At this time this iota *mutum* was not pronounced and consequently not written anymore in most cases.¹⁵ On the other hand, hypercorrect scribes sometimes wrote iotas even when this should not be done. What is more, of the two instances referred to by Dillon, one seems to require the verbal adjective "visible" instead of the dative "spectator." After this the text said about the truly highest objects of intellection "visible to the helmsman of the soul only" (ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἐπειδὴ περὶ τῶν κυρίως ἀκροτάτων νοητῶν ὁ λόγος ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη μόνῳ θεατῇ εἶπε, Iamblichus, *In Platonis Phaedrum Commentarii* 152.7–8). If we read "spectator," it would be strange to say that it tells something about the objects of intellection, it would say something about the helmsman. Furthermore, Proclus, who studied the *Phaedrus* together with Hermias under Syrianus, quotes the text with the verbal adjective "visible."¹⁶ Dillon is without doubt right to reject νῶ as a later gloss. It is, of course, out of the question that it was in Iamblichus' text, because it would have ruined his interpretation of the helmsman as the one of the soul. Besides, it is found neither in Hermias' quotation of the text, nor in Proclus, though it would be in favour of his interpretation. Anyway, this interpretation of the helmsman as the one of the soul seems to be different from the one found in Proclus.

Because both text (A) and (B) are supposed to be by Iamblichus, attempts have been made to reconcile both views. Finamore suggests that we consider the soul's one as the charioteer's "head," i.e. as the rational soul's highest part.¹⁷ However, this solution, I am afraid, will not do. It is very clearly implied in text (A) that the whole charioteer as such is the top part of our soul: it is called "the most attractive, and consummate part of us," and we are told that "the charioteer is the highest element in us."¹⁸ In text (B) the helmsman, as highest part of the soul, is of course supposed to steer the soul, but in text (A) it is the charioteer who steers the horses: the soul is "this that directs (διακυβερνῶν) our whole being." It seems, then,

14 *Ibid.*, 253.

15 Cf. Strabo (14.1.41) and E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik*, vol. 1 (München 1939) 202 (8).

16 Below, note 30.

17 Above, note 4, 148.

18 Finamore has informed me he himself is now also willing to reject this interpretation on the following consideration: "The soul's One must be a higher entity specifically introduced to allow the human soul to 'see' entities higher than those in the intelligible realm. Thus, the soul's One does not enable it to 'see' the Forms; the soul's intellect does that. Hence, the soul's One must be a part of the soul that is thrust up into the intelligible. The One of the soul in other words, must still be attached to the intellect, but performing a higher function. So, what does the helmsman 'see'? Hermias reports that it is united τοῖς θεοῖς, but these must surely be the noetic gods, not the visible ones. They might even be the henads themselves. But that's another matter."

as if the distinction so carefully made between the helmsman and the charioteer in text (B), is completely ignored in text (A).¹⁹

This is not the only disagreement between text (A) and Iamblichus' interpretation of the *Phaedrus*. There is another, perhaps less obvious at first sight, but surely no less important one. According to text (A), the fact that the charioteer "is sometimes carried up aloft and raises his head into the region outside, while at other times he descends" proves plainly "that the highest element in us experiences different states at different times." Iamblichus, though, seems to think that neither the elevation nor the descent necessarily implies a change in the condition of the soul. This is clearly brought out in a testimony from Olympiodorus. It reads:

(C) Πῶς ὁ Ἰάμβλῖχος τὸ ἐνάντιον φησὶ περὶ τῶν τελέως ἀποκαθισταμένων; ἢ τὰ ἀντίστροφα πάντα ἐροῦμενον, οὐδέποτε κατιέναι αὐτάς; ἢ κατὰ τινα περίοδον καθόδων αἰτίαν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀναγκαίαν, ἢ ὅσον γε ἐπὶ τῇ οἰκείᾳ ζωῇ μὴ ῥεπούση πρὸς γένεσιν, ἢ τὸ τρίτον κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τῆς ζωῆς ἀγέννητον ποιουμένης τὴν κάθοδον καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκοπον, ὥς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἐπιστολαῖς γράφει, ὑπὲρ τοῦ οἰκείου λόγου ἀπολογούμενος τὸν τρίτον ῥηθέντα τρόπον.

(In *Phaedonem* page 203, 26ff. = Iamblichus, In *Phaedonem* [frg. 5])

(C) How does Iamblichus say the opposite about those who are restored to a state of perfection?²⁰ Shall we say just the converse about them, that they never descend, either during a certain period in which there is no compelling necessity for descents, or because their essential life does not incline towards the realm of generation, or thirdly, by reason of the form of their life which creates a descent which does not involve generation and which never breaks its connexion with the higher realm, as he himself writes also in his *Letters*, explaining his own theory along the third line of argument above-mentioned?²¹

¹⁹ Reading his paper at the conference, Finamore suggested that in *De Mysteriorum* 1.15 (46.13ff.) (text discussed at page 171) Iamblichus does not keep to these distinctions, indeed seems to say that these distinctions are not at all important when compared to the overall philosophical view. I fail to see this confusion of entities. The text reads: Τὸ γὰρ θεῖον ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ νοερὸν καὶ ἔν, ἢ εἰ νοητὸν αὐτὸ καλεῖν ἐθέλοις, ἐγείρεται τότε ἐναργῶς ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς. Prayer arouses the divine in us, which is said to consist of a noetic part and the one of the soul/a noetic part (two times a defining καί). Note the θεῖον ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ νοερὸν καὶ ἔν may also be called νοητόν. Νοητόν is only an equivalent for the one in us. This is consistent with text (B) in which is explained that the expression "visible" is used not to signify that the one of the soul directs its gaze on the object of intellection (τοῦτ' ὡς τῷ νοητῷ) as being other than it, but that it is united with it and appreciates it on that level. If the one of the soul and the νοητόν are not different, they must be the same.

²⁰ Dillon (above, note 4) 89 translates: "who have been restored to a state of perfection," but this is not possible, because the Greek has ἀποκαθισταμένων a *praesens*, thus "are restored." Maybe Dillon has been misled by his own comparison of these special Iamblichean souls to the bodhisattvas in Buddhism. The latter have gone through a series of lives and are about to enter the nirvana, the perfection of human existence. Instead of entering it, they return to earth to help man. The Iamblichean souls may already be perfect before their first descent, cf. text (D), contrary to "those completely filled with desires and full of passions who encounter the first time the bodies with passions" (*De Anima* 380.279). The pure souls are once again restored to their original existence after their descent to earth.

²¹ Dillon, trans. (above, note 4) 89.

The souls under discussion here are no ordinary ones. In a moment their special nature will be discussed in greater detail. At present, we should stress the fact that such a soul "never breaks its connexion with the higher realm" (πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκοπον). Dillon thinks this to be in conflict with the *Phaedrus* myth, but in accordance with Plato's *Republic*.²² There the philosopher has to return from the sun into the cave. The difference between Iamblichus and Plato, however, is that for Iamblichus the duty of returning to help mankind does not stop after the philosopher's life on earth. But is this text really inconsistent with the *Phaedrus* myth? This may be so in the case of Plato's intended meaning of that myth (the question being, of course, whether we can ever determine what that is). It is certainly inconsistent with the interpretation of the myth offered in text (A). There the descent of the soul seems to imply a loss of contact with the upperworld, thus changing the state of the soul, proving that it is not always *apathes*. The fact that the souls in text (C) maintain connexion with the world above is likely to imply that they never stop exercising intellection, a consequence brought out more clearly in some other texts to be referred to later, something Proclus, as pointed out above, strongly denied. However, it will appear that Iamblichus does not see any tensions between the fate of these souls and the *Phaedrus* myth, thus casting further doubt on the question of whether or not text (A) is Iamblichean.

From Stobaeus' *Anthology* stems an interesting passage from Iamblichus' *De Anima* (1.379–80, frg. 40). It deals with the different causes of the soul's descent. Some, perfect, souls descend in a pure way for the preservation, purification and perfection of the things here. Other souls return for the sake of exercising and correcting their own characters. They are not so perfect as the first group, because they are not completely impassible (ἀπαθεῖς) nor do they enjoy their own independence. A third category of souls is made to descend by means of violence for punishment here.²³ Iamblichus pays special attention to the souls who make an undefiled descent. This is the equivalent of the expression "a descent which does not involve generation" from text (C). This material world is also called the world of generation. A descent that does not involve generation means a descent in which the material world does not affect the soul, that the soul remains pure. About these souls he remarks:

(D) Οἱ τε γὰρ νεοτελεῖς καὶ πολυθεάμονες τῶν ὄντων, οἱ τε συνοπαδοὶ καὶ συγγενεῖς τῶν θεῶν, οἱ τε παντελεῖς καὶ ὁλόκληρα τὰ εἶδη τῆς ψυχῆς περιέχοντες, πάντες ἀπαθεῖς καὶ ἀκήρατοι ἐμφύονται πρῶτως εἰς τὰ σώματα. (Iamblichus, *De Anima* 380.23–26)

(D) For those newly initiated and who have seen much of true being, those accompanying and akin to the gods, and those completely perfect ones embracing the whole forms of the soul are all first planted in the body unaffected and undefiled.²⁴

²² *Ibid.*, 243.

²³ Cf. Finamore (above, note 4) 101ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

As has been noted by several scholars, the passage is replete with reminiscences of the *Phaedrus* myth.²⁵ They are called "newly initiated and who have seen much of true being" (νεοτελείς καὶ πολυθεάμονες τῶν ὄντων), which may be compared to *Phaedrus* 251a2 (ὁ δὲ ἀρτιτελής, ὁ τῶν πολυθεάμων), while νεοτελής may be found in *Phaedrus* 250e1. The expression "accompanying the gods" (συνοπαδοί . . . τῶν θεῶν) is an echo of *Phaedrus* 248c3 (ψυχῇ, θεῶ συνοπαδὸς γενόμενῃ). Iamblichus, then, takes the *Phaedrus* as his source of inspiration for a doctrine thought by Dillon to be inconsistent with that same Platonic dialogue! Their implantation into bodies is described as an unaffected (ἀπαθές) and undefiled one. According to text (A) this process would, on the contrary, affect the soul. The fact that these souls are not affected in any way is once again made clear by another statement from the same fragment:

(E) Ἐτι γε μὴν αἱ καθαρὰ ψυχὰ καὶ τέλεια καθαρῶς εἰσוקίζονται εἰς τὰ σώματα ἄνευ παθημάτων καὶ τῆς στερήσεως τοῦ νοεῖν.
(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 379.22–24)

(E) Pure and perfect souls enter into the bodies purely without passions and without being deprived of intellection.²⁶

The perfect souls do not suffer any passions/affections (ἄνευ παθημάτων) when they enter the body. Because nothing changes for these souls, they go on exercising intelligence without being disturbed (ἄνευ τῆς στερήσεως τοῦ νοεῖν). This comes remarkably close to what Plotinus grants to all souls, something for which he is criticized by Proclus. The latter refers to the *Phaedrus* myth to prove his point, while Iamblichus uses it to formulate an almost opposite claim.

One may argue that using the language of the *Phaedrus* does not necessarily mean that this was how Iamblichus interpreted it. At least one testimony of Iamblichus' commentary of the *Phaedrus*, however, shows us that this was how he did read it:

(F) Ἡ δὲ ἐξηγησις τοῦ θεοῦ Ἰαμβλίου ῥηθήσεται νῦν· ἀνθρώπους λέγει τὰς ψυχὰς τὰς ἐν τῷ νοητῷ διατριψάσας· αἱ γὰρ ψυχὰι, πρὶν τὸν θνητὸν βίον διαζήσωσιν, ἄνω εἰσὶν ἐν τῷ νοητῷ, αὐτὰ τὰ εἶδη θεωροῦσαι, ἅμα τοῖς θεοῖς τοῖς ὑπερκοσμοῖς οὖσαι . . . καὶ ἅτε δὴ νεοτελείς οὔσαι καὶ μνήμην ἔχουσαι τῶν ἐκεῖ, ἀπόστροφοὶ ἦσαν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ οὐκ ἤθελον οὐδὲ φαγεῖν οὐδὲ πλεῖν, τουτέστι μεταλαβεῖν αἰσθητῆς δόξης οὐκ ἠβούλοντο· εἶχον γὰρ τὴν νοητὴν τροφήν· διὸ ὑπὸ λιμοῦ τῶν ἐνταῦθα ἀπέθανον, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀνήχθησαν.
(Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia* 215.12ff. = Iamblichus, *In Phaedrum*, frg. 7)

(F) We will now turn to the interpretation of the divine Iamblichus. He understands by the "men" of the text souls who have spent time in the intelligible realm; for souls, before they live their mortal lives, are above in the intelligible realm, having a vision of the Forms in their true nature, and consorting with the supracosmic gods. . . . And inasmuch as they were newly-

²⁵ Festugière (above, note 4) 223, note 1, Dillon (above, note 4) 255f., Finamore (above, note 4) 107ff.

²⁶ Finamore, trans. (above, note 4) 103.

initiated, and still retained a memory of the other realm, they turned away from the realm of generation and refused to eat or drink, that is to say, they did not wish to have any share in sense-perception; for they had their intellectual nourishment. For this reason they perished from starvation of things of this realm, which means that they were raised up again to their former level.²⁷

Iamblichus is commenting here upon the tale of the men who turned into cicadas (*Phaedrus* 249b5–d7). Plato does not link this with the myth of the charioteer, but Iamblichus does so by declaring that these are the newly initiated souls, who used to have a vision of the forms in their true nature while consorting with the supracosmic gods. Even descending into this world, they avoid partaking of “the realm of generation,” just as do the souls in text (C) whose descent did not involve generation. At the end of their existence on earth, they are lifted to the intelligible realm once again, just as are the souls in text (C) which are said to be restored to a state of perfection.

Iamblichus had probably *Phaedrus* 259c1ff. in mind when he interpreted the story about the cicadas thus. In that passage we are told that only philosophers deserve to be feathered again because they cling to their memories of the Ideas as firmly as possible (compare the souls in text [F]) which are said to retain a memory of the other realm). Using these memories in the right manner, they are initiated over and over again in the perfect mysteries in order to obtain perfection, just as the souls in text (F) are called newly initiated and said to be raised up in the end to their former level. In this process, according to Plato, the philosophers turn themselves away from human affairs, not unlike Iamblichus’ souls which wish to have no share in this world. The philosopher, Plato concludes, is therefore considered by the *hoi polloi* to be out of his senses, while in fact he is inspired by the gods.

Against the argument that has been developed above to dispute the attribution of text (A) to Iamblichus, one may argue that there does not need to be a contradiction between text (A) and texts (D) (E) and (F). Perhaps we should take into account that the souls discussed in the latter texts are of a special kind, while the souls in text (A), to whom are referred as “us,” are the souls of ordinary human beings. The myth of the fall of the winged charioteer would then only apply to our souls, not to these unaffected souls. This would solve the contradiction between the texts. However, I think this to be highly unlikely. According to Plato even the soul of the philosopher was not able to follow the gods all the time, and consequently lost his feathers and fell down.²⁸ The souls of the philosophers are the newly initiated ones that have seen much of true being. Iamblichus, as we have seen, equates these souls with his unaffected, undefiled ones. Although Neoplatonist interpretations can do strange things to Plato’s texts, it seems to me not very convincing to assume that Iamblichus would deny that the unaffected souls are also fallen charioteers, when he takes them to be Plato’s philosopher-souls and admits that they too have descended into the world of becoming.

If one is to accept the discussion of texts (D), (E) and (F) by Finamore in his paper in the present volume, the road would be open to yet another counter argument.

27 Dillon, trans. (above, note 4) 99.

28 *Phaedrus* 248c2ff.

He claims that the pure souls that make a pure descent into this realm are theurgists (Finamore [below, page 169]). Theurgists, in his opinion, use their intellect regularly, but not permanently (below, page 171). As he formulated it in a communication to me: "Theurgists, however, do intellectualize sometimes, and sometimes do not. When they do, it is because they have re-ascended via an out-of-body experience. Thus, (D), (E) and (F) do not contradict (A)." I do not agree with him on this identification of pure souls with theurgists. Theurgists do not make a pure descent into this world. From *De Mystериis* 5.18 (referred to by Finamore [below, page 169]) we gather that initially the theurgists were in the bounds of nature but succeeded in escaping by turning themselves towards Intellect (*De Mystериis* 223.16: "A few, then, using some kind of natural power of Intellect, withdraw from nature . . .," ὀλίγοι δὲ τινες ὑπερφυεῖ δὴ τινι δυνάμει τοῦ νοῦ χρώμενοι, τῆς φύσεως μὲν ἀφιστάνονται, κτλ.; *De Mystериis* 225.1ff.: "Those living according to Intellect and the life of Intellect only, after they have been freed from the bounds of nature . . .," οἱ δὲ κατὰ νοῦν μόνον καὶ τὴν τοῦ νοῦ ζωὴν τὸν βίον διάγοντες, τῶν δὲ τῆς φύσεως δεσμῶν ἀπολυθέντες, κτλ.) Iamblichus even distinguishes an intermediate group of theurgists-to-be who have not yet reached this state of perfection (*De Mystериis* 224.1–6, cf. Finamore [below, page 170]). The souls mentioned in texts (D) (E) and (F), on the other hand, are not in need of perfection and purification. They are pure and perfect from the very beginning (see texts (D) and (E). In Finamore's reading of them, the special souls indeed undergo some sort of improvement. They attain union with the gods and the Intelligible (Finamore [below, page 169]) and then "return to the realm of nature not for punishment but as an instrument of the gods." In fact, they do not return to this world. "Returning" would mean that they had been around here before. This, however, is impossible because we are dealing here with the *first* descent into the body (see text [D]) "first planted into the body"). The predicate νεοτελεῖς "newly initiated" in text (D), thus, cannot refer to the initiation in theurgical practise the student theurgists of the *De Mystериis* go through. The perfect souls do not, then, attain union with the gods, they remain united with the gods (see text [C]). The theurgist may intellectualize regularly, the pure soul does so one hundred percent of the time, as becomes clear in case of the cicada-men.²⁹

II. Proclus on the *Phaedrus* Myth

Both the difference in anatomy of the soul in text (A) and text (B) and the fact that, according to text (A), descent does imply a change in the condition of the soul, whereas Iamblichus seems to deny this happening to at least a certain class of souls, make it very dubious that text (A) is recording the views of Iamblichus. Could it, then, be by Proclus? Unfortunately, Proclus' own commentary on the *Phaedrus* has been lost, but we have several passages in his surviving work dealing with the myth.

Proclus clearly does not follow the Iamblichean interpretation of the helmsman as the highest part of the soul. In text (A) the activity of the charioteer is described as διακυβερνῶν, an activity more suitable to a κυβερνήτης, helmsman, than

²⁹ One may wonder who these special souls are if they are no ordinary theurgists. I imagine they are people like Homer, Orpheus, Pythagoras and Plato.

to a charioteer. If the two become more or less identical and if the charioteer represents the *nous* of the soul, then the helmsman is likely also to be understood as the *nous*. This identification recurs, indeed, in Proclus' commentary on the *First Alcibiades* 77.10–13: "Therefore, Plato calls the *nous* the helmsman of the soul ("because only visible to the helmsman of the soul," he says), διὸ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων τὸν μὲν νοῦν ψυχῆς κυβερνήτην ἀποκαλεῖ (ψυχῆς γάρ, φησί, κυβερνήτη μόνῳ θεατῇ)." ³⁰ If the helmsman is the *nous* of the soul, this means that, according to Proclus, it cannot be the one of the soul or the flower of *nous*, as Proclus likes to call it, because to Proclus that part of the soul comes before the *nous*. ³¹ Later on in the same commentary, Proclus once again attacks Plotinus, now without naming him but describing him and his supporters as "those who say our soul is a part of the divine essence" (*In Alcibiadem* 227.3ff.). ³² The charioteer is once again called the most important part of our soul, this time without any reference to his head at all (*In Alcibiadem* 227.19–20: καίτοι τί σεμνότερόν ἐστιν ἐν ἡμῖν τῆς ἡνιοχητικῆς δυνάμεως;). This identification of the helmsman with the *nous* instead of the one may also be found in Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* 4.13, 43, 16–7 (νοῦ ὁ κυβερνήτης τῆς ψυχῆς). Perhaps we should regard this as an innovation by Proclus. According to Hermeias, the helmsman is the one of the soul: "After this, the text said about the truly highest objects of intellection 'visible³³ to the helmsman of the soul only'" (Hermeias, *In Phaedrum* 152.7–9). Hermeias' commentary is a set of lecture notes of Syrianus' course on the *Phaedrus*. From Hermeias himself we know that Proclus also attended this course, possibly given just for the two of them. ³⁴ This would mean that Proclus was taught the Iamblichean interpretation of this passage (Hermeias shows himself aware that this was the interpretation by Iamblichus, see text [B]), but later on changed his mind.

According to the *In Platonis Alcibiadem*, the downfall of the soul is taken to mean that our soul is not always in the same condition (Proclus quotes *Phaedrus* 248b2–3 here): sometimes it is imperfect, sometimes it is perfected, depending on whether or not it has recently suffered oblivion (*In Platonis Alcibiadem* 228.1ff.: Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν καὶ ἀτελής ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ ποτε καὶ αὖθις τελειοῦται καὶ λήθην ἴσχει τῶν θείων καὶ αὖθις ἀναμιμνήσκειται, δῆλον δὲ ὅτι καὶ ὁ χρόνος συντελεῖ πρὸς τὴν τελείωσιν αὐτῆς.). From *De Malorum Subsistentia* 21, we learn that this corruption involved in the fall of the soul even includes the class of souls which Iamblichus allowed to remain unaffected and always thinking. Both Proclus and Iamblichus agree that these souls descend for the salvation of others. Proclus is also willing to call these souls pure (*immaculatas*, *De Malorum*

³⁰ Note that Proclus reads θεατῇ instead of θεατῇ (cf. *Théologie Platonicienne*, H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, eds. and trans., vol. 4 [Paris 1981] 147, note 1).

³¹ Cf. Rist (above, note 3) 215ff.

³² Cf. Steel (above, note 4) 46–7, A.Ph. Segonds, *Proclus, sur le Premier Alcibiade de Platon*, vol. 2 (Paris 1986) 412, note 278.

³³ Reading θεατῇ, see discussion above.

³⁴ See *Théologie Platonicienne* (above, note 30) xxxi.

Subsistentia 21.31). However, all souls, including this class, must drink from Lethe and thus suffer amnesia. The divine souls do not forget their true nature, as other souls do, but their functioning is, as it were, put to sleep. They are not capable of maintaining the way of life they used to have in the transcendent world, though they are unaffected by the troubles of becoming.³⁵ So, to some extent they may be called *apatheis*, but their coming to be means that they at least partially forget about the Ideas and that they do not continue thinking as does the Iamblichean divine soul.

It should also be noted that no Proclean (human) soul seems to be perfect all the time as appears from the passage from the *In Platonis Alcibiadem* referred to above. After all, imperfection is caused by drinking from river Lethe, something both the pure and ordinary souls have to do. The Iamblichean pure souls, however, seem to deserve the predicate "perfect" permanently (see texts [D] and [E]). Amnesia may seem a terrible evil, but Proclus hastens to explain that the providence of the gods is at work here. Which soul, he asks rhetorically, would care for the body if it did remember the celestial world it came from (*In Platonis Rempublicam Commentarii* 2.349.27ff.)? Iamblichus' special souls, on the other hand, maintain a clear recollection of their place of origin. We may expect them to neglect this world and so they do, as appeared from text (F) (Iamblichus' interpretation of the myth of the cicadas).

The Iamblichean pure souls seem to me to represent a stage in the development in Neoplatonist psychology from Plotinus towards Proclus. Proclus' souls, all of them, lose contact with the gods, contrary to Iamblichus' perfect souls (text [C]: πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκοπον, cf. Plotinus' position that we have *Nous* inside of us). The functioning of all Proclean souls suffers from the descent, while Iamblichus' pure souls continue exercising intellection (text [E]: ἀνευ τῆς στέρησεως τοῦ νοεῖν. Compare this with the characterisation of the Plotinian soul as ἀεὶ νοοῦν in text [A]).

Against this proposition, it has been argued that in the fragments of his *De Anima*, Iamblichus posits against Plotinus and others that the soul is an entity separate from others.³⁶ It does not, as Iamblichus' predecessors had argued, include them in itself. Iamblichus' opinion was to be accepted by other Neoplatonists like Proclus. In this respect, Plotinus on the one side and Iamblichus and Proclus on the other, do, of course, differ immensely. But there is also an important difference between the consequences that Iamblichus and Proclus were willing to draw from this assumption. To Proclus it seems to entail that if Soul is a separable entity from *Nous*, it always *is* separated from it whence the individual soul has made its descent. Iamblichus, on the other hand, holds that it *may* be separated, which is not the case when it comes to the perfect souls. The consequence is that there is virtually no

35 Mensuram enim quamdam poculi oblivionis necessarium omnem animam facere, ut ait qui in *Politeia* Socrates; quod autem oblivionis aliud in aliis, alicubi quidem et habitu perduto, alicubi autem operatione solum sepulta. Hanc itaque operationis quietem, habitu manente intus velut lumine extra procedere propter adiacentem caliginem impotente, oblivionem, si vis, et malitiam, si vis, illarum animarum. Haec autem, siquidem impassibiles sint ab ea quae in generatione turbatione circa animal facta...

36 Apud Stobaeus 1.365.7ff., see also Steel (above, note 4) 23–33 and Dillon, *Iamblichus of Chalcis* (ca. 240–325 A.D.), (above, note 4) 893–4.

difference between the functioning of the Iamblichean pure soul and the Plotinian ordinary one, as we have seen, notwithstanding the fact that the structures of both types of souls are unlike each other. Proclus differs from Iamblichus in that he draws the consequences far more firmly than Iamblichus, with drastic consequences for the pure souls. This all fits well into the general picture of an increasingly pessimistic view about the human soul in Neoplatonism.

III. Conclusions

It has been generally accepted that the three arguments brought in by Proclus against Plotinus in *In Timaeum* 3.334.4ff. are adapted from Iamblichus. There are, however, I think, good reasons to debate the ascription of at least the third argument to Iamblichus. If so, one might wonder whether we are still justified in attributing the other two arguments to him as well. The only thing, then, we can safely infer from frg. 87 is that, according to Proclus, Iamblichus stands in opposition to philosophers like Plotinus and Theodorus who assert that something in us stays always unaffected and enjoying intellection. As we have seen, there is some truth in this. There are souls who are already affected even before their descent. Furthermore, from his *De Anima*, we know that Iamblichus argued against Plotinus and others who held that we have the whole intelligible universe inside us, reason for Plotinus to assert that we always have part of *Nous*. In his opinion, soul is a separate entity, an intermediate between the intelligible and sensible world, not a part of the first.³⁷

The loss of what has been described as "a most important passage for Iamblichus' psychology,"³⁸ however, should not be overly lamented: something good has also come from it. To start with, Iamblichus is now cleared from the charge of inconsistency brought against him by Dillon: Iamblichus' theory that some souls make their descent into the world of becoming unaffected, without their thinking being disrupted, was said to be incompatible with the *Phaedrus* myth of the winged charioteer. If text (A) were to be by Iamblichus, this would indeed be the case. A closer study of Iamblichus' interpretation, though, has revealed that Iamblichus interpreted the myth in a way consistent with his doctrine. One may still accuse Iamblichus of a wrong interpretation of Plato according to modern standards, but then to how many Neoplatonic interpretations of Plato's dialogue could we give full approval?

In addition, by studying the *Phaedrus* interpretation, we have attained a better picture of the descent of the pure souls according to Iamblichus. Proclus rejected most completely Plotinus' theory that human souls have an ever-thinking, unaffected part. Because he quotes Iamblichus in support of his view, we are, in conjunction with Iamblichus' own doctrine about the human soul as an independent intermediary between the intelligible and sensible, prone to ascribe to Iamblichus the same absolute

³⁷ See, Steel (above, note 4) 23–33, Dillon, *Iamblichus of Chalcis* (ca. 240–325 A.D.) (above, note 4) 893–4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 382.

position, even giving him credit for being the first to fight off the Plotinian heresy.³⁹ As has appeared, especially from text (E), Iamblichus is willing to allow to the pure souls a state Plotinus grants and Proclus denies to all souls. Thus, the position of Plotinus was not abandoned instantly in one big stride, but by one step at a time. Regardless of whether or not Proclus believed it himself when he wrote,⁴⁰ discussing a passage from the *Phaedrus*, that he did not introduce anything new in Neoplatonist theology, but that he was just following Plato and the divinely inspired Iamblichus, we should not accept this as an article of faith. Sometimes, Neoplatonists are just less conservative and more original than they are willing to admit.

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³⁹ *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark, eds. (Bristol 1993) 3.

⁴⁰ *Théologie Platonicienne* (above, note 30) 23.68.23ff.

The Rational Soul in Iamblichus' Philosophy

John F. Finamore

It is well known that Iamblichus insisted on a special position for the human soul. It is separate from Intellect and the other higher souls, and holds an intermediate position between them and nature below.¹ But if the human soul is entirely separate from Intellect, how does the soul unite with it? If it does so through an intellectual component of its own, how is this psychic *voûs* different from the higher *voûs* and how does this conception of *voûs* differ from that of Plotinus? Iamblichus lays out his theory in the *De Anima* and, to some degree, in the *De Mysteriis* and in the fragments of his Platonic commentaries. In this paper, I wish to examine this theory of the soul and see how Iamblichus' solution is consistent.

Iamblichus thought that Plotinus and other Platonists did not adequately differentiate the Intellect from the human soul.² In *In Timaeum*, frg. 87, we are told that Iamblichus argued against Plotinus' opinion that there is "in us something impassible (*ἀπαθές τι*) that always thinks (*ἀεὶ νοοῦν*)" (lines 8–9). Iamblichus argues that if there were this highest part of our soul, we would be perfectly happy at every moment. Rather, Iamblichus concludes, the whole human soul descends from the higher levels into this lowest realm of nature. "For if the *voûs* is this [highest part], it does not concern the soul. But if it is part of the soul, the rest [of us] is also happy" (lines 20–21). Further, Iamblichus says, we learn from the *Phaedrus* that the highest part of the soul descends as well.³ Thus, Iamblichus concludes that the

¹ I have discussed this issue in the first chapter of J.F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico 1985) 11–32.

² See the works cited in Finamore (above, note 1) 92–94. See also C.G. Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Platonism* (Brussels 1978) 34–38, and R.M. Berchman, "Rationality and Ritual in Plotinus and Porphyry," *Incognita* 2 (1991) 189–200.

³ On this fragment, see *Iamblichi Chalcedensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. and trans. (Leiden 1973) 382–3, and Steel (above, note 2) 40–45.

whole human soul sinks to the level of nature, that none of it remains above, and that νοῦς is separate from the human soul.⁴ What then is this highest part of the human soul if it is not νοῦς?

Iamblichus is interested in this same problem in his *De Anima*. In *De Anima* 318.12–15, Iamblichus discusses the intellect:⁵

Many of the Platonists themselves introduce the intellect into the soul at the same time as the first entry of soul into body, and they do not differentiate at all between the soul and its intellect.

In *De Anima* 365.5–366.11, Iamblichus states who these Platonists are and compares his own beliefs to theirs.⁶ These Platonists say that all souls are made from one

⁴ Van den Berg in his paper in this collection (pages 149–162) has questioned whether we can use this fragment from Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary as evidence for Iamblichus' own views. Van den Berg sets out an intriguing argument that (1) whereas this fragment states that the highest part of the soul is the charioteer (ἡνίοχος), Iamblichus believed that the highest part was the helmsman (κυβερνήτης), which was for him the soul's One (in *Phaedrus*, frg. 6) and (2) whereas here the soul is affected by the descent, Iamblichus held that some souls were unaffected. I will return to the second point later. As to the first, there are three possible ways to accept the fragment as evidence for Iamblichus' beliefs. First, when Iamblichus discusses matters that are beyond human ken (the One, the gods, intellect), his vocabulary is flexible and suited to the argument at hand. Thus, in *De Mysteriorum* 1.15, Iamblichus calls this highest element τὸ θεῖον ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ νοερὸν καὶ ἕν, ἢ εἰ νοητὸν αὐτὸ καλεῖν ἐθέλοις ("the divine, intellectual, and one in us—or if you wish to call it so, the intelligible," 46.13–14). Its exact title, if you will, is less important than its function. Van den Berg takes καὶ νοερὸν καὶ ἕν in apposition with τὸ θεῖον, which is possible. What is not possible is that all three can be termed νοητόν, as he suggests. For how can the One be intelligible, or worse yet how can the intellectual be intelligible? It seems best to take these as four descriptions of the highest element of the soul. Both É. des Places (*Les Mystères d'Égypte* [Paris 1966] 65) and A.R. Sodano (*Giamblico: I Misteri Egiziani* [Milan 1984] 85), who unfortunately fails to translate καὶ ἕν, take it this way. Thus one could argue that Iamblichus called the soul's highest element ὁ ἡνίοχος in the *Timaeus* commentary, but distinguished ὁ κυβερνήτης from it in the *Phaedrus* commentary. A second way to preserve the fragment as authentically Iamblican is to argue that the three passages (from the *De Mysteriorum*, the *Timaeus* commentary, and the *Phaedrus* commentary) represent three different beliefs held at three different times. This solution is admittedly problematic since we do not know when Iamblichus wrote which works. Nonetheless, the three passages do suggest a transformation in Iamblichus' thinking. A third approach is to grant that the doctrine that the highest part of the soul is the charioteer is indeed Proclus' and not at any time Iamblichus' but argue that Proclus is simply inserting his own doctrine in place of Iamblichus' in what is still an Iamblican argument. In other words, Proclus found this argument in Iamblichus' commentary except that, instead of the charioteer, Iamblichus said that either the charioteer and helmsman descended or that the charioteer, i.e., the soul's intellect, descended or (simply) that the highest part of the soul descended. Proclus adapted this to fit his own doctrine of the soul. The conclusion (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκρότατον ἄλλοτε ἄλλως ἔχειν) is still that of Iamblichus, although in place of τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκρότατον, Iamblichus may have written ὁ νοῦς or ὁ ἡνίοχος or ὁ ἡνίοχος καὶ ὁ κυβερνήτης. (Of these three possibilities, I accept the first as the most probable.) I conclude then that the case for rejecting *In Timaeum*, frg. 87 as preserving Iamblican doctrine has not been made. This is not, however, to minimize the importance of what van den Berg has shown. For it is certain that Proclus and Iamblichus (in the *Phaedrus* commentary) do differ on what the highest part of the soul is.

⁵ Cf. *De Anima* 454.18–20: some Platonists say that "the essential reason itself and the soul's intellect always transcend the cosmos and are united with the Intelligible."

⁶ A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation D'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 3 (Paris 1953) 199, note 1, refers to this passage as well. See also Finamore (above, note 1) 21–2 and Steel (above, note 2) 24–5.

homogeneous incorporeal substance and "they establish even in the partial soul [*i.e.*, the human soul] the intelligible cosmos, the gods, demons, the Good and all the classes superior to it (*De Anima* 365.9–13)." Included among these Platonists are Numenius, and to some degree Plotinus (but not completely: οὐ πάντῃ δὲ ὁμολογουμένως, *De Anima* 365.15–6), Amelius, and Porphyry. According to them, Iamblichus concludes, "the soul differs in no way from Intellect, the gods, and the superior classes,⁷ at least in regard to its complete substance (*De Anima*, 365.20–21)." As in the passage from his *Timaeus* commentary, Iamblichus wants to distance the human soul from the Intellect and from all souls higher than it. The difference is not simply one of rank but also of its very essence. Iamblichus makes this clear when he states his own position.

But the opinion opposed to this separates the soul, on the grounds that it comes into being second after Intellect at a different level of being; explains the aspect of it that is with Intellect as dependent on Intellect but with the power to subsist independently on its own (μετὰ τοῦ κατ' ἰδίαν ὑφ' ἑσθ' ἑκείνου αὐτοτελῶς); separates it also from all the superior classes; assigns to it as its own limit (ὅρος) of essence either the middle of partial and non-partial <and corporeal and incorporeal> classes, or the totality of universal reason-principles, or the service of creation after the Ideas, or the life that having proceeded from the Intelligible [*cosmos*] has in itself the power to live, or again the procession of classes of all truly existent Being into inferior substance.

(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 365.22–366.5)

Iamblichus is making several important points about the human soul. First, it exists at a separate level (καθ' ἑτέραν ὑπόστασιν, *De Anima* 365.24) from the Intellect. As such, it is dependent on or suspended from the Intellect (ἐξηρητημένον ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦ, *De Anima* 365.25) yet has its own independent and non-intellectual life. Second, it is also completely separate from and inferior to the superior classes. This step is consistent with Iamblichus' view that the human soul is in need of divine assistance in its reascent to the higher realms. The distance between it and the Intellect is increased, and the gap is filled with visible gods, angels, heroes, demons, and other higher souls. In *In Parmenidem*, frg. 2, Iamblichus solidifies this view by removing the human soul from the third Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and replacing it with the superior classes. For the first (and possibly only) time in Neoplatonism, the human soul is relegated to the fourth Hypothesis.⁸ The greater distance shows the greater inferiority of the human soul in the ontological hierarchy. Finally, Iamblichus states that the human soul by its own essence (οὐσία) is circumscribed to an ontological level between the Intellect and superior classes above and the material world below.⁹ It is fully and properly a mean between them.

⁷ The "superior classes" (τὰ κρείττονα γένη) include visible gods, angels, heroes, and demons. These are beneath the Intellect but above the human soul in rank. See Finamore (above, note 1) 33–4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 34–36; see, Dillon (above, note 3) 387–9, and Steel (above, note 2) 27, note 19.

⁹ This point is also made by Steel (above, note 2) 24–27 and 52–61. See also Pseudo-Simplicius, *De Anima* 6.7–13; 89.33–90.25; 240.33–241.26 and Priscianus, *Metaphrasis* 32.13–18.

It may seem then that Iamblichus' solution to the problem of Plotinus' "undescended soul" was simply to deny that the human soul had an intellect and to aver that the whole soul descended and that the Intellect remained above in its own hypostasis. This is not, however, Iamblichus' position.

In *De Anima* 457.13–14, Iamblichus states that the human soul has "a disposition, good in form, similar to that of the gods in intellect" (παρὰ πλῆσιν τοῖς θεοῖς κατὰ νοῦν διάθεσιν ἀγαθοειδῆ). First, one should note that this is an intellectual διάθεσις. Iamblichus chose the word carefully to distinguish between that which the human soul possesses from the Intellect that exists in a higher realm. It is a "propensity." The human soul does not always think intellectually (ἀεὶ νοεῖ, *In Timaeum*, frg. 87.20), but can do so at certain times under certain conditions. Second, this ability is divine. Thus, when we think (νοεῖν), our soul, which mediates between two realms, is more akin to the higher than the lower realm.¹⁰ There is then an intellectual component in the human soul. Before considering its function in Iamblichean philosophy, let us briefly consider how it fits into Iamblichus' metaphysical scheme.

Iamblichus' plan is given in *In Timaeum*, frgs. 54–56 and 60.¹¹ In considering the two motions of the *Timaeus*, the motion of the same ("the motion that moves about uniformly in the same place," *Timaeus* 36c2–3) and the motion of the other (*Timaeus* 36c5), Iamblichus claimed that these were motions not of the soul but of the Intellect (*In Timaeum*, frg. 55). The motion of the same referred to "the Intellect separated from souls" while the motion of the other to the unseparated Intellect (*ibid.*, frg. 56). These represent two moments of a hypostasis: first the νοῦς χωριστός or ἀμέθεκτος, then the νοῦς ἀχώριστος or μεθεκτός. The next moment is νοῦς κατὰ μέθεξιν or ἐν σχέσει, which in turn is the highest moment of the next realm below, soul (ψυχὴ ἀμέθεκτος). Thus, the whole soul order (including individual souls within it) does not participate directly in the highest Intellect and this νοῦς is not a ξῆσις of the soul (*ibid.*, frg. 60). Plato had called the circle of the same the outer motion and the circle of the different the inner motion (*Timaeus* 36c4–5). Iamblichus interpreted this to mean that the unparticipated Intellect surrounded (περιέχει, *ibid.*, frg. 55.10; περιέχοντος, *ibid.*, frg. 56.5) soul (that is, the whole soul order) and was unmixed (ἀμιγούς, *ibid.*, frg. 56.6) with it, whereas the participated Intellect was in soul (frg. 56.6) and mixed with it and directed it (κατευθύνοντος, *ibid.*, frg. 56.8). Hence, Iamblichus can conclude:

soul participates in Intellect inasmuch as it [*i.e.*, the soul] is intellectual, and through it [*i.e.*, the participated Intellect] joins together also with the divine Intellect. For since the soul of the Universe participates in Intellect, it ascends to the Intelligible. (*In Timaeum*, frg. 55.14–17)

¹⁰ Thus, the use of the Greek ἀγαθοειδῆ is also intentional. This disposition is a higher faculty that brings the soul closer not only to the gods and to Intellect but also to the Good (*i.e.*, the One) itself. This intellectual disposition in the human soul should be contrasted with the gods' "intellectual essence" (τῇ ἐαυτῶν νοερὰν οὐσίαν, *De Anima* 379.20).

¹¹ See Dillon (above, note 3) 39, 335–337 and 342. See also Steel (above, note 2) 31 and 123–4, where Steel shows that Iamblichus' schema is preserved in Pseudo-Simplicius' *De Anima* commentary.

Thus the soul of the Universe and, therefore, other lower souls as well, participate not in the νοῦς ἀμέθεκτος (= "the divine Intellect"), but in the νοῦς μεθεκτός. A soul's access to the unparticipated Intellect then is through the second Intellect via its own intellectual component (as νοῦς ἐν σχέσει).

Let us now return to the intellectual component in the human soul. We can see that the whole psychic realm is dependent upon the realm of Intellect. The highest moment of the psychic realm is the lowest moment of the realm of the Intellect envisioned from another point of view. Iamblichus discusses this transcendent soul in *In Timaeum*, frg. 50: the soul that is "transcendent, hypercosmic, absolute, and supreme over all" (τὴν ἐξηρημένην καὶ ὑπερκόσμιον καὶ ἀπόλυτον καὶ πᾶσιν ἐνεξουσιάζουσιν, *In Timaeum*, frg. 50.19–20). From this soul proceeds the soul of the cosmos and all the individual souls (*In Timaeum*, frg. 54.10). Individual souls, then, are ψυχὰς ἐν σχέσει. They, together with the soul of the Cosmos, which presumably is μεθεκτή,¹² are intellectual in that they are surrounded by the unparticipated soul (*In Timaeum*, frg. 54.14–23).

The individual souls are all the souls that are divided out among bodies, whether ethereal or corporeal. These include all the superior classes and the human soul both in its incarnate and discarnate states. Returning to the *De Anima*, we see that all individual souls have access to the unparticipated Intellect only through the unparticipated soul, which as Intellect ἐν σχέσει, has access to the unparticipated Intellect through the participated Intellect. We begin to see the difficult position the human soul is in. But there is more. The human soul is at the bottom of the psychic ladder. In its essence, it is different from all the souls above it.¹³

Let us see how this difference affects the functioning of the human soul in Iamblichus' philosophy. In *De Anima* 372.15–22, Iamblichus states against the stoics, Plotinus, Amelius, and (to some degree) Porphyry that the acts (ἔργα) of different classes of soul differ from each other. The acts of universal souls are perfect; those of divine souls pure and immaterial; those of demons effective; those of heroes great; those of human and animal souls are of a mortal nature. There is a hierarchy of different types of acts of different types of individual souls. The acts of higher souls are purer and more perfect than those of the lower souls. The acts of human souls are therefore the least pure of all, befitting their rank.¹⁴

But there is more. Not only is the human soul different from the souls of higher entities, it also is different from itself at different times. For the human soul has a double life:¹⁵

¹² So Dillon (above, note 3) 336.

¹³ See Finamore (above, note 1) 35–53, in which I argue that each of the superior classes differs from any other because of its relation to the One. The human soul is the most distant from the One and in need of intermediaries to re-establish itself in the One. I also discuss the importance of the "mixing bowl" of the *Timaeus* for the soul's rank.

¹⁴ Cf. Iamblichus, *De Anima* 379.12–25, on the kinds of union with bodies made by the different classes of soul.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 370.3–4: "Plato makes them [*i.e.*, the faculties of the soul] belong to the souls themselves and to the [composite] living beings, distinguishing each in accordance with each life [*i.e.*, the incarnate and discarnate lives]." See Festugière (above, note 6) 192, note 2 and 195, note 4.

For those who think that the soul lives a double life, one in itself and one in conjunction with the body, they [*i.e.*, the faculties of the soul] are present in the soul in one way but in the common living being in another, as Plato and Pythagoras think.
(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 368.3–6)

Thus the faculties of the composite of body and soul differ from those of the discarnate soul. And just as the faculties differ, so too do its operations:

According to Plato, none of the motions of the composite living being are proper to the soul itself. And so, just as life for him was double—the one separated from body and the other in common with it—so also some operations (ἐνεργήματα) will be proper to the soul and others will be common also to what holds it [*i.e.*, the body]. And of these, some arise from the soul, some are aroused from the passions of the body, and some are stirred up from both equally. But all arise from the soul as their cause.

(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 371.3–11)

Thus the human soul, the lowest rank of individual souls with some connection to Intellect, itself can live a life in body or separated from body. What effect does this double life have on the soul's connection to Intellect?

Iamblichus tends to ascribe intellective activities to the separated life of the soul.¹⁶ In *De Anima* 371.17–22, Iamblichus includes among the motions that belong to the soul itself "after it has been freed from the composite life" divine possession, immaterial intellection, and union with the gods. Indeed, the body seems to be an impediment to intellection for human souls:

Thus the acts of universal and more divine [[souls] are unmixed [with body] because of the purity of their essence, but those of enhylic and individual [souls] are no longer pure in this way. And the acts of those ascending and being released from generation are freed from bodies for the remaining time, but the acts of those descending are interwoven and entangled with them [*i.e.*, bodies] in many ways. And the souls, which are mounted on uniform (αὐτοειδέσι) pneumatic bodies and which because of these [bodies]¹⁷ arrange easily whatever they please, display their acts from on high without a care. But those sown in more solid bodies and held down in them are filled in some way or another with the nature of these [bodies].

(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 373.25–374.6)

But we must not draw the conclusion that discarnate souls can think intellectually but incarnate souls cannot. The situation is not so simple. Although the body can act as an impediment to intellection to some souls, other souls can overcome the body's shortcomings:

Moreover, pure and perfect souls enter into bodies purely without passions and without being deprived of intellection (ἀνευ παθημάτων καὶ τῆς στερήσεως τοῦ νοεῖν), but opposite souls in an opposite manner.

(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 379.22–25)

¹⁶ At Iamblichus, *De Anima* 373.18–21, Iamblichus classifies the perceptive and appetitive faculties as somatic; the intellective as psychic. The intellective faculty is "purer" and does not make use of the body.

¹⁷ See Festugière (above, note 6) 206, note 5, for preserving αὐτῶν with the MSS.

It is not simply the presence of body that interferes with intellection, but also the impurity of the soul itself.

Iamblichus discusses the three reasons for the soul's descent into body in *De Anima* 380.6–14. A soul may be pure and make a descent free of any stain, it may descend impure for mild correction of past sins, or it may be forced down into this realm for punishment for greater crimes. *De Anima* 380.19–29 shows that Iamblichus thought that the highest class of human souls were those who had successfully attained union with the gods and the Intelligible. He calls them (*De Anima* 380.23–25) “newly-initiated and those who have seen much of reality, companions and kinsmen of the gods, and those who are fully perfected and encompass the parts of their soul complete” (οἱ τε γὰρ νεοτελεῖς καὶ πολυθεάμονες τῶν ὄντων, οἳ τε συναπαδοὶ καὶ συγγενεῖς τῶν θεῶν, οἳ τε παντελεῖς καὶ ὁλόκληρα τὰ εἶδη τῆς ψυχῆς περιέχοντες). As Festugière has pointed out,¹⁸ Iamblichus' terminology here comes from the myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which the souls follow the gods in heaven and try to glimpse the forms. For Iamblichus, the soul that has successfully seen the forms is pure and can engage in intellectual thought.

In *Phaedrum*, frg. 7, corroborates this claim. There Iamblichus is explaining Plato's myth of the cicadas (*Phaedrus* 259b–d). The men who would become cicadas had been in the Intelligible realm, where they saw the Forms. Since they were νεοτελεῖς (line 13) and had a memory of the higher realm, they turned away from the natural world after they had descended to it. They did not use sense-perception, but intellect instead. Afterwards they were elevated again to the Intelligible. Thus, the Platonic myth is made to describe a Neoplatonic one: pure souls of the theurgists make a pure descent into this realm and still make use of intellect even in this lower realm.¹⁹

Iamblichus makes a similar distinction in *De Mysteriis* 5.18. The majority of humanity is governed by fate and uses practical reason concerning individual objects in nature (*De Mysteriis* 5.18, 223.10–16).²⁰ Iamblichus continues:

A certain few, using some supernatural power of intellect, stand apart from nature, and are led around to the separated and unmixed Intellect (χωριστὸν καὶ ἀμιγῆ νοῦν), and become superior to physical powers.

(Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 5.18, 223.16–224.1)

¹⁸ See Festugière (above, note 6) 223, note 1. He cites for νεοτελεῖς καὶ πολυθεάμονες, *Phaedrus* 251a2, 250e1, and 248b4; for οἱ τε συναπαδοὶ καὶ συγγενεῖς τῶν θεῶν, *ibid.*, 248c3. In addition to these citations by Festugière, for ὁλόκληρα, see *ibid.*, 250c1–3.

¹⁹ See also *In Phaedonem*, frg. 5, where the theurgist makes a descent to the realm of nature that is “unbroken with regard to the things there [i.e., in the Intelligible realm]” (πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκοπον, lines 9–10). If this is not a retreat to the position of Plotinus (at least as far as theurgists are concerned) and I do not believe it is, then Iamblichus must mean that the theurgist here, like the cicada men in *In Phaedrum*, frg. 7, can still actualize their psychic intellect and re-establish contact with the Intellect above.

²⁰ Iamblichus uses the word ἀγέλη, the great “herd” of men. The term is Chaldaic. See R. Majercik, *The Chaldaean Oracles* (Leiden 1989) frg. 153 and her notes at 198, where she cites Cremer's opinion that the “few” (in Iamblichus' second group) are the theurgists. See also, *des Places* (above, note 4) 172–3, note 1.

Finally, there is a third group who live a life intermediate between nature and pure Intellect (*De Mystериis* 5.18, 224.1–6). The few who use intellect are in the same class as the followers of the gods in the *De Anima* passage and the men who become cicadas in the *Phaedrus* commentary. They are led to the separated Intellect of *In Timaeum*, frg. 56.20.²¹ The intellect they use is the intellectual disposition in their soul. The distance between the intellect-in-us and the Intellect above is finally bridged in the person of the theurgist, i.e., a purified soul who has come to the realm of nature not for punishment but as an instrument of the gods.²²

Theurgists, however, are a special class. Their ability to use Intellect is perhaps not surprising.²³ But what about the rest of humanity? Iamblichus' general view is given in *De Anima* 381.6–13, where he is discussing the moment when the soul enters the body:

Some other opinion might arise, not expressed as yet, that there are very many faculties and essential properties of the soul and that at critical moments, in different ways at different times,²⁴ when the body that is coming into being is suited to do so, it partakes first of the vegetative life, then of sensation, then of the appetitive life, then of the rational soul, and lastly of the intellectual soul.
(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 381.6–13)

Thus, for Iamblichus, all incarnate human souls can make use of intellection if they attain a suitable state. Given the role of intellection in the soul's separation from body and ascent, it seems clear that the suitability which the body must attain is dependent not only on years lived but also on the manner in which we prepare ourselves spiritually and philosophically. Thus, the ἀγέλη of *De Mystериis* 5.18 have not trained their bodies and souls properly to make use of intellections and to ascend. Rather, they remain in the earlier phase of practical reasoning (πρακτικὸς λογισμός, *De Mystериis* 5.18, 223.15 and λογικὴ ψυχὴ in *De Anima* 381.12).²⁵ In

21 Intellect is separated (χωριστόν) and unmixed (ἀμιγούς), in *Timaeum*, frg. 56.3 and 6.

22 On this type of descent, see *De Anima* 378.25–379.6, and my discussion of it in *Finamore* (above, note 1) 99–100. The threefold division of souls in *De Mystериis* 5.18 mirrors that of the types of descent in *De Anima* 380.6–14. The theurgist's soul (*De Mystериis* 5.18, 223.16–224.1) descends for the good of the world (*De Anima* 380.7–9). The soul that cannot use intellect (*De Mystериis* 5.18, 223.10–16) is akin to the soul that is forced to descend for punishment (*De Anima* 380.12–14). The intermediate soul that both uses and does not use intellect (*De Mystериis* 5.18, 224.1–6) corresponds to the soul that descends for correction of its character (*De Anima* 380.9–12). Cf. in *Timaeum*, frgs. 3–4 for Iamblichus' opinion that the fourth guest in the dialogue is absent because he belongs properly to the Intelligible realm not to nature (and hence not in this dialogue). He "belongs to another mode of contemplation, that of the Intelligible and this weakness [that keeps him from being present] is a superabundance of power" (*In Timaeum* 3.9–11). Hence, like the theurgist, he does not operate at the level of nature but at that of the Intelligible.

23 See appendix for my reply to van den Berg's paper.

24 Reading ἄλλοτε ἄλλως with the MSS.

25 Cf. *De Anima* 457.16–19: "Some of the ancients say that it [i.e., the human soul] surpasses reason (λογισμοῦ), and they define its acts so precisely that not even the purest and most perfect reason could attain them." Thus, the highest essence of the human soul is not reason but intellect, and intellect alone can attain the soul's highest essence.

Iamblichus' schema these souls have the intellectual component but have not actualized it. Indeed, in keeping with Iamblichus' stress of theurgy over philosophy, they cannot even know how to actualize it without help from the theurgists and (through them) from the gods.

Between the theurgists and this majority are an intermediate group who partake both of nature and of intellect and free themselves from the lower to ascend to the higher (*De Mystериis* 5.18, 224.2–6). These are theurgists in training, Iamblichus' students, human beings who are still in need of aid (human and divine) to attain the pure state of a theurgist but who have recognized the need for and have availed themselves of spiritual guidance. They can make use of their intellectual component. But how?

In *De Mystериis* 1.15, Iamblichus discusses prayer. Prayers for Iamblichus are a source of union with the gods. Prayers are not the perceptible words but something divine and intellectual (θείαν καὶ νοεράν, *De Mystериis* 1.15, 48.10). Indeed, their origin is divine and they are symbols (συνθήματα, *De Mystериis* 1.15, 48.7) of the gods and share a divine power with them (*De Mystериis* 1.15, 48.5–13). Thus, prayers are an intellectual link between the gods and humanity. When we pray to the gods, we are present with the gods as the divine is present to itself; we have a share of the intellections in the prayer (*De Mystериis* 1.15, 47.4–11). The part of us that receives prayers from and sends them to the gods is the intellectual component:²⁶

For the divine, intellectual, and one in us—or if you wish to call it so, the intelligible—is clearly aroused in prayers. And once aroused, it especially seeks its similar and unites with perfection.

(Iamblichus, *De Mystериis* 46.13–16)

Gradually we become similar to the god to whom we pray (τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ ὁμοίότητα . . . κτῶμεθα, *De Mystериis* 1.15, 48.1–2). We have a threefold schema: the gods, the intellectual prayers, and our own intellectual element. The intellectual prayers act as a link between the gods and us, but only insofar as we use our intellectual element. Thus prayers, which act as a necessary accompaniment to divine rituals (*De Mystериis* 5.26, page 238.14–15), are useful to those who are not yet theurgists but who wish to purify and use their intellectual soul.

This intellectual component is essential not only for praying to the gods but also for knowing them. Iamblichus discusses this function in *De Mystериis* 1.3. We do not know the gods discursively, but we have “an innate knowledge” of them (ἡ περὶ θεῶν ἔμφυτος γνῶσις, *De Mystериis* 1.3, 7.14). This γνῶσις is united to its cause from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς, *De Mystериis* 1.3, 7.16); it is the soul's essential yearning for the Good (τῇ πρὸς τὰγαθὸν οὐσιώδει τῆς ψυχῆς ἐφέσει συνυφέστηκεν, *De Mystериis* 1.3, 8.1–2). Thus this yearning is in all human souls (for all strive after the Good in some form or another), but not recognized by all. This sort of knowledge (which strictly is not knowledge at all, Iamblichus says) differs from other sorts in that it is not distinguished by otherness; rather we are

²⁶ Cf. *De Mystериis* 5.26, page 238.15–17: spending time in prayer nourishes our intellect. For prayer leading to contact with the Demiurge, see *ibid.*, 239.17–240.1. The theory of prayer in 5.26 is consistent with that in 1.15. Iamblichus stresses the power of prayer to elevate us to, connect us with, and bring us into union with the gods.

enveloped in it and filled by it (*De Mysteriis* 1.3, 8.3–13). Iamblichus explains that the human soul is united to the gods and superior classes by this kind of knowledge:²⁷

Not by conjecture or opinion or any syllogism, all of which begin at some point in time, will [the human soul] pursue an essence that is beyond all these, but by the pure and blameless intellections (ταῖς δὲ καθαραῖς καὶ ἀμέμπτοις νοήσεσιν) which it received from eternity from the gods, having been united to them [i.e., the gods] by them [i.e., the intellections].

(Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 1.3, 9.14–10.1)

This knowledge, then, is intellectual in nature. It arises from the gods who surround the psychic intellect with that knowledge. At the end of the chapter, Iamblichus calls this element by which we know the gods a first principle in us (ἀρχῆς ἐν ἡμῖν, *De Mysteriis* 1.3, 10.10). Again, as in the case of prayer, we have a threefold division: the gods, knowledge of the gods, and the intellectual component of the soul. Human beings who are helped by theurgists to ascend to the gods will attain this immediate knowledge; others will not.

That this intellectual component belongs properly to all human souls is indicated also by *In Phaedrum*, frg. 6. Here Iamblichus isolates two parts of the human soul: the One of the soul, which he identifies with the helmsman of the *Phaedrus*, and the soul's intellect, which he identifies with the charioteer. Since Iamblichus is considering the *Phaedrus* myth here (which is imagined as being about all souls before they are embodied), it is clear that both elements are in all souls but become actualized only when used to think intellectually and to view the Forms, i.e. when the soul is in its disembodied state. Again, inferior human beings (the ἀγέλη) have the elements but do not use them.²⁸ In an interesting connection with the innate γνῶσις of *De Mysteriis* 1.3, the One of the soul does not view intelligible objects as other than itself but because is united with them.

Finally, we come full circle and return to *In Timaeum*, frg. 87, with which I began this paper. At the end of the fragment, after arguing that Plotinus' position about the intellect is incorrect, Iamblichus refers to the *Phaedrus* myth. The charioteer of the soul, which Iamblichus had identified with the intellect of the soul in *In Phaedrum*, frg. 6, is here called the most accomplished and highest part of us (τὸ χαριέστατον ἡμῶν καὶ ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις κεφαλαιωδέστατον, lines 23–24). It both ascends to the Intelligible and sinks to generation. Thus, he concludes, "the highest part of us is necessarily different at different times" (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκρότατον ἄλλοτε ἄλλως ἔχειν ἀναγκαῖον, line 31). Everyone, therefore, has a psychic intellect. Theurgists use it regularly; the majority use it not at all; and the median group uses it intermittently.

In our examination of the rational soul in Iamblichean philosophy, we have found that the philosopher did indeed separate the human intellect from the higher

²⁷ See also *ibid.*, 10.5–10, where Iamblichus again contrasts this kind of knowledge with others.

²⁸ This answers Dillon's concern (above, note 3) 254: "It is not quite clear whether the One of the soul constantly remains Above, or simply that, when it is operating, it is in communion with the One. For the sake of Iamblichus' consistency, I hope the latter." It is indeed the latter.

separated Intellect. The human soul sinks in its entirety and ascends in its entirety. When the soul is freed from the body, it can actualize its intellectual component and reach its full potential. When it is in the body, on the other hand, it may transcend the body and make use of Intellect (as the souls of theurgists do, having made a pure descent that is uncontaminated by generation), or it may never actualize its intellect, or it may sometimes actualize it with the help of the gods. The reason for the existence of the intellectual component in the human soul is twofold. First, it gives the capacity for union with the divine Intellect (like to like). Second, it provides a means of non-discursive thought, which is crucial for Iamblichus' epistemology. Knowledge of the gods, like union with them, is non-discursive. We must use our intellectual component to make contact, but this in itself is not enough. We must prepare ourselves spiritually (study with an adept, purify the body and the soul, be illumined by the gods). Thus the intellectual part, like the soul itself, is so inferior that it requires divine aid for actualization. (This, I believe, is Iamblichus' answer to Plotinus.) There is a need for theurgy to channel the intellectual energies of the gods to our own intellectual component so that we may ascend to them and know them.

Appendix

Pure souls

Van den Berg has examined many of the same Iamblichean passages that I have examined and has arrived at a conclusion different from mine. He argues that *In Timaeum*, frg. 87, contradicts other Iamblichean passages, for it declares that all souls descend and are affected by the descent while Iamblichus elsewhere holds that pure souls descend purely and without being affected. He therefore believes that the class of pure souls is not the class of theurgists: "The theurgist may intellectualize regularly; the pure soul does so one hundred percent of the time." There are two problems with van den Berg's thesis. The first concerns what Iamblichus means by ἀπαθής (a point to which I will return below) and the second his belief that a pure soul ἀὲν νοεῖ. Not only does Iamblichus nowhere state that a pure soul *always* intellectualizes,²⁹ but such a theory would also be inconceivable. If these pure souls are represented by sages such as Pythagoras and Plato (as both van den Berg and I believe), then they cannot always be engaged in intellectual thought. For Pythagoras and Plato clearly spent time involved in the real world, writing, teaching, using πρακτικὸς λογισμός. Even if one could argue that pure souls could carry out such activities intellectually, Plato's and Pythagoras' childhood and infant years could not be explained in this way. Indeed if pure souls always intellectualized, Iamblichus'

²⁹ In fact, there is evidence that Iamblichus holds that any human soul can intellectualize only intermittently. See Pseudo-Simplicius, *De Anima* 240.33–35: "If the highest essence of the soul should remain completely the same, its activity (which does not remain the same) would not be as the essence, since at some times it thinks and at others it does not." Thus, this author, following Iamblichus (line 37), concludes that the soul in its essence (οὐσία) intellectualizes only part of the time (cf. *De Anima* 240.39–241.1). See Steel (above, note 2) 58. For attempts by later Neoplatonists to answer the question, see Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem* 5.3, Damascius, *In Phaedonem* 1.114, and the notes of L.G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam 1976) 98–9.

interpretation of the cicada myth would be true not only figuratively but also literally: they would starve and die. If such souls were meant to be an ἐπίδειξις θείας ζωῆς and θεοῦς ἐκφαίνεσθαι (*De Anima* 379.1–4), if they descend ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ καὶ καθάρσει καὶ τελειότητι τῶν τῆδε (*De Anima* 380.8–9), they must have an active role in this world and would therefore do more than engage in purely intellectual activity.

Iamblichus derives this class of souls from Plato's *Phaedrus* myth, as his use of the words νεοτελεῖς, etc. shows (*De Anima* 380.23–25 and *In Phaedrum* 7.13). Plato, however, lists only two classes of soul: those that can follow the gods and glimpse the Forms and who remain unharmed (ἀπλήμων, ἀβλαβή) and "the rest" who cannot follow, fail to see the Forms, and lose their plumage and fall (*Phaedrus* 248a–b; cf. 248c).³⁰ Iamblichus, it seems, subdivided Plato's lowest class into two: souls that descend for mild correction and are "not completely unaffected" (*De Anima* 380.11) and those who descend for punishment and whose descent is forced in some way (*De Anima* 380.12–14). Plato's second class of souls descends first into the bodies of philosophers and then undergoes later births of decreasing status (*Phaedrus* 248c–e). Later, however, Plato says that some souls can choose a philosophical life three times in succession and thereby escape from the cycle of births until the beginning of the next 10,000-year cycle (*Phaedrus* 248e–249a); other souls, after a period of punishment, are reborn after 1,000 years (*Phaedrus* 249a–c). Philosophers, Plato says, can regain their wings and be like gods (*Phaedrus* 249c–d). It is from these passages that Iamblichus creates his subdivision of the lower class of souls. Iamblichus believes that even a soul that is not, according to Plato, a "follower of god" (θεῶ συνοπαδός, *Phaedrus* 248c2) can improve its lot while embodied in this realm, come to use intellection and ascend to the gods.³¹ This soul "is not completely unaffected" (οὐκ ἀπαθὴς ἐστὶ παντελῶς, *De Anima* 380.11); that is, its body affects somewhat its ability to intellectualize.

What then does Iamblichus mean when he says that pure souls are implanted into bodies ἀπαθεῖς καὶ ἀκήρατοι (*De Anima* 380.26)? The doctrine of pure souls was problematic for Iamblichus. Apparently he first argued (*In Phaedrus*, frg. 5) that they did not descend at all and then "in letters" (ἐν ἐπιστολαῖς, line 10), presumably to his disciples, explained that pure souls³² can be said not to descend in the sense that their descent is made without a break with the Intelligible (πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκοπον, lines 9–10). One can understand why Iamblichus' disciples were confused.³³ The reason for Iamblichus' hesitation can be found in Plato's *Phaedo*

³⁰ Iamblichus makes a dual division in *De Anima* 379.22–25 and 380.23–29. For a triple division similar to the one in *De Anima* 380.6–14, see *De Mysteriis* 5.18, discussed above.

³¹ In *De Mysteriis* 5.18, Iamblichus says of this intermediate class of souls: "they are freed from what is inferior [i.e., from nature] and change to what is better [i.e., Intellect]" (*De Mysteriis* 5.18, 224.5–6).

³² The phrase τελῶς ἀποκαθιστάμενα (lines 5–6) refers to souls that have been restored to the Intelligible Realm after leading a life or lives on earth, at the close of the 10,000-year cycle mentioned by Plato in *Phaedrus* 248e–249a.

³³ See also Damascius, *Parmenides* 259.12–14: τὸ ἀκρότατον αὐτῶν, ὅπερ καὶ κατιὸν εἰς γένεσιν ὅμως οὐ κáτειναι, ὥς φησιν ὁ μέγας Ἰάμβλιχος ἐν τῷ Περὶ ψυχῆς μεταναστάσεως ἀπὸ σώματος. The text is cited by Westerink (above, note 29, vol. 2

114c2–5, where he says that souls through philosophy can escape rebirth εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον and in the *Phaedrus*, where Plato does not explicitly say that his highest class of souls do not descend but only that they are “unharméd” (*Phaedrus* 248c). Since in *De Mysteriis* 1.10 Iamblichus thought that disembodied pure souls were unaffected to some degree (*De Mysteriis* 1.10, 34.8–35.7), he may have decided at one time that pure souls (to remain pure) could not descend and mix with bodies. But even in 1.10, Iamblichus held that the pure soul could enter the body unaffected (*De Mysteriis* 1.10, 35.8–9). Further, since the soul was a mean, even in its pure disembodied state the soul is not completely ἀπαθής.³⁴ As a mean between Intellect and nature, it could not always remain unaffected. It seems likely that Iamblichus used his doctrine of the soul as mean to explain his theory of pure human souls, which are less “pure” than the souls of the gods and other superior classes. Thus when souls enter bodies “purely,” the term is relative to the kind of purity to which an intermediate substance like a human soul can attain.

A passage from Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* 3.20 clarifies that even the highest, pure class of souls does not always intellectualize but still requires divine aid when it does so. Here Iamblichus stresses that an embodied soul cannot know divine truths on its own but must be illuminated by the gods (*De Mysteriis* 3.20, 148.12–149.6). He continues:

If however these were works of the soul, either every soul would accomplish them or only the soul having its own perfection (τελειότητα). But as it is, neither is sufficiently prepared to such an end. But even the perfect soul (ἡ τελεία) is imperfect (ἀτελής) with regard to divine activity.

(Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 3.20, 149.8–12)

As it is with this “theurgical activity” (*De Mysteriis* 3.20, 149.13), so it is with the pure soul's ability to actualize its intellectual power. A pure soul, *qua* mean, intellectualizes intermittently with the gods' help.

The doctrine expressed in *In Phaedrum*, frg. 5, echoes the doctrine of *De Anima* 379.22–24 and *In Phaedrum*, frg. 7. In all three the pure soul descends unaffected in some way (πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ ἀδιάκοπον, οἷον παθημάτων καὶ τῆς στερήσεως τοῦ νοεῖν, οἱ ἀπόστροφοὶ ἦσαν τῆς γενέσεως). These three passages taken together with *De Mysteriis* 3.20 suggest that whereas these pure souls like all human souls require the gods' assistance in their re-ascent to the Intelligible, once they attain that realm they are more closely attuned to it than other lower souls because of their privileged position in the time before they were embodied. This can be seen, then, as Iamblichus' response to Plotinus in *In Timaeum*, frg. 87.8–9: ἀπαθές τι φυλάττοντας ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἀεὶ νοοῦν. The soul, *qua* mean, is not

[Amsterdam 1977] 281). The title of the Iamblichean work cited by Damascius may be a “subdivision” of the *De Anima*. See Dillon (above, note 3) 25.

³⁴ Pseudo-Simplicius, *De Anima* 89.33–35: “If, as the divine Iamblichus thinks, a distorted and imperfect activity could not come from an impassive and perfect essence (ἐξ ἀπαθοῦς καὶ τελείας οὐσίας), it would somehow be affected even in its essence (εἴη ἂν παθαινομένη πως καὶ κατ' οὐσαν), and would be a mean in this way too.” As a mean it “does not simply remain but both remains what it is and becomes” (*De Anima* 90.4–5).

completely unaffected and does not always intellectualize. (Note that this is the claim in lines 19–20 as well.)

A pure soul, like Pythagoras, when he reached the age of reason (cf. *De Anima* 318.1–4) would be able to actualize his capacity to intellectualize. Through theurgy the passions of the body will not impede him and the gods will assist him.³⁵ His contact with the Intelligible is unbroken in the sense that access to it is not denied him when, with the help of the gods, he desires to contact it. His pure soul is prepared. But his role on earth is not to remain in the Intelligible, but to assist humanity to make the same ascent. To do this he must exercise other non-intellectual powers. Thus he does not always intellectualize.

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³⁵ Cf. *De Anima* 456.22–457.6, where Iamblichus is discussing the need for punishment and purification. Pure human souls (ἔσαι θεοῖς συνέπονται, *De Anima* 457.2) have no need of purification after death, presumably because they are pure already. They also have no need of punishment after death and indeed are said to be “linked to the gods by sharing in their Intellect” (ὁμοιοητικῶς συναφθείσας τοῖς θεοῖς, *De Anima* 456.24). In their discarnate state, they have mediated access to the Intelligible through the Intellect of the gods. See also *De Mysteriis* 5.18, where Iamblichus, after making his threefold division of souls, has this to say about the kind of ritual that is appropriate for pure souls: “Those leading a life in accordance alone with intellect and the life of intellect, after they have been freed (ἀπολυθέντες) from the bonds of nature, devote themselves to the intellectual and incorporeal law of the hieratic art in all parts of theurgy” (*De Mysteriis* 5.18, 225.1–5). Notice that even these souls, although they are unaffected and pure, need to free themselves from the lower realm to intellectualize. Thus ritual purification is necessary before the immaterial theurgic ritual itself. These pure souls may be able to use intellect alone, but they clearly do not do so continually and always.

The Mortality and Anonymity of the Iamblichean Soul

Gregory Shaw

*... the nameless guest
is greater than those present . . .*

—Iamblichus¹

Look at this puppet here,
A heap of many sores, piled up,
Diseased and full of greediness,
Unstable and impermanent!

Devoured by old age is this frame,
A prey of sickness, weak and frail;
To pieces breaks this putrid body,
All life must truly end in death.

The Dhammapada (147–48)²

Platonists, Christians, or even initiates of New Age religions might, on reflection, more easily bear these hard words of the Buddha because they too believe that the body is merely a physical organism and subject to decay. But the Buddha says more than this. He maintains that the soul, which many of us prize—however secretly—as the immortal inhabitant of our flesh, is an illusion created by our fear of extinction. He says:

... is it not really an utter fool's doctrine to say: This is the world,
this am I; after death I shall be permanent, persisting, and eternal?³

¹ See *In Timaeum*, frg. 4 in *Iamblichī Chalcidensis: In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta*, J.M. Dillon, ed. and trans. (Leiden 1973).

² Cited in *A Buddhist Bible*, D. Goddard, ed. (Boston 1970) 27–8.

³ *Majjhima-Nikaya* 22, D. Goddard, ed. (above, note 2) 36.

Such sentiments seem to be the very antithesis of Neoplatonism as it is generally understood and taught. Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the human soul is central to the tradition, and Plotinus' evocative descriptions of his journeys into divinity and immortality have understandably attracted many to Platonism for its profoundly beautiful and optimistic vision of the human soul. The affective current of this Platonism is upward, uplifting, and positive; it affirms the dignity and the divinity of humanity.

It is understandable, therefore, that the Platonism of Iamblichus has been so reluctantly embraced. He seems to be the dark and uglier brother of the beautiful Plotinus. And for good reason. Iamblichus insults us and has a much darker view of human beings, one that dramatically diverges from Plotinian optimism and seems to revert to an almost unplatonic (yet very Greek) pessimism. In the *De Mysteriis* Iamblichus says:

[T]he human race is weak and small, it sees but little and is possessed by a congenital nothingness (οὐδένεια).⁴

"What is human," he adds, "is ugly, of no value, and ludicrous when compared to the divine."⁵ And yet, despite our congenital weakness, on reading Plato and particularly on reading Plotinus, we tend to think that our soul is divine and that we are immortal. If our weakness and impurity were not problem enough, the self-deception of believing that our personal identity, our "I," shall survive death as a permanent and eternal self is—in the opinion of both Iamblichus and the Buddha—a doctrine of fools. This is the tragedy of the human soul as perceived by Iamblichus, and his own less exalted and less optimistic psychology was his attempt to shed light on the hopelessness of the human condition and the futility of such vain beliefs. What makes the situation in the case of Iamblichus all the more complex and interesting is that he too was a Platonist and he too believed in the immortality of the human soul.⁶ It is this paradox in Iamblichean psychology that I will explore by examining (1) how Iamblichus imagined the identity and divinity of the soul, (2) how the Iamblichean soul was alienated from its divinity, and (3) how its self-alienation and mortality was, in Iamblichus' view, the soul's only way to participate in its divinity.

⁴ *De Mysteriis* 3.18, 144.12–14. The standard edition is, *Jamblique: Les mystères d'Égypte*, É. des Places, ed. (Paris 1966). Cf. *De Mysteriis* 9.10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.14, 146.10–12.

⁶ I do not mean to equate Iamblichean Neoplatonism with Buddhism, yet Iamblichus' critique of the pretensions and *hubris* of the personal self bears similarities to the Buddhist analysis and critique of the notions of an immortal "self." Despite significant differences in their metaphysics and soteriology, both Iamblichus and Buddhists are concerned with the problems of self-deception.

That Iamblichus' conception of the human soul diverged from that of Plotinus is now well-known,⁷ as are the practical consequences of Iamblichus' doctrine of the descended soul, particularly in their religious and theurgical expression.⁸ Yet what has not, to my mind, been sufficiently explored, is how important the soul's experience of mortality was to the psychology of Iamblichus. While Iamblichus' doctrines of the soul must be situated in an ultimately optimistic and Platonic context, I am interested in understanding the consequences of his apparently unplatonic doctrine: that an immortal soul must experience mortality and not just in physical appearance but in its very identity. I am interested in pursuing what may seem so obvious to others that it bears no explanation, and perhaps it does not. But I have so often passed over the existential significance of Iamblichus' doctrine of the mortality of the soul that I suspect there is something in it I prefer not to see.

The human soul, according to Iamblichus, is the lowest member of a hierarchy of divine and immortal beings.⁹ In both the *De Anima* and the *De Mysteriis* Iamblichus carefully distinguishes the human soul from its superiors. The soul cannot—as his Platonic predecessors held—be equated with the *Nous*, the gods, or other races superior to the soul.¹⁰ By definition, the soul is generated after, and is subordinate to the *Nous*.¹¹ Its function, according to Iamblichus' reading of the *Timaeus*, was to mediate between opposites,¹² and ultimately this demanded that the human soul extend itself into the generated world to mediate between mortality and immortality, between the undivided consciousness of the Whole and the self-reflexive consciousness of a part. It was a task not given to any other divinity, and although it expressed the collective will of the gods, it was uniquely accomplished by the human soul; among immortals, only the human soul had the experience of mortality and death.

In Plotinian terms the embodied soul was the "inferior companion,"¹³ buffeted and threatened on all sides by its environment.¹⁴ But while the Plotinian soul was able to escape from this inferiority and rise up to its undescended "better

7 A.C. Lloyd, "The Later Neoplatonists" in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, A.H. Armstrong, ed. (Cambridge 1967) 269–325; R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London 1972) 118–23; Iamblichus *Chalcidensis: In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (above, note 1) 41–47; A. Smith, *Porphyrus's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition: A Study in Post-Plotinian Neoplatonism* (The Hague 1974) 83–150.

8 Lloyd (above, note 7); Wallis (above, note 7); Smith (above, note 7).

9 Outlined in the *De Mysteriis* 1.7, especially 21.2; cf. 68.8–11; 34.8–9 and Iamblichus' stratification of immortal entities, including gods, angels, heroes, and archons—with the human soul as the lowest (*De Mysteriis* 70.18–71.18).

10 Stobaeus 1.365.7–21.

11 *Ibid.*, 1.365.22–366.11; see the translation of this passage by Dillon (above, note 1) 42.

12 *Ibid.*; cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 34c–36e.

13 *Enneades* 1.2.6.28.

14 *Ibid.*, 4.8.4.18–22.

half," the Iamblichean soul had no such option. It had to learn, somehow, to recognize that inferiority and emptiness were integral to its identity. One might argue, as Smith has, that Iamblichus' differences with Plotinus on the spiritual capacities of the soul were more semantic than substantive.¹⁵ C. Zintzen lends support to this view by presenting persuasive evidence that Iamblichus translated the metaphysics and psychology of Plotinus into the terminology of Chaldaean theurgy; that, after all, his differences with Plotinus were more semantic than essential.¹⁶

While I agree with both Smith and Zintzen's analyses, I think there are pedagogical consequences to the differences between Iamblichus' and Plotinus' theories of soul that they leave unaddressed. In terms of Mahayana Buddhism, it would be a question of *upaya*, a Sanskrit term for the skillful means or method of a teacher, especially with respect to the spiritual capacity of the student.¹⁷ I believe that Iamblichus' emphasis on the soul's descent and its nothingness reflect his concern with appropriate pedagogy, for the imagery of Plotinus' teachings on the undescended soul can easily be misappropriated by the empirical ego. Once introduced to the notion of a higher soul, it is virtually irresistible for the ego not to imagine that the soul, with its "head in heaven,"¹⁸ is the real "me," resulting in the kind of self-deception and rationalistic *hubris* that Iamblichus suspected in Porphyry, who not only "counted" his and his master's unifications with the One but also stated, with an unplotinian bluntness, that the "true self is the *Nous*."¹⁹ This is not to question the validity of Plotinus' experiences; it is to question, rather, how his images of transcendence were received by those lacking his depth. It would seem that, in Iamblichus' view, Plotinus' *upaya* risked promoting a kind of spiritual egotism, one that Iamblichus meant to counteract with his own less exalted psychology which stressed the emptiness and weakness of the human soul.

Since Iamblichus believed that the soul was the lowest of divine beings and carried the greatest degree of "otherness" (ἑτερότης),²⁰ once embodied, it had a

15 Smith (above, note 7) 86–89.

16 "Bemerkungen zum Aufstiegsweg der Seele in Iamblichs *De Mysteriis*," *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie*, H.D. Blume and F. Mann, eds. (Münster 1983) 319.

17 *Upaya* is a Sanskrit term meaning the "skillful means or method" of a Bohisattva, an enlightened one. It was introduced by Mahayana Buddhists to account for their differences with, and superiority to, the Theravadians. See *The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen*, S. Schumacher, G. Woerner, eds., M.H. Kohn, trans., (Boston 1991) 239. In Neoplatonic terms, the capacity (ἐμπνευστότης) of the student determined the degree of his or her spiritual illumination.

18 *Enneades* 4.3.12.1–5; cf. 4.8.8.1–4; 1.1.

19 On Porphyry's tallying up each *henosis*, *Vita Plotini* 23; on the self as *Nous*, *De Abstinencia* 1.29.4. J. Trouillard characterizes Porphyry as a disciple "souvent exotérique" who misinterpreted *henosis* as an "event" or even a "conquest" of the soul. See, *La Purification Plotinienne* J. Trouillard, ed. (Paris 1955) 98.

20 Dillon suggests that Iamblichus conceived the hierarchy of divine souls according to their respective allotments of "essence" (οὐσία), "sameness" (ταυτότης), and "otherness" (ἑτερότης), with the human soul carrying the greatest proportion of otherness (Dillon [above, note 1] 378). J. Finamore (*Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* [Chico 1985]) argues that the distinction cited by Dillon is unique to Proclus and differs from the thinking of Iamblichus. Citing passages from *De Mysteriis* 1.15, Finamore says that for Iamblichus souls are ranked according to

mortal rather than an immortal vehicle of expression. This meant that unlike its superiors the soul's actions were divided and bound up in the temporal cycles of a mortal body. Upon embodiment, Iamblichus maintained that the soul turns to and becomes identified with the mortal life that it animates.²¹ This turning outward and verging toward generated life fused the soul with an individual mortal body.²² In the imagery of the *Timaeus*, the embodied soul is turned upside down and its entire orientation is inverted (ἀντροπή), causing the soul to take the same for different, up for down, and right for left.²³ Using Aristotelian terms to describe this condition, Iamblichus says that the "highest οὐσία of our soul is, in some way, relaxed, broken up, and has its existence constituted—so to speak—in its descent toward lower lives."²⁴ In a word, the embodied soul is "self-alienated" (ἀλλοτριωθέν).²⁵ Although immortal, the soul becomes mortal, and although its original nature is universal and coordinate with the World Soul, it is fused to a single mortal body and is subject to its fate.²⁶

Summing up the essential problem of the embodied soul as imagined by later Platonists, H.D. Saffrey has written: "... le malheur de l'homme c'est d'être un individu, et tout l'effort du philosophe consiste à se hausser de nouveau à l'universel et au Tout."²⁷ The question, of course is what or who it is that is raised from particularity to universality, and the answer to this question forms an important part of the means to achieve it. The notion that the soul recovers its original nature and divinity through an assimilation to the orders of the World Soul was a standard Platonic teaching and was followed by virtually all Platonists.²⁸ The method of communicating this doctrine and effecting this transformation, however, formed part

their participation in essence (οὐσία) and their relation to the Good. Unlike the higher kinds, human souls "do not participate directly in the essential Good," hence their lower rank (*De Mysteriorum* 1.15, 37–40). Accepting Finamore's point about Iamblichus' distinction, I think that this would necessarily cause the human soul to experience "otherness" more than its superiors, which may account for Proclus' elaboration of this point. After all, as Finamore says, it is an elaboration based on Iamblichean principles.

21 *De Mysteriorum* 1.7, 21.6; cf. Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarii* 374.6–376.19 and Finamore's translation of part of this passage. See Finamore (above, note 20) 13.

22 Stobaeus 1.372.26–373.8; cf. *De Mysteriorum* 3.20, 148.12–14.

23 Plato, *Timaeus* 43e–44a.

24 Simplicius [Priscianus], *De Anima* 241.7–10. For the attribution to Priscianus and insight into Iamblichus' paradoxical psychology, see C.G. Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius, and Priscianus*, E. Haasi, trans. (Brussels 1978) *passim*.

25 Simplicius [Priscianus], *De Anima* 223.26.

26 Cf. *De Mysteriorum* 3.20, 148.12–14.

27 "Théologie et Anthropologie d'après quelques Prefaces de Proclus," in *Images of Man in Ancient and Modern Thought* (Leuven 1976) 208.

28 Plato, *Timaeus* 90a–d; *Respublica* 532b.

of the "skillful means" or *upaya* of each Platonic master. In the case of Iamblichus, self-consciousness itself was considered the primary symptom of the soul becoming "other to itself." In his "difficult definition of the soul,"²⁹ Iamblichus understood our sense of "self" to be the result of the soul fusing with an individual and mortal life. If, as Saffrey says, "the misfortune of man is to be an individual," then it would be inconsistent to maintain that an individual could save or "raise" himself, particularly when he is the primary obstacle to his ascent. Iamblichus argued, therefore, that human souls were incapable of achieving the self-transformation outlined in the dialogues of Plato or the *Enneads* of Plotinus. Because of our innate nothingness, human souls depend entirely on the gods for salvation.³⁰

Since Iamblichus believed the human soul was deficient and weak, it was necessary for him to imagine something within the soul that was not human but divine and able to translate the soul to universal wholeness.³¹ Although Iamblichus was unequivocal in his opposition to the doctrine of the undescended soul and clearly articulated his own views on the place of the embodied soul and its alienation from the gods, when he spoke about this non-human and divine presence in the soul he seems to have been deliberately vague.

In his *Phaedrus* commentary, Iamblichus refers to this divine presence as "the one of the soul" (τὸ ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς)³² which he identified as the helmsman of Plato's chariot of the soul.³³ It is this helmsman, Iamblichus maintains, that unites the soul with the Intelligibles, not intellectually, he cautions, but—as Dillon puts it—through "a special faculty," a "receptacle of mystical inspiration."³⁴ Describing this faculty and its function Iamblichus says "it is the essential nature of the 'one of the soul' to be united with the Gods."³⁵ There seems to be nothing ambiguous about this, yet in the *De Mysteriori*, where Iamblichus was writing in a more polemical vein to promote his own form of Platonic *upaya*, he described the "one of the soul" in several different ways. Perhaps the most ambiguous reference is in his explanation of what happens to the soul in prayer. He says:

For what is divine (θεῖον) in us and intellectual (νοεῖον) and one (ἓν) or—if you prefer to call it intelligible (νοητόν)—is then clearly awakened in prayers, and through being awakened it especially desires its similar and becomes united to perfection itself. (De Mysteriori I.15, 46.13–16)

29 Simplicius [Priscianus], *De Anima* 14.7–8.

30 Iamblichus' conception of the soul's dependence on the gods should clearly be distinguished from the dependence of the Christian, who is saved by a divine grace dispensed by a personal and loving deity. By contrast, the Iamblichean gods, like the powers of nature, are perpetually present in our world and available to any soul able to receive them, e.g., in theurgic ritual.

31 Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1177b.

32 In *Phaedrum*, frg. 6, Dillon (above, note 1) 96–7.

33 Plato, *Phaedrus* 247c.

34 Dillon (above, note 1) 253.

35 In *Phaedrum*, frg. 6, Dillon (above, note 1) 96–7.

I believe that Iamblichus is indifferent about what this presence should be called because he did not think that the divine presence was something that could be known by the soul. Significantly, however, Iamblichus is clear about its activity: the longing and yearning power that lifts the soul to its lost perfection. About what is unknowable Iamblichus is deliberately imprecise, but about its effects and superiority to the soul Iamblichus is quite clear.³⁶ I think we err in trying to impose clarity and precision in Iamblichus' psychology where it does not belong.

In another context, when Iamblichus distinguishes false divination, which is a human activity, from true divination, which comes from the gods and their presence in us, Iamblichus says that genuine divination "is not a human activity at all but divine (*θεῖον*), supernatural (*ὑπερφύεες*), and sent down to us from above, from heaven. It is ungenerated, eternal, and arises by itself."³⁷ The power of divination does not derive from the soul, he says, but from "a certain divine good which is pre-established as more ancient than our nature."³⁸ This more ancient presence is also described by Iamblichus simply as "another principle of the soul,"³⁹ and it is through this principle that the soul engages in true divination.

The key issue for Iamblichus was that this divine principle was established in the soul prior to our self awareness, and therefore it could not—as Porphyry seemed to believe—become an object of knowledge. Yet, because it is the "first principle in us," it is the source that stimulates all our thinking and striving toward the gods.⁴⁰ Describing this principle as an "innate gnosis of the gods,"⁴¹ Iamblichus says:

It pre-exists in our very essence; it is superior to all judgment and choice and exists prior to reason and demonstration. From the beginning, it is united to its proper cause and is established with the soul's essential desire (*ἔφεσις*) for the Good. (*De Mysteriis* 1.3, 7.14–8.2)

Lest Porphyry misunderstand, Iamblichus emphasizes that "contact with the divine is not knowledge (*γνώσις*). For knowledge is separated from its object by a kind of otherness."⁴² Prior to dualistic knowing, Iamblichus continues, the soul is already in active contact with the gods but in a way that surpasses discursive knowledge.⁴³

³⁶ Iamblichus adopts the same kind of pious agnosticism in his commentary on a passage in the *Timaeus* (44c–d). He states: "... that everything takes its existence from the Gods, we firmly maintain, looking to their goodness and power, but *how* things proceed from them, we are not competent to comprehend," in *Platonis Timaeum Commentarii*, frg. 89.9–11, Dillon (above, note 1) 202–3 (my emphases).

³⁷ *De Mysteriis* 3.1, 100.6–9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.27, 165.18–19; cf. Stobaeus 2.174.15–16.

³⁹ *De Mysteriis* 8.7, 270.8–9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.3, 10.10–11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.3, 7.14.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.3, 8.3–4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.3, 8.5–13.

What is consistent in Iamblichus' various references to the divine principle of the soul is that (1) it is not knowable, (2) it exists prior to the soul, and (3) it is recognizable only through its erotic activity: the yearning we feel for the Good. In effect, the soul's desire for the gods was rooted in the divine presence already within it. This paradox was consistent with both Platonic and Plotinian teachings as well as with the Chaldaean Oracles which speak of a "deep eros" (βαθὺς ἔρως) implanted in all souls by the Creator to stir up their desire for him.⁴⁴ The highest principle of the soul, therefore, was not its rational but its erotic capacity. For Iamblichus this means that

the Intelligible is held before the mind not as knowable (ὡς γνωστόν) but as desirable (ὡς ἔφερον) and the mind is filled by this, not with knowledge, but with being and every intelligible perfection.⁴⁵

Now, if the Iamblichean soul were able to experience an erotic apotheosis in the manner described so eloquently by Plotinus there would be no reason to see Iamblichus' psychology as dark or pessimistic. But, for Iamblichus, the soul's deep eros simply intensifies and clarifies the tragedy of the human condition. For although the soul has a divine eros for immortality, our mortal identity causes us to imagine its fulfillment in a way that gives our individual self the characteristics of a universal god. This was the self-deception that Iamblichus wanted to counter-act by emphasizing the soul's nothingness and mortality. For when we finally realize that the glory and beauty of our anticipated immortality is in direct proportion to, and rooted in, our fear of personal annihilation, then the imagined ascent of the soul—so beloved by Platonists—becomes nothing more than an exercise in self-deception. For Iamblichus, the soul truly becomes mortal and the experience of death and the annihilation of the self were unavoidable. All of which leads to a frustrating *aporia*.

For if, according to Iamblichus, the highest principle in the soul is revealed in our eros for the gods, and if, according to Plato (and Iamblichus) the soul is already divine and immortal, and if—at the same time—the soul is not divine but mortal, as Iamblichus also maintains, then we seem to find ourselves in a hopeless contradiction. Yet, since Iamblichus maintained that his teachings on the soul were Platonic,⁴⁶ and since, for Iamblichus, the soul's highest principle may be characterized as erotic, perhaps a way through this *aporia* may be found in Plato's description of Eros in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*.

After Socrates fails in his attempt to define Eros as being either beautiful or ugly, divine or human, immortal or mortal, Diotima reveals Eros to be somehow both and somehow neither; he is an intermediary who continually moves up and down

⁴⁴ *Chaldaean Oracles*, R. Majercik, trans. (Leiden 1989) frags. 39 and 43.

⁴⁵ Cited by Damascius in *Dubitationes et Solutiones* 1.154.9–11; I have checked this reference with the improved text and translation, *Traité des Premiers Principes* 2.104.20–23, L.G. Westerink, ed. and J. Combes, trans. (Paris 1989).

⁴⁶ Stobaeus 1.366.5–8.

between the gods and men. He is a messenger, she says, "conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men [bringing] commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices."⁴⁷ As an intermediary entity, Eros possesses the characteristics of both his parents, Poros and Penia (*Symposium* 203c-d). Neither mortal nor immortal, he is both full and empty, growing and shrinking, dying and being reborn, all in the same day (203e). As we know, it is Socrates himself who is Plato's embodiment of Eros. For Socrates is also an intermediary being who, like Eros, embraces in his person the pairs of opposites.

Socrates is attracted to beautiful boys but could not care less whether a boy is beautiful (216d-e), he comes on as a lover, yet it turns out that he is the beloved (222e), he is the best at feasting but is indifferent to food (220a), he is resistant to cold as well as to heat (220b-d), and he is calm whether with friends or enemies, in peace or at war (221b-c). Socrates, we are told, is comparable to no human being at all (221d). He is, after all, an exemplar of the great daimon Eros, and since Eros is constantly moving between the deathless beauty of the gods and the mortal ugliness of men it is not surprising that Socrates, at the conclusion of the *Symposium*, is trying to convince Agathon and Aristophanes that both tragedy and comedy should come together in the skill of the gifted dramatist. A coincidence of opposites lies at the heart of the Platonic Eros.

If these oppositions define Plato's understanding of Eros, and if the soul's eros allows it to contact the gods, it follows that the soul must plumb the mysteries of Eros to reach the divine. The soul must experience in a passionate and disturbing way the coincidence of opposites that goes on dispassionately at higher levels of the cosmos.⁴⁸ According to Platonists and Pythagoreans, the mixing of opposites causes the generation of numbers,⁴⁹ it forms the matrix of the physical universe and establishes the framework of all souls, including human.⁵⁰ In Iamblichus' psychology, the coincidence of opposites outlined in the *Timaeus* is imagined in starkly contrasting terms. According to Iamblichus, the "soul is a mean not only between the divided and the undivided, the remaining and the proceeding, the noetic and the irrational, but also between the ungenerated and the generated . . ."⁵¹ That

47 *Symposium* 202e

48 *De Mysteriis* 196.8-11. Iamblichus understood all powers to exist in the One, that which unifies as well as that which divides. Ultimately, the power that causes the soul to descend into individuality and alienation was rooted in the One itself. See Iamblichus' explanation of the One's power to unify and divide in his discussion of "quantity," preserved by Simplicius, in *Aristotelis Categoriae Commentarium* 135.8ff. cited and translated by A.J. Festugière, "Traité de L'Âme" in *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 3 (Paris 1953) 181, note 1.

49 Dillon shows the Pythagorean influence on Iamblichus' metaphysics for, according to Iamblichus, the Ineffable One is revealed through a Second One that gives rise to the opposing number powers of Limit (*nēpas*) and The Unlimited (*ἀπειρον*). Dillon explains that the mixing of these principles gives rise to the One-Being, in a manner similar to Plato's description of the "mixture" in the *Philebus* 16c-d. See Dillon (above, note 1) 29-33.

50 Plato, *Timaeus* 34c-36e. Iamblichus describes the work of the Demiurge as a "rhythmic weaving" of monadic and dyadic principles in *In Nicomachi Arithmeticae Introductionem* 78.24, Pistelli, ed. (Leipzig 1894) and U. Klein (Stuttgart 1975).

51 Iamblichus [Priscianus], *De Anima* 89.35-37.

the soul was simultaneously ungenerated like the gods and generated like mortals was a contradiction rooted in its very essence. In existential terms, Iamblichus says: "... what is immortal in the soul is filled completely with mortality and no longer remains only immortal."⁵² This means that although immortal, the soul—as a mean term—embraces its other: mortality. In embodiment the soul becomes self-alienated and "when the soul is made other to itself" (ἐτεροιοῦσθαι πρὸς ἑαυτήν), Iamblichus says, "the sameness with itself becomes faint."⁵³ So faint that we no longer know it. In terms of human experience, we no longer know that we are divine, and what is immortal in the soul becomes entirely hidden and inaccessible to us.⁵⁴

Yet, according to Iamblichus, each soul has within it the hidden helmsman, more ancient than the soul itself. Each soul possesses an innate γνῶσις of the gods which we feel as desire for our lost immortality, our divinity, our beauty. So, when the soul catches a glimpse of this beauty—which is its own hidden immortality—its desire is roused up and it passionately seeks to embrace this beauty as if it were its own. Like the dark and twisted horse in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the soul heedlessly surges after this beautiful immortality and seeks wildly to possess it. As Plato put it:

... [W]ith head down and tail stretched out he takes the bit between his teeth and shamelessly plunges on. (Plato, *Phaedrus* 254d)

To give the horse its head creates a monstrous distortion of spiritual fulfillment; it allows the mortal individual—who has not yet limited his unlimited impulses—to imagine that he possesses the immortality and the beauty that he grasps at. To indulge this urge inflates the ego into a caricature of the universal, and the individual assumes an immortality that it shall never possess. In Orphic terms, this self-deception is rooted in our titanic nature which "tears apart" the god within and isolates the soul, separating it from its connection with the universe.⁵⁵

It seems that this is an unavoidable tendency in human beings. For if, as the Platonists say, we are designed to yearn for immortality, how could we not think that it has something to do with us? The yearning for the divine is felt to be my yearning—and it undoubtedly is—and yet, in a deeper sense, it is not mine, for the desire was implanted in the soul prior to my self-consciousness. The unruly horse of the soul—our titanic nature—must feel desire fully and must experience unbearable anguish for the beloved, and yet, this dark Titan of self-awareness must recognize that the desire, ultimately, is not "mine" but something greater. When the unlimited

⁵² *Ibid.*, 90.21–23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 223.31–32.

⁵⁴ As a mean term, the soul can never entirely lose contact with its undividedness and immortality, yet in terms of the soul's experience, "mortality" brings significant consequences. After all, it is not possible to be only "a little bit" mortal. To be mortal at all is to be fully mortal; mortality is a complete orientation, as is immortality. This is the paradox and difficulty of Iamblichus' definition of the human soul.

⁵⁵ Damascius discusses the titanic element in the soul in his commentary on the *Phaedo*. See Damascius (section 1–9) in *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, L.G. Westerink, ed. and trans., vol. 2 (New York 1977) 32–3.

impulse (ἄπειρον) of the soul receives its limit (πέρας) something deeper may be discovered, something not human but divine.⁵⁶

Iamblichus refers to this discovery in his defense of prayer in the *De Mysteriis*. Responding to Porphyry's suggestion that human prayers were unfit to be offered to the divine *Nous*, Iamblichus emphasizes how important it is for the soul to recognize its unfitness and impurity as it enters the act of prayer. He says:

... It is due to this very fact, that we are far inferior to the Gods in power, purity and everything else, that it is of all things most critical that we do pray to them. For the awareness of our own nothingness (οὐδένετα), when we compare ourselves to the Gods, makes us turn spontaneously to prayer. And from our supplication, in a short time we are led up to that one to whom we pray, and from our continual intercourse with it we obtain a likeness to it, and from imperfection we are gradually embraced by divine perfection.

(*De Mysteriis* 1.15, 47.14–48.4)

Iamblichus says that the act of praying, when prayer arises from our acknowledged nothingness and spontaneity, awakens the divine presence in the soul. In prayer he says, "the divine itself quite literally is joined with itself" (*De Mysteriis* 1.15, 47.9–11). The true connection is between divinities, the one inside and the one outside the soul. Yet not until our nothingness is fully acknowledged can the soul enter this divine circuitry. Only by accepting its weakness and ugliness, its death and mortality, can the soul awaken the god within.⁵⁷ For Porphyry, the soul's weakness made its prayers unworthy, for Iamblichus it was our sense of unworthiness that lifts the soul up to the gods. Expressing similar sentiments about a Muslim who doubted that his prayers were being answered, Rumi wrote:

... This longing
you express is the return message.

This grief you cry out from
draws you toward union.

Your pure sadness
that wants help
is the secret cup.

Listen to the moan of a dog for its master.
That whining is the connection ...⁵⁸

The agony of accepting our separation from the beloved while feeling the pulse of an immortal desire, the anguish of recognizing our own nothingness creates the "secret

⁵⁶ The limiting of the soul's titanic impulses is portrayed in the punishment inflicted on the Titans, imposing "shackles" (δεσμοί) upon them, guiding them into the order of the gods. *Ibid.*, section 1.7.

⁵⁷ In another context, Iamblichus says that when the soul becomes aware of its "ugliness" apart from the gods it is drawn to divine beauty (*De Mysteriis* 1.11, 39.3–13).

⁵⁸ "Love Dogs" in *The Essential Rumi*, C. Barks, trans. (San Francisco 1995) 155–6.

cup," the spontaneous moaning of the soul, that leads it into prayer and into divinity.⁵⁹

So, whose prayer is it? Ultimately, it is not mine; it is the prayer of something greater than me. The lover of the god is secretly the god himself. As Rumi says: "How can a lover be anything but the beloved?"⁶⁰ Yet the human soul, as chaperone for the immortal lovers, has a unique responsibility. Foremost, it must resist the impulse to consummate these unbearable desires and to make of them a personal accomplishment. The soul must restrain its titanic urges, it must stay close to its human nothingness and, like Socrates, recognize the worthlessness (οὐδένεια) of its wisdom (Plato, *Apology* 23a-b). The *upaya* of Iamblichean psychology, therefore, was designed to prevent the soul from becoming lost in the *hubris* and vanities that accompany the undisciplined horse (Plato, *Phaedrus* 253e3). The soul's awareness of its mortality and nothingness was the ballast that prevented it from indulging in grandiose self-deceptions.⁶¹

Through the example of Socrates, the acceptance of death and mortality had always defined the lifestyle of Platonic philosophers,⁶² and this was particularly true for those who followed Iamblichus. Proclus reports, for example, that in "the most mystic of initiations" the theurgists buried the entire body of the initiate except for his head.⁶³ It was a ritualization of death, one that Damascius described as "supernatural" (ὑπερφύεες), "a death," he says, "which many theurgists have died."⁶⁴ Damascius goes on to say that the death rites of the ancient Greeks also symbolized the soul's transformation from individuality to universality. Laying the body down on the earth, he says, "is a reminder that the soul should reunite itself with the universe."⁶⁵ The burial of the initiate, therefore, transfers his head to another body: the body of the world. Newly rooted, the consciousness of the initiate in a supernatural death shifts from an individual body to a world body. Awareness

59 Rumi's "secret cup," like the receptacle (ὑποδοχή) in theurgic ritual, allows the soul to receive the power of the god. Cleansed of its pretensions to know, the soul's receptive capacity (ἐμπρηξιότηες) is increased, allowing it to receive the god and recover its own estranged divinity.

60 "In Between Stories" (above, note 58) 96.

61 Iamblichus maintained that the soul has "two lives" (Stobaeus 1.371.6-8), "two powers" (368.1-6), and "two activities" (371.5-8), yet because of its embodied condition it could know only one. Its higher life, received in theurgy, was otherwise inaccessible to the soul. What Plotinus came to identify with as his own undescended soul, Iamblichus left as the property of the gods, to be received—in exchange for human life—in theurgic ritual (*De Mysterioris* 8.7, 270.18-19). This, I believe, constitutes the essential difference between the soteriologies of Plotinus and Iamblichus.

62 Plato, *Phaedo* 64.

63 *Theologie Platonicienne*, H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, eds. and trans., vol. 4 (Paris 1981). See H. Lewy's discussion of this rite in *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, M. Tardieu, ed. (Paris 1978) 204-07.

64 *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo* (above, note 55) section 2, 149.7-8.

65 *Ibid.*, section 2, 150.

moves from particularity to universality, for the individual "self" has been reabsorbed into the Whole.

All of this: the acceptance of one's mortality, the experience of an immortal eros that can never be satisfied, and the constant awareness of the nothingness of our souls, even as we enter into the communion of gods, all make up the itinerary of the Iamblichean soul. These are the elements necessary to transform and lead the soul from individuality to universality. But to complete the journey the "individual" cannot take a step, for it is not the individual's journey, it is the journey of something greater than us. As Saffrey says in conclusion to his essay, for the later Platonists: "l'anthropologie était absorbée par la théologie, la philosophie de l'homme était devenue un chapitre secondaire et préliminaire à la théorie cosmique de Dieu."⁶⁶ The drama and the passion of the individual is revealed, finally, to be a reflection of the mixing of opposing elements throughout the universe. The destiny of the soul, Saffrey implies, is simply a reverberation, a secondary reflection, of higher causes, of numbers unfolding from their ineffable ἀρχαί: πέρας and ἀπειρον, and of the generosity of the Demiurge, weaving these number powers into a cosmos.⁶⁷ For the human soul, its participation in this activity causes it to experience a rupture and discontinuity unlike anything experienced in the Higher Races, yet without its self-alienation and passionate embrace of a mortal identity it could no longer participate in, or sustain, the life of the gods.⁶⁸ The soul's descent and self-alienation were activities of the gods themselves. As Proclus put it: "... the soul descends into the body because it wants to imitate the pre-noetic activity of the gods..."⁶⁹

When the Iamblichean soul is united to the gods in prayer, it is not united as an individual—as a Porphyry, a Plotinus, an Iamblichus, or any other—it is united as a universal being, an entire community, a world. Yet the ascent to the gods, even in theurgy, must have corresponded to an experience of some kind. As A.C. Lloyd reminds us, the hypostases of the Neoplatonists were not simply conceptual abstractions, they were also experiences, "types of consciousness;"⁷⁰ but, we must ask, what kind of experiences? Not, surely, experiences of a personal nature, for a personal self would lack the capacity (ἐμπτηδεϊότης) to contain or possess universal power. If the soul is united with the *Nous* and the gods, the experience must pertain to a corporate rather than to an individual "I." It would perhaps be more accurate to describe this "T" as an eye or voice of a corporate being. That it could not have been an individual or personal experience, Damascius reports:

66 Saffrey (above, note 27) 212.

67 Plato, *Timaeus* 29e–30a; Iamblichus refers to this weaving of opposites in *In Nicomachi Arithmeticam Introductionem* 78.22–24.

68 J. Trouillard discusses this theme in one of his last essays, "Proclus et la Joie de Quitter le Ciel," *Diotima* 11 (1983) 182–92.

69 *In Timaeum* 3.324.5–6, Trouillard, trans. (above, note 68) 191.

70 *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford 1990) 126.

... the divine Iamblichus declares that it is impossible to participate as an individual in the universal orders of existence, but only in communion with the venerable choir of those who are lifted up together, in one mind.⁷¹

The human soul, as particular, is never saved, however much it may imagine its divinity or consider itself free from the fate of mortal lives. As particular, the human soul must die—possibly the supernatural death of the theurgists—so that it may recognize the greater life that it unknowingly carries and that its “death” sustains. In the *De Anima*, reporting the doctrines of the Platonist Calvenus Taurus on the descent of the soul, Iamblichus says that some members of his school

... think the purpose of the soul's descent is to reveal the divine life, for this is the will of the Gods: to be revealed through souls. For the Gods come forth into bodily appearance and reveal themselves in the pure and faultless life of souls.
(Iamblichus, *De Anima* 1.379.1–6)

This, I think, is Iamblichus' own position and one that is perfectly consistent with his other views. Strictly speaking, even the death and mortality of the soul are not its own but are the activity of the gods who reveal themselves in the bodily appearance of souls. As Saffrey says, for the later Platonists anthropology is absorbed by theology, yet it is a theology or, better, a theogony that may be fulfilled only when the lowest of the gods,⁷² the human soul, accepts the unique task of becoming mortal, when it endures the tragedies of self-deception and learns, finally, to accept its nothingness. Only then might it experience the supernatural death of the theurgists, a death not of the body but of the individual self. Only then may the soul's *eros* carry it to fulfillment, a journey that is necessarily anonymous. As Rumi put it:

There are love dogs
no one knows the names of.

Give your life
to be one of them.⁷³

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⁷¹ Translation by L.G. Westerink in *Damascius, Lectures on the Philebus* (New York 1959) 106–7; cf. *In Philebum*, frg. 6, Dillon (above, note 1) 102–3. This quotation is followed by Damascius' remark: “And the Athenians prayed to Athena *Polias* only on behalf of the city, as patroness of the community, not on behalf of individuals.” Elsewhere Damascius says that Iamblichus affirmed that “the ascent to the One is not possible unless the soul coordinates itself to the Whole and, with the Whole, moves itself toward the universal principle of all things” (*De Principiis* 1.119.18–22).

⁷² Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.8.5.25.

⁷³ Above, note 58, 156.

Being, Life and Mind: a Brief Inquiry

Mark J. Edwards

For Iamblichus and the later Neoplatonists, the noetic or intelligible triad is the symbol of the demiurgic mind in its procession from and reversion to the fountainhead of being.¹ When being overflows from its self-sufficiency, it begets the amorphous energy of life; but life, though inexhaustibly dynamic, remains inapprehensible without the determining qualities of mind. Being is the source of all existents, life of soul, and mind of the lower intellects: a law divined by Proclus therefore states that what is higher in the order of procession will be present in a lower tier of the generated world.² All things in the world have being, some have life, and only a few of these possess intelligence; for that very reason, the intellectual principle is the lowest of the three:

Among these principles Being will stand foremost; for it is present to all things which have life and intelligence . . . but the converse is not true . . . Life has the second place; for whatever shares in intelligence shares in life, but not conversely . . . The third principle is intelligence; for whatever is in any measure capable of knowledge both lives and exists. (Proclus, *Elementa* 101)

This triple thread was not spun out of nothing. Plato had declared, in a famous passage of the *Sophist*, that the essence which gives rise to all existents would be weaker than its offspring were it not already instinct with life and motion (*Sophist* 248e). Since it is by life that being imparts itself to us, and through our minds that

¹ All research on this topic is indebted to P. Hadot, *Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin* (Geneva 1960) 107–41, *La Métaphysique de Porphyre* (Geneva 1966) 127–57, and *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vols. 2 (Paris 1968). For review and bibliography, see A. Smith, "Porphyrian Studies since 1913," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. 2, 36.2 (Berlin 1987) 717–73. Some of my remarks here are anticipated in M.J. Edwards, "Porphyry and the Intelligible Triad," *JHS* (1990) 14–27.

² Translation by E.R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1963) 91.

we participate in being, each of the three implies the other two. Drawing upon the five prime categories (μέγιστα γένη) of the dialogue—being, rest, motion, identity and difference—the Neoplatonists equated mind with rest and life with motion. As rest sustains identity and motion produces difference, all five μέγιστα γένη are included in the triad, and without it nothing further could exist.³

Identity and difference are the elements from which the Demiurge creates the soul in the *Timaeus*; he himself, as a being who spontaneously communicates his goodness, is another illustration of the axiom that perfection must be accompanied by motion.⁴ The receptacle in which he shapes the cosmos suffers constant, though unregulated, motion; the intellectual paradigm which he imitates can never be estranged from its repose. According to the handbooks of the early Roman period, the paradigm, the receptacle (or matter) and the Demiurge ("God") are the three cosmogonic principles of Plato;⁵ we shall see that it is no great change to rebaptize the members of this triad, in the Neoplatonic idiom, as being, life and mind.

We see, then, that the concept and nomenclature of the Neoplatonic triad are inchoate in the dialogues of Plato; for all that, it did not mature as a system there and is not among the trinities which populate the works of his immediate successors. The triad owes its celebrity in modern times to Hadot,⁶ who looks for its first expositor in Porphyry, and its earliest occurrence in that mysterious compilation which the Neoplatonists styled the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Though neither these nor Porphyry's reports of them survive except in fragments, Hadot contends that we have a loquacious mouthpiece of the latter in a Christian writer, Marius Victorinus, who correlates each member of the triad with a Person of the Trinity. This claim, if true, might lead to our crediting Porphyry with an influence that he would have found surprising and pernicious; for Marius Victorinus made the Platonists accessible to Augustine, whose laborious speculations on the Trinity have defined, for over one and a half millennia, the orthodoxy of the Christian west.⁷

My object in this paper is to question all these claims. I shall argue that the terms employed by Porphyry and the *Oracles* are not simply interchangeable with other formulations; that the sequence being-life-mind had a place in Christian speculation of the third century that was largely independent of its history in Neoplatonism; and that when Augustine cites these terms from Marius Victorinus, he

³ For Plotinus' interpretation of the *Sophist*, see J.M. Charrue, *Plotin Lecteur de Platon* (Paris 1978) 205–29; *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1 (above, note 1) 219–22.

⁴ See *Timaeus* 29e–30a; and on the interpretation of the Demiurge, A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 4 (1953) 275–92.

⁵ See Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 1.19.1, with the annotations of M. Marcovich, *Hippolytus: Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (Berlin 1986) 76; C. Moreschini, "La 'doxa' di Platone nella 'Refutazione' di Ippolito," *Studi Classici et Orientali* 21 (1972) 254–60.

⁶ See the articles by Hadot (above, note 1).

⁷ See P. Henry, "The *Adversus Arium* of Marius Victorinus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1950) 42–55; for recent doubts as to the relation between Augustine and Victorinus, see P. Manchester, "The Noetic Triad in Plotinus, Marius Victorinus and Augustine" in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, J. Bergman and R.T. Wallis, eds. (Albany 1992) 207–22.

does not accept the thought that underlies them. The evidence persuades me that among the Neoplatonists Iamblichus was probably the first to give canonical expression to the triad, though his predecessors might have seen there nothing but the expression of their uncompleted thoughts.

I

Among the pagan claimants to the invention of the triad, the *Chaldaean Oracles* are almost certainly the oldest, even if they were not composed, as tradition states, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius.⁸ Michael Psellus detects an echo of them in Plotinus, and Porphyry's defence of the Chaldaeans enjoys a painful immortality in Augustine's *City of God*.⁹

While the noetic triad was by no means the highest principle in the Chaldaean system, it was the first whose attributes the Neoplatonists ventured to expound.¹⁰ Trinities are legion in the late reports of Proclus and the Byzantines, and half a dozen fragments of the *Oracles* make mention of a triad; but none of these enumerates all three members, and the triad seems to be not so much a family of three as a filiation of one double to one simple entity:

A dyad sits by this one, for it has the functions both of comprehending the intelligibles by intellect and to introducing sense-perception to the world.

(*Chaldaean Oracles*, frg. 8)

The dyad which fuses sensory perception with intelligence is identified in another place as the Second Mind, which mortals style the first.¹¹ The Father is a dark abyss, known only through his illuminative force or *dunamis*; the filial mind, as Demiurge, communicates this force to the material universe.¹² In his exercise of *dunamis*, the Father keeps back something of himself; none the less, his *dunamis* sits closer to him than the Second Mind:

The Father has withdrawn himself, not enclosing his own flame in his intellectual *dunamis*; *dunamis* sits with him, but mind is from him.

(*Chaldaean Oracles*, frgs. 3-4)

⁸ See H.D. Saffrey, *Recherches sur la Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris 1990) 209-15.

⁹ Edited by J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre* (Ghent and Leipzig 1913) appendix 2.

¹⁰ For the commentaries of Psellus and Proclus, see É. des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques* (Paris 1971) 153-224. Psellus (page 194, etc.) makes it clear that the first triad follows a number of ineffable principles.

¹¹ See *Chaldaean Oracles*, frg. 7. The relation between this and Numenius, frg. 17, remains obscure. See e.g., E.R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," *Entretiens Hardt 5. Les Sources de Plotin* (Geneva 1957) 11; but the possibility of a later dating for the *Oracles* must be taken into account (above, note 8).

¹² See especially *Chaldaean Oracles*, frgs. 1 and 5.

This force, like other terms, has a mythological appellation: Hecate, the patroness of magic, is said in both the fragments and the commentaries to sit between the two paternal minds:¹³

Hecate's centre is carried in the midst of the Fathers.

(*Chaldaean Oracles*, frg. 50)

Have we then to do with a quaternity—the dyadic Son, the paternal Monad and Hecate between them? None of the extant fragments tells us so, and such an inference would neglect the very meaning of the term *dunamis*, which is not used in philosophy to signify determinate or separable being. *dunamis* is mere potentiality, a capacity for being which is wholly unintelligible, and therefore barely real, until it is brought to actuality. Nothing subsists as mere potentiality, yet nothing exists at all unless it actualizes some potentiality; while the potential makes the actual possible, it is only by the resulting actuality that the potential is defined.

I may seem to be dwelling here upon the wrong sense of *dunamis*, which with reference to the Father surely ought to signify not “potentiality” but “power.” But just as we can apprehend potentiality only in the light of its supervenient actuality, so we can think of no power which is not the power to realize some effect. The dominant physics, that of Aristotle, states that where there is an agent and a patient, the exercise of the agent's power fulfils the actualities of both.¹⁴ But where there is only God, there can be no patient, and the sole effect to which his power can tend is the fulfilment of itself as actuality; this it can achieve only by reversion to the father, in the course of which it actualizes mind. Mind, as the actuality of *dunamis*, is thus the precondition for the existence of its own matter and the working of its own efficient cause.

Therefore the very *dunamis* which creates the possibility of a Second Mind is the source of its duality. In so far as it is mind, it is immutable; in so far as it is *dunamis*, it tends perpetually to the realization of something other than, and consequently inferior to, itself. Psellus calls the Second Mind both the *dunamis* and the *horos* or definition of the Father;¹⁵ the terms seem antithetical, yet logic indicates that where a *dunamis* is nameable as *dunamis*, it submits to definition. Psellus also states that the Second Mind is a transcendent dyad (δύς ἐπέκεινα), supervening on the Father's *dunamis*.¹⁶ In fact, it is not so much that *dunamis* precedes the dyad as that *dunamis*, like mind, is half the dyad. The dyad is by nature indeterminate, and hence unformed by intellect; for all that, it is *dunamis*, in so far as it admits of being qualified by the very name of *dunamis*, that constitutes the mind.

According to the commentators Hecate also exercises influence outside the noetic triad, and as the wellspring of her own trinity, dispensing soul in the left-hand

¹³ For a recent study of Hecate in the *Oracles*, see S.I. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: a Study of Hekate's Role in the Chaldaean Oracles and Related Literature* (Atlanta 1990).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Aristotle, *Physics* 202a13ff.

¹⁵ See Psellus, *Papyri Graeci* 122, 1144a14, 1144b4 = É. des Places (above, note 10) 180–1.

¹⁶ See *Papyri Graeci* 122, 1152a4 and frg. 169, with des Places' note (above, note 10) 147.

stream and virtue in the right, becomes the source of life in the generated universe.¹⁷ Since Hecate is *dunamis*, the force that always tends to change and otherness, this continuing emanation is in keeping with her nature. At the same time it leads her into schism, since in her higher nature she resides between the two paternal minds, but in the form of soul, her lower aspect, she is inferior to both:

After the paternal intelligences dwell I, soul, ensouling all with warmth.

(*Chaldaean Oracles*, frg. 53)

Commentaries suggest that in this lower sphere the activity of Hecate is life, which for the Greeks was an essential operation of the soul. From this some modern scholars have deduced that Life is itself a name for Hecate, and the *Oracles* already contain the triadic series being, life and mind.¹⁸ Yet this is a rash conclusion, as life is a function, not the essential character, of Hecate in the *Oracles*, and then in her intermediate, not her most exalted, aspect. Psellus in his Commentary alludes to the later triad, but not in his account of the higher cosmogonic agencies, where the middle term is always *dunamis*.¹⁹ If it is the case (and it has not been proved) that Porphyry knew this triad and purported to have found it in the *Oracles*, that is no proof that it was there to be discovered, since he could either have imposed his own nomenclature or borrowed it from an independent source.

If Plato was his well of truth, his windlass was the teaching of Plotinus. Hadot and others have cited numerous passages from the *Enneads* where being, life and mind conspire in the origin of sensible and intellectual natures.²⁰ It is not so clear, however, that these terms make up a triad by themselves, or are presented in an order which implies that mind originates from being through the medium of life. What is certain is that mind and life proceed from being, and are closely interfused. Life in the intellectual world is a function of the mind in its reversion to its source (*Enneades* 6.7.15); mind, where it is active in the lower realm, always coexists with life (*Enneades* 3.6.6. etc.).

Intelligence and vitality are notes of being both in the noetic sphere and in the present universe; but it may be that the gradient entails a certain difference in the sequence of activity. Life, as an operation of the soul, falls short of intellect in dignity, and when transcendent principles are in question it will therefore be the third:

¹⁷ See *Chaldaean Oracles*, frgs. 51–52. On Hecate's role as Life, Nature and Soul, see H. Lewy, *The Chaldaean Oracles* (Cairo 1956) 84–99.

¹⁸ See Plato, *Phaedo* 105d; Aristotle, *De Anima* 412a28 etc.; Hadot, *La Métaphysique de Porphyry* (above, note 1) on the noetic triad in the *Oracles*.

¹⁹ See des Places (above, note 10) 189 and 197. In both the first term of the triad is the Father, rather than Being. For the occurrence of the noetic triad, see page 182 (= *Papyri Graeci* 122, 1145a5ff).

²⁰ See Hadot, *Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin* (above, note 1); Dodds (above, note 2) 252–54.

If now that which is should be taken as existing first, then mind, then the living being—for this appears already to "contain all things" (*Timaeus* 31a4)—and mind is second because it is an energy of being—number would not depend on the living being, since before it there were already one and two; nor would it depend on mind, as before it was being, which is one and many.

(Plotinus, *Enneades* 6.6.8.17–22)

Here the chief text proposed for exegesis is *Timaeus* 39e, where mind is said to contemplate the ideas in the perfect living being. As Hadot and others have observed, the interpretation of this passage in the third century always yields the sequence being, mind and life.²¹ Elsewhere, however, Plotinus seems to put life in the second place, on the grounds that life is motion, whereas mind is the determination of motion as an energy or activity of being:

One who considers this manifold power (*dunamis*) calls it being in so far as it is, as it were, a substrate, then motion, in so far as he sees its life, then rest, because it is invariably the same, and difference and sameness, in so far as it is altogether one.

(Plotinus, *Enneades* 6.7.3.8–11)

But here we find all five μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist*, and it seems a little tendentious to abstract the first three members as an independent triad. At *Enneades* 5.3.16—an obscure text if there are any in Plotinus—life is said to imitate the life in the first existent, whereas mind imitates its essence, and *Enneades* 6.7.17 repeats the axiom that mind gives form to life. At *Enneades* 3.6.6, Plotinus notes that motion is the first property that raises natural bodies above the level of naked being; it follows, then, that life will be more generally distributed, and in some sense prior, to mind.

To discern this threefold ranking in the physical world, however, one has no need of the *Sophist*, the *Timaeus* or any dialogue of Plato. No society wholly fails to distinguish the inanimate from the animate, and the division of living creatures into rational and irrational has been a cornerstone of western thought. These premisses are synthesized in Plato's notion of man as a trichotomy of body, soul and intellect; but also (for example) in the Aristotelian theory which discriminates the vegetative, sensitive and rational capacities of soul.

Life as a source of intellect is not found in Plotinus, but, as Hadot has pertinently observed, he feels some need of an intermediary between the source of being and the cosmogonic mind.²² This intelligible matter (as he calls it) has been plausibly compared with the indefinite Dyad of the Pythagoreans, which is not itself an entity but the cause of propagation from the Monad.²³ The designation "intelligible matter" is anomalous in so far as it is not the receptacle of concrete being but something prior to it, and, because it is not susceptible of differentiation, it

²¹ See Hadot, *Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin* (above, note 1) 116–19; Smith (above, note 1) 729–30. See further J.M. Dillon, "Plotinus, *Enneades* 3.9 and later Views on the Intelligible World," *TAPA* 100 (1969) 63–70.

²² See Hadot, *Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin* (above, note 1). For intellectual matter, see Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.4.4.2–5 etc.

²³ See especially J.M. Rist, "The Indefinite Dyad and Intelligible Matter in Plotinus," *CQ* 12 (1962) 99–107; L. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London 1994) 101.

guarantees the unity of intellect at the same time as enabling it to exist as something other than the One.

In the vocabulary of Plotinus, this precursor of the intellect is distinguished from its life, which accrues to it in the course of its reversion to the highest principle. But this is merely a lexical observation on a subject, which, as Plato, warned, is not to be approached except by a kind of bastard reasoning.²⁴ Matter, having no form, cannot exist but as the substrate of some formally determined entity; mind is thus constitutive of matter no less than matter is constitutive of mind. And, since the mind acquires its formal being by a process which necessitates reversion, the life which is implied in that reversion is as much the cause of mind as its effect. Plotinus thus made way for an equation of the life that resides in intellect with the indeterminate potency that generates the intellect; the question now is, which of his disciples was the first to take this way?

Porphyry cannot fail to be a candidate, as he codified the lectures of his master and reduced the *Chaldaean Oracles* to an economic trinity of triads.²⁵ Two familiar members of the first triad are the Father and his intellect; the third remains concealed by the real or feigned incomprehension of Augustine:²⁶

For he speaks of God the Father and God the Son, whom he calls in Greek the paternal intellect or . . . Of the Holy Spirit, however, he either says nothing, or says something under a veil; though what he means by the other which is between these I do not know.

(Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 10.23)

The evidence that the median term is life is: first, that Porphyry read Plotinus, second that he was read by Victorinus; third that he recognises all three terms in a comment on the *Timaeus*. The first point would be sound if we knew that Porphyry had tried to prove congruity between Plotinus' doctrines and the *Oracles*; the second would suffice if Victorinus never read any Neoplatonist but Porphyry. Since we have no right to these assumptions yet (if ever), the argument must rely on one report:²⁷

. . . according to [Porphyry and Theodorus] . . . the Sun, being Essence, journeys to Intellect through Life; Venus, being Intellect, yet proceeds through Life to Intellect; Mercury is Life, but proceeds through Essence to Intellect. This Intellect, however, to which they all turn, is in one case essential, in another intellectual, in another vital.

Porphyry's contribution is occluded by the name of Theodorus of Asine, who, being later than Iamblichus and possibly his pupil, might have seen the noetic triad where it

²⁴ See Plato, *Timaeus* 52b; the "Pythagorean" *Timaeus* Locrus 94b interprets this as reasoning by analogy.

²⁵ See Lewy (above, note 17) 1-64; Hadot, *La Métaphysique de Porphyre* (above, note 1).

²⁶ See Bidez (above, note 9) 36*; cf. the passage cited from Amobius, *Adversus Nationes* 2.25 by J.M. Dillon, "The Concept of two Minds: a Footnote to the History of Platonism," *Phronesis* 18 (1973) 176-83.

²⁷ Translation by Dillon (above, note 26) 357 (annotation to *In Timaeum*, frg. 70).

was only half expressed.²⁸ In any case, the excerpt gives no clue as to the ordering of the triad; or if it does, the median place does not belong to life. Proclus testifies that Theodorus espoused a version of the triad in which life succeeded mind:²⁹

He designates the first intellect essential, the second an intellectual substance, the third the source of souls.

(Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentarii* 3.309)

We cannot say that the sequence of the terms is insignificant when Proclus himself insists upon another. Hadot is right to infer that the canonical triad cannot have been devised by Theodorus;³⁰ but where does he find the evidence that Porphyry espoused it in the order and the terms maintained by Proclus? Only in a fragment from a commentary on the *Parmenides*, which lacks the author's name:³¹

According to the first idea it is one and simple . . . but neither one nor simple in respect of substance (ὑπαρξίς), life (ζωή) and intellection (νόησις).

I have written at length elsewhere against the ascription of this work to Porphyry, arguing that the thought is not so consonant with his as Hadot contends, that where it is consonant it is not uniquely so, and that some of its technicalities belong to a later period.³² The above quotation cannot by itself afford good evidence for Porphyry's construction of the triad; I should rather say that it precludes his being the author of the anonymous commentary.

II

We recognise something closer to the Neoplatonic triad in a chapter of Origen's *De Principiis*, written before Plotinus went to school, in which he associates the Persons of the Trinity with being, life and mind:³³

Thus the working of the Father, which endows all with existence, is found to be more glorious and splendid, when each one, through participation in Christ in his character of wisdom and knowledge and sanctification, advances and comes to higher degrees of perfection; and when a man, through being sanctified

²⁸ On the place of Theodorus in Neoplatonism, see H.D. Saffrey, "Le Philosophe de Rhodes, est-il Theodorus?" in *Memorial A.J. Festugière*, E. Lucchesi and H.D. Saffrey, eds. (1984) 65–76. See also Dillon (above, note 26) 26ff.

²⁹ See Festugière (above, note 4) 282–3.

³⁰ Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 1 (above, note 1) 102, note 3.

³¹ On the dating and authorship of this commentary, see P. Hadot, "Fragments d'un Commentaire de Porphyre sur le *Parménide*," *REG* 74 (1961) 410–38. For the text, see Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. 2 (above, note 1) 65–112. Hadot's arguments assume, perhaps illegitimately, an identity between οὐα and ὑπαρξίς.

³² M.J. Edwards ("Porphyry and the Intelligible Triad," *JHS* 110 [1990] 14–27) supporting W. Kroll, "Ein Neuplatonischer Parmenideskommentar," *RhM* 35 (1892) 599–627.

³³ Translation G.W. Butterworth, *Origen on First Principles* (Gloucester 1973) 38.

through participation in the Holy Spirit, is made purer and holier, he becomes more worthy to receive the grace of wisdom and knowledge.

(Origen, *De Principiis* 1.3.8)

Here the unique activity of the Father may be contrasted with the interchange of functions between the Son and the Holy Spirit; being is the monad, mind and life are an inseparable pair. The Son perfects life, the Spirit increases knowledge; though each shares in the office of the other, and if the passage will bear a close interpretation, it would seem that the Spirit's work inverts the order of the Son's. J.M. Dillon has pointed out that, in another passage, Origen anticipates the Neoplatonic principle that what is first in the order of procession reaches furthest in the order of operation.³⁴ But Origen does not speak of reversion of the Spirit to the Father, as the Neoplatonists speak of a reversion of the intellect to the One; at this point his concern is the activity of the Godhead, not the nature of the Godhead in itself. Man, as a tripartite being of body, soul and intellect, is saved by the threefold action of the Trinity; but if man shows any likeness to his author, it can only be (in Origen's scheme) by virtue of his mind.³⁵

More interesting, because it concerns the origin and not merely the operation of the Trinity, is a passage from the *Commentary on John*:³⁶

Ἀπαύγασμα οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, καὶ τοῦ αἰδίου φωτός αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀτμῆς οὐ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.

He is a ray, not of God, but of his glory and his eternal light, and a breath not of the Father, but of his power.

(*Commentary on John* 13.153)

Here we find the Chaldaean pattern—Father, Son and intermediate potency—but not derived from the *Oracles*, which Origen may have had no opportunity to read. The result is not the Trinity, since for Origen the Spirit is posterior and subordinate to the Son;³⁷ nor, since there is no scriptural warrant for it, is there any equation of *dynamis* with life. In any case, the Logos is more properly called the Father's soul than his intellect, his title connoting not so much immutable stability of reason as the perennial vitality of speech.³⁸

³⁴ "Origen's Doctrine of the Trinity and some later Neoplatonic Theories" in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, D.J. O'Meara, ed. (Norfolk 1982) commentating on *De Principiis*, frg. 9, inserted at 1.3.5.

³⁵ See, e.g., *De Principiis* 1.1 *passim*; but such passages as *Contra Celsum* 7.38 imply that God is in fact superior to mind.

³⁶ Origen is commenting on John 4.24, with assistance from Hebrews 1.3.

³⁷ See, e.g., *Commentary on John* 2.10; *De Principiis* 1.3.4–5; H. Ziebritski, *Heilige Geist und Weltseele* (Tübingen 1994) 237–48.

³⁸ See *Commentary on John* 1.24; *De Principiis* 2.8.5.

Origen holds that the Spirit infuses knowledge in the Christian, the Son perfects his life, and the Father consummates his immortality. Another Christian text which, in its earliest form, must antedate the mature thought of Plotinus, is the Gnostic *Zostrianus*, which raises the initiate through the water of life to blessedness (the resting-place of intellect) and then finally to existence in a heaven of divine simplicity.³⁹ These three also constitute an archetypal triad, but in a different order of succession.⁴⁰

... They are powers of Existence [...] and Life and Blessedness. In Existence he exists as a simple head ... Existing in Life, he is alive ... He exists as [the] [...] since he is in [the] mind. (Zostrianus 66.15–67.18)

In the *Enneads*, we found reasons for attributing one order of the terms to the noetic realm, another to the temporal universe. Here we find, if anything, the converse; but in any case, a Gnostic could not long remain content with such asymmetry, as the taproot of his system was a perpetual replication of the higher in the lower. Life in Gnostic texts is an appellation of Sophia, who can be both the bride of God and a lesser aeon, the mother of an abortion and the abortion itself, the parent of the Demiurge and the hidden source of Spirit in his universe, primordial Eve and every human soul.⁴¹ In another Gnostic writing of this period, the *Allogenes*,⁴² Vitality is described as the first activity of the one who exists in silence, and Mentality as his second indivisible activity, the third silence and the fruit of his eternal blessedness.

The tenets of the Gnostics were regarded by Plotinus as a deviation from the true philosophy; but in the light of passages like this, both he and Porphyry have sometimes been suspected of a surreptitious harvest in the fields of their opponents. Another view would posit a continuous redaction of the Gnostic texts to keep pace with developments in Neoplatonism.⁴³ Both hypotheses ignore the fact that Gnostic thought is an organic growth from Christian speculation,⁴⁴ which, even before the dawn of Neoplatonism, conceived a sacred Trinity of being, life and mind.

³⁹ See *Zostrianus* 15 in J.M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden 1990) 408. See further García Bázan ("Sobre el Origen Histórico y las Transformaciones de la Triada ser, Vida y Conocimiento," *Philosophica Malacitana* 5 [1992] 43–54), where the case for the Gnostic role in the invention of the triad is strongly argued.

⁴⁰ Translation by J.N. Sieber in Robinson (above, note 39) 419–20.

⁴¹ See the Coptic *Apocryphon of John*, *Exegesis on the Soul and Origin of the World* in Robinson (above, note 39); also, e.g., G.C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969) 75–104.

⁴² See *Allogenes* 53 = Robinson (above, note 39) 494–5.

⁴³ For diverse views, see, e.g., Edwards (above, note 32) 27; R. Majercik, *The Chaldaean Oracles* (Leiden 1992); García Bázan (above, note 39) 43–54.

⁴⁴ Proved in my view (though with many gratuitous hypotheses of little merit) by S. Pétrement, *Le Dieu Séparé* (Paris 1984).

III

We meet the final version of the triad in Iamblichus, whom Proclus and Eunapius treat as almost a second founder of the school:⁴⁵

These three qualities, he says, are conferred by Time on the realm of becoming, the first, the idea of "was" and "will be," the second, "becoming younger and older," the third "coming to be" . . . The first of these . . . by virtue of its procession from Being, the second, as coming forth from Life, the third, as dependent on the Intellectual Order.

(Proclus, *In Timaeum*, frg. 65)

It is possible to retrace the steps which brought Iamblichus to this position. In our previous discussion, we observed two inconcinnities in the theory of Plotinus. The first is that, in contrast to his usual disparagement of matter, he could posit an intellectual matter free of all deficiency and superior to the mind; the second is that the special place accorded to this matter allows the inference that the intellect's procession and reversion are consecutive in time. Iamblichus construed the temporal idiom of Plato as a symbol for the working of three demiurgic instruments—the mind, the soul and providence (πρόνοια)—in a timeless symphony:

Plato [wishes] to make clear how the Providence coming down into the universe from the Demiurge and the ordering influence coming from Mind and the presence of Soul are causes of so many and such varied good principles in the cosmos . . . in fact the cosmos is eternally in being, but the exigencies of exposition must . . . bring into being in a time-sequence things that cannot substantially be separated.

(Proclus, *In Timaeum*, frg. 37)

We may perhaps discern in these three agents of creation the equivalents of being, life and mind. The third is given to us under its own name, and the second is a function of the soul. It may appear tendentious to identify the paradigm with πρόνοια, yet both are said, in different parts of the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, to be utterly transcendent with regard to natural kinds and individuals, and at the same time immanent in each of them by virtue of their ubiquitous causality.⁴⁶ The paradigm is an undivided unity, but πρόνοια does its work in the regulation of the world.

Yet since the soul for Iamblichus is inferior to mind, the ordering of the terms here would be that which we see ascribed to Theodorus of Asine. Iamblichus' construction of the true noetic triad is a consequence of a striking innovation in cosmogony.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ All translations from the commentaries of Iamblichus are from Dillon (above, note 26). On this passage, Dillon remarks that the use of "intellectual order" rather than "intellect" is determined by the text (*ibid.*, 349–50).

⁴⁶ See *In Timaeum*, frgs. 35, 37 and 88.

⁴⁷ Cf. *In Timaeum*, frg. 38, and see further G. Shaw, "Theurgy as Demiurgy: Iamblichus' Solution to the Problem of Embodiment," *Dionysius* 12 (1988) 41ff. Dillon ([above, note 26] 313) remarks that materiality "will presumably be a noetic archetype of Matter, perhaps connected with ζωή in the noetic world."

God brought matter forth from essentiality, materiality being produced by schism; this, since it is imbued with life (ζωτικῇ), the Demiurge adopted for the creation of the simple and impassible spheres.

(Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 8.3)

Iamblichus' primal matter is superior to the soul, as the first recipient of the motion and vitality which the cosmic and hypercosmic souls impart to the world of natural phenomena. These should come into being below the Demiurge, whose relation to primal matter is more obscure. On the one hand he appears to be its creator; on the other, it is an immediate derivative of pure essentiality, and will thus rank second only to the paradigm, the seat of all true being. Iamblichus himself resolves this problem with his statement that the Demiurge is united to the paradigm by virtue of the unity of the intellect with the object of its knowledge.⁴⁸ This Plotinian principle implies that the Demiurge contains the paradigm and is all but identical with it;⁴⁹ nevertheless, there must be something to differentiate them, and this, I would suggest, is primal matter. While soul, then, is the instrument of the Demiurge in his shaping of the lower world, matter is both the necessary condition and sufficient means of bringing forth his own identity.

Earlier speculations on the soul may have played a part in this new concept of a matter that is substantial and divine. In the *Timaeus* Plato had ascribed to the receptacle an inalienable motion which appears to be older than the cosmic soul. Plutarch, who is answered in fragment 37, posited an evil soul in matter, which Iamblichus could accept no more than any other Neoplatonist.⁵⁰ But his notion of intellectual matter offers an explanation for the presence of a motion coeternal with the Demiurge and indeed for the activity of the Demiurge himself. As mind, the Demiurge not only encompasses the triad, but is himself the third member of it. He is at once the formal cause of the triad and inseparable from its second term, his own material cause. Intellectual matter gives him both the potentiality for existence and his potency to act. Dyadic in his own nature, he propagates all the inferior dyads; and rather than being, as others thought, the hypercosmic soul, he is its origin and archetype, his mind conferring form on it while his matter imparts to it the power of life.

We surmised above that providence, soul and mind make up a triad in the image of the higher one, which is formed by the paradigm, matter and the Demiurge. If this is so, we are not surprised to find that the production of the first soul is analogous to the origin of matter:

⁴⁸ Frg. 44, with commentary by Dillon (above, note 26) 317–8. I differ from Dillon (above, note 26, 36) in finding the paradigm, in the strictest sense, superior to "being in itself," since at frg. 35 it is called αὐτὸ τὸ ὅπερ ὄν and τὸ αὐτὸ ὅπερ ὄν is merely *sundromos* with it. See also the remarks of Proclus, quoted by Dillon (*ibid.*, 309).

⁴⁹ Frg. 45.

⁵⁰ See *De Procreatione Animae in Timaeo* 6–7; J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London 1977) 191.

Timaeus, he says, creating in speech through the generation of the soul the One and the hypercosmic soul, from which springs the soul of the All and others, produces from it at this point the Dyad; for the splitting signifies the dividing action of the Demiurge, which goes forth in sameness and completeness.
(Iamblichus, *In Timaeum*, frg. 54)

As in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, even the first procession from the monad is a dyad, since nothing can become actual which lacked the potentiality for existence. In the stream of efficient causes, the potential precedes the actual; in the chain of final causes, it is only for the sake of and with respect to actuality that potentiality can partake of being. In the lower triad mind is an image of the Demiurge, and being of the paradigm, while matter and the hypercosmic soul are both results of a bifurcation which the Demiurge introduces into being. The noetic triad, then, is nothing other than the Middle Platonic triad of first principles; Iamblichus obtained the classic order by making matter the seat and origin of life.

Could his train of thought have been assisted by the Gnostics? Iamblichus is the only Neoplatonist to mention them without a condemnation, and the earliest sect of this name had forestalled him in describing matter as a "blessed substance."⁵¹ Gnostics, like Iamblichus and all Pythagoreans, built the world on numerology, and their *ogdoads* and *hebdomads* were borrowed, like his own, from the priestly hinterland of Egypt.⁵² Some postulated a highest female principle, called Barbelo, who governs all below with her *pronoia*. To these it was all one to say that something is the image of an archetype and to say that it was the archetype itself at a different level; they would have taken no exception to Iamblichus' belief in the concentricity of the lower and the :

And through these [viz. division and procession] are generated two souls after the One, each of which has the same system of principles and . . . they are united by their very centres, and this is the meaning of the phrase [*Timaeus* 36b] "middle to middle."
(Iamblichus, *In Timaeum*, frg. 54)

Yet parallels are treacherous, for in many cases the more there are the less they signify. An equally sound analogy could be drawn with the Hecate of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, whose affinities with the writings of Iamblichus and the Valentinian Gnostics have been canvassed in a number of recent studies.⁵³ We must not be misled, however, into reckoning similarities as tokens of historical influence. In any one society at any epoch, many will subscribe to the same beliefs without a single book in common, and thinkers who are moved by different interests and proceed by different methods will approach the same results. We ought not to seek extraneous material in the *Oracles*, the Gnostics or Iamblichus until they exceed the logic of their premisses and the tools of their own tradition. The history of ideas is precisely that—

⁵¹ See Iamblichus, *De Anima* 375.1; the report on the Naassenes at Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 5.7.13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6.21–37; Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 8, and *In Timaeum*, frg. 53 etc.

⁵³ See M. Tardieu, "La Gnose Valentinienne et les *Oracles Chaldaïques*" in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, B. Layton, ed., vol. 1 (Leiden 1980) 194–237, and the introduction to Majercik (above, note 43).

the history of *ideas*; it is not a tale of casual thefts, unmotivated borrowings and involuntary conceptions from a fashionable breeze.

IV

Works produced before the reign of Constantine have so far claimed the whole of our attention; but a consequence of his revolution was that Christians studied pagan literature in earnest. Marius Victorinus, whose conversion was preceded by a long career in rhetoric, paraded his acquaintance with philosophy in his tracts against the Arians. Here he presents the Godhead as a Trinity of being, life and mind.⁵⁴

If Christ is life, and living in itself is the Logos, yet this very life is being in itself and being in itself is the Father; if again this very life is understanding in itself, and this is the Spirit, then all these are three and three in each and one three and consubstantial.

(Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arianos* 1.63.1)

Hadot's researches leave no doubt that Victorinus appropriated Porphyry as his mentor in philosophy. But to argue that, because he drew so much from one, he made no use of others is to practice an irrational parsimony in speculation. In Victorinus life pertains to the Son and mind to Spirit; but when Augustine, using only Porphyry as his manual, approached the Chaldaean triad, he chose to couple mind with the Second Person of the Trinity, and despaired of any equivalent for the Third. We find a closer parallel in Origen, and the closest in Iamblichus, and we need not choose between them. Victorinus holds the creed of catholic Christianity, but interprets it with a logical apparatus that could only have been acquired in pagan schools. Less interested in the origins than the fruits of speculation, he was not obliged, as we are, to inspect the different sources of the streams that had converged so happily in his own career.

What Augustine knew of Platonism he derived, by his own account, from Victorinus,⁵⁵ and the latter is seldom absent from attempts to trace the provenance of the Augustinian doctrine of the Trinity.⁵⁶ The African father does indeed invest his God with the attributes of being, mind and life:

No one doubts that nobody has understanding unless he is alive, or life unless he exists; the consequence is that what has understanding both is and lives.

(Augustine, *De Trinitate* 10.13)

But here the terms are not employed to illustrate the distinction of the Persons in the Trinity; the burden of this argument is that, just as the mind both is and lives, so all

⁵⁴ Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (above, note 1) has collected the relevant passages from Victorinus' writings in vol. 2, 13–55.

⁵⁵ See *Confessions* 8.3. On Augustine, Victorinus and the Neoplatonists, see further W. Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin* (Halle 1933) and J.M. Rist, "Mysticism and Transcendence in Later Neoplatonism," *Hermes* 92 (1964) 213–25.

⁵⁶ See, above, note 7.

three Persons work as One in every operation. Augustine's favoured image of the Trinity convenes the mental faculties of memory, understanding and volition; of these the second and third are inextricably united, for nothing is desired without acquaintance, nothing known without desire.⁵⁷ It must have been such reasoning that led the *Chaldaean Oracles* to the notion of an intellectual dyad, and persuaded Victorinus that both life and mind could be styled, on different grounds, the form of God.⁵⁸ Like the Neoplatonists, Augustine banishes temporal succession from his Trinity, finding it as true to urge the priority of will to understanding as that of understanding to the will.⁵⁹ It has sometimes been suspected that he robbed the *Chaldaean Oracles* for another of his similes,⁶⁰ in which the Son appears as the reflection of the Father's mind, and the Spirit as a bond of love between them. The alleged source, having been edited by Theiler,⁶¹ does not quite speak for itself:

Ψυχαῖον σπινθήρα δυὸν κράσας ὁμονοίαις νῷ καὶ νεύματι
θεῷ, ἐφ' οἷς τρίτον ἀγγόν ἔρωτα.

The Father mixed the spark of the soul from two concordant elements,
mind and the reflection (νῷματι; MS νεύματι) of God, to which he added love
as the third.
(*Chaldaean Oracles*, frg. 44)

Once again we must plead for circumspection. The case for plagiarism from the *Oracles* requires an emendation to the verses, and supposes that Augustine was prepared to steal from Porphyry a battery of terms that he elected not to quote in his critique. The emendation is dubious, and the theory ignores the prolix chain of reasoning by which Augustine reaches his conclusions. The most original mind since Socrates was never guided by the din of fading voices; even when engaged in a public argument, he will fall into soliloquy, exhausting his opponents' answers long before he has ceased to tax his own propensity for interrogation. To such a mind the questions occurred spontaneously, and he never had to lift a doctrine bodily from any source but the Bible and the Creeds. His doctrine of the Trinity and the triads of the later Neoplatonists stem from different proximate causes; their ultimate cause is one in this respect, that both attempt to grasp God's nature through the medium of his greatest work, the mind.⁶²

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⁵⁷ See Augustine, *De Trinitate* 12.4 etc.

⁵⁸ In Hymn 3.163ff., both *vita* and *substantia* (Son and Spirit) are form; At *ibid.*, 114–5 the Son is *forma*, the Spirit *reformationem*.

⁵⁹ See Augustine, *De Trinitate* 11.5, 12.12 etc.

⁶⁰ For the triad *mens-notitia-amor*, see Augustine, *De Trinitate* 11.17 etc.

⁶¹ See des Places (above, note 10) 131, citing W. Theiler, *Die Chaldaischen Orakel und die Hymnen des Synesios* (Halle 1942) 9.

⁶² I am grateful for comments made in the seminar by Dr. H.J. Blumenthal, Dr. L. Siorvanes, Dr. C.G. Steel, Mr. R.M. Van Den Berg, Prof. F. García Bázán and Prof. F. Romano.

2

Iamblichus and the School of Ammonius, Son of Hermias, on Divine Omniscience

Elias Tempelis

An original epistemological view of Iamblichus was used by Ammonius, Stephanus and an anonymous commentator in their discussion on divine omniscience.¹ This view is actually what has been preserved from Iamblichus' own commentary *In De Interpretatione*.

The Neoplatonic school of Ammonius offers a possible account of God's experience of the world, which is conceptually defensible. Even though the views of Ammonius, Stephanus and the Anonymous Commentator on the subject are expounded in their commentaries *In De Interpretatione*,² they argue that the laws of

¹ In most cases several scholars have dealt with Ammonius, but within the framework of an attempt to determine Boethius' dependence on him regarding this metaphysical problem. As a consequence, similar or parallel ideas of other members of this school, like Stephanus or the anonymous author of the commentary *In De Interpretatione*, have received practically no attention. Ammonius (*In De Interpretatione* 122ff.) was first mentioned by J. Orelli (*Alexandri Aphrodisiensis de Fato Quae Supersunt, etc.* [Zürich 1824] 335) as a source for Boethius' metaphysics with regard to the concept of necessity. F. Klingner ("De Boethii Consolatione Philosophiae," *Philologische Untersuchungen*, A. Kiessling and U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, eds., vol. 27 [Berlin 1921] 111) repeats the argument. H.R. Patch ("Necessity in Boethius and the Neoplatonists," *Speculum* 10 [1935] 401) and P. Courcelle ("Boèce et l'École d'Alexandrie," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 52 [1935] 208) refer to Ammonius' distinction between simple and hypothetical necessity. P.T.M. Huber (*Die Vereinbarkeit von Göttlicher Vorsehung und Menschlicher Freiheit in der Consolatio Philosophiae des Boethius* [Zürich 1976] 52–3) correctly argues that the doctrine of the twofold necessity was not applied by Ammonius to his own discussion about divine providence and free will. Cf. R.W. Sharples, "Temporally Qualified Necessity and Impossibility," *LCM* 3.4 (1978) 89–91.

For a detailed examination of the parallels among Proclus, Ammonius and Boethius, see Courcelle (above, this note); Courcelle, "Les Lettres Grecques en Occident, de Macrobie à Cassiodore," *Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome*, vol. 159 (Paris 1948) 268ff.; Huber (above, this note) and L. Obertello, "Proclus, Ammonius and Boethius on Divine Knowledge," *Dionysius* 5 (1981) 127–64.

² Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 128.15–135.25; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 34.5–

the Aristotelian syllogisms are superficial and not founded upon facts. Thus they do not apply them to the Neoplatonic solution to the problem, which includes not only metaphysical, but also epistemological, ethical and physical considerations as well.³ Nevertheless, this does not mean that what can be said about divine omniscience violates the laws of human logic in general.

Ammonius' and Stephanus' arguments should be conceived within their attempt to define the relation between God and the world.⁴ The answer to the inquiry about how God knows the world in a determinate way is to be sought on a metaphysical level with the assistance of the Iamblican theory about the relation between the knowing subject and the object known.

To start with, Ammonius and Stephanus examine the truth value of two opposing beliefs:

Belief (a): The world is governed by fate or the providence of the divine. Therefore, everything in the world occurs determinately and by necessity. This is something which applies also to all eternal realities.⁵

Belief (b): Some things are produced by particular causes and happen by contingency. Human beings have a free will and, therefore, they ought to cultivate their education and virtue in order to act in a better way.⁶

Although Ammonius and Stephanus do not state it from the beginning, their main concern is to reconcile the two opposite views. Their argumentation will be pointing to the conclusion that even if God exercises providence, nothing in the material world occurs determinately and by necessity.⁷ Furthermore, the events

36.38, Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 55.6–56.14. Even though Stephanus generally depends on Ammonius (see R. Vancourt, *Les Derniers Commentateurs Alexandrins d'Aristote: L'École d'Olympiodore, Étienne d'Alexandrie*, [Lille 1941] 38), there are three passages in Stephanus' discussion on divine omniscience (*In De Interpretatione* 35.17–19, 35.34–36.8, 36.35–38) which have no parallel in Ammonius.

With reference to the anonymous author of *In De Interpretatione*, L. Tarán in his edition of Anonymous' *The Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (Codex Parisianus Graecus 2064) (*Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 95 [Meisenheim am Glan 1978] xv–xxv) persuasively argued that he must have belonged to the Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism. His commentary, which must have been written in the late sixth or the seventh century A.D. either in Alexandria or Constantinople, is closely dependent upon Ammonius, because the Anonymous Commentator must have been closely acquainted with Ammonius' commentary *In De Interpretatione*. Nevertheless, the commentary has some independent value.

³ Huber (above, note 1) 28. Even if this remark of Huber's refers to Ammonius only, it applies to Stephanus as well. See Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 131.23, 132.8–10; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 34.35–36.

⁴ Obertello (above, note 1) 139.

⁵ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 131.5–8, 131.11–16; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 34.24–25.

⁶ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 131.8–10, 131.17–19; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 34.24–25.

⁷ In their commentaries Ammonius and Stephanus draw on Proclus' relevant doctrine that divine knowledge is determinate but does not necessitate the future of the entities depending on it, because their nature is contingent. See Obertello (above, note 1) 154.

It is known that Proclus lectured on the *De Interpretatione* (Ammonius, *In De*

which involve human beings will be shown to be contingent, because they may occur equally well or not. These events are matters of human responsibility and choice.⁸

The discussion continues with the introduction of three hypotheses, which are as follows:⁹

Hypothesis (a): God knows determinately the outcomes of contingencies.¹⁰

Hypothesis (b): God has no knowledge of contingencies at all.

Hypothesis (c): God has, like humans, an indeterminate knowledge of contingencies.¹¹

Hypothesis (b) needs hardly any argument to be refuted as impious, absurd and impossible. God is superior in that He creates and ordains all secondary beings and intellects. How, then, could He be ignorant of, or neglect, what He creates by

Interpretatione 1.6–11, 181.30–32; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 46.25–47.12), but there is no record of these lectures. Nevertheless, A.D.R. Sheppard ("Proclus' Philosophical Method of Exegesis: The Use of Aristotle and the Stoics in the Commentary on the *Cratylus*" in *Proclus, Lecteur et Interprète des Anciens, Actes du Colloque International du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 2–4 oct. 1985*, J. Pépin and H.D. Saffrey, eds. [Paris 1987] 143) has "no doubt that Ammonius attended Proclus' lectures on the *De Int.*, took assiduous notes and used these notes together, perhaps, with other material when he came to lecture on the *De Int.* himself." Cf. Sheppard (above, this note) 141–2 and 146–7.

⁸ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 142.1ff., 151.9–152.11; Philoponus, *In Analytica Priora* 1.13, 151.27ff. Cf. R.W. Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Fato*: Some Parallels," *CQ* 28 (1978) 250–1.

⁹ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 132.11–13; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.11–14; Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 55.6–16.

¹⁰ A similar view, namely that God has determinate knowledge and that necessity applies to everything that comes to be, was attributed by Proclus (*De Providentia* 63) to the Stoics. F.P. Hager ("Proklos und Alexander von Aphrodisias ueber ein Problem der Lehre von der Vorsehung" in *KEPHALAION, Studies in Greek Philosophy and its Continuation offered to Prof. C.J. de Vogel*, J. Mansfeld and L.M. de Rijk, eds. [Assen 1975] 180, note 6) refers to Chrysippus (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, H.F.A. von Arnim, vol. 2 [Leipzig 1903–1924] 280 note 963). However, closer to the truth seems to be the suggestion that the reference to Stoics and Peripatetics is used as a means of clarification of the Neoplatonic position. See Huber (above, note 1) 22.

In fact, the Stoics did not say that the divine has determinate as opposed to indeterminate foreknowledge, because that distinction had not yet been formulated. It is also true that the formulation "all things happen by necessity" is one that the Stoics would have found questionable, at least, though the situation is complex. However, the substantive points that everything is predetermined and that the gods have foreknowledge of it would have been accepted by them. The foreknowledge of the divine for the Stoics would rest in their belief that the history of the universe repeats itself in cycles. See R.W. Sharples, "Necessity in the Stoic Doctrine of Fate," *SO* 56 (1981) 81–97.

¹¹ This hypothesis was mentioned by Proclus (*De Providentia* 63) as shared by the Peripatetic schools. At the time of Proclus there were no independent Peripatetic schools, but it is true that the view was shared by Alexander of Aphrodisias (*De Fato* 201.16–18). Cf. Huber (above, note 1) 22ff.; Hager (above, note 10); Patch (above, note 1) 399. Similar views, however, had previously been shared by the Platonic school of Gaius (J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* [London 1977] 249–98, 320–6). Cf. R.T. Wallis ("Divine Omniscience in Plotinus, Proclus and Aquinas" in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong*, H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus, eds. [London 1981] 223–35) where Alexander is presented as defending free will against Stoic determinism.

indolence?¹² It is true that neither Ammonius¹³ nor Stephanus insisted on examining the consequences of this hypothesis.

Hypothesis (c) seems to argue that, like humans, God cannot know for sure that a future event will actually take place. This hypothesis is somewhat impious but as absurd as hypothesis (b), because divine knowledge is transcendent and superior to the human. If divine knowledge were identical to ours either in nature or in capacity, God would not be in a state of intelligent quiet, since He would have to deal with particular things.¹⁴ To support this view, Ammonius draws attention to the long treatises on the divine acts and to everyday facts which are significant to those people who can note them.¹⁵ Unfortunately, he does not become any clearer than that.

Ammonius¹⁶ refutes the argument that the fact that God generally gives His oracles in an ambiguous form proves His indefinite knowledge of the future. Influenced by Syrianus, he argues that divine knowledge is distinct from the quality of a prophet. What enlightens is not identical to what is enlightened. Prophetic talk remains human, partial and ambiguous, because God respects our ambivalent nature. Any prediction in general cannot have an unqualified (*i.e.*, a determinate) truth before the predicted event actually takes place. Even so, however, prophetic talk may be to the advantage of those listening to it, since it may exercise their intellectual qualities.¹⁷

The main fact which Ammonius and Stephanus use in order to refute hypothesis (c) is the immutability of the divine. If God is to remain immutable, His knowledge cannot be variable.¹⁸ An indefinite knowledge is being continuously altered. If such were the case of divine knowledge, it would follow that part of the contents of the demiurgic Intellect, which is the knowing subject, would continuously be altered. The aforementioned traditional philosophical and theological view is founded on the belief that in a perfect, and therefore immutable being, any change would have to constitute deterioration.¹⁹ The principle of immutability is supported

12 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 132.13–19, 134.3–7, 135.10–11, 136.4; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.12. Cf. Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.104; W. Theiler "Tacitus und die Antike Schicksalslehre" in *Phyllobolia: Für Peter von der Mühl zum 60. Geburtstag am 1. August 1945*, O. Gigon *et al.*, eds. (Basel 1946) 50, note 70.

13 Cf. Huber (above, note 1) 23.

14 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 132.19–25; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.12–25. See Ph. Merlan, "Ammonius Hermiae, Zacharias Scholasticus and Boethius," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 199–200.

15 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 134.21–26.

16 *Ibid.*, 137.12–23, 145.9ff. See Sharples (above, note 8) 263.

17 Obertello ([above, note 1] 145) mistakenly renders the Greek word διάνοιαν (Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 137.21) as "intuitive qualities," instead of "intellectual qualities."

18 Philoponus (*In De Intellectu* 19.48–55) argues that God has a cognition which remains always the same.

19 Plato, *Respublica* 381b.

by the argument referring to the complete actualization of a perfect being's capacities.²⁰ Consequently, it is absolutely necessary that God's capacity to know everything is completely actualized. In its absolute actuality, His Intellect knows everything by reflecting upon itself, because it has in itself the exemplars of all beings, i.e., the Forms as cognitive and creative reason-principles. God generates everything from the intelligible, indivisible and eternal Forms and thinks of what He creates in that manner.²¹ The activity of the demiurgic Intellect, anyway, does not extend outside itself.²²

God's knowledge of the future cannot be vague or conjectural, because He does not undergo any change in Himself.²³ This means that He does not acquire a knowledge which He did not previously have,²⁴ because if that were the case, then He would undergo some sort of change in His Intellect. A man may know an event after it has happened to be, but God knows it eternally. What for humans belongs to the future and is contingent was examined by the school of Ammonius exclusively from the point of view of an immutable entity.²⁵ For God, in whom coming-to-be is unacceptable even as a hypothesis,²⁶ there is neither past nor future, but an eternal present which incorporates all three dimensions of time, is distinct from temporal images and signifies divine immutability and stability.²⁷ When "is" is applied to

20 Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1074b26ff. Cf. N. Kretzmann, "Omniscience and Immutability," *JPh* 63 (1966) 409; S. Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity* (London 1962) 164.

21 Philoponus, *In De Anima* 126.20–21, 126.26–32, 141.17–18.

22 *Ibid.*, 136.26–32.

23 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 133.13ff.; R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum. Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London 1983) 261–2. Stephanus (*In De Interpretatione* 35.14–15) does not explicitly refer to the immutability of the divine, but this remains a necessary presupposition for his criticism of the third hypothesis.

24 Cf. Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1.352.19ff.; *Institutio Theologica* 124; *Decem Dubitationes* 2.7–8.

25 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 133.19–23, 136.20–24.

26 *Ibid.*, 133.22–23.

27 *Ibid.*, 136.17–25; Asclepius, *In Metaphysicam* 38.17–18, 42.30, 202.16–17; Philoponus, *In Physicam* 65.9; *In De Generatione et Corruptione* 211.30–31; Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem* 13.2; Philoponus(?) / Stephanus(?), *In De Anima* 536.24, 545.25–28. For the school of Ammonius divine knowledge of all events is fixed and stable, because God is outside time. Divine knowledge of an event does not develop along with the duration of the event. God knows everything *ab aeterno* and *ante factum*. See M. Mignucci, "Logic and Omniscience: Alexander of Aphrodisias and Proclus," *OSAPh* 3 (1985) 242–5. At *In De Interpretatione* 133.13–26 Ammonius cites similar views in the philosophical tradition: he refers to Parmenides (frg. 8, line 5), Plato's *Leges* (905a), *Parmenides* (141e), *Timaeus* (37e–38b) and Aristotle's *Metaphysica* (1072a25). Sorabji argues that the attribution to Parmenides need not be taken as historical. In fact, Ammonius interprets Parmenides' quoted line as referring to a sizeless present, since the past exists no more and the future does not yet exist. Sorabji persuasively argues that Parmenides gropes towards the idea that his subject exists, but not at any time, neither at any point, nor over any period of time. See Sorabji (above, note 23) 99ff., 262, note 38.

God, it is not meant in the temporal sense, because it actually denotes existence.²⁸ Since God necessarily is the principle with regard to all that exists, everything is placed near Him and is unified in an eternal present.²⁹ As the category of time does not apply to His omniscience, the latter is of a timeless eternity.³⁰ For the school of Ammonius the doctrine of timelessness provides a backing for and an explanation of the doctrine of God's immutability. If God is timeless, He is totally immutable. It also allows the claim that God is omniscient. God outside time knows our free actions, no matter if they may sometimes be in the future from our point of view. Since they are never in the future for God, He sees them as present and this does not endanger their free character.

Since God knows the present, He knows the outcome of His own creation and whatever springs from His creatures in any possible way.³¹ The use of the notion of an eternal present by Ammonius and his students eliminates from God all past and future and hence eliminates from Him anything resembling human memory and anticipation. Thus, consistent with their exclusion of any kind of anthropomorphism, they successfully avoided inadequate anthropomorphisms in describing God.

Even though it is necessary for God to know determinately the outcomes of contingencies, yet there are certain difficulties as to the acceptance of hypothesis (a). On the one hand, it is true that God knows the outcomes of contingencies not only completely, but also in conformity with His own nature, i.e., in a determinate way.³² On the other hand, however, universal determinism is introduced if we believe that

28 Philoponus, *In Physica* 457.26–458.13.

29 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 133.24–29. On the idea of the eternal present Ammonius follows Plotinus (*Enneades* 3.7.3.16–23, 3.7.4.40). See Huber (above, note 1) 48–9; W. Beierwaltes, *Plotin: Über Ewigkeit und Zeit* (*Enneade III*, 7) (Frankfurt 1967) 166ff., 198ff.

30 Cf. Huber (above, note 1) 46. Temporal measures for Ammonius show themselves simultaneously with the subsistence of the universe. A knowledge which is bound to time and its distinctions of past, present and future is conjectural and, therefore, not attributable to the gods (Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 133.27–30; Stephanus, *In Hippocratis Prognosticum* 46.8–17). Cf. L.G. Westerink, "Philosophy and Medicine in Late Antiquity," *Janus* 51 (1964) 171. Philoponus (*apud* Simplicius, *In Physica* 1156.28–1158.29) expressed the view that the characteristic property of divine thinking alone is the indivisible, simultaneous cognition of all things that are, have been and will be. It does not follow that divine knowledge is temporal, because God exists over and above time and contemplates temporal things atemporally. Cf. G. Verbeke "Some Later Neoplatonic Views on Divine Creation and the Eternity of the World" in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought, Studies in Neoplatonism*, D.J. O' Meara, ed., vol. 3 (Norfolk 1982) 49. For Olympiodorus (*In Gorgiam* 249.8–13) as well, neither past nor future applies to the divine, but only the eternal present. According to Elias (*Prolegomena* 17.9–10; *In Categorias* 219.19–30) God can know everything at the same time and always, and He is not in want of anything there is to know. David (*Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy* 40.19ff., 84.10ff.) holds that God knows everything at once and there is never a moment when He does not know. For Stephanus (*Opusculum Apotelesmaticum* 271.19–21) divine knowledge is perfect and most unerring.

31 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 134.3–7.

32 *Ibid.*, 134.24–135.2; Philoponus(?) / Stephanus(?), *In De Anima* 547.9–10; cf. 547.15–16; Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 55.11–15.

contingencies necessarily conform to the knowledge God has of them.³³

In addition, nobody can doubt that contingent things, which develop in multiplicity and change, can neither be organized nor ordered in themselves, were it not for the creative and providential divine causality.³⁴ But then, if one claims that contingent things do not necessarily conform to the divine knowledge of them, one may come to the unacceptable conclusion that the things of our world are neither known nor foreseen by God.³⁵

At this point the position of Ammonius, Stephanus and the anonymous writer of the commentary *In De Interpretatione* cannot be defended by purely metaphysical arguments. Their thesis is that God knows contingencies in a determinate way, yet they do not necessarily conform to the knowledge God has of them.³⁶ Through their discussion however, they remain with a clear-cut alternative between universal determinism and absolute neglect of the world. To reach the desired solution and resolve the dilemma they apply the Iamblichean doctrine of the threefold relation between knower and known.³⁷

Ammonius finds the dilemma to be tough, because it seems to be confirmed by evidence. Therefore he refers to the thought of the divine Iamblichus, who distinguishes between the various kinds of knowledge. Iamblichus' principle is that knowledge is a mean between the knower and the known, if it is true that knowledge is the operation of the knower upon the known. Thus knowledge need not have the same status as the known object. Sometimes the knower knows the known better than the nature of the known itself does, sometimes less and sometimes in the same way. Ammonius, Stephanus and the Anonymous Commentator give some examples to illustrate the three different instances. When the intellect knows a perishable particular, for example Socrates as a rational mortal animal, or an accident, like the whiteness of an object, its knowledge is better than that which is known. When the intellect or the soul turn to themselves and consider their own substances, such knowledge is of the same kind as the knower. When, on the contrary, the intellect ascends to the summit of its own capacities and considers the things pertaining to the divine government—how all things issue forth from their one and only principle and how they are individually determined and specified—its knowledge is without doubt "less" than the known.

Iamblichus made a general epistemological remark: Since to know is an activity of a knowing subject, the nature and modalities of knowledge depend on the nature of the knowing subject, not of the object known. In fact he presented a graded and hierarchical vision of knowledge according to the typical setting of Neoplatonic

33 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 135.7–9; Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 55.15–16.

34 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 134.26–135.1.

35 *Ibid.*, 135.10–11; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.10ff.

36 See A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford 1990) 155–6.

37 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 135.12–19 (= Iamblichus, frg. 147); Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.16–24 (= Iamblichus, frg. 148) and *In De Interpretatione* 37.35–38.1 (= Iamblichus, frg. 149); Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 55.16–56.8.

metaphysics. Knowledge, like all kinds of perfections, does not have one form and is not univocal in all intellects. A perfect intellect possesses a perfect knowledge, a less perfect intellect a less perfect knowledge and so forth. The content of knowledge is derived from the known object, but the knower is he who determines the degree of completeness of knowledge. The part of this theory which is of particular interest to the problem of divine omniscience is that if the knower is superior to the known, then he has a knowledge of it which is superior even to the knowledge the known has of itself, provided that the object known is itself a knower. Therefore, divine omniscience is as excellent as God Himself.³⁸ The same thing, a triangle, for example, is known by God as one, *i.e.*, without the phenomenal multiplicity perceived by a human. An intellect would know it as a whole, *i.e.*, with all its constituents together at the same time. Discursive thought would know it as a universal, representation would know it as a shape, and sensation would know it as an affection.³⁹

Even if Dalsgaard Larsen denies it,⁴⁰ the references by Ammonius, Stephanus and the Anonymous Commentator to Iamblichus' principle establish that Iamblichus certainly wrote a commentary on the *De Interpretatione*, the existence of which was also attested by the Arab ibn Al-Nadīm in his *Kitab al-Fihrist*.⁴¹

The principle formulated by Iamblichus is found in Proclus,⁴² too, without an ascription to Iamblichus. Proclus applies Iamblichus' principle to divine knowledge and believes that divine knowledge, being a divine property, will be determined not by the nature of the inferior beings which are its objects, but by its own transcendent majesty. Proclus' point is that knowledge of the contingents is not necessarily

38 Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 135.19–25. Cf. Obertello (above, note 1) 158; G. Clark, "Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Life," *Translated Texts for Historians*, vol. 8 (Liverpool 1989) 64.

39 Proclus, *In Timaeum* 1.352.15–19; *De Providentia* 64; Lloyd (above, note 36) 154. Similarly when Asclepius (*In Metaphysica* 171.21–22) argues that "as known is to known, so is knowledge to knowledge," he affirms the correlation between the properties of the known and the properties of knowing. Cf. Plato, *Respublica* 509d–511e; *Timaeus* 51c–52c; A. Madigan, S.J., "Syrianus and Asclepius on Forms and Intermediates in Plato and Aristotle," *JHPH* 24 (1986) 165.

40 *Jamblique De Chalcis. Exégète et Philosophe. Testimonia et Fragmenta Exegetica, Appendice* (Aarhus 1972) 53.

41 Ibn Al-Nadīm, *Kitab al-Fihrist* 249.2. See also: A. Badawi, *La Transmission de la Philosophie Grecque au Monde Arabe* (Paris 1968) 110; F.E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus* (Leiden 1968) 12; L. Tarán, Book review of Larsen's *Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et Philosophe. Testimonia et Fragmenta exegetica, Appendice* (CW 68 [1975] 467); Tarán (above, note 2) vii, note 9; F.W. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (London 1981) xcii, note 4.

42 Proclus, *De Providentia* 64.1–4; *Decem Dubitationes* 2.7.1–29; *Institutio Theologica* 124; *In Timaeum* 1.352.11–16; *In Parmenidem* 956.10–957.40. Cf. P. Courcelle, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la Tradition Littéraire: Antécédents et Postérité de Boèce* (Paris 1967) 221; Huber (above, note 1) 42, note 18; R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London 1972) 150; Wallis (above, note 11) 226–8; R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame. Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (London 1980) 124; Sorabji (above, note 23) 255, 262; Sharples (above, note 8) 260–1; M.J. White, "Time and Determinism in the Hellenistic Philosophical Schools," *AGPH* 65 (1983) 61; Mignucci (above, note 27) 238–9; L. Obertello, "Augustine on Original Perception," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991) 11, note 23.

contingent and that knowledge of something mutable is not necessarily mutable. The properties of what is contingent or mutable do not become necessary because of the fact that they are known by the divine. So, Proclus secures not only the contingency of the world, but also the omniscience of the divine as well. The same principle is also found in Boethius,⁴³ Psellus⁴⁴ and Aquinas.⁴⁵ It is evident now that from Iamblichus onwards we have in post-Plotinian Neoplatonism the development of an influential doctrine of divine omniscience as conforming to the nature of the knower rather than the object known.⁴⁶ As Obertello remarks:⁴⁷

The conception of knowledge (originally Iamblichean) . . . is a unicum in ancient philosophy. . . . In its last expressions classical Greek philosophy proposes anew and unfolds the question by which it had always been fascinated: the question about Being in itself, the Absolute.

It should be observed here that even if the school of Ammonius, like Plotinus and Porphyry,⁴⁸ distinguished between the knowledge God has of the world and God as the knowing subject, they did not introduce some sort of duality into His Intellect. There can be no subject-object distinction in the knowledge attributed to God. This means that He does not know the objects of His knowledge as something external which His Intellect has to approach cognitively. God knows everything internally, so to speak, as beings created by Him. The divine cognition of everything else is presented as analogous to the sun's light when still in the sun. God has an exact knowledge of all things with constant reference to His own nature. This is possible not because He has perceived all things, but rather because He possesses their cognitive and creative reason-principles.

God knows the generated things in a way which is superior to the indeterminate nature of the generated things, that is to say that He knows them in a definite way.⁴⁹ God's knowledge of contingencies corresponds to the kind of knowledge which is superior to the object known, because God realizes contingent things better than contingent things themselves do. Even if the latter have an indeterminate nature and may either occur or not, God possesses a determinate

43 *De Consolatione* 5, pr. 4.72ff., pr. 6.1ff., 59ff.

44 *De Omnifaria Doctrina* 17.1ff.

45 *Summa Theologica* 1.14.13.2.

46 Huber (above, note 1) 41.

47 Obertello (above, note 1) 157, 159.

48 Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem* 4.7. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades* 6.9.6.42ff.; Porphyry, *In Parmenidem*, frg. 2 (5.7ff.); J.M. Dillon, "Porphyry's Doctrine of the One" in *ΕΦΙΗΕ ΜΑΙΗΤΟΡΕΣ* "Chercheurs de sagesse," *Hommage à Jean Pépin*, M.O. Goulet-Cazé, G. Madec and D. O'Brien, eds. (Paris 1992) 361-2.

49 Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.31-33. Stephanus (*Opusculum Apotelesmaticum* 271.19-21) also says that divine knowledge is perfect and most unerring.

knowledge of them.⁵⁰ The divine science of contingencies is single and immutable. To know divisible things in an indivisible and dimensionless way, manifold things in a unitary way, temporal things atemporally and generated things in an ungenerated way is not only appropriate, but also necessary for God.⁵¹

God ordains all possibilities,⁵² but epistemically there is no possibility for Him, as He knows the outcome of everything beforehand.⁵³ Possibilities exist metaphysically with respect to particular beings only, but their definite outcome is not caused by God's knowledge of it; the nature of things themselves is exclusively responsible not only for their outcome, but also for the contents of the knowledge God has of their outcome.⁵⁴ Since God transcends all ambivalence and contingency, the reason for His omniscience is that the outcome of what is indefinite is included in the possibilities He has arranged. Divine knowledge renders actual what for us is in potency.⁵⁵ From our point of view in the world, free future decisions appear as not yet made;⁵⁶ nevertheless in reality they already have been made and exist in God timelessly in their full concreteness.

The outcome of contingencies cannot be thought necessary on the ground that God knows it in a determinate way. When it occurs, it will be only because a contingent thing will have this or that outcome. God must simply know which this outcome will be.⁵⁷ Since divine knowledge is not understood by the school of Ammonius to be a foreknowledge, it no more necessitates an event than our seeing of

⁵⁰ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 136.11–15; Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 56.9–14. See also Plotinus (*Enneades* 6.7.1); Proclus (*De Providentia* 65, *Institutio Theologica* 124). Cf. Patch (above, note 1) 399; Sorabji (above, note 23) 255.

⁵¹ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 136.1–4; Philoponus, *In De Anima* 126.26–7, 132.30–31; Philoponus, *apud* Simplicius, *In Physica* 1158.29–1159.7. The doctrine that divine foreknowledge does not take on the character of its object is also found in Proclus (*In Timaeum* 1.352.5–27) who justifies the doctrine theoretically (*De Providentia* 63; *Decem Dubitationes* 2.2, 2.8, 7.28, 8.9; *Institutio Theologica* 93, 124; *In Parmenidem* 1.956.10–957.40; *Theologia Platonica* 1.15–16, 1.21). Cf. Hager (above, note 10) 178–9; Theiler (above, note 12) 51–2; Sharples (above, note 8) 261, note 188; Sorabji (above, note 23) 255, 261–2; Mignucci (above, note 27) 239.

⁵² Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 134.24–6. Cf. Huber (above, note 1) 32–3; Wallis (above, note 11) 230–1.

⁵³ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 135.7–9; Merlan (above, note 14).

⁵⁴ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 136.25; Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 36.32–39. Cf. Huber (above, note 1) 53, 58. Stephanus' view is differentiated from that of Proclus' *Decem Dubitationes* (8.32–35) according to which divine foreknowledge is assimilated to causing. Cf. Sorabji (above, note 42) 122.

⁵⁵ Obertello (above, note 1) 159ff.; Huber (above, note 1) 33. Cf. Nemesius, *De Natura Hominis* 43, 129.26–130.1.

⁵⁶ Cf. Olympiodorus, *In De Interpretatione* 31.4–11; 38.9–12; Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 60.16–61.6.

⁵⁷ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 136.25–30.

an event necessitates it.⁵⁸ If God knows that a certain particular will come to be at some time, the particular will come to be at that time, because the existence of things follows the truth of the cognitive reason-principles in His Intellect.⁵⁹ In other words, it is argued that necessarily, if God knows anything, it will come to pass. The only things which God can rightly be said to know are those which in fact come to pass. This does not entail that if God knows anything, it will necessarily come to pass. Such a claim would yield the conclusion that man does not have free will.

Ammonius himself did not examine the role of free will in this scheme.⁶⁰ Its existence is justified by the Anonymous Commentator on the *De Interpretatione* and Stephanus. The former⁶¹ argues that men have been made by Nature to have free will with reference to contingencies, and this is not in vain on behalf of Nature. If everything in the world were subject to necessity, free will would be purposeless. The latter⁶² justifies the existence of free will as the only possible answer to the question why God does not prevent evil actions, even though He knows how men will choose and what the outcome of their choice will be. Stephanus holds that even if God has the ability to prevent evil actions, He does not wish to do it, because He has bestowed on man free will. The fact, however, remains that God freely allows evil to occur. Stephanus did not pose the question if this is somehow evil after all.

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⁵⁸ Ammonius, *In De Interpretatione* 133.15–27. Cf. Sorabji (above, note 42) 125–6; Sorabji (above, note 23) 262.

⁵⁹ Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.15–19. Cf. Plotinus (*Enneades* 4.4.8.1–8, 30–33) according to whom the sensible world is a fragmented image of the causal principles within the divine mind. See Wallis (above, note 11) 225.

⁶⁰ There are passages, though, where Ammonius (*In De Interpretatione* 38.28–39.10, 137.22–23) explicitly accepts that man has been created as a rational and self-moved being and therefore is the master of his own actions. The power of deliberation is a peculiar characteristic of man (*ibid.*, 142.17–20) and has been given by Nature; therefore, it is not in vain (*ibid.*, 148.11ff.; cf. Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 60.16–61.6). See Sharples (above, note 8) 259, notes 166 and 168.

⁶¹ Anonymous, *In De Interpretatione* 60.14–61.6.

⁶² Stephanus, *In De Interpretatione* 35.34–36.8. Cf. Proclus, *Decem Dubitationes* 8.10ff.

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Figure 1: A vertical strip of a document page, showing a dense column of text. The text is oriented vertically, reading from top to bottom. The page is heavily degraded, with significant noise and artifacts, particularly along the right edge where the text is cut off. The text appears to be a list or index of items, with many entries starting with "The" or "A".

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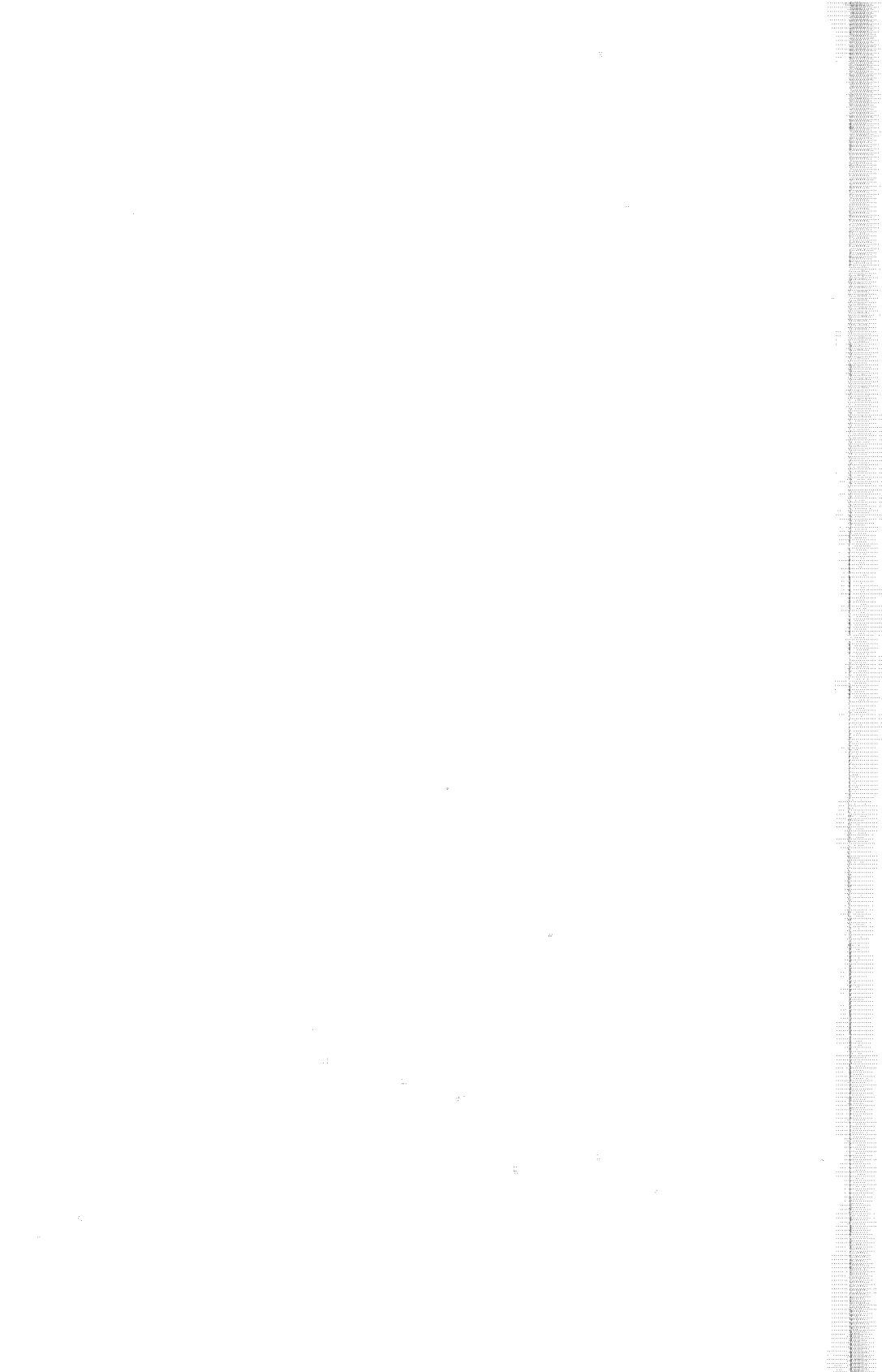
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