

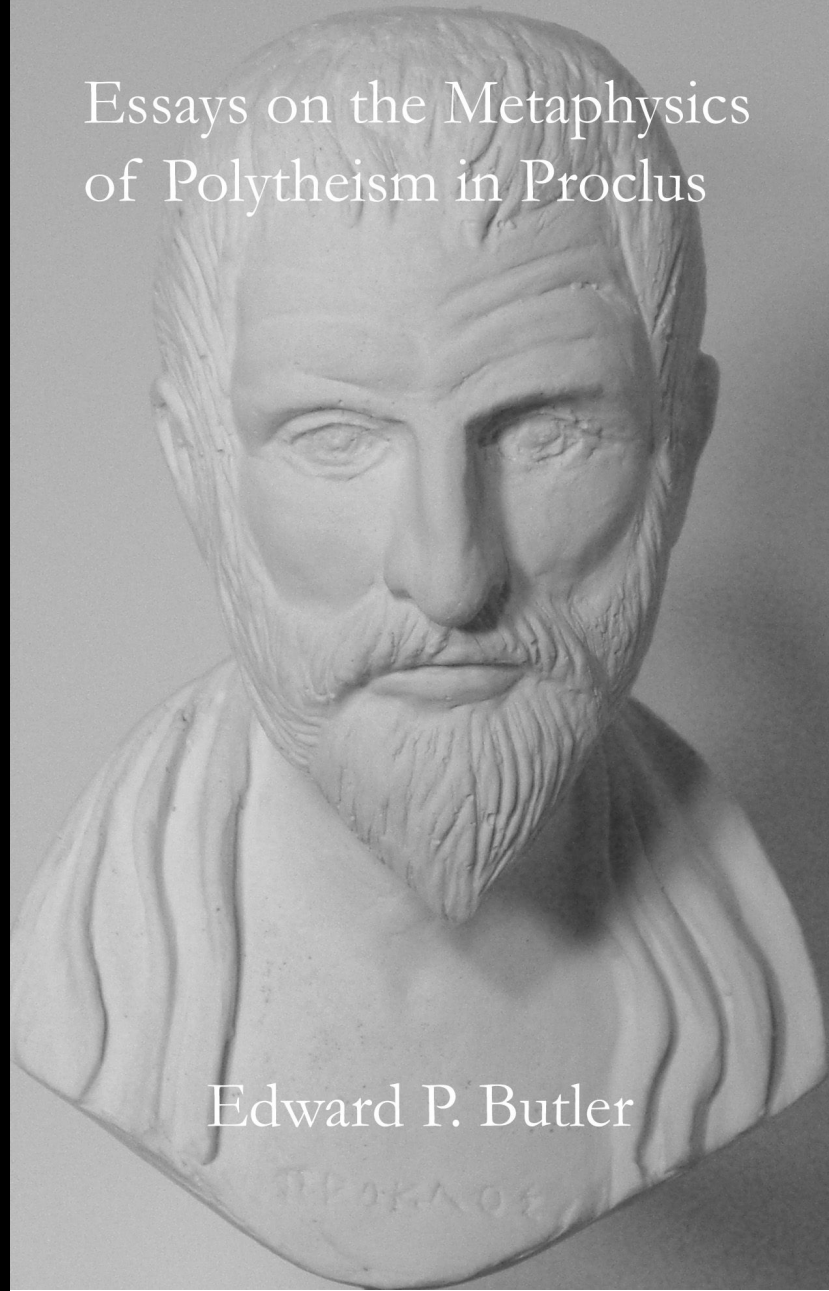
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Essays on the Metaphysics of Polytheism in Proclus

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PHAIDRA EDITIONS
NEW YORK CITY
2014

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ISBN 978-1-304-76703-5

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PREFACE

This book collects a series of articles based on my 2003 dissertation “The Metaphysics of Polytheism in Proclus”. “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold” (2005) and “The Gods and Being in Proclus” (2008) appeared in *Dionysius*, the journal of the Department of Classics at Dalhousie University. “The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus” (2008), “The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods” (2010), and “The Third Intelligible Triad and the Intellective Gods” (2012) appeared in *Méthexis: International Journal for Ancient Philosophy*. It was always my intention for these articles to be read in the closest conjunction, therefore the present volume gathers them, without comment or elaboration. To facilitate citation, the original journal pagination appears in brackets. The articles are as they were posted to my website, **henadology.wordpress.com**, and remain available there, along with the dissertation and other of my published works. As a bonus, this volume also includes two previously unpublished works: a lecture I delivered at Dalhousie University in 2010, and a piece I wrote for a ceremony in Athens commemorating Proclus’ 1,600th birthday in 2012.

The essays in this book provide the principal theoretical foundation for the ‘henadological’ approach to theology in the polytheistic philosophy of religion, while in a wider perspective constituting the first stage in recovering the sense and significance of henology, the discourse concerning ‘unity’, in classical metaphysics. Understanding the philosophical value of henology in ancient thinkers, especially (but not solely) Plato and the Platonists, offers in turn the opportunity for a general reassessment of the relationship between classical metaphysics and modern thought. Diverse routes into this broader inquiry are possible; this work on Proclus is the one I took.

POLYTHEISM AND INDIVIDUALITY IN THE HENADIC MANIFOLD*

In his 1918 book *The Neo-Platonists*,¹ Thomas Whittaker rejected the notion that the doctrine of the henads was merely “an attempt to find a more definite place for polytheism than was marked out in the system of Plotinus,” and approved of the effort “to find in it a more philosophical meaning” (173), remarking that already in his day “much has been written upon the question, what the henads of Proclus really mean,” (ibid). And yet, despite the explosion of interest in recent decades in Neoplatonism and in later antiquity generally, interest in the henadology, particularly interest in its “meaning,” has been lacking, as measured both by the relative paucity of literature on the henads, as well as by the tone of much that has been written. I will treat at the end of this essay of what I regard as the constructive trends in the previous literature on the henads, after I have presented my own reading of some of what I regard as the most important primary

* Originally published in vol. 23 of *Dionysius* (Dec. 2005), pp. 83-104. Pagination from this publication appears in brackets.

¹ *The Neo-Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press)

texts. In the first place, however, I wish to isolate the tendencies which I believe to have obstructed progress in understanding the doctrine.

The first is the tendency to overlook unique logical and structural characteristics of the henadic manifold which set it apart from any *ontic* manifold. If a logic really distinct from that applying to beings applies to supra-essential entities, the henads shall no longer seem, as they otherwise might, a mere structural complement within the system. One would see, in short, the *work* the henads do. The whole concept of the supra-essential or “existential,” that which lies beyond Being, would thus acquire true content, whereas otherwise it might seem mere hyperbole or obscurantism.

The contemporary understanding of the henadology has also been hindered by the inability of commentators to integrate the doctrine’s theological and philosophical dimensions. The henads are also the Gods; and this has caused inexplicable problems for commentators who would not, to put it bluntly, find it so difficult to accept the interplay and interdependence of philosophy and theology in a monotheistic philosopher, whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim. In such a case, one would recognize the constructive [84] contribution that the problem of rationally articulating a religious position could make to a

philosopher's thought; one would not see the philosopher in question as merely engaged in special pleading. An implicit assumption for many commentators with respect to the henadology seems to be the following: if the identity of the henads and the Gods is to be taken seriously, then the philosophical significance of the henads must be minimal, while if their philosophical significance is to be affirmed, then their identity with the Gods must be a mere concession to vulgar opinion, even if the vulgar opinion is Proclus' own. Upon either alternative, the *integration* of the philosophical and theological dimensions of the henadology is ruled out from the start. This dichotomy is already present in Whittaker, who explicitly opposes the theological and philosophical readings of the doctrine, and remains the dominant theme in the literature.²

Nor have modern commentators interested in the "mystical" elements of Neoplatonism, as has been the case particularly among

² A. C. Lloyd, for example, in his "Procession and Division in Proclus" (in *Soul and the Structure of Being in Late Neoplatonism: Syrianus, Proclus and Simplicius*, ed. by H. J. Blumenthal and A. C. Lloyd (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982)) attributes to "critics of the henads" the position that "their identification with traditional gods is built into the theory," (36f) – reflexively assuming that the theological dimension of the theory must operate at the expense of its philosophical integrity.

Francophone scholars such as Jean Trouillard, in general advanced the understanding of the henadology.³ The intrinsic value Proclus accords to the specific identities, names and natures of the traditional Gods of his own and other nations is awkward for the mystic, who would find common ground with the rationalist in their disdain for the belief in Gods and Goddesses as divine individuals who are not the masks, aspects or potencies of anything—not, in short, *whats* but *whos*. Between the mystic's beatific dissolution of all otherness and the rationalist's reduction of individuals to accidents of the *infima species*, there is no room for an appreciation of the polytheist's experience of wonder at the existence of unique divine individuals.

What is the source of the presupposition that the function of the henadology cannot be both apologetic *and* systematic? One could attribute it simply to the difficulty modern commentators have often had taking the classical paganism of the West seriously (and, in fact, non-Western religions to the degree that

³ For the history of the French retrieval of Neoplatonism in the last century I am indebted to Wayne J. Hankey's exhaustive survey in *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History* (Peeters, 2006), and to Prof. Hankey for pointing out the necessity of taking separate account of the Francophone scholarship.

they resemble classical paganism). A habit of long standing sees the development of philosophy in the West as inextricably tied to a [85] progressive estrangement from paganism. This view features in a particular metanarrative regarding the spiritual history of the West and of the world. To trace the history of this metanarrative and criticize the notions upon which it rests is not the task of this essay. Let it suffice to say that within this metanarrative polytheism is something any connection to which could only taint Proclus, and that this metanarrative makes itself felt nearly as much in the proponents of a “mystical” reading of Neoplatonism as those who prefer a “rationalist” reading.

It is not merely a delicacy with respect to exposing the prejudices of previous generations of scholars which urges forbearance in pursuing the matter from this viewpoint, however, for this metanarrative does not suffice by itself to explain the complex of assumptions which have prevented an integrated understanding of the henadology. It is a more likely as well as a more charitable supposition that the roots of the incapacity to integrate its philosophical and theological dimensions lie rather in the first problem I outlined, namely the failure to recognize a special logic of supra-essential existence in Proclus. For it is not merely a question of a reflexive cultural bias

privileging monotheism, but beyond this, of a logic of unity and multiplicity for which intelligibility can only come at the cost of reducing multiplicity to unity and the diverse to the same. A fresh investigation of the potential function of the henadology within a polytheistic economy has therefore something to offer above and beyond the progressive emancipation from archaic prejudices. Polytheism is a theological position uniquely suited to stimulate novel solutions to philosophical problems concerning the logic of unity and multiplicity, for if the polytheist wishes to take full advantage of a conceptual apparatus, such as Neoplatonic logic, that inherently privileges unity over multiplicity, without at the same time compromising his/her theological position, s/he must fashion out of the concepts of unity and multiplicity instruments subtle enough to be applied within a polytheistic framework without doing it violence. In this article, I wish to show how approaching the henadology in this way can, in fact, shed light on the doctrine's most recondite aspects, in particular by stressing the value of the henads' *individuality*.

In his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus states that “all that have ever touched upon theology have called things first according to nature, Gods; and have said that the theological science

concerns these.”⁴ He goes on to explain that since, for some, what ranks first is the corporeal, the Gods are for such as these a certain kind of body. Proclus intends the Stoics here. Others, he continues, regard soul as primary. For these, the best of souls are Gods. These [86] are apparently Anaxagoreans. Others again place intellect before all else, and these, he explains, consider theology and the discussion of intellectual essence as one and the same. These are Peripatetics. Now Plato, according to Proclus, laid the groundwork for a different sort of theology altogether because of the principle that he places first, namely unity. Unity is the most generic of concepts; not everything participates of soul, nor even of intellect or being, for these are only enjoyed, Proclus explains, by such things as subsist *according to form*. Unity, however, is, at least in some respect, prior to form. In a theological discourse based upon the concept of unity, the Gods will be first *by virtue of their mode of unity*. What, then, is the mode of unity of the Gods? We know that it is a unity prior to form, but what does this mean? Moreover, how are we to distinguish the special characteristics of a theology based upon the concept of unity,

⁴ *Théologie Platonicienne*, 6 vols., ed. and trans. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-97) (henceforth *PT*; translations mine) I 3. 12. 11

rather than any of the other concepts named? In what lies its superiority to the other theologies? We know that it is based on a concept that is, in itself, more generic and hence superior. But a Platonist must believe that it will also, for that very reason, be a science more adequate to its object.

Let us turn to a text of Proclus where he deals with the very issue of the mode of unity of the henads, or Gods, as contrasted to that of forms. In a passage from his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, Proclus explains that:

all the henads are in each other and are united with each other, and their unity is far greater than the community and sameness among beings. In these too there is compounding of forms, and likeness and friendship and participation in one another; but the unity of these former entities, inasmuch as it is a unity of henads, is far more uniform and ineffable and unsurpassable; for they are all in all of them, which is not the case with the forms. These are participated in by each other, but they are not all in all. And yet, in spite of this degree of unity in that realm, how marvelous and unmixed is their purity, and the individuality of

each of them is a much more perfect thing than the difference of the forms, preserving as it does unmixed all the divine entities and their proper powers distinct [...]⁵

In this passage there is nothing whatsoever about the One Itself; rather, it is a question of a straightforward contrast between *henads* and *forms* or, more simply, *beings*. The text lays out a series of contrasting characteristics. The henads are *all in all* or *all in each*, in which lies their “unity” (*henôsis*). Note that this unity is not a matter of their union *with or in the One*, but the presence of all the henads *in each other*. The “unity” of the henads thus [87] conceived far exceeds that which beings possess by virtue of the corresponding phenomena among them, namely community, sameness, compounding of forms, likeness, friendship, and participation in one another. Participation in one another, in particular, is mentioned twice, and thus makes the clearest contrast to the all-in-all of the

⁵ *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. J. M. Dillon and G. R. Morrow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) (henceforth *IP*; translations occasionally modified) 1048. 11-26. (References are to the pagination in *In Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. V. Cousin. (Paris: Durand, 1864; Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1961)), except for those followed by ‘K,’ which refer to the Latin portion, as in Dillon & Morrow.)

henads. So far, it would seem as if what is at stake here is a difference in the degree to which entities are united *with each other*, with the various relationships mentioned as existing among beings serving to unite beings with each other to a lesser degree than the degree to which the henads are united with each other. “Unity” then would be a matter of the reduction of difference to sameness. But then Proclus proceeds to contrast the purity and individuality – *idiotês* – of the henads to the difference – *heterotês* – of the forms. It cannot be a matter, then, of entities simply becoming more united with each other, and hence less differentiated from each other, as we ascend to the One Itself. A henad is both more united to the other henads than a being is to other beings, *but also more distinct from the other henads than a being is from other beings*. There are only two options: Proclus is either simply positing an irrational coincidence of opposites, or propounding a philosophical doctrine of more subtlety than has hitherto been appreciated. That he intends what he says here to bear philosophical weight is indicated by his remarks a page later:

So much, then, may be said concerning the situation of the primal henads and their communion with and distinction from one another, of which we are wont to call the one individuality

[*idiotêta*], the other unity [*henôsin*], distinguishing them thus also by name from the sameness and difference manifested at the level of Real Being.⁶

The attempt to establish technical terminology respecting the difference in question hardly seems consistent with an appeal to a coincidence of opposites beyond our rational powers. Let us try then to better understand what Proclus means by the contrast he draws here.⁷

⁶ *IP* 1049

⁷ A. C. Lloyd's "Procession and Division in Proclus," (1982) offers a contrasting interpretation of *IP* 1048. Lloyd sees no more in the passage than that the henads are described "in effect, as having all the positive and formal properties of forms but to a greater degree" (36). But in fact Proclus lays out in this passage a series of specific characteristics with respect to which henadic existence differs fundamentally from the mode of existence of the forms. The henadic characteristics are juxtaposed with the corresponding formal characteristics to *contrast* them, not to posit a difference of degree, as is shown by the fact that Proclus seeks to develop a distinct and parallel terminology to refer to the henadic characteristics. That there is a correspondence, a parallelism, is a result of the fact that formal being is ultimately a *product*, an *effect* of henadic existence. But since Lloyd presupposes that there is no real difference between the supra-essential and the ontic registers, he sees nothing in the contrast beyond hyperbole. This imputes to Proclus in too many places what amounts

[88] Among the characteristics attributed to beings in the passage cited above, the ones that stand out especially are sameness (*tautotês*), difference (*heterotês*), and participation in one another (*methexis*). These are the most frequently repeated characteristics, and also those with the clearest systematic functions in Proclus' thought. Proclus' remarks here, where he contrasts the all-in-all of the henads to the participation in each other of the forms, should be seen in the light of his rejection elsewhere of henads participating altogether, that is, not just in each other, but in *anything*. Proclus states in the *Elements of Theology*, for instance, that the Gods "have no attribute by participation, but all according to existence [*huparxis*] or implicit in their causality [*kat'aitian*]," (prop. 118)⁸ and in

to an empty verbosity and renders the henadology a doctrine without substance.

⁸ *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. E. R. Dodds, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) (henceforth cited by prop. #; translations occasionally modified). Dodds attempts to blunt the impact of the statement in prop. 118 that the Gods "have no attribute by participation" by making this an instance of "characters derived transversely from the monad by its co-ordinate *metechomena*," and traces this doctrine to prop. 19 (263). But the latter proposition merely refers to two different kinds of participation, one "primitive" and one "transient," and never implies that the former might be regarded as no participation at all. Dodds wishes to preserve an account of the relation between the One and the henads which would be "exactly parallel to that which subsists between intelligences and the

his *Timaean* commentary that “every God is essentialized [*ousiôtai*] in being a God, or rather is supra-essentialized [*huperousiôtai*], but there is nothing which is participated by him; because the Gods are the most ancient and venerable of all things.”⁹ This passage is especially significant, for it explicitly states that the fact that the Gods possess a common characteristic *does not mean that they participate in something*, making a clear break with a basic axiom of Platonic ontology, namely that common characteristics belonging to coordinate entities are to be explained by reference to their common participation in some single principle of a higher order of being than they.

In Proclus, participation as such tends to be superseded by a more general relationship, that between a manifold (*plêthos*) or class (*taxis*) and its principle or monad, with its complementary concepts of procession from (*proôdos*) and reversion upon (*epistrophê*) the principle. The basic concepts are laid out in prop. 21 of the

Intelligence or between souls and the Soul” (270), but does not justify why the cases should be parallel, or why the parallel should be “exact” rather than holding in some respects and not in others. The One, after all, is of a nature fundamentally different from the ontic hypostases.

⁹ In *Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, 3 vols., ed. E. Diehl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-6; Reprint, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965) (henceforth *IT*; translations mine) I, 364

Elements, which states that “every class originates from a monad and proceeds to a coordinate [*sustoichon*] manifold, and the manifold of any class is carried back to one monad.” In the body of the proposition, we read that [89]

since ... in every class there is some common element, a continuity and identity in virtue of which some things are said to be coordinate [*homotagê*] and others not [*heterotagê*], it is apparent that the identical element is derived by the whole class from a single principle. Thus in each class or causal chain there exists a single monad prior to the manifold, which determines for the members of the class their unique relation [*hena logon*] to one another and to the whole.

Notice that the relationship of members of such an order to one another and to the whole is *mediated* by the monad, the monad being equivalent to a common *logos* uniting the members of the order. This principle of mediation, where beings relate to each other indirectly through a superior principle, can be generalized to the whole of Being. In the *Parmenides* commentary we read that just as “there must exist ... prior to all beings the

Monad of Being, through which all beings *qua* beings are ordered with respect to one another,” so “we seek to know of them, in so far as they are beings, what sort of monad they have which embraces and unifies them.”¹⁰ And again, “all beings are actually from a single monad which is and is called primarily Being, by which they are and are named beings according to their respective classes [*taxin*]; and from this monad all beings are sympathetic with one another and are in a sense identical, as being from the One Being”; indeed, “all things, insofar as they participate in the One Being, are in a sense the same as one another and one.” Ontology, therefore, is *monadology*. The application of the concept of the monad extends from the highest hypostases to the individuals under *infima species*.¹¹ Common to these various usages of ‘monad’ is the idea of some common *logos* in a manifold, with the degree to which we are entitled to hypostatize

¹⁰ IP 703f

¹¹ The most specific Ideas are those “that are participated by individuals, such as Man, Dog, and others of the sort. Their ‘makings’ have as their immediate result the generation of individual unities [*tas en tois atomois monadas*] – Man of individual men, Dog of particular dogs, and Horse and each of the rest in like manner” (IP 735). Similarly at IP 752 “monad” is used to refer to “the many separate individuals” under some Idea, e.g., “the infinity of existing men” under the Idea of Man.

that *logos* being variable, for the monad itself carries only a minimum of ontological commitment. The monad expresses *formal unity*. Formal unity determines a being as some kind of being, while at the same time affirming the unity of beings with the whole of Being, their identity in and with Being through the very nature of form. As such, the formal unity possessed by beings undercuts their unity in the sense of individuality or uniqueness on account of the holistic system into which they are folded by the very structures from which they derive determinacy. We read in prop. 66 that “every being is related to every other either as a whole or as a part or by sameness or by difference.” We can see this as an axiom of the universality of mediation with respect to beings: the part mediated by the whole; identical [90] things mediated by that quality with respect to which the two are identical, or with respect to which one thing is self-identical; different things mediated, likewise, by that quality in respect to which they differ; and finally, the whole itself mediated by the parts.¹²

The Gods, however, are explicitly non-relational. The *Elements* states that the henads

¹² Even the “whole-before-the-parts” (prop. 67), that is, “the whole in its cause” or “the form of each thing ... pre-existing in the cause,” is still “a whole of parts” albeit prior to them (prop. 73).

transcend relation on account of their “purity” (*amigês*),¹³ which derives from the “simplicity” and “self-sufficiency” of the Gods.¹⁴ Deities are “perfectly unitary,” *heniaios*, and as such are “wholly self-sufficient ... perfect simplicity is the character of deity. Being a pure excellence, deity needs nothing extraneous; being unitary, it is not dependent upon its own elements.” The quality of being unitary, then, is a matter of the integrity and autonomy of an individual. *Heniaios* is the technical term in Proclus for the type of unity possessed by supra-essentials, contrasting with the term *hênômenos*, or ‘unified’, which applies strictly to beings. Prior to Proclus the term *heniaios* usually simply characterizes a unifying agent.¹⁵ Notably, however, the term *heniaios* is used in the plural by Iamblichus¹⁶ to explain that any multiplicity brought together according to summation (*sôreia*) or herding

¹³ Prop. 126

¹⁴ Prop. 127

¹⁵ “Unitary *Logos*” is for Aristides Quintilianus (*De Musica* I 3. 9) an epithet of the demiurge, where “unitary” is glossed as “making the many and diverse beings to rest by indissoluble bonds in one comprehension”; similarly Iamblichus, *De Myst.* VIII 3. 265. 6, which reports an ostensibly Egyptian doctrine respecting a “supreme unitary cause of all things” which “masters” the “indeterminate nature” (*tês aoristou phuseôs*) as or in conjunction with “a certain determinate measure” (*tinos hôrismenou metrou*).

¹⁶ *In Nic. Arithm.* 81. 15

together (*sunagelasmos*) can be discriminated (*diakrinai*) into *heniaia*. *Heniaia* are thus integral individuals whose assemblage into a common body is adventitious in relation to their own individuality. Entities determined by their relations, on the other hand, lose their autonomy to the degree that those relations come to be objective.

For instance, “[e]very God,” Proclus explains in the *Elements*, “is above Being, above Life, and above Intellect,” the three major ontic hypostases, inasmuch as “these three, though mutually distinct, are each implicit in the other two.”¹⁷ Here again, we see the ubiquity of holism and mediation among beings, and that this is in some way the very thing which makes Gods profoundly different from beings. This comes up again in a discussion contrasting the status of relations in the ontic and supra-essential realms in [91] the *Parmenides* commentary.¹⁸ This discussion turns on the use of the terms “for itself” and “for another.” The intelligible, he explains, is “for itself” and the Intellect is “for itself,” but “through this very relation the Intellect is united with the intelligible and the intelligible with the Intellect, and the Intellect and the intelligible are one

¹⁷ Prop. 115

¹⁸ *IP* 936

thing.” The very “for itself,” then, of ontic hypostases like Intellect and Being, serves ultimately to *unite* them, since in their very nature they co-posit each other. They are, we might say, *diacritically determined*. Proclus goes on, however, to speak of a higher degree of existence “for itself,” which is present among the Gods. He uses, as an example, the relationship of *being a father*: among beings a father, since he possesses the essentially relational attribute of father, is therefore purely “for another”; but among the Gods, by contrast, a “paternal cause” is first “for itself,” as, indeed, is any offspring. Proclus states that when conceiving the Gods we must place prior, “even to ... self-identity the existence [*huparxin*] of each in itself; for each exists primarily ‘for itself,’ and in itself is united to the rest ... Such an entity ... then, is non-relational, though productive of a relation.” Proclus repeats the same doctrine later,¹⁹ explaining that “the paternal and maternal faculties,” are present among the Gods not as “mere relationships” but rather as “generative powers.” The Gods have relationships among each other, but unlike beings, a God is “for itself” <*sic*> prior to these relationships, which are present incipiently as that deity’s “powers.” Proclus contrasts the powers of the Gods and their *huparxeis*, or

¹⁹ IP 942

“existences.”²⁰ *Huparxis*, which we have already encountered, e.g., in the discussion of *ET* prop. 118, is a technical term establishing the henads as prior to Being Itself and to the opposition of Being and Non-Being.²¹ Prior to the general opposition of *huparxis* to Being, however, is the opposition between considering the Gods with respect to their *huparxeis* and with respect to their *dunameis*. At *IP* 1128, for instance, intellectual shapes “are knowable and expressible as pertaining to the powers of the Gods, not to their existences [*tais huparxessin autais*], in virtue of which they possess the characteristic of being Gods.” The “powers” of the Gods are also mentioned in the following passage from the *Platonic Theology*: “We must never think therefore that all power is the progeny of essence. For the powers of the Gods are supra-essential, and are consubstant with the henads themselves of the Gods. And through this power the Gods are generative of beings.”²² The “powers” of the Gods are, like the Gods [92] themselves, supra-essential, but it is through their powers that the Gods are “generative of beings.” The opposition between

²⁰ E.g. at *IP* 1128

²¹ For the history of the term *huparxis* in Neoplatonism, see *Hyparxis e Hypostasis nel Neoplatonismo* ed. F. Romano and D. P. Taormina (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994).

²² *PT* III 24. 164-5

huparxis and *dunamis* is thus the locus for the opposition between the supra-essential and ontic domains. For not only are the Gods generative of beings through their powers, but it is by virtue of their powers that they themselves can be grasped like beings and treated ontologically – grouped into functional classes, for instance.

The notion of relations as somehow emergent from the non-relational state of the henads comes up in the *Parmenides* commentary when Proclus considers the applicability of the notion of difference to the relationship between the One and the Many (*polla*), the context being the affirmation at *Parm.* 139e that “the One cannot be other than, or the same as, either itself or another,” that is, the negation of identity and difference with respect to the One.²³ Proclus explains that despite their transcendence of difference (*heterotês*) as such, there is still differentiation among the Gods.

[T]he Many *qua* different are necessarily also in all ways ‘other’ [*alla*], but are not *different than* the One. For as he himself has declared, what is ‘different’ [*heteron*] is different *than another*; and so, even if

²³ This negation corresponds positively to the third order of the intellectual Gods.

they should be called ‘others’ [*alla*] and different than the One, one would not say it in the sense that they have made a procession from it by means of Difference ... let us grant that there is a declination [*huphesis*] from the One to these; but not every declination is the product of Difference, but only that declination which is in the realm of the forms.²⁴

Proclus goes on to explain that “the others than the One” will be called “different than the One insofar as by becoming *other than each other*, they are separated from the One, which absolutely rejects the title of reciprocal otherness [*tên allêlôn prosêgorian*].” And so “in the supra-essential realm,” that is, the realm of the henads, “instead of the difference of superior forms from inferior, we must postulate transcendence [*hyperochên*], instead of that of inferior from superior, declination [*huphesin*], and in place of the distinction [*diakriseôs*] of coordinates [*homostoichôn*] from each other, individual peculiarity [*idiotêta*].” The “Many” of the present passage are thus evidently the henads, whose individuality – note the use of *idiotês*, which was introduced as a technical term in *IP* 1049 – is

²⁴ *IP* 1190

contrasted with the “reciprocal otherness” of the forms, “the distinction of coordinates from each other,” that is, the other *than*-ness or determinate difference of beings that are coordinate, i.e., can be assigned to a common order or reduced to common “elements” (*stoicheia*).

The Many (that is, the henads) are “other” (*allos*) in relation to the One, but not different (*heteros*) than the One. This would seem to be nonsense if it were not for the explanation that what comes to be other *than* or different [93] *from* the One, does so through coming to be other than its coordinates. That is, when determinate relation amongst coordinate entities arises, so too does a determinate relationship arise between them and their principle, ultimately the One. The different position relative to the One of the henads and the forms is therefore a matter of the emergence, with the forms, of mediating relationships, namely the four ontic relations of whole and part, identity and difference. Simultaneously to these, a relationship emerges between the forms and the One, where no relationship seems to exist between the One and the henads. The term *allos* refers to this looser, generic “differentiation.”

Note that whereas, for the relationship among the forms of reciprocal otherness or the distinction of coordinates, Proclus simply substitutes the *idiotês*, the individual peculiarity,

of the henads, he substitutes for the *single* vertical relationship between the superior and the inferior among the forms the *two* complementary notions of transcendence and declination in the supra-essentials. These notions are not important in themselves. What matters, rather, is the strategy of breaking up the single relation into two, because of the way it forecloses mediation. Rather than a single substantial relation mediating two henads – *and hence uniting them in some third* – the relationship exists as a potential in each of the members. This potential is actualized and *becomes* a substantial relationship, a third, when the hypostasis of intellect is fully constituted and the necessary structures of identity and difference have been constituted by divine activity. The special importance of the hierarchical relationship, the reason why it is singled out here, is because were the relations of subordination between more “universal” and more “specific” henads to be granted the status such relations possess among forms, then the more “universal” henads would be *more* henadic than the more “specific” ones. But there are not degrees among the Gods. Proclus is quite clear that even an infra-intellectual God is still altogether a henad and supra-essential.²⁵

²⁵ The assimilative Gods (constitutive of the form of Likeness, that is, of assimilating participants to the forms

Here we see the formal structure distinguishing ontic multiplicities from the manifold of the henads. Coordinate terms, terms subsumed under a single class, are *other than* one another, that is, they are reciprocally or *diacritically* distinguished, which implies mediation. The Gods transcend relation and mediation. But how can this be if they are subject to the rules governing the relationships between monads and their manifolds in prop. 21? The question is, in what sense do the henads proceed from the One at all?

[94] According to the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, the One neither is, nor is one; and Proclus further specifies that the One is neither a cause or a producer; the various modes of causality – the “about which,” the “on account of which” and the “from which” – are all said by him to subsist in and through the intelligible order of Gods.²⁶ In accord with this, Francesco Romano has noted a propensity throughout Proclus’ work to use the term *aitia*

they participate) are “according to their *hyperxeis*, beyond essence and multiplicity; but according to the participations of them which receive the illumination of a procession of this kind, they are called assimilative” (PT VI 16. 79. 7-10)

²⁶ The various modes of causality are established in and through the intelligible order of Gods. PT II 9. 57. 21-4; 59. 14-6, 24; 60. 26-8.

in reference to the One, as opposed to *aition*, seemingly in order to avoid the hypostatizing connotations of *to aition*.²⁷ This usage is already evident in the *Elements*, and so we should not accord more weight than is merited to the extension there of the structure of monad and manifold to the One and the henads. Indeed, according to prop. 21, a monad is simply that which “has the relative status of a principle [*archês echousa logon*].” In turn, an unparticipated principle “has the relative status of a monad [*monados echon logon*],” (prop. 23). The designation “monad” carries the minimum of ontological commitment. The key, then, is to understand which aspects of “monadicity” are appropriate to the relationship between the One and the henads and which are not.

Furthermore, there is no “decline” from the One to the henads. In the *Platonic Theology*, Proclus says that “if the Good is multiplied through weakness, the whole of things will proceed through a diminution [*huphesin*], rather than through a superabundance of goodness.”²⁸ In the passage cited above from the *Parmenides* commentary (IP 1190), Proclus contrasted the

²⁷ “L’Idée de Causalité dans la *Théologie Platonicienne* de Proclus” in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne: Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13-16 Mai 1998) en l’honneur de H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink*, eds. A. Ph. Segonds & C. M. Steel.

²⁸ PT II 7. 50. 20-2

mode of procession of the henads from the One to the “procession by difference” of the forms. At another point (IP 745) Proclus speaks of different modes of procession, contrasting that “by way of unity [*henôsin*]” and that “by way of identity [*tautotêta*].” Procession by way of unity belongs to the henads, “for there is no identity among them, nor specific likeness, but unity only,” while procession by way of identity belongs to “the indivisible substances, where that which proceeds is somehow the same as what it came from, for being all safeguarded and held together by eternity, they manifest in a sense the identity of part to whole.” The “procession by identity” of this passage is evidently the same as the “procession by difference” of 1190, since identity and difference share the same formal structure. Beings proceed by identity, because to *be* is on some level to be identical, as a part of Being, with the whole of Being. All that *is*, is the same as Being because every being is, and is one – a monad of some sort and an *hênômenon*, a unified entity, just like Being Itself. Being is one and many, identical and different, like all the beings themselves, for Being accepts all the determinations the One rejects in the [95] First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.

The henads are the sole exemplars of procession “by way of unity,” which is discussed at PT III 3. 11f. After having laid out a

line of reasoning essentially the same as that of prop. 28 of the *Elements*, namely that “[e]very producing cause brings into existence things like to itself before the unlike,” he concludes that

if every other cause constitutes a progeny similar to itself prior to that which is dissimilar, much more must the One reveal after this manner things posterior to itself, since it is beyond likeness, so the One Itself must produce according to *unity* [*kat’ henôsin*] things which primarily proceed from it.

The One is thus said to produce the “unitary manifold” (*plêthos heniaion*) of the henads “unitarily” (*heniaiôs*). This manifold consists of “self-perfect [*autoteleis*] henads most cognate to their producer [*tô paragonti suggenesteras*]” and is “connascent [*sumphuomenos*] with the One, uniform [*benoeidês*], ineffable, supra-essential, and perfectly similar to its cause.” This perfect similarity is such that no “intrusion of difference separate[s] from the generator the things begotten, and transfer[s] them into a different class.” The “cause of all things,” we read, “has established about itself a divine set, and has united it to its own simplicity.”

To think the henads as caused at all, then, we must imagine the difference between producer and product as approaching zero, with no difference to separate them from their principle, lest they lack the very unity – that is, individuality, integrity, and simplicity *each in itself* – that is the very characteristic imparted them by the One. They would fall short in their unity were the One to be set over and above them. This is what makes the set, or *arithmos*, of the henads “ineffable”: the character of ineffability refers to the impossibility of drawing the inferences in respect to this series which would apply to any other manifold. From a discussion in the second book of the *Platonic Theology* we may gain insight into how the causal economy is sublated in the relationship between the One and the henads:

it is necessary that every thing which is produced with reference to, and on account of it [viz. “the cause of all beings”], should have a certain relation [*schesis*] with it, and through this also, a likeness to it. For every relation of one thing towards another, is predicated in a twofold respect, either from both participating one thing, which affords to the participants a communion with each other; or from one of them participating the other ... Hence it is

necessary ... either that there should be a certain third thing the cause of the relation, or that the principle should impart to the natures posterior to itself a tendency to itself, and that desire through which everything is preserved and exists. (*PT* II 3. 23f)

The reference to a “third thing” puts us in mind of the problematic of the “Third Man.” To avoid an infinite regress of relations and causes of relations, [96] the first series must relate to its cause through a desire which does not cause us to posit any likeness or relation to anything different, but rather a desire for *self*. This is evident simply from the nature of the characteristic imparted by the One. The One or the Good is *sôstikon bekastou*, that which “conserves and holds together the being of each several thing,” (*ET* prop. 13). Desire of the One, therefore, is desire as self-production, inasmuch as in desiring the One/Good, entities desire their individual integrity. In the *Parmenides* commentary (*IP* 54K), Proclus speaks of “a natural striving after the One” in everything: “What else is the One in ourselves except the operation and energy of this striving? It is therefore this interior understanding of unity, which is a projection and as it were an expression of the One in ourselves, that we call ‘the One.’” Again, “we should rather say that it is

not the One that we call ‘one’ when we use this name, but the understanding of unity which is in ourselves” (ibid). This striving is aptly referred to elsewhere by him (*PT* II 8. 56. 25-6) as a “desire for the unknowable nature and the source of the Good.” Desire of the One is desire as self-production. In desiring the One or Good, entities desire their individual integrity. If for beings the guarantor of this integrity is their form, then it is through the mediation of the form that the being desires itself, and constitutes itself through reversion upon its form. This means that for beings, the desire-for-self leads to the sublation of the self as narrowly conceived. For any being *qua* being, reversion upon its form will disclose that the given being is mediated by the whole of Being.²⁹

²⁹ The caveat is that beings participate, not only in ontic classes, but also in divine series; and beings participate in the latter apparently *as individuals* rather than as instantiating forms. Two modes of reversion are thus possible for individual beings: one by way of form, which is mediated by the whole of Being, the other by way of theurgy and reversion upon the (individual) tutelary deity (on which see *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition: A Study in Post-Plotinian Neoplatonism* by Andrew Smith (The Hague, 1974)). Cf. *IT* I, 212, which explains that “it is necessary to observe a stable order in the performance of divine works,” so that, preserving “segregation from every other pursuit,” and thus “becoming *alone*, we may associate with *solitary deity*, and not endeavor to conjoin ourselves

For the henad, however, there is, existentially, only itself. For we read in the “Ten Doubts” essay that

[t]he One and the Good exists in three ways: according to cause, and this is the first principle; for if this is the good and is it through itself, it is inasmuch as it is cause of all goods and all henads; or according to existence, and this is each God, since each of them is one and good existentially; or according to participation, and this is what there is of unity and goodness in substances.³⁰

with multitude to the One. For he who attempts this effects the very opposite, and separates himself from the Gods.” This passage illustrates nicely the way that the language of unity and multiplicity so important in Platonism generally is deployed by Proclus in a manner never conflicting with his polytheism; for here the integrity of the individual worshiper approximates them to the supra-essential individuality of the chosen deity.

³⁰ *Decem Dubitationes* X. 63. *Existentiam*, *Existens* render *huparxis* in this passage according to Carlos Steel, “*Huparxis* chez Proclus” in *Hyparxis e Hypostasis nel Neoplatonismo* ed. F. Romano & D. P. Taormina (Leo S. Olschki Editore: Firenze, 1994) p. 94. The correspondence is, at any rate, evident from the parallel structure of *ET* prop. 65.

[97] This corresponds to prop. 65 of the *Elements*, which states that “all that subsists in any fashion is either according to cause [*kat’aitian*] in the mode of a principle, or according to existence [*huparxis*] or according to participation in the mode of an image.” But the interesting thing about the way in which the axiom is applied in the passage from “Ten Doubts” is that usually when Proclus speaks of something subsisting *kat’aitian* it is a matter of seeing “the product as pre-existent in the producer” (prop. 65), as when we would speak of Intellect subsisting in Being *kat’aitian*. But here, the subsistence of the One Itself *kat’aitian* actually posits it in things which ostensibly are *from* it, namely “all goods and all henads.” And yet *this* is the One and the Good as “first principle.” Where it is a matter of the subsistence of the One and the Good *kath’huparxin*, which is generally where “we contemplate each thing in its own station [*kata tên heautou taxin*], neither in its cause nor in its resultant” (prop. 65), the One and the Good exists *as each God*.

The One then, when contemplated *in its own station*, is not an hypostatized One Itself, but *each God*. Proclus explains that the One as it exists in the Gods is self-sufficient, not like something existing in a substratum, that the One “*truly is*,” as it is among them, whereas in beings

it exists “as a character in something.”³¹ The point of such passages cannot be that the One exists among the Gods as something separate from them. But neither can the point be to fold the Gods into the One. In the *Platonic Theology*, for instance,³² Proclus explains that by establishing the henads, neither each as one *only*, in the same manner as the One Itself, nor each as one *and many*, like Being, we not only preserve the transcendency of the first, but also ensure that “the henads proceeding from it are unconfused either with respect to themselves, or to the one principle of them.” But if the manifold of the henads was a whole, rather than a unitary set in which all are in each, the henads would precisely *not* be unconfused with respect to each other, nor to the One Itself, for the henads would be contained in the One as effects in their cause, at once spoiling the transcendency of the First Principle and subverting the autonomy of the Gods. The transcendency and efficacy of the First Principle lies precisely in the fact that it does not subordinate the manifold of the Gods. Proclus refers to the henadic manifold as “the totality of the divine set [*pas te theios arithmos*], in virtue of which is the being, or rather pre-being

³¹ *IP* 641f

³² *PT* III 4. 123-4

[*proeinaí*], of the Gods.”³³ The “pre-being” of the Gods is here secured, not as one might expect, by reference to the One, but to the totality (not wholeness, but totality) of the *arithmos*, or “set,” itself; it is as [98] much as to say that the Gods possess their Godhood from themselves. Hence he calls it, when being strict, an *arithmos* rather than a *plêthos*, for *plêthos* is a notion arising at a distinct moment in the procession of Being, namely in the intelligible-and-intellectual order, where the negations of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* begin. Here multiplicity (*plêthos*) emerges in opposition to and conjunction with unity. In this way Proclus can say that “a multiplicity of henads is discernible first in the first rank of the intelligible-and-intellectual,”³⁴ that is, a multiplicity *that is unified*.

The results of this investigation of the primary texts could be synthesized as follows. In the “production” of the henads from the One the economy of causal procession breaks down because the One ultimately represents each God’s uniqueness and absolute individuality. The One would sacrifice its own perfection were it to subsist as something over and above the Gods, lest each God be less one; hence the ultimate consequence of pursuing

³³ *IP* 1212

³⁴ *IP* 1091

the concept of unity to its radical conclusion is that a One over this manifold or subsuming it would impart to them a lesser degree of unity. Procession “by way of unity” is, in a real sense, not procession at all, if there is no One beyond the henads. Procession by unity is not a matter of the manifold of the henads vanishing into the One, as if the henads were but “aspects,” “adumbrations” or “perspectives” of the One. The One is not one, and its purpose is not the subordination of multiplicity. The characteristic the henads possess in common is none other than irreducible uniqueness and individuality. This uniqueness and individuality is not negative, a function of each henad’s *difference* or *discernibility* from every other, but *positive*. This positive individuality, manifest especially in the proper name borne by each God, which denies the One as something that could subordinate the multiplicity of Gods to it, is in fact how the One “truly is.” The presence of all the henads in each grounds the henadic manifold as a set of absolute individuals, inasmuch as that which has no other outside it, which has its other in itself, is more *individual* than that which confronts an other through difference. In accord, then, with the conclusion of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* that the One neither *is*, nor is *one*, we should say that the One *is* as each henad, each God, rather than as the hypostatized entity that, for our own convenience, to be able to refer to divine

activity in generic fashion, we refer to as “the One Itself.” There is *no such thing* as the One Itself, if we mean something *different* than the henads; Godhood is nothing but the Gods themselves. In this way the One is clearly and unequivocally distinguished from the One-that-is, the Monad of Being, which subsists itself as something unified.³⁵

[99] The above account, while it may seem provocative, is grounded ultimately in motives which should be regarded as modest. First, Proclus should be approached as a systematic thinker, until the impracticability of such an approach presents itself; thus it should be legitimate to use the texts of Proclus to illuminate one another. Second, the principle of hermeneutic charity should guide us in our reading of Proclus, requiring us not to attribute open contradictions, empty rhetoric, or willful paradox to texts where a more fruitful meaning

³⁵ Being is referred to at *PT* III 9. 40 as “not only standing in the One, but receiving a multitude [*plêthos*] of henads and powers which are mingled into one essence [*ousian*]” (4-8). Notice how the unity of the henads only comes about through a “mingling” posterior to their *huparxis*. It is this mingling that produces the decline in Being; not the existence of many Gods, but their coalescence in and through the Intellect. For the Gods are only finally “mingled” into one essence, and Being itself fully constituted, in the hypostasis of Intellect, that is, in a single formal regime.

can be found. I would argue that this principle in itself, even absent other considerations, legitimates juxtaposing the *negativity* of the One with the *positive* pluralism of the henadology in order to save the former from obscurity and the latter from triviality. Thirdly, to see in the resulting system an expression of Proclus' polytheism is simply to entertain a reading of his system in which the religious interest he constantly expresses and regards as essential to his philosophical enterprise is seen not as adventitious but as organic and, indeed, as having been a stimulus toward a novel set of approaches to classic philosophical problems. It is past time for a more balanced approach in the literature, and not only in the case of Proclus. Moreover, the literature does not lack for overtly monotheizing readings of Proclus, despite the violence this does both to Proclus' own attested piety for the traditional Gods of his own and other nations, as well as to the systematic negativity of the One. Pantheistic readings are no less violent, although they are at least more cognizant of the risk of hypostatizing the One even in the context of a "negative theology".³⁶ The intrinsic value the polytheist accords to the distinct identities and autonomy

³⁶ See, e.g., Trouillard's comments in *La mystagogie de Proclus* on the danger "à faire du silence une contre-expression, de la nuit un secret et du néant une substance mystérieuse" (94).

of the individual Gods acts, by contrast, as a bulwark against illicit hypostatization of the One.

In closing, I would like to review certain antecedents of this reading in the literature. Whittaker remarks on “an element of explicit pluralism in his [Proclus] doctrine,” (302) and that “Proclus seeks the cause of plurality in things at a higher stage than the intelligible world ... Before being and mind are produced, the One acts as it were through many points of origin,” (173). Whittaker recognizes the problem, however, with asserting that the One “acts” *per se*, asking

what is the meaning of ‘creation’ by the One? It means, for both philosophers [Plotinus and Proclus], essentially this: that without unity in and over the system of things there [100] would be no particular existence as an actually realized thing. It does not mean that abstract unity, without the latent existence of a many as it were in its own right, calls it from nothing into being. (235f)

The notion of latency, of course, is equally impracticable in regard to the One:

For a real understanding of their [the Neoplatonists'] position, however, we must equally avoid attributing to them the ideas of volitional creation and of 'pantheistic absorption.' The many are never finally absorbed into the One; and therefore, on Neoplatonic principles, there was never a time when they did not in some sense exist as a many. On this, Proclus is more explicit than Plotinus. (236)

Whittaker takes notable care with respect to the doctrine of the henads. In an area which is prone to misunderstanding, for instance, he recognizes (175f) that henads participated in by lower ontic hypostases are no less *henads* than those participated by higher ones; and with respect to the distinction between henads and monads, he sees the monad as "the unity of a group," and does not conflate monads and henads (251). As far as he went, Whittaker thus laid out a promising path for research.

Among more recent commentators on the henads, the most promising contributions have been made, not by those focusing squarely on the metaphysics of the henads, but those such as L. H. Grondijs, Andrew Smith and Christian Guérard, whose interest lies in the

consequences of the henadology for individuals at the *bottom* of the Neoplatonic hierarchy. Here, it seems, it has been perceived that there is a stake in recognizing really distinct properties in the supra-essential domain. Andrew Smith, in his study of theurgy in *Porphry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition: A Study in Post-Plotinian Neoplatonism*,³⁷ discusses the henads with respect to their connection to theurgy and the concept of the *sunthêmata*, calling attention to a series of passages from Olympiodorus which he correlates with passages in Proclus and which distinguish theurgic virtues as *heniaiai* or “unitary” by contrast with the ontic virtues which are “substantial” or “substantifying,” *ousiôdeis*, and as possessing *huparxis* in contrast to the *ousia* of the ontic virtues. The distinction between the regimes of *sunthêmata* and of Forms manifests itself in the different structure Iamblichus accords to the *epitédeiotês*, or “suitability,” for participation in forms as compared to the suitability to participate in *sunthêmata*. As Smith points out, “the continuity of Neoplatonic ontological procession seems to break down here,” (127) inasmuch as the normal order of reversion up the hierarchy of ontic hypostases “has been, as it were, bypassed and a more direct mode of contact with the divine created” (126). Smith explains that [101]

³⁷ The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974

Iamblichus' *epitédeiotês* for divine mantic is over and above normal *epitédeiotês* for form. Proclus distinguishes *sunthêma* and Form. This seems to imply that the divine channel which aids in ascent is different from the ontological procession of Form. On a broader basis Proclus distinguishes henads and *ta noêta*. The henads in their manifestation at different levels are independent of the *noêta* or Forms. Thus theurgy which works through the henads leads to a divorce of the spiritual ascent from the contemplation of Forms. (127 n. 7)

Smith recognizes, further, that the activity of the supra-essential realm with respect to beings is to impart a unity which is to be understood as *idiotês*, that is, individual peculiarity. This is already implicit from the very notion of the *sunthêma*, which is often not just a particular type of being but a particular "divinized" individual. Even if the *sunthêma* is a type of being – say, a particular species of herb or stone – its significance to the theurgic ritual lies not in its position in the ontic hierarchy, but its relation to certain myths and the attributes of particular deities. Putting together the pieces in a manner that Smith does not, inasmuch as the

metaphysics of the henads is not his chief concern, one could conclude that the unity corresponding to the One and conferred by it is also a generically distinct mode of unity, that is, individuality.

“La théorie des hénades et la mystique de Proclus,” by Christian Guérard (*Dionysius* 6, 1982) begins from the aspiration to recover the unity of the theological and systematic functions of the doctrine of the henads, and the things Guérard says about the relationship between the One and the henads, albeit brief, are much in harmony with the present essay. Guérard’s reading follows in the footsteps of Trouillard, who recognized in the negativity of the One Itself an opportunity for a positive pluralism; but Trouillard, for his own part and in accord with the general motivations of the “mystical” school, evinces no interest in the henadology, conflating henads and monads, in no way distinguishing the supra-essential and ontic modes of unity, and effacing any polythistic aspect of the doctrine or identification of the henads with the pagan Gods.³⁸ Trouillard speaks of “polycentric procession” in Proclus, a term which would be admirably applicable to the henads,³⁹ but means

³⁸ See *La mystagogie de Proclus*, especially chap. 6.

³⁹ Compare Diana Eck’s characterization of Hinduism as “radically polytheistic” inasmuch as it is “polycentric”

nothing more by it than the venerable axiom (already of hoary antiquity for Iamblichus), “all things are in all things, but each according to its proper nature,” (e.g., *ET* prop. 103).⁴⁰ Guérard, although identifying with Trouillard’s [102] tradition, seeks to restore the henads to the system. The first proposition of the *Elements of Theology*, he stresses, is not to be interpreted as saying that the henads participate the One; instead, in accord with the choices already made by translators Trouillard and Dodds alike, as he puts it, “il ne faut en effet pas mettre de majuscule à cet un général [i.e. the *to hen* of the first three propositions] qui n’est pas l’Un,” (n. 21 p. 76). The importance of this point for Guérard is that

après l’Un sera nécessairement le nombre hénadique, qui, contrairement à la doctrine jambliquienne, n’est que la somme ‘uniée’ des Uns et non pas une hypostase individuelle. De la sorte, les êtres ne participeront pas à ce qui serait un unifié, mais bel et bien à des Uns. Dans une telle optique, il ne saurait être question d’un Un participé, ni de

(*Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 3rd ed. [New York: Columbia U Press, 1998] 22ff).

⁴⁰ *La mystagogie de Proclus* 111.

participation à un unifié. Il faut, au contraire, que la participation à l'un soit la participation à des Uns. (76)

Since Guérard's interest is primarily in the consequences of the henadology for beings, rather than in explicating the status of the henads themselves, he does little to draw out the implications of this doctrine of "Ones." And yet he suggests he is not unaware of the possibility of just such an interpretation as the present essay offers by his provocative remark that "[i]l convient de rappeler que, 'stricto sensu' chez Proclus, il n'y a pas d'hénologie, mais une hénadologie," (n. 26 p. 76). The first proposition of the *ET*, when it "énonce que tout participe obligatoirement à l'un ... signifie évidemment que tout participe à l'Un par les Hénades, et non que l'Un soit participé ou qu'il soit un," (77). In accord with the argument of the present essay, then, there really is no "One," there are only Ones, that is, the henads. Guérard says that the henads "ne sont donc pas des 'participants' à l'Un, mais de pures 'participations'," and that there are, besides them, only the "irradiated states of unity" of *ET* prop. 64, and that "Entre elles [the henads] et l'Un, il ne faut pas établir un rapport de methexis, mais de simple *proödos*," (78). The henads are thus preserved from losing their autonomy to an hypostatized One, but so too is the principle of irreducible individuality

itself preserved from the exigencies of ontic logic, theological and philosophical exigencies coinciding. Guérard calls the fact that “les Hénades sont autonomes et ne constituent pas un hypostase unifiée” their “horizontal” characteristic; he proceeds to analyze the significance of the “vertical” dimension of the henadology. I have commented (see n. 25 above) on the significance of the doctrine that the hierarchical manifestation of the henads as intelligible, intelligible-and-intellectual, intellectual and even infra-intellectual Gods does not make the members of these divine orders any less henads in their *huparxeis*. Guérard discerns the contrast between the henads’ polycentric existence and their hierarchical manifestation, which in turn grants to Being [103] its hierarchical nature, because of his interest in the anti-hierarchical implications of this contrast for beings. That there are orders of the Gods proceeding to the last orders of Being means that, as Guérard puts it, “la participation à l’un est participation aux Uns et non à l’unité de l’être qui précède” (79). That is, beings are divinized directly at each level, so that their opportunity for reversion does not arise exclusively from reversion upon all the hypostases lying between them and the First Principle on the ontic ladder. Guérard concludes by endorsing the comments of Trouillard, who opposed Bréhier’s characterization of the Proclean system as one

in which “chaque réalité reste à sa place, dans une hiérarchie figée,” by arguing for a tendency in Proclus which “porte à considérer tous les ordres, même les derniers, comme des rayons immédiatement issus du centre universel. Tous deviennent des modes, non pas égaux, mais directs de l’Un” (81).⁴¹ Indeed, as Guérard points out, “la primauté de l’un sur l’être prend ici tout son sens,” namely, from the polycentricity of the henads. In asserting that “l’idée de hiérarchie, fondamentale dans tout le platonisme, ne vaut plus ... par rapport aux dieux,” the henadology truly does represent something “révolutionnaire dans la pensée grecque classique.”

This “revolutionary” potential will, however, be easily squandered without a proper appreciation of the value of polytheism for the system. To speak as Guérard does of “modes of the One,” which would be harmless enough in itself were the understanding of the system on

⁴¹ This exchange between Bréhier and Trouillard should be read in the context of the conflict between “Hegelian” and “Bergsonian” strains in the French retrieval of Neoplatonism, as discussed by Hankey in *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France*. Perhaps as commentators learn to better appreciate the richness and complexity of Neoplatonic thought, rather than seeking relentlessly to streamline it, “Bergsonian” and “Hegelian” moments—and others too—will be found to be equally accommodated in the most systematic expressions, such as that of Proclus.

firmer ground, will otherwise tend inexorably to encourage less perspicuous commentators in hypostatizing the One and effacing the individuality and autonomy of the henads. An impulse to render the henads evanescent is already hinted at by Guérard's ambiguous characterization of the henads as "pure participations," as if the henads are, at last, merely the event of their participants.⁴² Beyond perpetuating the historical erasure of a subtle and profound polytheistic theology, the principles sustaining the coherence and viability of Proclus' system would thus be obscured, a system the grasp of which must be regarded as inherently endangered in a polemical environment failing to acknowledge the intrinsic value for Proclus of the Gods themselves.

⁴² Cf. Trouillard, *Mystagogie*: "Dieu n'existe pas comme Dieu sans théophanie" (110).

THE GODS AND BEING IN PROCLUS*¹

One of the most distinctive developments in late antique Platonism is the conception of a domain ‘beyond’ Being. The ‘supra-essential’ (*hyperousios*), however, is often treated by modern commentators on Neoplatonic thought as a mere annex of ontology. Thus, A. C. Lloyd sees in the supra-essential a structure identical to the structure of Being and argues that there is no reason to think of the class of supra-essential entities, namely the henads or Gods, as constituting “a kind of ‘alternative’ or ‘parallel’ system ... behaving differently from the rest of reality which is forms.”² Conceived in this way, the term “supra-essential” comes dangerously close to mere hyperbole; it does no work. In particular, this reading has difficulty in explaining the novelty of content on every plane of Being, which cannot simply represent an analysis or division of the concept of unity.

The fundamental flaw in this reading lies, the present essay shall argue, in its failure to

* This essay was originally published in *Dionysius* Vol. 26, 2008, pp. 93-114. Pagination for this publication appears in brackets.

¹ I am grateful to Wayne J. Hankey for his helpful comments and suggestions on this essay.

² A. C. Lloyd, “Procession and Division in Proclus” 35.

accord sufficient systematic weight to the henads, the only entities for whom the beyond of Being constitutes, so to speak, their native habitat. Any reading that underestimates the systematic function of the henads inherently runs the risk, as well, of hypostatizing the One Itself. Jean Trouillard, although having developed an henology striving above all to prevent the One appearing as one thing, a singular substance, or item of some kind, undermines his efforts by virtually effacing the henads when he says of them, “L’hénade n’est pas une entité, mais un passage, qui ne peut se définir que par ce qu’elle produit,”³ reducing them to “des puissances immédiates de l’Un.”⁴ On the one hand, it is hard to imagine the author of the first book of the *Platonic Theology* endorsing this conception of the Gods; on the other, it virtually renders the One a subject with potencies.

The question of according the henads their proper systematic function concerns the very meaning of negative henology. Is the point of denying unity, autarchy, causality, etc. to the One to exalt it, or rather that to predicate these of the principle of individuation is *incoherent*? Trouillard ends up [94] with a problem not

³ J. Trouillard, *La Mystagogie de Proclus* 201.

⁴ *L’Un et l’Âme selon Proclus* 95.

unlike those who would attempt to generate the procession of Being through division. Trouillard states of procession as a whole that “Son modèle est la dérivation que Proclus appelle *kath’hupobasin* (par marche dégressive), qui est la génération des parties par le tout, en précisant qu’il s’agit de parties totales que le tout contenait de façon indistincte.”⁵ But *hupobasis* is specifically rejected by Proclus as a model for the procession of Being as a whole: at *Plat. Theol.* II 7. 50. 20-2, for example, he denies that “the procession of the whole of things” takes place through “diminution [*huphesis*], rather than a superabundance of goodness.”⁶ *Huphesis* here is none other than the *hupobasis* of *In Parm.* 746 to which Trouillard refers, where it was defined as the production by a monad of things “as if from the entirety of their natures but *diminished* for particular instances, their specific character being preserved but becoming more partial in them,” like, e.g., intellects from Intellect. *Huphesis* is also the relationship between more “universal” and more “specific” henads, and therefore the “procession” from the One to the henads cannot be like that from, e.g., the intelligible to the intelligible-intellective Gods.

⁵ *Mystagogie* 112f.

⁶ *Théologie Platonicienne*. 6 vols. Ed. and trans. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-97. Translations mine.

But neither, Proclus explains, can the henads come about by *proödos*, that is, “by a change in essence, as in the case of the production of the procession of images from paradigms” (ibid),⁷ for this mode of causation does not even exist among intelligibles, much less supra-essentials: “the forms are called *paradigms* of beings, while Being is cause, and not paradigm, of all that comes after it; for paradigms are causes of things differentiated [*diêrêmenôn*] in their Being and which have essences characterized by difference [*diaphorou*]” (*Plat. Theol.* III. 52. 2-7). The henads cannot proceed from the One either by *hupobasis* or by *proödos*, for either of these imply some sort of *decline*, and there is no decline from the One to the henads. Indeed, if the One ‘declined’ from unity to multiplicity, we would need to posit some passive principle as responsible for this multiplication, and the very rigor of Proclus’ monism will not permit this.

This essay argues that only by recognizing the concrete individuality of the henads, not as logical counters, but as *unique individuals* and the

⁷ References to the *Parmenides* commentary are to the pagination in *In Platonis Parmenidem*. Ed. V. Cousin. Paris: Durand, 1864. Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1961, except when followed by a ‘K’, signifying pagination in Klibansky’s edition of the Latin portion; translations from *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*. Trans. J. M. Dillon and G. R. Morrow. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

real agents of the causality attributed to the One, can the true significance of procession in Proclus be grasped. On this interpretation, procession in the primary [95] sense is from one *mode of unity* to another: namely, from the polycentric manifold of autarchic individual henads to the monocentric unity of forms. Distinct organizations belong to the ontic and the supra-essential, and the ontic organization is emergent from the supra-essential through a dialectic immanent to the nature of the henads. The polycentric henadic organization, because it is an organization of unique individuals, is irreducible to ontology for the latter only treats of forms, that is, of universals. The independence of theology (that is, henadology) from ontology in Proclus is thus a matter of its *structural difference*.

This reading necessarily begins in recognizing that ontology in Proclus is underdetermined with respect to its content, which has been noted by a number of commentators, but not accounted for. Lowry, for instance, discerns “the tension between the logic and the content of the Procline philosophy,”⁸ and that in fact the logic of the *Elements of Theology* is “inadequate to its content.”⁹

⁸ J. M. P. Lowry, *The Logical Principles of Proclus' Stoicheiôsis Theologikê as Systematic Ground of the Cosmos* 85.

⁹ Ibid. 78.

The problem lies in the henads, their individuality and plurality: "Substantially, they do not differ—to one another they are indifferent. What then is it in their immanent principle which divides them? This ... is the question of wherein lies the productivity of the One."¹⁰ To find the solution, however, will require going beyond the boundaries of the geometrical structure of the *Elements*. Lloyd, for his part, acknowledges an irreducible "empirical element" which "is needed to complement the non-empirical philosophical system."

The two together constitute Neoplatonism. But the content of personal experience cannot be derived from the Neoplatonists' philosophical system. It is an unpredictable gift from their gods. Otherwise it would have been applied to the universal soul, and the hypostases would have been 'telescoped' to a degree unacceptable to orthodox Neoplatonists ... For the same reason, we can give no final reply about the uniqueness of particular humans. We know neither which angels, demons and heroes ascend to

¹⁰ Ibid. 77f.

the One nor how often. They write no books.¹¹

Lloyd displays here a tendency common in the literature, evident in Trouillard as well, to find the locus of the problem of uniqueness and individuality at the level of the individual *soul*, hence Lloyd imagines the empirical element in the system to be drawn from “personal experience”. Lowry, however, recognizes that the problem is ultimately and properly located rather at the level of the henads: individual souls are a synthesis of universality and individuality [96] inasmuch as they receive one nature from the forms and another from the Gods. Furthermore, the Gods may not write books, but Homer, Hesiod and other ‘theologians’ do; and for Proclus the mythology and iconography associated with the Gods originates directly from the Gods themselves.¹² Hence it is this *cultural* content which actually constitutes the “empirical element” in his system. The complement to philosophy in Proclus therefore is not so much phenomenological, as Lloyd posits, but hermeneutical.

¹¹ A. C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* 126.

¹² See, e.g., Proclus’ remarks on divine inspiration in his *Cratylus* commentary, §71, §87.

It was with respect to *sumbola* and *sunthêmata*, the ‘symbols’ and ‘tokens’ of theurgy, that the existence of an ‘alternative or parallel system’ criticized by Lloyd was first recognized, notably by Smith, who made his case on the narrow but secure basis of a small number of passages (in particular *Eclogae de philosophia chaldaica* V) that mostly concern the reversion of the soul according to symbols/tokens and forms respectively.¹³ What has not been appreciated in these parallel systems, however, is in just what they differ and the significance of this for the Neoplatonic metaphysics. Symbols and tokens, for all their richness of culturally-determined content, are, from an ontological—and hence necessarily *universal*—viewpoint, indifferent ciphers. Indeed, this is what caused some to label as ‘irrationalism’ the whole tradition of Neoplatonism beginning from Iamblichus. But what if this very transition from content to form actually expresses the nature of procession, and in a manner thoroughly rational?

The fundamental difference between *henadic* and *ontic* modes of unity is to be found in the two sorts of manifold constituted by

¹³ A. Smith, *Porphyrus's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition*. On the notion of the ‘parallel series’ see also E. P. Butler, “Offering to the Gods: A Neoplatonic Perspective.”

henads and beings/forms.¹⁴ The henads are *all in all*, whereas the forms *participate in* each other. These two structures, as permutations of the broad axiom stated in *El. Theol.* prop. 103, “All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature,”¹⁵ are routinely conflated by commentators, despite the fact that Proclus could not be clearer about *contrasting* them at *In Parm.* 1048. Lloyd, for example, states that “all in all” at *In Parm.* 1048 “means the relation which Plotinus found among the categories and which implied that motion is at rest, rest is in motion, being is at rest, in motion, other, and so on with all the categories,” (167).¹⁶ But this is clearly exactly the sort of relationship attributed to Being, Life and Intellect in *El. Theol.* prop 103 and categorically [97] *distinguished* from the “all in all” of the henads in prop. 115: Every God is above Being, Life and Intellect “for if these three, though mutually distinct, are each implicit in the other two,” by prop. 103, “then no one of them can be a pure unity, since each contains all.” The very manner in which forms are all in all categorically distinguishes their

¹⁴ On which see E. P. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold.”

¹⁵ *The Elements of Theology*. Ed. and trans. E. R. Dodds. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963. Translations generally modified.

¹⁶ Lloyd, *Anatomy* 167.

mode of existence from that of the Gods because each form *implies* the others. Each form is therefore *mediated* in its very being, whereas the all-in-all of the henads renders the individuality of each more robust: “the individuality of each of them [the henads] is a much more perfect thing than the otherness of the Forms,” (*In Parm.* 1048). This is the essential difference between a polycentric manifold and a holistic totality (what Neoplatonists sometimes refer to as a *plérôma*).¹⁷ What goes for the forms themselves applies *a fortiori* to their participants, who are mediated in their very being since they are what they are purely through something else.

The henadic and the ontic organizations do not simply rest in static opposition, however, since the latter arises from the former; this is the sense of procession. The fact that the Gods, though themselves supra-essential, are active *within* Being, means that there is an ontological as well as a strictly theological perspective on them. Proclus is well aware of this distinction between two ways of speaking of the Gods, as we read at *In Tim.* I, 303,¹⁸ where, in commenting

¹⁷ On the Neoplatonic notion of *plérôma*, see S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* 83-86.

¹⁸ *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*. 3 vols. Ed. E. Diehl. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-6. Reprint, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965. Translations mine.

on the passage from *Tim.* 28c which states that “[i]t is difficult to discover the maker and father of this universe, and when found, it is impossible to speak of him to all,” Proclus remarks that

someone may say, do we not assert many things about the demiurge, and about the other Gods, and even of the One Itself? To which we reply, we speak indeed *about* them [*peri autôn*], but we do not speak *of each of them him/herself* [*auto de hekaston*]. And we are able indeed to speak *scientifically* [*epistêmonikôs*] of them, but not *intellectually* [*noerôs*].

The distinction here is between, on the one hand, the familiar concept of *epistêmê*, which is always of the species or class, and on the other hand a *noêsis* of *particular* henads or Gods—i.e., with proper names. Indeed, one finds that Proclus when speaking ‘philosophically’ refers to *classes* (*taxeis* or *diakosmêseis*) of Gods, but quotes ‘theologians’ (e.g., Homer, Hesiod, ‘Orpheus’) for data about particular Gods as empirical evidence for the conclusions arrived at through philosophical dialectic.¹⁹ The

¹⁹ Bodéüs finds a similar pattern in Aristotle’s approach to theology, which “is for Aristotle, as for Plato, the business

possibility of treating of the Gods by [98] classes, 'taxonomically', as it were, rather than individually, allows the Gods to be treated 'scientifically', that is, ontologically.

This distinction of discursive registers has fostered misunderstandings of Proclus' theology due to the sharp difference between a text like the *Elements of Theology*, which contains the names of no particular Gods and speaks of henads only in universal terms,²⁰ and the

of the poets ..." (*Aristotle and the Theology of Living Immortals* 218): Aristotle "appeals to traditional opinion concerning the gods as a means of reasoning about his philosophical object, rather than using the study of this object so as to produce philosophical judgments about theological opinions," (ibid. 41).

²⁰ There are actually two axes of purely formal determinations of the henads in the *Elements*, the one corresponding to the monads of the ontic series (props. 161-5), the other consisting of the functional characteristics given in props. 151-8. Charles-Saget, I believe correctly, reads the latter classification as reflecting that by which "le divin ... garantissait ... la possibilité du système qui le dit" (*L'Architecture du divin* 250). Thus the classes of deities enunciated in props. 151-8 "renvoient bien à l'économie générale du système," (ibid. 251) and "présentent donc, sur le mode religieux, les axiomes du système proclien," which are: "qu'il y ait un principe," corresponding, we might say, to each deity prior to any classification; "qu'il y ait un engendrement à partir de ce principe," corresponding to the classification of deities as *gennêtikon*; "que tous les engendrés s'accomplissent selon leur perfection propre, accomplissant ainsi celle de l'ensemble par eux constitué,"

commentaries or the *Platonic Theology*, which substantiate the abstract doctrine with respect to the henads with a wealth of concrete material from (mostly Hellenic) ‘theologians’. Hence the structure set out for the *Platonic Theology* at *Plat. Theol.* I 9. 8-19 carefully distinguishes between (1) the doctrines concerning all the Gods in common, (2) the doctrines concerning “the universal classes [*holas taxeis*] of the Gods,” and (3) the particular Gods mentioned by name in Plato’s works, “in relation to the universal genera [*hola genē*] of the divine ranks [*tôn theiôn diakosmôn*].”

At *In Tim.* I, 364, Proclus states that “every God is essentialized [*ousiôtai*] in being a God, or rather is supra-essentialized [*hyperousiôtai*], but there is not anything which is participated by him/her, because the Gods are the most ancient and venerable of all things.” We cannot grasp the significance of rejecting a participatory relationship between the henads and the One, however, until we have recognized its *positive* corollary, namely, that the most appropriate way of conceiving of the first principle is as standing for *each God*, rather than for the class of Gods, as would be the case for an ordinary

corresponding to the classification of deities as *telesiourgon*; and “que cette perfection se maintienne pure de toute altération,” corresponding to the classification of deities as *phourêtikon* (ibid. 252).

monad. In this lies the distinction between the polycentric henadic manifold and any formal manifold. Thus *Decem Dubitationes* X. 63²¹ informs us that “according to existence” the One is “each God, since each of them is [99] one and good existentially.” The terminology here corresponds to prop. 65 of the *Elements*, which states that “all that subsists in any fashion is either according to cause, in the mode of a principle; or according to existence [*kath’huparxin*]; or according to participation, in the mode of an image.” To contemplate something *kath’huparxin* is to conceive it “in its own station [*kata tén heautou taxin*], neither in its cause nor in its resultant”; but *kath’huparxin* the One is *each God*. Thus the One, when contemplated *in its own station*, is not an hypostatized One Itself, but *each God*—not all the Gods together nor a cause distinct from them. The distinction between the perspective which takes each God individually and that which treats of the Gods in classes or taxonomically is thus grounded in the very nature of the First Principle and is, I would argue, the key to grasping the real, meaningful distinction between Being and the supra-essential.

²¹ *Trois études sur la providence*, ed. and trans. Daniel Isaac. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977-1982. Translation mine.

The locus for the opposition between the supra-essential and ontic domains is the inherent opposition in each God between *huparxis* and *dunamis*, 'existence' and 'power'. This is the initial gap which widens at each stage of procession as Being acquires determinacy. Thus Damascius (*De Princ.* I. 118. 9-17)²² speaks of the distinction between *huparxis* and *dunamis* in "the First" as the "minimum distinction" (*bêkista prosdiorismon*). The *dunameis* or 'powers' of the Gods are explained at *Plat. Theol.* III 24. 86. 7-9 to be themselves "supra-essential, and consubsistent with the very henads of the Gods, and through these <powers> the Gods are generative of beings." At the same time, however, Proclus also opposes the powers of the Gods to their *huparxeis*. For example, we read at *In Parm.* 1128 of things which "are knowable and expressible as pertaining to the powers of the Gods, not to their existences [*tais huparxesin autais*], in virtue of which they possess the characteristic of being Gods."

As is stated in the passage from *Plat. Theol.* III 86, the powers of the Gods are that through which the Gods produce Being/being(s). Insofar as there is an *opposition* between the Gods and their powers, it seems reasonable that this should stem from the connection which exists

²² *Traité des Premiers Principes*. 3 vols. Ed. and trans. L. G. Westerink and J. Combès. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986-91.

between the *powers* of the Gods and the *classes* of beings. This opposition in fact underlies the distinction between the two ways of speaking about the Gods, the one which is ‘philosophical’ and the other which is peculiar to ‘theologians’, because it is by virtue of their universalizable potencies that the Gods incline, as it were, toward Being, and this latent opposition within the henadic individual is the engine driving the procession of Being. Thus *In Parm.* 74K explains that “positive propositions apply rather to the monads of kinds of being, for the power of generating things is in these. The first principle is before [100] every power and before assertions,” in which note the juxtaposition of *kinds* of being with *powers*. This text is making the same distinction as *IP* 1128, which opposes the *huparxeis* of the Gods to their powers. For not only are the Gods generative of beings through their powers, but through their powers they themselves can be treated *like* beings—grouped into classes, for instance, which generally under Platonic logic would imply that the members of the class participate in, and are subordinate to, a monad expressing the unity of that class. I have argued elsewhere that Proclus resists placing the henads under these constraints in part because it would tend toward *unifying* them, when in fact their ‘being-Gods’ consists precisely in their irreducible ‘existential’ individuality. In this light, the powers of the Gods form the link not

only between the Gods and Being, but also between a discourse concerning unique individuals ('theology', in the sense of what mythographers do) and a discourse concerning *kinds*.

The two most salient characteristics of the henads are, first, that they are 'all in all', which is to say all in each, and, second, their consummate individuality and autarchy. Indeed, these are simply two sides of the same coin. The individual *being* is an individual, albeit to a lesser degree, insofar as it possesses only abstract parts. The supreme individuality, however, that possessed by henads, is such that not just the other henads, but *all of Being* too is present in *each* henad. Thus at *In Tim.* I, 308 Proclus says that "each of the Gods is the universe, but after a different manner," and again at I, 312 that "each of the Gods is denominated from his peculiarity [*idiôtês*], though each is comprehensive of all things." Again, at I, 209, we read that "all beings are contained by the Gods and reside in their natures." Not only beings, ontic particulars, are contained by the henads, but the ontic hypostases themselves, Being, Life, and Intellect, are also contained by each henad: "the Gods do not subsist in these [Being, Life and Intellect], but prior to them, and they produce and contain these in themselves, but are not defined in them" (*Plat. Theol.* I 26. 114. 20-22).

The *pre-positing* of the procession of Being in each of the Gods is operative through their ‘providence’ (*pronoia*): “Every God in his/her own existence [*huparxis*] possesses the providence [*pronoiein*] of the universe [*tôn holôn*], and the primary providence is in the Gods,” (*El. Theol.* prop. 120). In an important discussion Gersh stresses the correspondence between *pronoia* among the Gods and mortal ‘belief’ (*pistis*).²³ Belief and providence “are clearly to be viewed as complementary aspects of the irreducible element of ineffability in the causal process as a whole ... belief represents the ineffable element interpreted primarily from below and providence the same element [101] viewed from above.”²⁴ But this “ineffable element” is not simply irrational or, as Gersh characterizes it, a manifestation of ‘mysticism’. Rather, there is a quite rational bond between the *pistis* prior to *epistêmê* and that which is inferior to *epistêmê*. Proclus, as usual, in opposing these two senses of *pistis* (see, in particular, *Plat. Theol.* I 25. 110. 17-22) is also affirming the causal relationship between the two.²⁵ Gersh recognizes that the link between the *pistis* of the

²³ *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* 115-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 118.

²⁵ Note also the significance Proclus accords to Plato’s use of *pisteuein* at *Parm.* 141e, at the culmination of the First Hypothesis (*In Parm.* 42K).

Gods and that of sensible particulars, i.e., the second stage of perception in the Divided Line of *Rep.* 511e, lies in the emphasis placed by later Neoplatonists on “the rapprochement between the simplicity of matter which is below form and the simplicity of the gods which transcends it,”²⁶ but does not discern the crucial element these two modes of existence have in common, namely particularity—sensible particulars insofar as they fall below *infimae species*, the Gods insofar as their supra-essential individuality *transcends* universality. *Epistêmê*, which is cognition of the universal, is therefore bounded on both sides by a kind of knowing pertaining exclusively to individuals, and these are the two kinds of *pistis*.

It is on account of *pistis*, Proclus explains, that “all the Gods are united [*sunhênôntai*] and gather together [*sunagousin*] uniformly [*monoeidôs*] around one center both their universal powers [*tas holas dunameis*] and their processions,” (*Plat. Theol.* I 25. 110. 14-16). What is the function that *pistis* is said to perform here among the Gods themselves? In what must they ‘believe’ and toward what do they dispose themselves ‘uniformly’, literally, according to one form? It is that to which the universality inherent in their powers and processions, which both pertain to classification, is ultimately referred,

²⁶ Ibid. 116 n. 179.

namely the individuality of each God, which as irreducible is perceived immediately by each in a founding moment of *pistis*. In a discussion of universal attributes of the Gods drawn from the *Phaedo*, Proclus says of the ‘uniform’ (*to monoeides*) that it “pertains most of all to the divine monad at the point at which Being first emerges, in which ends every participated genus of henads, for the One is prior to these,” (*Plat. Theol.* I 27. 118. 20-23).

The One here is not something subordinating the Gods, but that in virtue of which the Gods *have something to give* to Being. Schürmann expresses the stakes of the proper understanding of the One when he remarks that “l’alliance entre apophasisme métaphysique et onto-théologie éclipse la découverte phénoménologique dont est née l’hénologie négative.”²⁷ For Schürmann, “l’hénologie négative accomplit ce que la théologie négative ne [102] peut jamais accomplir.”²⁸ For ‘negative theology’ the One is “l’étant suprême dont nous ne savons pas ce qu’il est, mais seulement qu’il est,”²⁹ while the One of Plotinus and *a fortiori* of Proclus “ne désigne aucune réalité

²⁷ R. Schürmann, “L’Hénologie comme Dépassement de la Métaphysique” 337.

²⁸ Ibid. 334.

²⁹ Ibid. 337.

transcendante, aucune chose—et, en ce sens, rien.”³⁰ Steel similarly wishes to mark the distinction between Neoplatonic metaphysics and “onto-theology”³¹ as well as distinguishing the former from negative theology, that is, “a negative discourse whereby one expresses through negations what the divine cause is.”³² In Proclus, Steel asserts, we have instead a “negative dialectic” which “only aims at removing all discourse, negations as well as affirmation,” together with a positive theology of the divine classes. But what is the meaning of the transition from negative dialectic to positive theology? It is neither a question of a negative theology which would share with ‘onto-theology’ the attempt to disclose a supreme being according to philosophical categories, nor a speechlessness before ‘mystic union’. Rather, the henological negations come into their rational significance by distinguishing henadic individuality from ontic unity, instead of as the determination of one supreme subject.

We will not lapse into hypostatizing the One if we accord to the henads the full systematic weight that they have for Proclus; but

³⁰ Ibid. 334.

³¹ C. Steel, “Theology as First Philosophy: The Neoplatonic Concept of Metaphysics” 21.

³² Ibid. 20.

this is lost in recourse to concepts like negative theology and mystical union out of place in a thinker whose theology is fundamentally *positive*. Mystic union contradicts the manner in which Proclus consistently portrays engaging with the divine as an encounter *between individuals*, as at *In Tim.* I, 212. 19-26, which explains that in the performance of “divine works” it is necessary to withdraw from other pursuits so that “*alone*, one may associate with *the God alone*, and not attempt to join oneself to the One with multiplicity. For such a one would do the opposite, and separate himself from the Gods.” Here the opposition of unity and multiplicity evidently applies to the integrity or dispersion of the individual, not to some unity into which individuals would be annihilated, nor is the ‘unity’ of the divine in any way a matter of one God instead of many. Similarly, at *Plat. Theol.* I 3. 15. 24-16. 1 the soul is urged to “incline herself toward her own unity and the center of her entire life, laying aside the multiplicity and diversity of the powers of every kind in her” in order to elevate herself to “the highest outlook [*periôpê*, *Politicus* 272e5].” Here again, the rhetoric of unity against multiplicity refers, not to reducing the number of entities involved, but to those entities’ integral individuality.³³

³³ K. Corrigan, “‘Solitary’ Mysticism in Plotinus, Proclus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius,” discusses such

[103] Understanding the essence of henology as lying in individuation rather than in abstract unity grounds procession. The ‘providence’ of the Gods, a pre-thinking (*pro-noein*) of the whole of Being, lies in the supra-essential or ‘existential’ individuality they possess; indeed, it is a direct *consequence* of that individuality, because the latter entails that the whole of Being be pre-positd in each God, lest the universality accorded to Being in relation to *beings* be allowed to usurp the autarchy of each God—the Gods “are present to everything, transcend all things alike, and contain all things, while being dominated by nothing they contain,” (*Plat. Theol.* I 19. 92. 25-93. 1). *Each* of the Gods is “the Best” (*to ariston*; *Plat. Theol.* I 19. 89. 4); therefore the desirable (*to epheton*), around which “all beings and all the Gods dispose their essences, powers, and activities,” (*Plat. Theol.* I 22. 102. 12-14), though for beings it may lie outside themselves, is for the Gods nothing other than themselves: “nor does s/he [each God, see *hekastos* at l. 21] pass into something better, for what could be better than the best?” (*Plat. Theol.* I 19. 89. 25-27). It suffices to establish truth in the universe that each God is true to

texts, although he does not mention the passage above from the *Timaeus* commentary, and while his concerns and the scope of his inquiry are quite different from my own, similarly concludes that the language of unity in them pertains to “the uniqueness of identity,” (35).

him/herself. Whereas, for Leibniz, each monad is a unique perspective on a single universe (*Monadology* 57), for Proclus, the universe is *constituted* in the first place out of the manifold of unique henadic ‘perspectives’. “All things are solely from the Gods, and genuine truth is in them, who know all things unitarily [*heniaiōs*],” (*Plat. Theol.* I 21. 99. 1-3), that is, as individuals themselves, on account of which “the Gods cognize all things ... not like the intellect, which knows the particular by the universal and nonbeing by being, but each immediately [*autothen*], the universal and the particular alike, even atomic individuals, the infinity of future contingents, and matter itself,” (*Plat. Theol.* I 21. 98. 7-12).

The *pistis* of the Gods, therefore, far from collapsing the system into irrational ‘mysticism’, is the ultimate epistemic precondition without which there is nothing but an utterly circular idealism devoid of meaning because no procession really takes place. This is the trap the interpretation according to ‘negative theology’ or ‘mystical union’ falls into. Trouillard, for instance, sees the “autonomy of the intellect” as “guaranteed” by “le processus cyclique” according to which “la fin n’est autre que le principe”;³⁴ but this autonomy is purchased at the cost of divorcing ontology from what is, for

³⁴ *Mystagogie* 103.

Proclus, its ground. From a purely ontological perspective Being does indeed form just such a circular or holistic system, but this is exactly why Being and its hypostases [104] are not henads (*El. Theol.* prop. 115). This is the emptiness of ontology without theology, inasmuch as theology for Proclus is not a set of universal propositions about the nature of divinity but an empirical and pluralistic welter of myths, rituals, names and iconography.

To return, however, to the technical formulations which articulate this concept of the relationship between the supra-essential and Being, Being is a dependent moment of each God prior to the Gods' activity, in which and through which Being acquires qualified self-sufficiency as that which "receives a multiplicity of henads and powers which are mingled into one essence," (*Plat. Theol.* III 9. 40. 7-8).³⁵ Would not this mean that Being (and Life and Intellect, and hence the world itself) are multiplied at their source as many times as there are henads? After all, the henads do not participate in these hypostases; the hypostases participate in the henads.

³⁵ For a discussion of the difference between the self-sufficiency, or autarchy, of the Gods and the self-constitution of intelligibles, see D. G. MacIsaac, "The Origin of Determination in the Neoplatonism of Proclus."

Here the distinction between the modes of unity exhibited by henads and by beings (including the hypostases themselves), which is reflected in the distinction between the modes of discourse appropriate to ‘theologians’ and ‘philosophers’ respectively, assists us. The multiplication of Being and the other ontic hypostases as contained in each of the henads does not pluralize the hypostases *essentially* or *formally* because the instances of Being and the rest in each of the Gods share the same *formula*. Just as the multiplicity of participants beneath these hypostases, posterior to their essence, does not affect their *specific* unity, neither do the many henads prior to them—and prior to essence altogether. From another point of view, the many henads in which Being is anteriorly contained do not pluralize it because the henads, due to the nature of the First Principle and its difference from other monads, do not form a manifold structured in the same way as ontic manifolds. This is the reason for what would otherwise be a paradoxical statement by Proclus, namely that “a multiplicity [*plêthos*] of henads is discernible first in the first rank of the intelligible-and-intellectual” (*In Parm.* 1091). This statement implies that the intelligible Gods, whom Proclus treats in the third book of the *Platonic Theology*, do not constitute a multiplicity *per se*. The reason for this becomes apparent from remarks he makes in the latter

text concerning the nature of these Gods and of the three ‘intelligible triads’.³⁶

The intelligible triads represent the articulated structure of Being Itself. Being in the broad sense encompasses Being in the narrow sense, namely the intelligible *qua* intelligible, as well as Life (that which is at once intelligible [105] *and* intellectual, *noêsis*, the ideal form of thinking in its fulfillment) and Intellect (that which orients itself toward the intelligible as such). The latter are all, of course, Being too, and hence unfold from, and *as*, aspects of Being Itself. The three ‘aspects’ of Being which are the roots, so to speak, of the three hypostases are the three intelligible triads. In explaining the relationship between the three intelligible triads and the Gods, Proclus states that “the first triad is an intelligible God primarily, that which comes after it, an intelligible-intellective God, and the third, an intellectual God,” (*Plat. Theol.* III 14. 51. 9-11). The intelligible triads represent the individual deity who is a member of these classes, but *prior* to the constitution of the classes themselves, which is the significance of ‘primarily’ (*prôtôs*) here. This is really the *only* sense in which the three intelligible triads could refer to *three Gods*, when Proclus has

³⁶ On the relationship between the henads and the intelligible triads, see E. P. Butler, “The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus.”

explicitly stated (at the aforementioned *In Parm.* 1091) that a *pléthos* of Gods is first present in the intelligible-intellective order.

It is significant in this respect that the intelligible-intellective order is where the activities of a *pantheon* first become evident, and where mythological hermeneutics begin in earnest, as manifest particularly in interpretations of *Phaedrus* 246-248. Prior to this we are only concerned with the properties of each individual henad, and not with the activities of particular classes of Gods. The first order of classification, the intelligible order, concerns only the most general attributes of the Gods as such, attributes nevertheless not as general as the attribute embodied by the One, namely, the attribute of being *unique individuals*.

Classificatory orders of the Gods subsequent to the intelligible order, that is, beginning with the intelligible-intellective, involve *relations* among Gods and hence are the site for Neoplatonists' mythological hermeneutics.³⁷ The progressive constitution of

³⁷ Mythological identifications for the intelligible order in Proclus or Damascius (e.g., in the second part of *De princ.*, vol. III) refer to an order of intelligible Gods in a *narrow* sense corresponding to the narrow sense of Being as explained above. One might also observe that where the Orphic Phanes is understood to be operating as the third intelligible triad, or intelligible intellect, it is in virtue of his relationship to Gods of the intellectual class.

Being by successive divine orders has its *telos* in the emergence of the very determinations which make it possible to (retrospectively) treat the Gods through classes or kinds in ‘philosophical’ discourse.³⁸ Once the space of relations among the Gods is fully articulated, the problem of the multiplication of Being in each deity no longer arises, for the transition has been accomplished from supra-essential individuality to *formal* unity, the unity of species. One might say, to construct a novel but typical Neoplatonic triad, that there is a sense in which the Gods *contain* the [106] intelligible, *both contain and are contained in* the intelligible-intellective, and *are contained in* the intellectual—albeit intellectual form ‘contains’ them only with degrees of specificity; hence the richness of content embodied in myths give myths the status for Proclus of virtual theophanies.

The relationship between the henads and their immediate (i.e., highest) participants, and thus the relationship in the most direct sense between the Gods and Being, is discussed in some complicated passages from Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* which have troubled

³⁸ Compare D. G. MacIsaac, “Projection and Time in Proclus” 101: “[I]n bringing these works [viz., the philosophical corpus of Proclus] into being, the dividing thought which is *dianoia* simultaneously brings into being the philosophical terms which it employs.”

commentators, but which can be elucidated from the present perspective. *El. Theol.* prop. 135 posits that for each henad there is some being that participates it immediately, and that “the participant genera of beings are as many as the participated henads.” But as Dodds points out in his commentary (p. 272), it is unclear what *genê* these might be. Moreover, when Proclus stresses that “there cannot be two or more henads participated by one <being>,” nor “one henad independently [*diêrêmenôs*] participated by several <beings>,” he appears to flatly contradict himself (as noted by Dodds, p. 282) because props. 162-5 refer unequivocally to a *class* of henads participated by *to ontôs on*, a *class* of henads participated by the unparticipated Intellect, and so forth. How can 135 and 162-165 be consistent?

If open contradiction is to be avoided, the participation of the hypostases of 162-5 in their respective classes of deities must *not* constitute the participation in the first place or immediately of two or more henads by a single being that is rejected in 135. How could the multiplicity in question in the latter propositions not be of the kind that is ruled out in the former? One possibility is that, e.g., *to ontôs on* participates, not in a multiplicity of deities of the intelligible class, but rather in *any single deity in that class*, in accord with the remarks of Proclus about the intelligible triads quoted

above (*Plat. Theol.* III 14. 51. 9-11). A multiplicity of henads could only be participated by a single being insofar as the being in question is a universal and the multiplicity is supra-essential, i.e., not ontologically determined. Nor could a single henad be ‘dividedly’ (*diêrêmenôs*) participated by more than one being, because as the primary participation is participation in the Gods, the differences between participants at this level could only come from participating different Gods. For “as the distinctive characters [*idiotêtôn*] of the henads vary, so the beings whose nature is identified with theirs [*sumphuomenon*] cannot but vary also” (prop. 135). And since we are dealing here with *ontôs onta*, ‘real beings,’ there can be no question of the beings proximately participating in a God being only numerically different.

That two terms cannot be on the same level, so to speak, as participants of a henad, but rather must assume a hierarchical disposition, implies that deities from different cultures would not simply represent different names [107] for the same God or Gods. For Proclus, in his commentary on the *Cratylus*, explicitly rejects a hierarchy of languages which would make one more divine than another (*In Crat.* § 71).³⁹ This brings us back to the question of the two ways

³⁹ *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria*. Ed. G. Pasquali. Leipzig: Teubner, 1908.

of speaking about the Gods, which correspond to the two ways of linking henads to beings, one which is many-to-one, a class of deities to an hypostasis participating them, and the other which is one-to-one, one deity to one hypostasis. Corresponding to the former, the link between many henads and one hypostasis, there is the multiplicity of national pantheons, the Gods of whom are intellectually or functionally comparable, but irreducible to particulars participating common forms and differing only in their 'matter' (Proclus categorically rejects Plotinian 'intelligible matter' at *Plat. Theol.* III 9. 40). When it is a question, however, of the multiplicity of, say, intellectual Gods *within a single pantheon*, there can be no notion of a multiplicity participated by a *single* ontic principle, for as we can see from Proclus' own *Platonic Theology*, when a given pantheon is subjected to philosophical interpretation, there is always a formal unit, a 'monad', strictly speaking, expressing the position of each deity within the singular *logos* of the pantheon.

It is anachronistic in some respects to speak of a concept such as cultural difference in relation to Proclus. But cultural difference is a manifestation of the problem of particularity, and it is on account of his concern for getting *that* right that Proclus can have something interesting to say about the former. *El. Theol.* prop. 149, for instance, demonstrates on the one

hand that the total number of Gods must be *finite*, but on the other hand that there can be no absolute determination of *how many* Gods there are. It is not a question, to phrase it in modern terms, upon which ontology can have any purchase. For Proclus' teacher Syrianus, similarly, there can be no knowledge for the "partial soul" of the actual number of Gods, save that the number is on the one hand finite, and on the other hand not *less* than the number of *classes* of beings (*In Metaph.* 914b3-6).⁴⁰ There cannot be *fewer* Gods than there are classes of beings, for the real articulation in Being is furnished by divine activity and the differences within the given pantheon; but the determination is not reciprocal, and neither the total number of deities nor the total number of pantheons is delimitable any further than to finitude. Similarly, at *In Tim.* III, 12 we read that the number and nature of the Gods is known to the Gods themselves "divinely" while the *Parmenides* "teaches us in a human manner and philosophically," and philosophical knowledge [108] remains for Proclus knowledge of the

⁴⁰ *Syriani in metaphysica commentaria*. Ed. W. Kroll. In *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, Vol. 6. 1. Berlin: Reimer, 1902.

universal and of the particular purely as an instantiation of the universal.⁴¹

It simply does not make sense that Syrianus and Proclus would claim that the number of Gods was not humanly knowable if that number could be determined by the number of ontic hypostases. The henadic manifold must not be denumerable in this fashion; instead, it consists of just those Gods who *happen* to exist, and who have revealed themselves cultically, most likely in numbers well beyond those of a single pantheon. As such, there is nothing to authorize that the *comparison* of deities belonging to different pantheons proceed to their *conflation* with one another. We can see that Proclus thinks this way, not merely from the eclecticism of his personal practice as attested by Marinus, but first-hand from the way he approaches this question in his *Cratylus* commentary (Pasquali 32.9ff): *If* a certain deity *may* be called by the Greeks Briareus, but differently by the Chaldeans, nevertheless..., the counterfactual conditional making it clear that this would not be something up to a *philosopher* to determine in

⁴¹ Van Riel, “Les Hénades de Proclus sont-elles Composées de Limite and d’Illimité?” 422 n. 30, unlike most commentators, notices that “le nombre exact des hénades n’est connu qu’aux dieux,” but does not seem to see the significance for Proclus’ ontology of this *ontologically* undetermined supra-essential multiplicity grounding Being Itself.

the first place.⁴² Accordingly, the only case in which Proclus unequivocally identifies a God of one nation with that of another is in acceding to the anecdotal identification of the Egyptian Goddess Neith with the Hellenic Athena in Plato's *Timaeus* (*Tim.* 21e), and this is presented as a matter of testimony. The Saïte, Proclus remarks, "perhaps conjecturing [*tekmaïromenos*] this from the great agreement of the lifestyle of the citizens [of Athens] with Her [Neith] or perhaps also perceiving from the telestic art and hieratic works that there was an allotment [*klérouchia*] of this kind," (*In Tim.* I, 140. 22-28).

And so when Proclus posits, in introducing the third intelligible triad at *Plat. Theol.* III 14. 49, that "there are not more beings than henads, nor more henads than beings, but rather each procession of Being participates the One," we will understand this not as determining the total number of henads, but as determining that no *procession*, that is, no *class* within Being, is to be conceived as arising absent divine illumination. This means that each hypostasis must have at least one henad whose activity is specific to it. Soul, for instance, as a novel hypostasis relative

⁴² J. M. Dillon, "The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Late Platonism" 210, paraphrases this passage while unfortunately eliminating the counterfactual phrasing explicit in the Greek.

to Intellect, cannot merely be the product of the activity of intellectual Gods manifesting on a lower level, but must possess its own class of deities who guarantee it a direct [109] divinization. Even where a member of such a class is a deity active on higher planes of Being as well, Proclus secures the new phase of that deity's activity with reference to a *mythic* disjunction. In the case of Zeus, for example, who is active on both the intellectual and infra-intellectual planes, the difference is marked by the difference between Zeus *qua* sovereign of the whole cosmos (Zeus *qua* intellectual God) and as one of three Gods dividing the sovereignty (Zeus *qua* hypercosmic God), i.e., a mythical distinction supports the ontological distinction (*Plat. Theol.* VI 8. 34-42).⁴³ This sort of hermeneutic is no mere allegorical subtlety; Proclus negotiates in this way an ontological relationship between myth and reason. The very facticity of myth enables it to function as an instrument of unique, supra-essential divine individuals. The significance of myth in Proclus thus is not of a ladder for the soul to climb up to the truth, to be kicked away after this 'demythologization'. Rather, myth retains its existential excess relative to the universality of

⁴³ There are numerous other examples; see, e.g., the way that Proclus uses the incommensurable myths about Persephone being spouse either of Zeus or of Hades (*Plat. Theol.* VI 11. 50f; *In Crat.* §150, p. 85.18-23).

the concept, the “superabundance” of the Gods (*El. Theol.* prop. 131) in recognition of which the philosophical system limits itself.

Returning to the distinction between the theologian’s and the philosopher’s ways of speaking about the Gods, we can say that the participation of moments of Being in single henads, as per *El. Theol.* 135, refers to the former, for this is the narrative, so to speak, of Being’s divinization, while the participation of moments of Being in classes of henads, as per *El. Theol.* 162, belongs to the latter. Just as an individual must, according to Proclus, encounter one deity at a time in order to encounter that deity in his/her true profundity (*In Tim.* I, 212), so too philosophy is divinized in the exegesis of singular pantheons, as Proclus carries out with the Hellenic pantheon in his *Platonic Theology*, despite the fact that his biographer Marinus attests to an eclecticism in Proclus’ personal religious practice (*Vita Procli* 19).⁴⁴ Philosophy, the kingdom of the universal, reaches out to individual deities and particular pantheons to be divinized because the transition from being to *huparxis* is the transition from formal or specific (sortal) unity to individuality. The threshold between the realm of form and that of *huparxis* is therefore a

⁴⁴ *Vita Procli*. Ed. J. F. Boissonade. Leipzig, 1814. Reprint, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1966.

gateway into the factual and the unique as the domain of revelation.

According to *El. Theol.* prop. 138, Being is the “first and highest of all the participants of the divine character [*tês theias idiotêtos*] which are thereby divinized [*ektheoumenôn*].” We may be specific about what Being means here. It is not unparticipated Being, the monad or hypostasis of Being, for this participates in the *class* of intelligible Gods, and therefore not one-to-one. [110] Rather, this highest participant is the Mixed of the *Philebus*, which is radical Being, the third or synthesizing moment of the first intelligible triad.⁴⁵ “Every God begins his/her characteristic activity with him/herself,” and establishes first in him/herself the character [*idiotêta*] s/he bestows upon participants (*El. Theol.* prop. 131); with respect to the first intelligible triad, each God is at once in his/her supra-essential existence the agent of the mixture *and also* the mixture itself as primal or radical Being, a kind of ontic doubling of the God’s own supra-essential individuality. Being is in the first place each God’s mirroring of him/herself. Thus Proclus, characterizing

⁴⁵ Damascius regards Being as the “first *hênômenon*,” distinguishing it thus as ‘unified’ from the ‘unitary’ (*heniaios*) henads; compare *El. Theol.* prop. 6, “Every manifold is either *ex hênômenôn* or *ex henadôn*”—that is, either ontic or henadic.

procession in abstract terms, states that “the One and Being generate *a second henad conjoined with a part of Being*,” and Being “generates a more partial being suspended from a more partial henad,” this being the division, *diairesis*, of the One and the distinguishing, *diakrisis*, of the One and Being (*Plat. Theol.* III 26. 89. 22-26), the generation of a “second henad” together with a more partial being referring to the emergence of specific levels of Being from the activities of the Gods.

The kind of ‘division’ that Proclus speaks of here cannot be adequately represented by a Porphyrian tree. However, that does not mean that it is not rational, a mere external multiplication. Proclus does not offer an account of the coming-to-be of many Gods from one God. Rather, he takes the existence of the Gods as primordial givenness, and offers an account of how ontic unity, which is of a formal nature, comes to be out of henadic unity, which is of an individual, ‘existential’ nature. The transition from henadic to ontic unity takes the whole of the *Platonic Theology* to accomplish but is, on the most universal plane, accomplished in the first intelligible triad, which contains the formula according to which each God is present to Being. The dialectic of Limit and the Unlimited which yields as its result Being and all of the subordinate hypostases, arises from the two primary aspects

of each deity. We may characterize these two aspects, Proclean 'Limit' and 'Unlimited', insofar as they are determinations of Being, as particularity and universality, which emerge from the original distinction between the *huparxis* and the powers of each God, Damascius' "minimum distinction." And so it is not because of the Unlimited, for instance, that there are many Gods, or because of Limit that their number is finite. This would be the worst sort of category mistake insofar as it is only because the Gods, the primary units or individuals, first apply these principles to themselves that we can speak philosophically about their natures. Reaching this far, reflection attains the point at which *epistêmê*, by recognizing its limitations, becomes the witness to its own origins, and [111] thus comes into as much self-sufficiency as it is coherent for it to possess. In short, it recognizes itself in the moment of pre-ontological reflection of the ultimate existents.

Terezis states that because Proclus "places forms at an inferior level compared to that which they possess in Plato's work," he "relativizes Platonic ontology," and the "precedence of the One and the henads over Being" makes Proclus "a representative of an era when mysticism dominated and rituals

prevail.”⁴⁶ Terezis sees a trade-off here. On the one hand, Proclus “gives a theological orientation to his work and aims at including classical ontology into his theological henology, so that every ontological foundation is completely impossible without its permanent reference to henological preconditions.” But despite “relegating” the forms to an inferior plane, Proclus does thereby concede to forms “an actual content and remains within the orbit of a consistent realism.”⁴⁷ There is much more to it than this, however. Proclus, far from being a prisoner of his era, can even speak to us today insofar as he challenges the presumptive mutual entailment of *content* and *relativity*. The plurality, uniqueness and individuality of the henads does not need to be reduced to uniformity in order to provide a ground for ontology; they provide this ground by virtue of the dialectic of particularity and universality immanent to them. Nor does ontology become the handmaiden of some particular dogmatic theology, since in recognizing the factual plurality of pantheons and revelations, it is subordinated not to one, but to the many. Ontology is thus emergent from theology just as Being is from the Gods; but neither is reducible to the other.

⁴⁶ C. A. Terezis, “Proclus on Henads and Plato on Forms: A Comparison” 165f.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 166.

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THE INTELLIGIBLE GODS IN THE *PLATONIC THEOLOGY* OF PROCLUS*

The *Platonic Theology* is the culminating work of Proclus' long career and one of the defining works of late antiquity, but it has had few modern philosophical admirers. The exception, and an important one, is Hegel, who clearly drew inspiration from the *Platonic Theology* for his *Science of Logic*, and who draws his admiring account of Proclus in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* largely from his reading of this work. Nevertheless, the *Platonic Theology* has received far less attention from philosophers than it might have. A key reason for this neglect, I suggest, has been the inability to perceive in the procession of the divine orders as presented in the *Platonic Theology* a unifying logic akin to that in the *Science of Logic*. Such is the judgment of Hegel himself, who, despite his overall high praise of Proclus in the *Lectures*, characterizes the dialectic of the *Platonic Theology* as "external".

If the procession recounted in the *Platonic Theology* is, fundamentally, simply the multiplication of an hypostatized One, then Hegel would be correct, and Proclus' system

* This essay was originally published in *Méthexis* XXI (2008), pp. 131-143. The pagination from this publication appears in brackets.

lacks an inner logic. Moreover, on such an interpretation, causality in Proclus' system as a whole would be mystified, which would contribute to the perception of this grand edifice of Neoplatonic thought as little more than a highly developed form of irrationalism. The present essay, however, offers an interpretation of Proclus' system in which the procession of Being begins not from an hypostatized One, but in the manifold of individual, supra-essential henads, treating this procession not as a simple passage from unity to multiplicity, but as a transition from one mode of unity to another. In a previous essay,¹ I have discussed the difference between the modes of unity of the henads and of beings; the present essay argues that the *Platonic Theology* exhibits the emergence of the latter mode of unity from the former.

The beginning of the procession of Being cannot be from "the One", because there is, in a most important sense, no such thing: the first principle is not, in itself, a cause. The beginning, rather, is from the *henads*. This is why the *Platonic Theology* is a *theology*. The Gods constitute Being, and do so simply by virtue of being-Gods. The *Platonic Theology* is not

¹ "Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold," *Dionysius* 23, Dec. 2005, 83-104.

therefore about the creation of the Gods, but about their nature, and how this nature determines the nature of Being. The aspect of the Gods from which the procession of Being begins, and which drives it throughout its several stages, I argue, is their *individuality*. That is, the meaning I propose for the statement that the procession of Being begins [132] from the One is that Being proceeds from individuality as such.² The procession of the divine orders as presented in the *Platonic Theology* will lack a unifying logic so long as the procession of the divine orders from the One is seen as the genesis of the Gods from the One. Rather, the *Platonic Theology* is an account of the emergence of Being from the Gods, which is a passage from *existence* to *essence*, *huparxis* to *hupostasis*. Being emerges from an *existing* divine manifold through the objectification of the existential individuality primordially possessed by each God *qua* God, with each successive plane of Being reflecting a stage in the ordering, or *diakosmêsis*, of this divine manifold. This process begins in earnest in the *Platonic Theology*'s third book, which concerns the intelligible Gods.

² On the One as principle of individuation in Plotinus, see recently Adam Labecki, "The One and the Many: Part II: The Many," *Dionysius* 25, Dec. 2007, 129-152.

Being has a wide and a narrow sense in Proclus. In the wide sense, it refers to everything that is, excluding only the two kinds of nonbeing: privations, which fall short of existence, and the Gods, from whose superabundant existence Being radiates. In the narrow sense, Being refers to that in relation to which all other beings as beings orient themselves, the intelligible as such, and is distinguished therefore from Intellect, which thinks that which is, and from Life, the intellective medium connecting intellect and the intelligible. Being in this narrow sense has the structure of three triads, of which the first triad represents primary Being, Being *qua* Being as it were, while the second and third triads are Life and Intellect as implicit within Being, that is, Life and Intellect as modes of Being. In this way the structure of Being in the wide sense is explained by the structure of Being in the narrow sense. But what explains the differentiation of Being into just such modes of Being?³ For this, we must look to the first intelligible triad, which contains the nuclear structure of Being, so to speak.

³ Note that Damascius, in his commentary on the *Parmenides*, characterizes the explanation of the triplicity of the intelligible (*to noêton*) by virtue of the triplicity of substance (*ousia*) as a “more theological” (*theologikóteros*) mode of explanation (*In Parm.* 17. 4-6/R. II, 14).

The first intelligible triad is *Limit*, the *Unlimited*, and *Mixture*, the terms of the intellectual method Plato presents in the *Philebus*. Being is therefore in the most fundamental sense—which is at the same time the most universal sense because all the modes of Being unfold according to it—Limit, the Unlimited, and Mixture. But we can state it more narrowly, for Proclus explains that Being *per se* is the third moment, Mixture. And he is unequivocal that this means that Being is a *product*. For while the God “exhibits” [*deixai*] or “reveals” [*ekphainein*] Limit and the Unlimited, the God “makes” [*poiein*] the mixture through these two *archai* (PT III 9. 36.12-19). The significance of giving Being the status of a product is not lost on Damascius, who criticizes Proclus in this regard (DP III 109ff/R. I, 285); it is, indeed, one of the most profound differences between the two Platonic successors. For his own part, however, Proclus approaches the [133] problem from a somewhat different perspective. The question Proclus asks is how this Mixture, although it is the very being of Being Itself, can nevertheless be a mixture composed of nonbeings, that is, of supra-essentials: “For if Limit and the Unlimited are supra-essential [*hyperousia*], essence may appear to have its subsistence from non-essences. How therefore can non-essences produce essence?” (PT III 9. 38.13-16). To understand how Proclus answers this question,

we need to go deeper into what Limit and the Unlimited are for him, and in particular their relationship to the henads or Gods.

Limit, Proclus explains, “is a God proceeding to the intelligible summit from the unparticipated and first God,” while “the Unlimited is the inexhaustible power of this God,” (i.e., the God who proceeds) and the Mixed is “the first and highest order [*diakosmos*] of the Gods,” (PT III 12. 44.24-45.7). Limit is a God, the Unlimited is the power of the God, and the Mixed is an *order* of the Gods, the highest such.⁴ The Mixed is the highest order of the Gods because it is the most general classification of the Gods, just as the Mixed is the most general classification of beings. What is crucial here is the progression from a God, to

⁴ On the relationship between the henads and the One (“the unparticipated and first God”), see my article in *Dionysius* 23, 2005. On the “unparticipated” specifically, see Edward Butler, “The Metaphysics of Polytheism in Proclus,” (Ph.D. diss., New School for Social Research, 2003) esp. 157-172. Briefly, note *ET* prop. 23: “all participated substances [*bupostaseis*] are linked by upward tension [*anateinontai*] to existences [*buparxeis*] not participated”—that is, the opposition between the participated and the unparticipated is founded upon that between *bupostasis* and *buparxis*, on which more below. The opposition, I argue, is *internal* to the henads, and expresses the tension between their illumination of Being and their reservation of their own transcendence, rather than between the henads and an hypostatized One Itself.

a property of that God, to a class of Gods based upon the expression, or activity, of such properties (that is, 'powers'). The sense of this progression is therefore not multiplication, but *classification*, and it is this which is at the heart of the transition from that which is beyond Being, to Being Itself.

What exactly does Proclus mean when he states that Limit is *a God*, and why ought the third moment of the triad be regarded as the result, not of multiplication, but rather of the classification of an existing individual? With respect to the question of multiplication, Proclus explicitly states that "a multiplicity of henads is discernible first in the first rank of the intelligible-and-intellectual," (*IP* 1091), that is, at the stage corresponding to the hypostasis of Life. The intelligible order of Gods, therefore, cannot constitute a multiplicity. Rather, the three intelligible triads correspond to three *dispositions* of henads considered strictly as *individuals*. Hence Proclus states that "the first triad is an intelligible God in the first place [*prôtôs*], that which comes after it an intelligible-and-intellectual God, and the third an intellectual God," (*PT* III 14. 51. 9-11). Proclus is not speaking of three *particular* Gods here, because he is not so perverse as to claim that one and one and one do not make three; and this is also why Limit is not a particular God

named, as it were, *Peras*, but *a God as such*, any God.

[134] What Proclus means, I submit, is that the first triad is any God of the intelligible class, the second triad is any God of the intelligible-intellectual class, and the third triad is any God of the intellectual class. The triads, then, would represent the disposition of the Gods of these classes as individuals, prior to the account of the nature of the classes as assemblages, which is inseparable from the account of the *activities* of the Gods in these classes, these activities being the ontic structures of the relevant planes of Being. The use of *prôtôs* in the above quote should thus be compared to the statement at *PT* III 21. 74. 7-8 that “just as the intelligible Gods are henads in the first place [*prôtôs*], so too are they fathers in the first place [*prôtôs*].” This passage refers to Proclus’ technical use of the term “father” to characterize *a mode of divine activity* (a usage probably influenced by the *Chaldaean Oracles*): “All that is paternal in the Gods is of primal operation [*prôtourgon*] and stands in the position of the Good [*en tagathou taxei*] at the head of all the divine orders [*diakosmêseis*],” (*ET* prop. 151). The equivocation which can make the henadology confusing at times arises because the procession of Being takes place *within* the individual God him/herself, whose activity, characterizable as *prôtôs*, *deuterôs* and so forth, is the very site for the

emergence of Being's stratified and hierarchical structure.

Whereas the organizations of the intelligible-intellectual and intellectual classes of Gods are treated in the fourth and fifth books of the *Platonic Theology* respectively, the intelligible class of Gods is treated in the third book itself. But if the second intelligible triad is "an intelligible-and-intellectual God," and the third intelligible triad is "an intellectual God," then the *individual* Gods of the intelligible-intellectual and intellectual classes are, when taken individually, intelligible Gods. That is, the first intelligible triad represents *any God*, taken in the widest universality, while the second and third triads already represent particular divine dispositions; indeed, what would make the most sense would be for the second to be more particular than the first and the third more particular than the second. This is the most sensible meaning to accord to the statement by Proclus that a multiplicity of henads is first discernible in the intelligible-and-intellectual order: the latter is the first such particular *disposition* of the divine manifold.

Proclus remarks in the first book of the *Platonic Theology* that "such things as express characteristics of particular orders [*idia tinôn diakosmôn*] do not necessarily pertain to all the Gods, but those that pertain to all of the Gods *a fortiori* apply to each," (PT I 10. 43. 19-21). The

intelligible order expresses the characteristics which apply most universally to the Gods, and therefore all the Gods *qua* Gods are intelligible Gods. This conclusion receives additional confirmation from the correspondence Proclus establishes between attributes common to the Gods in general (*PT* I 2. 9. 9-12)—most notably the perfections of *goodness*, *wisdom*, [135] and *beauty* (chap. 22-24)⁵—and the three intelligible triads (see esp. *PT* I 24. 108. 20-109. 2). The statement that those characteristics that pertain to all of the Gods apply *a fortiori* to each expresses an important corollary of the henadology's core doctrine, namely that all of the Gods are present in each (*IP* 1048). Expressing this doctrine with respect to the universal characteristics of the Gods reveals the principle according to which the polycentric manifold of the Gods comes to constitute the monocentric and hierarchical manifold of Being.⁶ To Being belongs the *universality*

⁵ "Socrates affirms that all that which is divine is beautiful, wise and good, and shows that this triad applies to all the processions of the Gods," (*PT* I 22. 101.1-3).

⁶ On the polycentric nature of the henadic manifold, see my article in *Dionysius* 23, op. cit. The polycentric nature of procession from the One is recognized by Jean Trouillard in *La mystagogie de Proclus*, chap. 6, "Procession polycentrique," although without acknowledging that it is proper to the henads alone; Christian Guérard, "La théorie des hénades et la mystique de Proclus," *Dionysius* 6, 1982, has a more balanced account.

embodied in the divine characteristics. The transition from the supra-essential domain of the Gods to the ontic domain of essence is a transition, as it were, from the *each* of henadic uniqueness to the *all* of universality and ideality, this transition occurring *within* the first intelligible triad.

While the Platonic terminology for the first intelligible triad is the Limit, Unlimited, and Mixed of the *Philebus*, the expressions Proclus finds most systematically fruitful for this triad are “Existence” (*huparxis*), “Power” (*dunamis*), and “Intellect” (*nous*). Being *qua* Being is thus implicitly intellectual; and this explains why Proclus sometimes calls beings intellective and reserves for the Gods that intelligibility which, beyond that which is “the complement of intellection [*plêrôtikon tês noêseôs*],” is “defined according to the existence [*huparxin*] and unity [*henôsin*] of the divinity itself.” It is in this sense that “the existence of the Gods,” although beyond being, “is called intelligible” (PT I 26. 117.23-118.9). The “existence” or *huparxis* of the Gods is inherently individualized; thus Proclus speaks of the “existences”, *huparxeis*, of the Gods when referring to their individual natures. In this sense, existence and individuality truly precede essence for Proclus.

Mediating between Existence and Being in the Gods, however, and therefore playing the truly crucial role in the emergence of Being

from the Gods, is *Power*. “In all the divine genera,” Proclus explains, “powers precede processions and generations,” (*PT* III 24. 84.18-20). Proclus will frequently refer not to “power” in the singular, but to “powers”, in the plural. This is important inasmuch as the progression from unity to multiplicity in the *Platonic Theology* is not a multiplication of the number of existing entities but in fact the coming to determinacy (*diakrasis*) of the multiplicity of *powers* within *each deity*. Through their powers becoming determinate the Gods, in effect, disembody themselves, generating an ontic double which is *formal* rather than *existential*, a process which is the very emergence of Being. I will have more to say about this “doubling” of each henad below, but first we must understand the sense of powers as *properties* of the [136] Gods, because in the tension between the individual integrity of each God and the multiplicity of his/her properties or powers, the procession of Being finds its inner logic.

Proclus speaks about the “powers” of the Gods with a technical connotation which contrasts them with the Gods’ “existences”. In his commentary on the *Parmenides*, for instance, Proclus speaks of “shapes ... knowable and expressible as pertaining to the powers of the Gods, not to their *huparxeis*.” It is in virtue of the latter, their “existences”, Proclus says, that

they possess “the characteristic of being Gods,” although it is through the “shapes” pertaining to their powers that the Gods “become manifest to the intellectual eyes of souls,” (*IP* 1128). The contrast between *huparxis* and power in the nature of the Gods can also be expressed in terms of *henôsis*, the unity or integrity of the divine individual, as in *ET* prop. 93, concerning the infinitude of superior principles relative to inferior ones: “though they [the inferiors] unfold the powers contained in it [the superior], yet it has something unattainable in its unity [*henôsin*].” We can see this general principle given specific theological application in some remarks from his *Cratylus* commentary on “the multitude of the powers of Apollo” (*IC* 174), which are, in their totality, “not to be comprehended, nor described by us. For how will human reason ever be able to comprehend all the <individual> properties [*idiotêtôn*] of Apollo, or any other God?” Here the existential uniqueness of Apollo is expressed by our incapacity to grasp exhaustively the totality of his powers, of which Proclus offers here the examples of “medicinal”, “prophetic”, and “harmonic”, as well as the activity of archery.

“Powers”, when taken in this fashion as properties of unique individuals, yield *kinds*, and therefore they both express the uniqueness of an individual and also embody the negation of that very uniqueness; hence their mediating

role in the first intelligible triad. Thus in the *Parmenides* commentary, Proclus holds the existential dimension apart, explaining that “positive propositions apply to the monads of kinds of being, for the power of generating things is in these. The first principle is before every power and before assertions,” (*IP* 74K). The contrast between an existential individuality and a multiplicity of powers, which is really the contrast between existential and ontic *modes of unity*, applies to the human individual as well, for Proclus states that “if indeed the divine is cognizable in any respect, it must be apprehended by the *huparxis* of the soul ... so that the most unical [*henikôtaton*] must be known by the One and the ineffable by that which is ineffable,” but to do this the soul must “lay aside the multiplicity of diverse and omniform powers in it,” (*PT* I 3. 15.15-26). This does not mean that the individual is no longer an individual, however, as we can see from a discussion of prayer in the *Timaeus* commentary, which explains that prayer consists in focusing the attention such that, “becoming *alone*, we may associate with *solitary deity*, and not endeavor to conjoin ourselves with multitude to the One. For he who attempts this effects the very opposite, and separates himself from the [137] Gods,” (*IT* I, 212). Here the integrity of the individual worshiper approximates them to the supra-essential individuality of their deity.

Power, Proclus explains, is the relation (*schesis*) between the One and Being, a relation which has a double aspect (*duoeidês*), “for it is of the One but adherent to Being [*tô ontî sumphuetai*]; it is the motion of the One and <its> procession into Being,” (PT III 24. 85.7-9). “Power,” he says, “is supra-essential, but conjoined with [*sumpheromenê*] essence ... The powers of the Gods are supra-essential and subsist together with [*sunuparchousai*] the very henads of the Gods. And through these <powers> the Gods are generative of beings,” (PT III 24. 86.5-9). This generativity comes about by the “mingling” of henads into a unified essence: “Supra-essential natures do not themselves enter into the composition of the Mixed, but those remaining transcendent, secondary processions from them coalesce [*sumphuomenôn*] into the hypostasis of essence,” (PT III 9. 38.24-27). This is how nonbeings constitute Being. But this means that Limit and the Unlimited “are each twofold, one prior to Being but the other in Being, and the one is generative but the other is an element of the mixture ... The Limit and Unlimited which are separate <from Being> subsist causally prior to the Mixture. But the Limit and Unlimited which are mixed are more imperfect than the Mixture,” (PT III 10. 42.16-26). Limit and the Unlimited, insofar as they are supra-essential and do not become elements of the mixture, remain inseparable moments of the Gods’

integral individuality, whereas Limit and the Unlimited as elements of an ontic mixture are dependent moments of the mixture, that is, of Being.

The powers of the Gods, therefore, can also be thought of as powers *of Being*. Existentially, that is, according to their *huparxeis*, each God is perfectly simple, their individuality unassailable by any means of analysis: “Only the Gods possess existence defined by singular simplicity, transcending all multiplicity insofar as they are Gods, superior to all division, fragmentation, alienation from or relation to secondary entities and all composition,” (PT I 20. 95.18-22). Existentially, then, each God is utterly unique, since their attributes cannot be considered separately from their integral persons. If these attributes or powers are considered in themselves, however, they constitute a different sort of unity than that which is embodied in each God. It is for this reason that Proclus refers to the second intelligible triad, which unfolds the second moment of the first intelligible triad, as *the first whole*. “For there <in the first triad> everything is prior to parts and to wholeness, while in this <second triad> there are parts and whole, power having revealed itself,” (PT III 25.5-7).

Each God contains all of Being; thus at IT I, 308. 3-6 Proclus says that “each of the Gods is the universe [*to pan*], but in a different way ...

according to a divine peculiarity [*idiotêta*],” and again at I, 312. 21-22 that “each of the Gods is named from his peculiarity [*apo tês idiotêtos*], though each is comprehensive [*periektikon*] of all things.” *Idiotês* is designated by Proclus at *IP* 1049 as a technical term for henadic individuality, that which is expressed among beings by [138] difference, *heterotês*, an intellectually mediated relation. Being is said in a wider and a narrower sense, as I remarked above, and Being in the narrow sense, Being Itself, is the ground of Being in the wider sense and is explicated in it. The richness of content which provides for this explication is the presence to Being and for Being of the manifold of the Gods, which is present in the first place and in its greatest intensity not as a manifold, but as *each* God’s one-to-one relation to all of Being. The ground of Being is therefore that which is in immediate contact, not with a *class* of Gods, like the subordinate hypostases which are not Being-*qua*-Being, but with *each* God, as a unique individual existence (*huparxis*). In this fashion the polycentric manifold of the Gods is present to Being and grounds it to its furthest reaches.

The intelligible order of Gods, it was explained above, does not constitute a multiplicity in the ontological sense: “the intelligible genus of the Gods is unitarily exempt [*exêrêtai* ... *heniaiôs*] from all the other divine orders [*diakosmôn*] ... it transcends

[*ekbebēke*] both universal and particular intelligibles and preexists all intellectual objects, being an unparticipated and divine intelligible,” (PT III 28. 100.4-11). The intelligible genus of the Gods is not itself an intelligible universal because the henads do not participate anything. The Gods, Proclus states, “have no attribute by participation, but all according to existence [*huparxis*] or implicit in their causality [*kat’aitian*],” (ET prop. 118); and elsewhere, “every God is essentialized [*ousiōtai*] in being a God, or rather is supra-essentialized [*hyperousiōtai*], but there is nothing which is participated by him; because the Gods are the most ancient and venerable of all things,” (IT I, 364). In his clearest programmatic statement with respect to the organization of manifolds in general, Proclus explains in the *Elements of Theology* that “for each class [*taxis*] there is a single monad prior to the manifold, which determines for the members [lit. co-ordinates, *tetagmenoī*] their common relation [*hena logon*] to one another and to the whole,” (ET prop. 21, ll. 15-18). And so too for the henads; but because their monad is none other than the One Itself, which neither is, nor is one, the henads are not mediated by the One, but are rather immediately all in each.

Unlike individuals depending upon forms to individuate them, therefore, the henads possess “individuality much more perfect than

the otherness of forms,” (IP 1048). Each God is thus, *qua* God, one of a kind, and the manifold of the henads has a unique structure unlike any other manifold. Hence Proclus refers to “the totality of the divine set [*pas ... theios arithmos*], in virtue of which is the being, or rather pre-being [*proeinai*], of the Gods,” (IP 1212). Thus unlike a manifold of beings, which would be disposed around a single center, the manifold of the henads is polycentric, deriving its collective character simply from the unique individuals who are its members. The very same characteristic, therefore, which makes the henads most *individual* is also that which makes the totality of them most *united*, namely the absence of a substantial mediator. It is, indeed, the emergence among the Gods of the basic structures governing the organization of multiplicities that is the condition of the possibility of such structures operating [139] among beings. Hence Proclus states that Being “receives a multiplicity of henads and of powers and mingles them into one essence,” (PT III 9. 40.6-8). Readers of the *Platonic Theology* who have seen in the procession of Being a process of multiplication, therefore, have gotten it precisely backwards, for this procession actually involves the many Gods coming together into a common, ultimately intellectual space.

It is a misinterpretation of Proclus, moreover, to see in the existence of a multiplicity of individuals a decline from unity. Proclus specifically rejects that “the procession of the whole of things” should come about “through a diminution [*huphesin*], rather than through a superabundance of goodness,” (PT II 7. 50. 21-22). “Diminution” here is that *hupobasis* defined as the production by monads of things “as if from the entirety of their natures but *diminished* for particular instances, their specific character being preserved but becoming more partial in them,” like, for example, intellects from Intellect (IP 746). This process is not to be used to account for procession as a whole.⁷ The One does not produce the totality by “employing power,” (50.25-26) that is, through the activation of potentialities, but rather the One “produces all things by being exempt from all things, and by being unparticipated, similarly generating the first and last of beings,” (50.9-11). It is not just that the One produces all things while remaining transcendent. This would be to render Proclus’s statement banal and void of explanatory power. Rather, it is that the One’s transcendence—that is, individuality’s

⁷ Contra Trouillard, *La Mystagogie de Proclus* (112-113), who sees the “modèle” for “le passage de l’Ineffable à la totalité,” in “la dérivation que Proclus appelle *kath’hupobasin* (par marche dégressive), qui est la génération des parties par le tout.”

transcendence—is the very thing that brings production about through the very irreducibility of the existential individual to objective definition.

This tension between individual *huparxis* and universalizable potencies *produces* Being, but it also goes along with a decline in the *intensity* of existence for beings, for ontic individuals “do not have a simple essence, nor uniform [*monoeideis*] powers, but are composed out of opposites,” (PT I 18. 85.18-20) and “subsist from adversaries,” (85.24). Our existential individuality, which is to some degree in common with the Gods, is obscured, in effect, by our *particularity*, which consists in the *polemos* (86.8) by which “things coming to be in a foreign place [*en allotria chôra*], by introducing the universal, dominate the physical substrate by means of the form,” (86.5-6). In this we are different from the Gods, of whom “each is simply self-sufficient goodness ... not according to participation or illumination or likeness possessing self-sufficiency [*to autarkes*] and total perfection but just by being what s/he is,” (PT I 19. 91.13-16) for “there is nothing in them which is not one [*hen*] and existence [*huparxis*],” (92.16-17). “The peculiarity of existence [*idiotês tês huparxeôs*],” Proclus explains, “diversifies [*exallattet*] the procession of each goodness,” (91.10-11) that is, of each God. The procession of Being is determined by the

“peculiarities” of just the [140] Gods that happen to be, but these peculiarities are also reserved in some sense from that procession and hence conserved in it. In reserving their supra-essential individuality, the Gods allow to the intellectual domain, the domain of what we would call ontology, the realm of the Mixed *qua* Mixed, that degree of self-sufficiency that it possesses.⁸

Because the second and third intelligible triads actually express the nature of Gods, not simply *qua* Gods, but *also* as members of the intelligible-and-intellectual class and the intellectual class respectively, a discussion of those triads would be appropriate to an account of the activities of the Gods in those orders. Just to recognize this is already to take a major step toward the correct understanding of the *Platonic Theology*. What belongs properly to the discussion of the intelligible Gods is to explain what is involved in a God “proceeding to the intelligible summit.” What does a God do in proceeding to the illumination of Being,

⁸ “One calls the intellectual cosmos self-sufficient insofar as it has established the universal good [*to holon agathon*] in eternity [*en aióni*], comprehends at once [*homou*] its whole blessedness, and lacks nothing, because all life and intelligence are present with it, and nothing is deficient, nor does it desire anything as absent. This indeed is self-sufficient in its own class [*en têi heautou taxei*], yet it falls short of the self-sufficiency of the Gods,” (PT I. 19. 91.1-7).

regardless of the specific region of Being that God illuminates? For in general one must take the higher planes of Being as the sites of a *more universal activity*. Limit, Proclus explains, is “divine existence”, the Unlimited, “generative power”, and the Mixed is “the essence proceeding from these,” (PT III 27. 93.15-18). Elsewhere, he says that the mixture “is a union [*henôsis*] unto [*eis*] the hypostasis of Being,” (PT III. 9. 37.4-5). What happens to a God, who is supra-essential, in becoming or acquiring essence? If the essence proceeds from the *huparxis*, or existential individuality of the God, and from the powers of that God, not power in the sense of force, but in the sense of *properties* of that individual, and this is indeed what the first two moments of the first intelligible triad signify, then the “essence” of the God is the reconciliation of the opposition between this existential character and the properties which are *potential universality*, with which the God is “pregnant”, as Proclus frequently terms it.⁹ The differentiation of powers from the integrity of the divine person is the thinking, as it were, by the God of his/her attributes, which creates the space of reflection in which beings dwell. It is

⁹ E.g., at PT I 24. 108.22-23, where the wisdom [*sophos*] of the Gods, which corresponds to the second moment of the first intelligible triad, is said to be “pregnant with intelligible light and the very first forms [*eidê*].”

in this sense that the opposition of existence and powers is *intellectual*.

Proclus explains the difference between thinking in humans and in the Gods in the following manner: for us, knowledge is a coming-to-plenitude, while in the Gods, intellect is generated *from* their plenitude, “for the progression in them is not from an imperfect state to a perfect one, but from the existence perfect in itself [*ek tês autotelous huparxeôs*] comes the power that engenders lesser entities [141] [*hê gonimos tôn hupodeesterôn dunamis*],” (PT I 23. 105.14-19). Already in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (247a5-e7), we see the Gods assembled in a symposium seemingly the model for the human symposium in the dialogue of the same name: assembled for a banquet, the Gods feast themselves upon the intelligible attributes primarily instantiated in none other than themselves. This divine symposium, as it were, is constitutive of the noetico-noeric organization, but has its ground in what each of the Gods does for him/herself, namely cognizing his/her own properties, which alone makes it possible that we might do the same, for according to Proclus “if all intellect is intelligible to itself, it is through the intelligible Gods that it possesses this characteristic,” (PT III 28. 100.15-16).

I spoke above of the procession of the Gods into Being as involving the production

for each of an ontic “double”. This doubling has its primary expression in the third moment of the first intelligible triad, in which Being “receives a multiplicity of henads and of powers and mingles them into one essence,” (PT III 9. 40.6-8). Proclus’s account of the third intelligible triad, however, which pertains strictly speaking to the disposition of an intellectual God, explicates the Gods’ presence to Being which was expressed universally in the third moment of the first triad. In the third moment of the first triad, the moment of the Mixed, each God is, immediately, Being Itself, whose components, Limit and the Unlimited, are simply the existence and power(s) of each God. In the third intelligible triad, Proclus explains, “unitary multiplicity [to heniaion plêthos],” that is, the multiplicity of the Gods, “is conjoined to the multiplicity of beings,” (PT III 26. 89.16-17). A multiplicity of henads and a multiplicity of beings are present in one ideal space, a space of mediation; hence where Proclus referred to the second intelligible triad as *wholeness*, the third intelligible triad is *allness*, totality (PT III 20. 71.8-10). The One and Being confronting one another, so to speak, “the One and Being generate a *second henad conjoined with a part of Being*,” and Being “generates a more partial being suspended from a more partial henad,” this being the division, *diairesis*, of the One and the distinguishing, *diakrisis*, of the One and Being (89.22-26).

The generation of a “second henad” together with a more partial being refers to the emergence of specific levels of Being from the activities of the Gods, *activity* (*energeia*) being the third moment of all triads taking their form from the first intelligible triad: each God is existence, power, and activity. Their activities, which we know of through myths conveyed to poets through divine inspiration,¹⁰ [142] allow us to classify the Gods according to the specific planes of Being constituted through their illumination. It is this symbolic action through which the Gods, in effect, bring forth and resolve the latent alterity in themselves. The Gods are primordially distinct by virtue of each possessing his/her unique *idiotês*. This individuality is not originally given diacritically,

¹⁰ In his *Cratylus* commentary Proclus characterizes the works of poets such as Homer as the product of souls “at one time operating enthusiastically about the Gods and at another time operating according to science,” (71). At IC 87 he characterizes the “enthusiastic” component further as coming about through a variant form of *anamnêsis* or recollection, namely, “through the love of a divine nature, and the recollection of the *huparxis* of deity.” This recollection of the Gods refers to the account in the *Phaedrus* of the soul’s pre-natal experience as a “follower” of one God or another, the recollection of which influences the soul throughout its embodied life and plays an important role in its intellectual development (note in this respect that “beauty” emanates from the third intelligible triad, i.e., from an intellectual God, one who places him/herself in proximity to souls).

negatively, holistically, but instead with primitive positivity. Explicating this primitive identity, however, manifests alterity through the Gods' powers, as well as through the presence of all the other Gods in each one.

Of previous treatments of the nature of the first intelligible triad, the most perspicacious and insightful is clearly Gerd van Riel's.¹¹ Van Riel answers in the negative the question posed in the title, and also recognizes that Limit and the Unlimited "ne sont pas réellement distincts au niveau intelligible," (428) but does not go on to explain the significance of this, for he does not acknowledge authentic individuality in the henad, seeing in the *idiotês* of the God "une caractéristique typique" (424). I would argue that the primary *idiotês* is not a type but rather a unique individuating property. Van Riel recognizes that "unité (*henôsis*) et spécificité (*idiotês*) constituent les *existentia* des hénades," (ibid.) but does not recognize that in the henads these are one and the same, for the "unity" of the henads is their *individuality*. The *idiotês* of the God is thus a primitive character, not "une place particulière dans la procession causale," (ibid.). To give *idiotês* a solely classificatory sense is to dismiss Proclus' commitment to the

¹¹ "Les hénades de Proclus sont-elles composées de limite et d'illimité?", *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 85 (2001), 417-432.

reality of unique divine persons. As Van Riel acknowledges, the exact number of the henads is only knowable to the Gods, although it can be determined *a priori* to be finite (422 n. 30). But since the number of ontic classes *is* known to us, the henads cannot therefore be individuated in relation to the classes of beings, as the “typical characters” or “regulative principles” for those classes (426). In fact, it is rather the case that *singular* hypostases participate in *classes of Gods*; thus, for example, *ET* prop. 163 defines the intellectual class of Gods as follows: “Every manifold of henads participated by the unparticipated Intellect is intellectual.” The number of henads is not fixed to the number of ontic classes because “the individuality of each of them [the henads] is a much more perfect thing than the difference of the Forms,” (IP 1048). Hence Proclus, except for purposes of exemplification, speaks of classes of henads and leaves to the sacred discourses of theologians the accounts of individual Gods. Reducing the henads to logical counters both fails to do justice to Proclus’ theology and also, more importantly, mystifies the constitution of Being, inasmuch as it is from out of polycentric henadic individuality than ontic unity—formal, universal, mediated—comes to be.

[143] In summary, I have argued that the intelligible Gods are to be understood, not as a discrete set of Gods, but, according to the

broad sense of Being, as *all the Gods* in their primary disposition as a polycentric manifold, and that accordingly, the divine activity that generates the procession of Being as recounted in the *Platonic Theology* is not a process in which a multiplicity of Gods come to be from one, but rather a process in which a common intellectual space comes about *among* the Gods as a resolution of the opposition between unique individuality and universalizable potencies—that is, between existence and power—in *each* God. That this opposition is resolved in symbolic action in turn grounds Proclus' project of interpreting myth as the bringing forth of the moments of Being by the Gods. In my interpretation, Being is brought forth, in effect, through the emergence of self- and other-relatedness among the Gods. In the reading I have suggested for the *Platonic Theology*, Being comes to be through the self-analysis of ultimate individuals which results in the constitution of a monocentric order from out of polycentric henadic autarchy through the generation of classes or kinds in the expression of power(s). The categories from which the dialectic of the *Platonic Theology* begins, therefore, may be in one sense the most general and hence most empty; but only by willfully ignoring that they also *stand for* concrete existential unities, could this unfolding be taken as in any respect "external".

THE SECOND INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD AND THE INTELLIGIBLE-INTELLECTIVE GODS*

ABSTRACT: Continuing the systematic henadological interpretation of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* begun in "The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus" (*Méthexis* 21, 2008, pp. 131-143), the present article treats of the basic characteristics of intelligible-intellective (or noetico-noeric) multiplicity and its roots in henadic individuality. Intelligible-intellective multiplicity (the hypostasis of Life) is at once a universal organization of Being in its own right, and also transitional between the polycentric henadic manifold, in which each individual is immediately productive of absolute Being, and the formal intellective organization, which is monocentrically and diacritically disposed. Intelligible-intellective multiplicity is generated from the dyadic relationship of henads to their power(s), the phase of henadic individuality expressed in the second intelligible triad, and is mediated, unlike the polycentric manifold, but not by identity and difference, like the intellective organization. Instead, the hypostasis of Life is constituted by ideal motility and

* This essay was originally published in *Méthexis* 23 (2010), pp. 137-157. The pagination from this publication appears in brackets.

spatiality, figural dispositions, and the intersubjective relations depicted in the divine symposium of Plato's *Phaedrus*.

In his *Platonic Theology* Proclus exhibits the structure of Being as a series of planes of formation constituted by the activity of successive classes of deities. In a previous article,¹ I argued that the immanent logic of this procession, or *proödos*, of Being is that it explicates the fundamental nature of the Gods as *unique individuals* with *universalizable powers*, and that the dialectic of individuality and commonality in the Gods is the engine of procession. I also offered an interpretation in this light of the structure of the primary plane of Being, what Proclus calls the three intelligible triads, as constituted solely by the activity of individual Gods, while the succeeding planes of Being are constituted by Gods acting, as it were, in concert.

In this reading, the first intelligible triad—schematically consisting of Limit, the Unlimited, and the Mixed, from *Philebus* 16ce—

¹ "The Intelligible Gods in the Platonic Theology of Proclus," *Méthexis* 21, 2008, pp. 131-143. See also on my general interpretation of the henadology, "Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold," *Dionysius* 23, 2005, pp. 83-103; "The Gods and Being in Proclus," *Dionysius* 26, 2008, pp. 93-114.

expresses the activity of every God (or Goddess) as such, and hence the so-called “intelligible order of Gods” [138] actually encompasses *all* the Gods (“Every participated divinity is intelligible inasmuch as s/he fulfills the participant,” (PT III 21. 75. 2-3).² I say “so-called” because Proclus indicates the intelligible class of Gods is structurally unlike other classes: “The intelligible genus of Gods transcends unitarily [*heniaiôs*] all the other divine orders [*diakosmôn*] ... It transcends both universal and particular intelligibles and preexists all objects of intellection as an unparticipated and divine intelligible,” (PT III 28. 100. 4-11). Note here that while the intelligible *Gods* are participated, their *genus*, as a singular intelligible object, is *unparticipated*, meaning that it is not, in itself, formally intelligible. The sense of *heniaiôs* here, I have argued, is essentially that the intelligible genus exhibits in a greater degree the property associated with the One, namely *individuality* or *uniqueness*, because the intelligible genus of the Gods encompasses each of them in the purity of their unique individuality, or *idiotês*. Hence Proclus states that “there is one henad to each intelligible triad; a multiplicity of henads is discernible first in the first rank of the

² *Théologie Platonicienne*. 6 vols. Ed. and trans. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-97. [PT]

intelligible-and-intellectual,” (IP 1091).³ Proclus establishes thus a one-to-one correspondence between henads or Gods and intelligible triads, not a head count of henads, which would add up to three, a quantity it would be most perverse to claim is not a “multiplicity”.

Within the overall structure of the intelligible quasi-class, the second and third intelligible triads express more particular patterns of activity than the first. As Proclus explains, “the first triad is an intelligible God primarily [*prôtós*], that which comes after it an intelligible-intellective God, and the third an intellective God,” (PT III 14. 51. 9-11). The second intelligible triad thus expresses the pattern of activity of Gods belonging to the intelligible-intellective (or ‘intelligible-and-intellectual’, ‘noetico-noeric’) order, which is the first true ‘multiplicity’ (*pléthos*) of Gods, that is, the most universal classification of Gods which has the structure of a proper class according to the definition Proclus supplies in the *Elements of Theology* (prop. 21). The third triad, which will be the subject of a future essay, expresses the pattern of activity of Gods belonging to the intellective (noeric) order, as

³ In *Platonis Parmenidem*. Ed. V. Cousin. Paris: Durand, 1864. Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1961. [IP]; *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*. Trans. J. M. Dillon and G. R. Morrow. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

well as, by extension, the infra-intellective orders (hypercosmic, etc.). The present essay investigates the nature of the intelligible-intellective Gods, first as revealed in the abstract by the discussion of the second intelligible triad in the third book of the *Platonic Theology*, and then in concrete fashion through the activities of Gods of the intelligible-intellective class in the fourth book of the *Platonic Theology*. [139]

1. THE SECOND INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD AS A UNIVERSAL ACTIVITY OF THE GODS

The structure of each intelligible triad consists of a first, supra-essential (*hyperousios*) moment, which expresses that each henad or God is superior to Being, a second moment, still technically supra-essential, which represents the henad's *power*—or powers, since these are the latent multiplicity that contrasts with the singularity and individuality of the henad—and a third moment which represents a particular ontic product. In the case of the first intelligible triad, this ontic product is simply Being Itself. Every henad therefore has a unique, one-to-one correspondence to Being as whole. Hence *IT* I, 308: “each of the Gods is the universe, but after a different manner”; *ibid.*, 312 “each of the Gods is named from his individuality [*idiotês*],

though each is comprehensive of all things,”⁴ and systematically, *IP* 1069: “each participated One is a principle of unification [*henôtikon*] for all Being ... and each of the Gods is nothing else than the participated One.”

The ontic product of the second intelligible triad is Life (*Zôê*). This is not the life associated with souls, but rather a universal intelligible principle which all of the various properties Proclus attributes to the second intelligible triad can be regarded as expressing. The most important properties of the second intelligible triad are *motion* (*kinêsis*), *measurement* (*metrêsis*), and *wholeness* (*holotês*). Intelligible Life, Proclus says, is the motion within Being, that is, the motion *implicit* within Being⁵: “If thus Being abides transcendent in the primary mixture,” i.e., the product of the first intelligible triad, “nevertheless it already [*édê*] proceeds and is dyadically engendered from the monad, so there is motion in relation to it [*peri auto*] and there being motion it is necessary that there be intelligible Life,” (*PT* III 12. 46. 13-16).

The motion that is intelligible Life makes explicit a procession implicit in the first

⁴ *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*. 3 vols. Ed. E. Diehl. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-6. Reprint, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965. [II]

⁵ Cf. *Sophist* 254 D & sqq.

intelligible triad, because Being was produced from an implicit dyad, the implicit opposition between *huparxis*, individual existence, and *dunamis*, universalizable potency, in the henad. Thus Damascius (*De Princ.* I. 118. 9-17)⁶ speaks of the distinction between *huparxis* and *dunamis* in “the First” as the “minimum distinction” (*hêkista prosdiorismon*). I characterize the dyad as implicit in the first intelligible triad, however, because it is not itself the ontic product of that triad. In the second intelligible triad, this minimum distinction has developed into *self-relation*: “The second triad is a God possessing prolific power [*gonimon dunamin echôn*] and revealing [*ekphainôn*] secondary Being from himself and in relation to himself [*aph’heautou kai peri heautou*],” (PT III 12. 46. 20-22). The [140] power that in the first intelligible triad was only implicitly distinct from the henad’s integral individuality is, as seen in the second intelligible triad, something the deity *possesses* and hence *relates* to him/herself.

The God *as such*, when seen through the lens, as it were, of the second intelligible triad, relates to him/herself, mediates him/herself; the *class* of Gods who operate according to the second intelligible triad perform a mediating and relating function for the other Gods who

⁶ *Traité des Premiers Principes*. 3 vols. Ed. and trans. L. G. Westerink and J. Combès. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986-91.

proceed with them and after them and for the cosmos they constitute together. An important concept Proclus uses frequently with respect to the intelligible-intellective order is *sunecheia*, ‘continuity’, which in its verbal form has both the connotation of forming a spatial connection between things and of sustaining or conserving them. The second intelligible triad, Proclus explains

sustains/connects [*sunechei*] the middle [or ‘mediation’, *mesotêta*] of the intelligibles; it is filled from the higher unity and fills what comes after it [i.e., the third triad] with intelligible powers; it is uniformly measured from there [i.e., the henadic realm] and measures the third by its power; it abides fixedly in the first [triad] while establishing its successor in itself. (48. 1-6)

These determinations sound very external, and yet the spatiality of the second triad, which comes to fulfillment through the activities of the intelligible-intellective order in forming the “supracelestial place” of the *Phaedrus*, the gathering place or *agora* of the Gods, expresses the same notion as the more ideal determinations which follow, just as the supracelestial ‘place’ is also the ‘site’ whence originate the primary virtues of Science,

Temperance and Justice and the institution (*thesmos*) of Adrasteia (on all of which, see below, sec. 2.3). These faculties arise immediately from the disposition of perfect individuals (the Gods) in relation to one another, and hence to the ‘space’ itself in which that relationality is posited.

The spatiality in the intelligible-intellective order is a product of the ideal or ‘spiritual’ motion embodied in it,⁷ as is what is probably the most important ontic product of this order, namely *number* (see section 2.2 below). As the motion in the second intelligible triad can be seen as a concretization of the dyadic relation essential to it, so too the products of this motion in the intelligible-intellective order can be grasped in either continuous or discrete form. Since the intelligible-intellective order is the first real *organization* (*diakosmos*) of the Gods, the first *unified* manifold, it institutes number, as well as the corollaries of distribution and of divine intersubjectivity, from the factual disposition of the Gods in relation to one another. Number is the discrete product of this process, while the Platonic ‘heaven’ is the continuum expressing it. Proclus explains that just as the sensible heaven compresses on all

⁷ On the concept of “spiritual motion”, see Stephen Gersh, *Kinêsis Akinêtos: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*.

sides the elements of the cosmos (*Tim.* 58 A), leaving no void, and thus is the cause of continuity, coherence and sympathy for them, [141] so too “that intellectual heaven binds all the manifolds of beings into an indivisible [*ameriston*] communion, illuminating each with an appropriate portion [*moiran*] of connection [*sunochês*],” (*PT* IV 20. 59. 18-60. 1). The intelligible ‘heaven’, therefore, is not a discrete place, but rather the connecting and synthesizing continuum of intelligibility itself, the ‘medium’ in which the intelligible as such is immanent.

Relation in the second intelligible triad, however, is still essentially dyadic, and hence self-relation, the crucial systematic dimensions of which are *measurement* and *wholeness*. “The second triad,” Proclus states, “is the immediate [*proseches*] measure of all beings and is coordinate [*suntetagmenon*] with that which is measured,” (*PT* III 18. 59. 16-7). If we read this in the light of statements cited earlier to the effect that each of the Gods *is* the universe, but in a unique way (*IT* I, 308), is comprehensive of all things (*ibid.*, 312) and is a principle of unification for all Being (*IP* 1069), then it should be evident that the second triad expresses an aspect of the function of *every* God, rather than being itself some discrete deity. It is *primarily* a deity of the intelligible-intellective class (*PT* III 14. 51. 9-11), however, because it is the activities of this class of

Gods—including, e.g., Ouranos and the Orphic ‘Night’ (*Nux*)—that preeminently exemplify this function.

The measuring function of the Gods is closely bound up with the concept of ‘eternity’ (*aiôn*), one of the most important attributes of the second intelligible triad. Much of what Proclus says about eternity is drawn from the *Timaeus* (37d-38b), in which the relationship between eternity and temporality is the foundation for that between the model or paradigm of the cosmos and the cosmos itself. In Proclus’ reading, the relationship between eternity and temporality constitutes in effect a prior plane of formation for the cosmos distinct from the intellective, which renders *aiôn* itself structurally homologous to the intelligible-intellective plane of Being. Propositions 52-55 of the *Elements of Theology* discuss eternity as a measure. Here *aiôn* is distinguished as “that which measures by the whole” in contrast to time (*chronos*), which “measures by parts”; “every *aiôn*,” he explains, measures by “simultaneous application of the whole measure to the thing measured,” (prop. 54). On the level of the second intelligible triad, we are not yet dealing with a set of henads disposed toward each other as parts of a whole, but with *each* God in his/her ultimacy, as adequate to the whole of Being. Wholeness itself will be the final function of the second

intelligible triad we shall discuss, but for now, let us note rather the plurality of “eternities” mentioned here. We read further at prop. 117 that “every God is a measure of beings.” That there are a multiplicity of such “eternities” indicates again that *aiôn*, rather than being a particular henad, is nothing other than the power of *each* henad to act as a measure of the whole of Being.

The second triad “is measured uniquely [*monoeidôs*]” from the first triad, but “measures the third triad by the power of itself,” (PT III 13. 48. 4-5). Each *aiôn* is at once measured by the unique, supra-essential henad it represents, [142] and measures the third intelligible triad, which is the paradigm of the intellectual cosmos and of the activities of intellectual Gods as such, and which is for its own part referred to as “sole-of-its-genus” (*monogenes*). The transition between the second and third intelligible triads, and by extension between the intelligible-intellective and the intellective planes, is the transition from the Whole, *holon*, to the All, *pan*, the latter being a principal attribute of the third triad and a key determination of the intellective plane of formation: “The All participates the Whole and is a multiplicity [*plêthos*] whole-limbed [*holomeles*]⁸ from multiple parts,” (PT III 20. 71. 22-23). While the third triad is thus an organic unity, a system

⁸ Accepting Saffrey and Westerink’s emendation.

or organization, the second triad is essentially dyadic (*PT* III 18. 58. 18-23). It is the whole consisting of the One and Being (*ibid.* 25. 87. 8-9), “the continuity/coherence [*sunochês*] illuminating [*ellampomenês*] Being from the henad,” (27. 95. 5).

‘Illumination’ (*ellampsis* or *katalampsis*), the technical term in Proclus for the direct formative power the Gods exercise upon Being, will be discussed at more length in sec. 2.3; for now, we may note that its significance lies particularly in its asymmetry. That is, a certain class of Gods ‘illuminates’ a certain region of Being; as a result, that region of Being ‘participates’ that class of deities. However, the hierarchical disposition of Being is a hierarchy of participation, not of illumination. All Gods are supra-essential, that is, prior to Being; the practical value of this is that a God ‘illuminates’ any particular region of Being immediately, i.e., not by way of those prior to it. By contrast, a region of Being necessarily participates all the prior ontic principles and, by extension, all the prior classes of Gods. This is a result of the fact that, for Proclus, what regions of Being a particular God illuminates is to be determined hermeneutically, whereas the structure of Being is determined dialectically.

Through the function of measurement, the second intelligible triad constitutes the ontic determination of *wholeness*. Mereology, the

doctrine of wholes and parts, can be seen as the heart of Neoplatonic ontology. Prop. 66 of the *Elements of Theology* states that “every being is related to every other either as a whole or as a part or by identity or by difference.”⁹ But of these four relations that exhaustively determine beings, identity and difference are ultimately subordinated to relations of whole and part. For identity and difference are simply the positing of beings in relation to, that is, mediated by, classes of which they are or are not members. And according to prop. 74, “every specific form is a whole, as being composed of a number of individuals [*ek pleionôn huphestêken*] each of which goes to make up the Form,” while at IP 1105 he states that “those things that make up the definition of each form are assuredly parts of it,” and hence forms are wholes. Furthermore, “even the atomic individual is a whole as being atomic, although it is not a Form,” (i.e. it is a whole with only abstract or dependent parts) [143] from which Proclus concludes that Wholeness is the more extensive predicate than Form, and thus ontologically prior. This subordination of formal determination to mereological determination is expressed by the subordination of the third intelligible triad to the second intelligible triad. Only “Primal

⁹ *The Elements of Theology*. Ed. and trans. E. R. Dodds. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963. [ET]

Being”, the radical Being that is the third moment (the product) of the first intelligible triad, is prior to Wholeness according to prop. 73, for being is predicable even of parts *qua* parts. Of course, if *to prôtôs on* is prior to Wholeness, the henads must *a fortiori* be prior to Wholeness as well, for “every God is above Being, above Life, and above Intelligence” (prop. 115).

The Gods are prior to ontology, and hence to mereology, but by virtue of that fact, they generate by their very mode of existence the mereological structures that determine beings, and the second intelligible triad expresses this activity. There are three modes of wholeness: the whole-before-the-parts, the whole-of-parts, and the whole-in-the-part (*ET* prop. 67). In the first place, these three modes derive from the three primary aspects of each God’s nature that are expressed in the first intelligible triad, namely existential individuality, conceptually distinct power(s), and ontic productivity (*PT* III 25. 88. 15-23). In the ontic functions of the three modes of wholeness, moreover, the operation of the second triad can be discerned on three distinct planes:

through the wholeness prior to parts,
eternity [*aiôn*] measures the henads of
the divine <classes> [*tôn theiôn*] who

transcend beings; but through the whole-of-parts, it measures the henads coordinate with [*suntetagmenas*] beings; and through the whole-in-the-part, it measures all beings and whole [or “universal”] essences. For these being parts of the divine henads, they possess dividedly [*meristôs*] what pre-exists unitarily [*heniaiôs*] in those. (PT III 27. 94. 26–95. 4)

Through the moment of self-measurement, then, the henads organize themselves into classes, which have as their ontic product, first, so many wholes-before-the-parts or *unparticipated monads* or transcendent universals; second, so many classes equivocally containing Gods and beings (e.g., intellectual Gods and intellects) due to participation (immanent universals); and third, so many beings participating ontic principles as a result of divine activity (concrete universals). Beings experience the inherence in them of the wholes in which they take part, by taking up the whole into themselves. In addition, thus, to their participation in the ontic principles giving them substance, beings experience their own relative divinity as virtual parts of the henads, not in the sense that henads have parts, but in the sense that each henad is generative of the whole of Being, that is, the *wholeness* of Being or Being’s subsistence *as a*

whole. Beings access the deities *through* such a whole, that is, through the *aiôn*-function of each deity through which it is a measure of and by the whole, in the sense of *ET* prop. 54. In other words, beings are the ‘parts’ of the henads inasmuch as the henads measure them.

The whole through which beings access the henads also refers to the declension of the powers of the Gods (cf. *ET* prop. 140). This declension, which is prior [144] to the intellective declension according to which, for instance, universal Intellect generates particular intellects, is the work of the second intelligible triad. At *IP* 1092 Proclus remarks that the One and Being are “pluralized separately”; this process is explained at *PT* III 27. 98f, in which “the parts contained in the intelligible multiplicity” are said to consist of the conjugations, as it were, of *the One-that-is* and *Being-which-is-one*. The intelligible multiplicity referred to here is *not* the multiplicity contained in the intelligible-intellective order, which is a multiplicity of henads in relation to each other. Instead, this is the multiplicity through which the henads propagate themselves in the lower orders, a *vertical*, so to speak, rather than a *horizontal* multiplicity, for the One and Being generate, through their four possible combinations—a single relationship taken four ways—Gods, angels, daimons and mortal animals, formed respectively by (1) the One-

that-is, in relation to the One-that-is; (2) the One-that-is, in relation to Being-that-is-one; (3) Being-that-is-one, in relation to the One-that-is; and (4) Being-that-is-one, in relation to Being-that-is-one. This system is the whole composed of the One and Being, the systematic relationship between the two expressing the relationship between the Gods and the cosmos in abstract terms, while in concrete terms the product of their conjugation is the chain connecting each God to the lowest Beings, a chain composed of, in the first place, the 'illumination' by that God of whatever particular orders of Being (manifested in myth and iconography), and then by angels, daimons and mortal beings (e.g., heroes) depending from that God and acting as conduits for subsequent beings to contact them. One must bear in mind in this respect that the Intellect, e.g., illuminated by the intellectual Gods is itself a "real being," *ontôs on*, not an intellect in the sense that its own participants are. The further procession of such a hypostasis depends on the extension of divine activity represented by such beings as angels and daimons.

2. THE INTELLIGIBLE-INTELLECTIVE ORDER AS A SPECIFIC CATEGORY OF GODS

The intelligible-intellective class of Gods derives its name from being at once subject *and* object of (divine) thought, while the intelligible Gods are solely objects and the intellective Gods solely subjects (IV 1. 6. 10-12). Hence the intelligible-intellective class is not only the first discrete divine manifold, but also a mythical *topos*, as we can see from the presence in it of deities such as Night and Ouranos. In the intelligible order we see the Gods each alone, for all are in each one, and as such they are without relation except for the *potential* relations their powers embody. Proclus speaks, for example, of Gods in the relationship of father and son, say Zeus and Apollo:

Whereas a father in this [i.e., our] realm ... is not first 'for himself', and only then father of someone else, but he is what he is solely 'for another'. But in that realm [i.e., among the Gods] any paternal cause is primarily 'for itself', completing its own essence, and only then [145] bestows an emanation from itself upon things secondary to it, and any offspring exists 'for itself', and only

then derives from something else ...
Such an entity 'There, then, is non-
relational, though productive of a
relation. (IP 936)

That Zeus is the father of Apollo, then, does not mean that Zeus pre-exists him, since each exists "for himself" *prior* to the relation. This is because the relation subsists primarily not as a single relation with two terms, but rather as a power in Zeus of being-father-to-Apollo, on the one hand, and as a power in Apollo of being-son-of-Zeus on the other. Only the intellective activation of these potencies produces a reciprocal disposition, or *diakrasis*, of Zeus and Apollo toward one another, the significance of which is to found some region of Being.

It is with the intelligible-intellective class that this activation of relations appropriately begins, inasmuch as the second intelligible triad and the intelligible-intellective order both serve to unpack the second moment of the first intelligible triad, power or potency as such. Accordingly we find at the ultimate stage of this process, in the intelligible-intellective order, the gathering place or *agora* of the Gods; the emergence of number as the most basic property possessed by collections of objects; and the emergence of the primary virtues as the properties of divine intersubjective relations.

2.1. PLACE AND PROCESS IN THE INTELLIGIBLE-INTELLECTIVE ORDER

All of the divine classifications discussed in the *Platonic Theology* share the common structure of the ontological determinations derived from the properties denied of the First Principle in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. That is, the Gods are classified here according to the *positive* ontic products of their *negative* perfections. What they, as supra-essential entities, are *not*, is what they are *causes* of for Being. This is not the only manner in which the Gods can be classified. An alternative philosophical (i.e., formal) classification is given in the *Elements of Theology*, props. 151-8. In addition, 'theological' (i.e., hieratic) sources such as the *Chaldean Oracles* sometimes speak in terms of classes of Gods rather than individuals. Different classificatory schemata serve different purposes; the classification according to the negations of the *Parmenides* is uniquely suited for generating the series of ontic hypostases.¹⁰ Accordingly, the intelligible-intellective order corresponds to the

¹⁰ Whereas Annick Charles-Saget has, correctly I believe, analyzed the classifications from *El. Theol.* props. 151-8 as expressing the theological conditions of the possibility of the philosophical system as such (p. 250-2).

Parmenidean negations of *multiplicity*, *whole and parts*, and *shape* or figure (*Parm.* 137c4–138a1). [146]

Proclus accords to the intelligible-intellective order, however, the unique parallel structure of a series of ‘places’ (*topoi*) or proto-spatial determinations; it is necessary to qualify them in this fashion because it is explicit that none of them are sensible. These determinations are drawn from the *Phaedrus*: the supracelestial place, the celestial circuit and the subcelestial arch. Within the supracelestial place there is in addition the “Plain of Truth” and the “meadow” that nourishes the best part of the soul (*Phaedrus* 248 B 8-10). Proclus explains the supracelestial ‘place’ in the following terms:

The supracelestial place is indeed intelligible, and thus Plato calls it <a> real being [*ousian ontôs ousan*] and object of contemplation [*theaton*] for the intellect of the soul, but it is also the one comprehension and unity [*mia periochê kai henôsis*] of the intellectual Gods ... Plato calls it a ‘place’ [*topos*] inasmuch as it is the receptacle of the paternal causes and brings forth and produces the generative powers of the Gods into the hypostasis of secondary natures. For having called matter also a

‘place’, he calls it the mother and nurse of the *logoi* proceeding into it from Being and the paternal cause. (IV 10. 31. 23-6; IV. 10. 33. 19-24)

Being, Proclus explains, is that which “receives a multiplicity of henads and of powers mingled into one essence,” (III 9. 40. 7-8). This receptacle is an object of contemplation for the soul, however, in the form of the supracelestial place. The distinction here is that where the former is a product of analysis, the latter is a locus of divine illumination. That the Gods gather in such a place prior to their intellective—that is, cosmogonic—activities is revealed in myth and iconography; such is the Olympus of Hellenic theology, or any of the divine locales from other theologies. The ‘unity’ or ‘comprehension’ embodied in the supracelestial place is thus not that of a class under a concept, but rather of a *pantheon* joined by *narrative* bonds. The actions of the intellective and subsequent orders of Gods are captured for human contemplation in myth; this is myth’s function for Proclus. As the staging place for these narrative actions, the supracelestial place also expresses the unity of the pantheon itself. This unity is not the same as the unity of the set obtained by quantifying over “All the Gods”, and hence the *number* of pantheons of Gods is not ontologically (i.e., dialectically) determined.

Rather, a pantheon is in effect for Proclus a co-emergent set of deities linked by narratives themselves generative of intellectual structure for the souls who participate them through contemplation and ritual (theurgic) action. In this fashion, it is no longer necessary to see Proclus' recourse to myth as external to his philosophical project, as allegorical embellishment; rather, myth is a phenomenon basic to Being's procession, the proto-intellectual ground of which must in itself be explicated.

In addition to these spatial determinations and the ontological determinations derived from the *Parmenides*, Proclus alludes to other ways in which the functions of the intelligible-intellective order may be conceived. He describes the celestial circuit, or *periphora* (*Phaedrus* 247c1), the central moment of the order, as a *process* of intellectual perception shared in by Gods and souls alike: "The circuit in the *Phaedrus* is intellectual perception [*noêsis*], through which [147] all the Gods and all the souls obtain the vision [*theas*] of the intelligibles," (IV 5. 21. 27 - 22. 2). Ouranos, the central divinity in this order for the Hellenic theology, thus embodies "the intellectual perception of the primary intelligibles," (ibid., 21. 21) and on account of this "possesses the one bond of the divine orders [*diakosmoi*]." He is the "father of the intellective class,

engendered by the kings before him, whom he is indeed said to *see*,” (22. 4-6), referring to *Crat.* 396 B 9, which interprets the name of Ouranos as *hê eis ta anô horôsa opsis*, “the sight which sees the things above”. As an intelligible-intellective deity, and hence as both *subject* and *object* of intellection, Ouranos has a viewpoint, so to speak, on the Gods of his pantheon emerging prior to him as well as being an object of the cognition of those deities who emerge after him. Before and after here have of course a purely ideal sense; they express the hierarchy existing between the different moments of *Being* produced by the activities of these Gods. Furthermore, the process of intellection in which Ouranos and other intelligible-intellective Gods are engaged is, in accord with the nature of the second intelligible triad, an eternal motion rather than a discrete event. In the same way, ‘heaven’ is for Proclus not a discrete place, but the connecting, synthesizing continuum of intelligibility (IV 20. 59. 18ff), a coherence supplied by reciprocal divine intellection. The nature of intelligible-intellective Gods is in this fashion to create an environment for mythic actions, which are divine works constitutive of discrete planes of Being for beings that participate in them either through ritual or contemplation.

2.2. NUMBER, MEREOLOGY, AND SHAPE

Proclus offers a different way altogether of conceiving the function of the intelligible-intellective order in characterizing the three intelligible-intellective triads (i.e., the order's differentiated ontic product) as number (*arithmos*), whole (*to holon*) and perfection (*to teleion*) (IV 27. 78. 19-21) respectively. A principal goal of the present essay, however, is to articulate how for Proclus these more formal determinations correspond in a meaningful fashion to the more concrete ones from the *Phaedrus* and elsewhere in order to provide a unified account of the procession of Being in all its richness.

There are supra-essential numbers, Proclus explains, but no supra-essential forms (IV 29. 87. 28f. Again, Proclus contrasts number with form, stating that "number exists primarily among the Gods, while the forms participate the divine henads," (88. 16-7). And indeed, when Proclus wishes to express the special character of henadic multiplicity, and contrast it with ontic multiplicity, he will frequently use the term *arithmos* to refer to the henadic manifold, as in prop. 113 of the *Elements of Theology*, which states that "the entire manifold [*arithmos*] of the Gods is unitary [*heniaios*]." In contrasting number with

form specifically with regard to *participation*, Proclus stipulates that the relationship between the henads and number is immediate relative to the mediation of the participatory relationship [148] constitutive of the domain of form. Number thus closely resembles *power* (*dunamis*) as an inseparable aspect of divine existence: “the powers of the Gods are supra-essential, consubsistent [*sunhuparchousai*] with the very henads of the Gods, and through them the Gods are generative of beings,” (PT III 24. 86. 7-9). Indeed, Proclus speaks of number as a kind of immediate or immanent development of power:

All number is a multiplicity [*pléthos*], but multiplicity is constituted either as unified [*hênômenôs*], or as distinct [*diakkekrimenôs*], and number is distinct multiplicity. For in it there is difference [*heterotês*], while in the intelligible it was power, and not difference, that engendered multiplicities [*ta plêthê*] and attached [*sunaptousa*] them to the monads. Thus number is continuous [*sunechês*] with intelligible multiplicity, and necessarily so. (IV 28. 81. 4-10)

We should be sensitized by now to the key intelligible-intellective determination of

‘continuity’. How is number different from intelligible multiplicity, that is, multiplicity as it was manifest in the intelligible quasi-class of Gods, and how is it yet ‘continuous’ with it? Intelligible multiplicity was ‘unified’—which is different than ‘unitary’—while number is ‘distinct’ or diacritical multiplicity, and this is equivalent to the distinction between *power* and *difference*.

All the henads, we recall, are in each; it is the manner of this inherence that is described by the ‘unified’ intelligible multiplicity. ‘Unified’, *hênômenos*, however, refers in Proclus to ontic products, while ‘unitary’, *heniaios*, refers to supra-essentials; thus we are speaking here about the ontic correlate of the all-in-each of the henads considered in their primordial state. In this state, all of the other henads are not considered as ‘other than’ (i.e., different, *heteros*)¹¹

¹¹ Cf. the discussion at *In Parm.* 1190 concerning the negation of identity and difference for the One at *Parm.* 139e, where Proclus explains that the henads are ‘other’ (*alla*) in relation to the One but not ‘different’, “for what is ‘different’ [*heteron*] is different *than another*, and so ... one would not say ... that they have made a procession from it [the One] by means of Difference,” for “not every declination [*buphesis*] is the product of Difference, but only that declination which is in the realm of the forms.” The “others than the One” will be called “different *than* the One insofar as by becoming *other than each other*, they are separated from the One.” For further discussion of this passage, see Butler (2005), p. 92f.

each, but as ‘powers’ of each. Henadic identity, in this respect, is a matter of “predominance of individual characters [*epikrateian tōn idiotētōn*],” as Damascius puts it, in which “the concomitants [*sunonta*] are present as elements [*stoicheia*] and affections [*pathē*],” (*In Parm.* II 8. 6-7). This is what all of the other Gods ‘are’, when seen from the perspective of any one God in his/her henadic ultimacy, namely, certain passive potencies or dependent moments of the henad’s autarchic individuality. Before the establishment of diacritical difference as mediator,

each of the parts is an intelligible whole, as in Animal Itself [*to autozōion*, the third intelligible triad], for that was a whole composed of wholes, and the One was with Being completely in the parts of it. And Animal Itself was one of a kind [*monogenes*], whereas number proceeds according to paired coordinates [*kata tas dittas sustoichias*] [149], monad and dyad, odd and even. (*PT* IV 32. 96. 4-9)

The determinations of the number series, such as odd and even, are taken by Proclus as ciphers for all of the activities of the Gods as agents acting in classes (*genē*) (IV 29. 84. 11-2; 85. 22-3; 88. 23-4) for, as Damascius puts it,

“Parmenides neither plays nor mathematicizes,” (*In Parm.* II, 3. 23-4).¹² That is, to speak of number in this context, i.e., as “supra-essential difference” (*PT* IV 30. 89. 24), is to speak in a very special sense of what we call ‘numerical difference’, only whereas we use the latter to refer to a difference *lacking* any other source of differentiation, supra-essential difference is ‘numerical’ in the sense that it is *superior* to formal (substantial, intellectual, hence conceptual) difference. And this is also why cooperative agency among henads can be theorized according to the characteristics of number, as strange as this idea might at first sound. Indeed, its strangeness is not to be diminished by allegorization; rather, we must recognize its dialectical necessity for Proclus. The only *ontic* determination appropriate to the activity of the Gods considered as agents superior to Being and thus to *substantial* analysis is that of number and its properties; and if these are rather abstract, this simply attests to the necessity of other, hermeneutical sources of information about them—mythology, iconography—if we are to gather in more of their supra-essential fullness. Thus the recourse to pure (i.e., ‘unitary’ rather than ‘substantial’)

¹² Damascius, *Commentaire du Parménide du Platon*, vol. II, ed. and trans. L. G. Westerink, J. Combès and A-Ph. Segonds, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002.

number is the only strictly ontological resolution for Proclus to the problem of how to treat units each of whom is in a class all its own, unique (*monogenes*).

Opposition is one of the most important forms to emerge through the Gods' activity in this order, representing the beginning of the establishment of that "reciprocal otherness" or "distinction of coordinates" that Proclus speaks of as the transition from supra-essential individuality (*idiotês*) to ontic formalization (*In Parm.* 1190) and which will be completed through the structures of mediation established through the Gods' activity in the intellective order. We have seen that Proclus establishes opposition schematically through the powers of odd and even in number, but the second intelligible-intellective triad takes the form of a further series of oppositions, having as its moments (1) one and many (*to hen kai ta polla*); (2) whole and parts (*to holon kai ta merê*); (3) finite and unlimited (*to peperasmenon kai to apeiron*) (IV 35. 103. 20-4). The second intelligible-intellective triad was described generally by Proclus as belonging to the development of the concept of 'whole'. On the subject of mereology, much has already been said in the section concerning the second intelligible triad, the ground, as it were, of the divine activities in the intelligible-intellective order. In the development of this function in the intelligible-

intellective order, however, in accord with the essentially dyadic nature of the second intelligible triad, we see Being as [150] held together by oppositions, with the pair of opposites functioning as the *minimal whole*. Mereology is the formal structure of mediation itself, here seen only in its pre-intellective manifestations, that is, not yet involving identity and difference, which are emergent in and through the divine activity in the intellective order.

This minimal wholeness yields the foundation for *figure* or shape (*schéma*) in the third intelligible-intellective triad, which follows immediately from the determination of the *finite* (*peperasmenon*) in the second intelligible-intellective triad, for what is finite has extremes (*eschata*) (IV 37. 108. 9-10). Moreover, the oppositions in the second intelligible-intellective triad are not separate moments, in the way that limit and the unlimited formed the first and second moments of the first intelligible triad, but form indivisible dyads, so “the One there [the second intelligible-intellective triad] is limit which also sustains [*suneichen*] the unlimited, while here [the third intelligible-intellective triad], possessing extremes, it will also have a middle [*meson*] and a beginning [*archên*] and will be perfect [*teleion*],” (108. 13-16). The ‘finite’, which is not ‘limit’ as such but *the limited*, has unlimited in it in the

form characteristic of this plane of Being, namely the *continuum* (*sunochê*), which establishes it as figural and also, in a certain respect, as an ideal *artifact* insofar as it has a *principle* (*archê*) of which it is the completed (*teleios*) result. We shall see more concretely in the following section how this austere dialectic is embodied in the activities of henadic individuals.

2.3. THE LOCUS OF VIRTUE

Everything that comes about on the intelligible-intellective plane of Being, which is really the whole of Being as constituted through intelligible-intellective activity, is determined by the fundamental condition of the henadic individual. This individual—each deity—in his/her supra-essential existence contains all the other henads in him/herself, but dirempts him/herself, resulting in the emergence of Being. Because what is created in this ‘doubling’ of the henadic individual is a *formal* or *substantial* rather than an existential entity, it is *one* for all the henads; and this is none other than Being, which “receives a multiplicity of henads and of powers and mingles them into one substance” (PT III 9. 40. 6-8). For unlike the polycentric henadic manifold, ontic manifolds are all mediated, that is, monocentric. The first stage in this emergence is the creation of a place in

which the Gods are *with* each other, rather than all of them immediately present in each. This place is accordingly the ultimate locus of *truth*, of *recognition*, and of *distribution*, and hence the source of the virtues of *Science* (*Epistêmê*), *Temperance* (*Sôphrosunê*), and *Justice* (*Dikaïosunê*) (PT IV 14. 44. 9-10).

These virtues, Proclus explains, are not intellective forms (*eidê noera*), but *pégai*, ‘fountains’ or ‘sources’, and godheads (*theotêtes*); intellective forms, he notes, would be characterized with *auto-*, as Socrates states in the *Phaedo* (75d 1-2) (IV 14. 44. 10-16). [151] *Pégê* is a term borrowed by Proclus from the Chaldean Oracles¹³ to refer to intelligible form. Since the *pégai* arise from the activity of the third intelligible triad, which is “an intellective God primarily” (PT III 14. 51. 9-11)—that is, any intellective God considered *prôtôs*, in his/her unitary individuality—a discussion of the *pégai*

¹³ But note the citations by Proclus at PT V 31.115 to *Phaedrus* 245c8-9, on the self-moved as “source and principle [*pégê kai archê*] of motion for all other things having motion,” and at PT V 32.120 to Plato’s use of the term *pégê* at *Laws* VII 808d6 to characterize as “source of understanding [*pégên tou phronein*]” that which Proclus calls “the essentially inhering power of understanding in souls,” and at *Laws* I 636d6-8, where pleasure and pain are “fountains” (i.e., of behavior) imparted to us by nature. All of these Platonic usages, it will be noted, correspond precisely to the Proclean technical usage of the term.

belongs largely to a (forthcoming) discussion of the third intelligible triad and the intellectual Gods. However, because the intelligible-intellective order is produced from the causality *both* of the second and also the third intelligible triads, *pégai* play an important role in this order and, through it, in the whole of Being.

The intellectual plane of Being defines itself in relation to the intelligible-intellective plane chiefly through the differentiation of intelligible and intellectual form, the former being specified as *pégai*, the latter as ‘principles’, or *archai*. Since the final state achieved in the emergence of Being is intellectual, with the posterior (psychical and corporeal) planes of Being appropriately described as ‘infra-intellectual’, when we recount the terms in the Neoplatonic ‘Chain of Being’ we speak of *archai*. But *pégai* are the *wholes* of which the *archai* are parts (*In Parm.* 1193, 1198; see also *PT VI* 1. 5-7). The constitutive significance of this relationship for the very possibility of a philosophical *doctrine of principles* has gone unappreciated because commentators have artificially separated the use of the concept of *arché* from its systematic conditions of emergence, and yet it is the whole intention of Proclus’ system to attempt to account in just this way for its own ontological conditions of possibility. *Pégai* are ‘self-generating’, *autogenes*,

while *archai* are ‘ungenerated’. To the casual eye, the latter condition would appear superior to the former, but this is not the case for Proclus (*PT* VI 1. 6. 6-7.17). This is because, in accord with the basic pattern of the Syrianic interpretation of the negations in the *Parmenides*, affirmations emerge immediately from corresponding negations; and so the ‘ungenerated’ refers *immediately* to the generated: in effect, then, the term refers to the immediate cause of that which is generated as such. The ‘self-generating’ *pégai*, on the other hand, are analogous to the henads as ‘self-constituting’, *authupostatos*, and to that extent prior even to the *negation* of generation, prior, that is, to the opposition of the generated and the ungenerated. *Pégai* are thus transitional between the Gods and the (intellective) forms—this is why Proclus refers to them as ‘godheads’—and represent in some respects the primary ontic footprint of the Gods *in general* upon Being. (Note in this respect *IT* I, 319, “the highest summit of every series [*seiras*] is fontal [*pégaios*].”) [152]

Pégai have their locus in the intelligible intellect (the third intelligible triad) and embody the difference between the paradigmatic and the demiurgic functions of intellect. But there is no better place to observe what this means *concretely* than in the *pégai* manifest on the intelligible-intellective plane,

for here we can truly appreciate them as *lived* moments of the philosophical system, in the *virtues* which make the emergence of intellective form possible. *Pégai* are those intelligibles “which have established unitarily in themselves all multiplicities, and occultly contain the manifestations [*ekphanseis*] of the Gods and the existentialia [*huparxeis*] of intelligibles,” (PT V 1. 7. 2-4). As the *huparxeis* of intelligibles, that is, the existential roots or sources of intelligibility, the *pégai* are said, like the Gods themselves, to contain the ontic multiplicities ‘unitarily’, *heniaiôs*. Like the Gods, in each of whom the whole of Being pre-subsists, the *pégai* contain the ontic multiplicities unitarily because each one is a source of illumination to the whole of Being.

Having their own source in the third intelligible triad, which is essentially Totality (as distinct from Wholeness), the *pégai* cannot be grasped in an account that prescind from the relevant totalities. In the case of the virtues, this signifies in particular the *ethical community* which is in the first place the community of Gods, but includes souls (PT IV 17. 51. 5-14) insofar as their experience of theophany (26. 77. 5-8) will lead them to attempt to reproduce the divine beauty, in the form of virtue, in human

communities, as depicted in Plato's *Phaedrus*.¹⁴ The three prime virtues of Science, Temperance, and Justice thus all derive from the henads' being *with* one another, their presence *to* one another, and accordingly "these three *pégai* sustain [*sunechousin*] all the activities of the Gods" (14. 45. 4-6), being literally the aspect of *continuity* in these activities. The most basic expression of this collective presence is *Truth*: "The whole supracelestial place is illuminated [*katalampetai*] by the light of Truth," (16. 49. 12-13).

'Illumination' is not merely a metaphor for Proclus, but an important technical term, for "the One participates in Being ... as illuminating [*katalampon*] really existing essence [*tên ontôs ousan ousian*]," (PT III 4. 15. 15-17). Since all causality associated with the One is really operated by the henads, it is natural that Proclus speaks in prop. 162 of the *Elements of Theology* of the intelligible henads as "illuminating real Being" (*katalampon to ontôs on*). Although all henads are participated, insofar as henads exist beyond Being they cannot be participated in the same way as forms. At PT II 4. 33, Proclus identifies the henads with the "light of truth"

¹⁴ I have discussed how this operates from the human side in "Plato's Gods and the Way of Ideas," *Diotima: Review of Philosophical Research* 39, 2011 (Hellenic Society for Philosophical Studies, Athens), pp. 73-87.

participation of which “renders that which is intelligible boniform [*agathoeides*] and divine,” and that “every divine [i.e., divinized] nature is that which it is said to be, on account of this light.” He goes on to explain that

We must not say that the intelligible is united to the First <Principle> in the same way as the light, but the latter through its continuity [*sunecheian*] with the Good [153] is established in it without intermediary [*amesôs*]; while the former, through this light, is afforded its vicinity [*tês pros ekeino geitniaseôs metalagchanein*]. (33.27-34.2)

Note again here the characteristic intelligible-intellective themes of continuum and spatiality, at the same time that Proclus underscores the basic difference of the henadic *arithmos* from other multiplicities, in that its relationship to the One is not mediated by a quality imparted through participation. The *truth* arising from illumination, and the *epistêmê* it makes possible, is inseparable from *number*, that is, from the fact of *many* being in *relation*. Thus the Plain of Truth is “splendid with illuminations [*katalampetai ... tais ellampsesin*]” (IV 15. 45. 22-3) and the ‘meadow’ within it (*Phaedrus* 248c1) is “the prolific power of life and of reasons of every sort [*logôn*

pantoión” and “the cause of the diversity [*poikilias*] and production of forms” (46. 1-4). Proclus even iterates the *topoi* themselves, saying that “the very meadows in this place [*kai hoi têide leimônes*] are productive of forms and reasons of every kind [*pantodapôn*],” (4-5). Elsewhere, Proclus simply states that the intelligible-intellective ‘meadow’ “signifies the diversity [*poikilian*] of life [or, ‘of lives’],” (IV 6. 23. 23-4). This diversity is in effect the emergence of the relation of immanence characteristic of the intellect, in which new multiplicities can be constituted purely on the basis of multiplicities already existing.

The redoubling of illuminations, in which the Gods are at once sources and recipients of illumination, as when Proclus states that *epistêmê* “shines [*epilampeî*] perceptions [*gnôseis*] upon the Gods” (14. 45. 9-10), is what provides the content to make the production of forms and *logoi* on the intelligible-intellective plane meaningful, rather than a mere *fiat lux*, ensuring that the cognition arising on this plane is truly cognition of something. Temperance (*Sôphrosunê*) is described by Proclus in a manner emphasizing this recursive dimension of divine operation: it “measures the activities of the Gods and returns each God to himself [*epistrephousa pros heauton hekaston*]” (45. 12-3). Measurement is the mediation whose emergence is fundamental to the intelligible-

intellective plane, while the conversion-to-self—an unusual occurrence of *epistrophê* in the second, rather than the third moment of a triad—expresses the Gods’ internalization of the measure that emerges from their own operations. This latter property is vividly conveyed by the nectar and ambrosia of *Phaedrus* 247e, which is treated by Proclus as symbolic of the “nourishment” (*trophê*) the Gods receive from

a certain [*tis*] intelligible union [*henôsis*], comprising in itself the whole perfection [*tên holên teleiôtêta*] of the Gods and filling the Gods with vigor and power in order that they may exercise providence with respect to secondary natures and immutable cognition of primary natures. (15. 46. 7-11)

The *unity* of the henadic manifold is expressed here in a manner it could not be on the intelligible plane, for which there was only *each* God, in whom all the other henads and all of Being was immediately present. Here the Gods are present *with* each other as a *whole* or unified—i.e., mediated—multiplicity, [154] and the unity of this multiplicity is now itself an intelligible object. This unification is

represented as food because it is, in effect, the first pure *object* relation arising from the *intersubjective* relationality of henadic individuals.

“Nectar and ambrosia,” Proclus explains, “are the perfections of the Gods *qua* Gods,” (47. 7) and “the cognition [*noêsis*] of the Gods *qua* Gods” (48.6), that is, the Gods’ cognition of *each other* as Gods, which is in itself the intellectual presence of the divine in Being. Fully developed through the divine operations on the intellective plane, this will be a *quantificational totality* of the Gods; on the intelligible-intellective plane, it is an ethical totality, expressing especially the Gods’ providence (*pronoia*) towards Being and beings. This intelligible unity, this unity-in-thought of the Gods “unitarily perfects the divided [*meriston*] multiplicity of the Gods and converts all things to itself through divine intelligence ... for it is ... the plenitude [*plêrôma*] of intelligible goods and the uniform [*henoeidês*] perfection of divine self-sufficiency [*autarkeias*],” (48. 1-9). That is, it perfects henadic individuality through the returning-to-self of the Gods’ cognition of being together with one another. In cognizing themselves in this way, the Gods also conceive the intelligible unity of all things, which is for them not a representation, but the primary *production* of this very *plêrôma*.

Plato’s recourse to the ancient symbol of the divine banquet (*dais*) signifies for Proclus

the third and final stage of this process of proto-intellectual constitution: “The banquet signifies the divided distribution [*diëiréménên dianomên*] to all things of the divine nourishment,” (48. 3-5). Distribution here alerts us to the operation of the third ‘fountain’ or ‘source’ of virtue, that of Justice (*dikaïosunê*), which “distributes [*dianomês*] universal goods [*tôn holôn agathôn*] according to merit [*kat’axian*],” (14. 44. 25-6). The first ‘division’ (*diairesis*) of a ‘universal’, therefore, is pre-intellectual and, indeed, ethical. The conditions for the emergence of Intellect arise from the immanent logic of a multiplicity of autarchic individuals recognizing one another and thus constituting from the existential polycentric manifold a single center, “a single hearth [*hestia*] for all the Gods” (47. 27-8). Only through such a coming-together of *really autarchic individuals*, and not through the parcelling out of a pre-existing, presupposed unity—a falsely hypostatized unity—could a norm be forged that is truly binding upon all. Such, Proclus explains, is the “Decree [*thesmos*] of Adrasteia” (*Phaedrus* 248c2) which “is established in that [supracestrial] place and rules uniformly [*monoeidôs*] over all the divine laws [*nomôn*]” (PT IV 17. 51. 13-14). This henadic autarchy is shared to some degree with souls, for “not only the Gods are superior to the laws of fate [*heimarmenôn nomôn*], but also particular [*merikai*] souls who live according to intellect and give themselves over to the light of

providence,” (52. 11-14). The ontological ground for this soteriological doctrine lies in the ability of souls, insofar as they are unique individuals, and not merely participants of universal forms, and thus parts of wholes and mere ‘particulars’—in other words, not *qua* souls, but as existential units—to enjoy some of the autarchy of the Gods themselves. [155]

CONCLUSION

The hypostasis of Life is the continuum or unified multiplicity of henadic individuals who, from their fundamental position of polycentric autarchy, proceed to engagement with one another, creating in the process monocentric structures which are the noetic infrastructure, so to speak, for the emergence of intellect. The Intelligible-Intellective is not simply a transitional state between Being and Intellect, but rather the whole of Being after its own fashion, affirming the primacy of place or situation, of number, and of relation. The Intelligible-Intellective generates the Intellective plane of Being out of its own immanent dialectic, but continues to operate within and beyond the Intellective, as is evident from the importance of intelligible-intellective determinations such as motion, place, and self-measurement or normativity for the domain of

Soul and for souls themselves; psyche is a product, in large part, of Intellect's reflection, or *epistrophê*, upon these very intelligible-intellective functions. Reflection upon the hypostasis of Life, if we can successfully distinguish it from the intellective structures which naturally dominate philosophical analysis, reveals a distinctive *Lebensphilosophie*, so to speak, at the heart of systematic Platonism.

THE THIRD INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD AND THE INTELLECTIVE GODS*

ABSTRACT: Completing the systematic henadological interpretation of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* begun in "The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus" (*Méthexis* 21, 2008, pp. 131-143) and "The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods" (*Méthexis* 23, 2010, pp. 137-157), the present article concerns the conditions of the emergence of fully mediated, diacritical multiplicity out of the polycentric henadic manifold. The product of the activity of the intellective Gods (that is, the product of the intellective activity of Gods as such), in resolving the contradiction between existential uniqueness and universalizable potencies in the divine natures, also grounds the human exercise of philosophical cognition in the founding self-analysis of divine individuals.

* This essay was originally published in *Méthexis* 25 (2012), pp. 131-150. Pagination from this publication appears in brackets.

In two previous articles on the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus, I have treated of the henad in the first intelligible triad as immediately participated by Being Itself, the position of an “intelligible God” as such; and the henad as expressing a primary manifold of powers—or a continuum of power—in the second intelligible triad and forming a primary alliance of henadic subjects in the intelligible-intellective order.¹ The present article concerns the completion of the emergence of intelligibility prior to the procession of Soul; thus it concerns the henad as intelligible or paradigmatic object, and as subject/object of divine intellection.

Insofar as Proclus’ account in the *Platonic Theology* concerns the henadic, that is, primary causal, origination of ontic determinations, understanding his account requires at each stage grasping the specific henadic activity responsible for the characteristics of the plane of being in question; thus, the present essay argues that *reciprocal relation* among henads is the intellective cause in general. Furthermore, however, because the ontic determinations with which this essay is concerned are *intellective*, it

¹ “The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus,” *Méthexis* 21, 2008, pp. 131-143; “The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods,” *Méthexis*, 23, 2010, pp. 137-157.

must treat as well the problem of the retrospective constitution of the philosophical system, because the latter, as a mode of reflection upon Being, is emergent from the activity of intellective Gods (or, of Gods in the intellective phase of their activity). In light of this, the integrity of the philosophical system as product of human intelligence depends upon the possibility of a rational henadology of just the sort Proclus offers, where emergent intellectual structures, while supervenient upon the nature of henadic individuality, [132] express the intelligible conditions of the latter, and therefore are not mere contingencies of factual revelation.

The hypostatic positions treated in this essay—*mixture*, the third moment of the first intelligible triad; the third intelligible triad, deity as *intelligible paradigm*; and the intellective organization of Gods, that is, their *differential* or *diacritical disposition*—express on different planes of Being the resolution of a process that begins from the minimal difference, the root of all procession, namely the difference between a henad as unique ‘existential’ individual (i.e., to whom pertains *huparxis* rather than *ousia*) and the power(s) of that individual. Proclus states as much when he says that intellective difference subsists latently and causally in the first intelligible triad, for it is “the progeny of

intelligible and paternal [primary-causal] power” (PT V 37. 136).²

The powers of the Gods, Proclus affirms, are, like the Gods themselves, supra-essential (*hyperousios*), that is, prior to Being; that is, they are not yet formal *predicates* because they are inseparable from the henadic individual. Hence the mythopoetic characteristics of the Gods are neither univocal with respect to beings who possess these attributes analogically (as, say, the musicality of Apollo, which is founding for musicality as such, and the musicality of an ontic subject); nor with respect to the conceptual structures emergent from them (as the musicality of Apollo and the ontology of music); nor with respect to attributes of other Gods (as the musicality of Apollo and the musicality of, on the one hand, a God such as Hermes belonging to the same pantheon or intelligible-intellective manifold, or of a deity such as, e.g., Saraswati, who does not). The term used for such characteristics in their highest, most positive form is *idiotêta*; as ‘powers’, *dunameis*, they are already in transition to consideration as ontic attributes.

² References to the *Platonic Theology* are to volume, chapter, page and line number in *Proclus: Théologie Platonicienne*, ed. & trans. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, 6 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003).

So too, the intelligible-intellective form of multiplicity is transitional to the properly intellective manifold. The intelligible-intellective God, the intellective God, the hypercosmic or the encosmic God is also, *qua* God, a member of the intelligible class (or quasi-class); but the intelligible-intellective manifold is a mode of multiplicity distinct from the intellective manifold. If the procession did not complete itself in the emergence of intellective multiplicity, if the intelligible-intellective manifold was the terminal mode of multiplicity, procession would end in a manifold constituted not by identity and difference, but by proto-spatial *contiguity*. This is the nature of intelligible-intellective multiplicity, which is not merely an abstract moment in an artificial taxonomy, but has its own genuine phenomenality. We can see from the account of the intelligible-intellective order in book IV of the *Platonic Theology* that this primary divine multiplicity, the first way in which the Gods are *with* one another, is on the one hand purely spatial and numeric, in one sense an impoverished form of collectivity, but on the other hand that this mode of multiplicity is that of the divine symposium of [133] the *Phaedrus*, the *pantheon*, as it were, as distinct from the logical set of 'all the Gods', or all of the Gods qualified according to x . The intelligible-intellective manifold, if logically underdetermined, is an existentially dense

henadic community, an intersubjective manifold. The logical or intellectual set, by contrast, is a class based on a common characteristic. There is thus an equivocation in the intelligible-intellective manifold traceable to the ambivalent position of Power as inseparable divine characteristic and as potential formal attribute. The intelligible-intellective manifold, native to factual theologies, is treated within the philosophical system as an intellective set, though the condition of the possibility of the latter is the activity of intellective Gods. Hence we may characterize the three intelligible triads as (1) a God *simpliciter*; (2) a God in a pantheon; (3) a God qualified.

I. THE MIXED IN THE FIRST INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD

The transition from the second to the third moment in the triadic structure of procession establishes a univocal field of Being.³ On the plane of the first intelligible triad, the most universal, it establishes *mixture*; on the plane of

³ On the univocity of Being, note Proclus' remarks in his commentary on the *Republic* that, whereas a determination such as 'generated' may be taken in a variety of senses (*sêmainomena*), "there is only one [property] pertaining to all intelligibles, which we call being [*einai*] and real being [*ontôs einai*]" (IR 282.13-7 Kroll).

the third intelligible triad, *paradigm*, on the intellectual plane, *principle*. Each of these constitute at once an existential state of the henad and an ontological grasp, or intelligence, of him/her.

Proclus distinguishes carefully between the ‘exhibition’ (*deixis*) or ‘revelation’ (*ekphansis*) of Limit and Unlimited from the God, on the one hand, and the ‘production’ (*poiesis*) of the Mixed (PT III 9. 36.10-19). The two prior principles are ‘exhibited’ or ‘revealed’ by the God—any God as such—as dependent moments of his/her nature in the course of his/her activity: “The first [cause] is the God revealing the two principles; next come the two principles [themselves], namely limit and unlimited; and the mixed is fourth” (36.26-8). When Proclus speaks of these principles as inseparable aspects of the divine nature, sharing in the henad’s supra-essential status, he generally refers to them as ‘existence’ (*huparxis*), rather than ‘limit’, and ‘power’ (*dunamis*), rather than the ‘unlimited’ (or, ‘infinity’), preferring to reserve the latter terms for ontological rather than henadological contexts (e.g., “limit is the limit *of beings*, and unlimited is the unlimited *of beings*” (35.1-2)). Accordingly, there are two ways of understanding the relationship between these principles and Being (that is, the Mixed as such), depending on whether we regard it from the side of the Gods, or from that of beings: “It

must be admitted therefore that they [Limit and Unlimited] are [134] unmixed and separate from Being, and that Being is at once derived from them, and consists of them. It is derived from them inasmuch as they presubsist; but it consists of them inasmuch as they come to be in it according to a secondary procession" (42.5-8). The 'secondary procession' in question is that by which, as Proclus has explained, "supra-essentials are not themselves taken into the mixture of it [Being], but these remaining transcendent, secondary processions from them coalesce [*sumphuomai*] into the subsistence of essence" (38.24-7). The sense of passing from a supra-essential henadic manifold to an ontic monad, is underscored by Proclus's subsequent characterization of Being as "having received a multiplicity of henads and of powers, which it has mingled into one essence" (40.7-8).

The 'mingling' or 'coalescing' of the primordial henadic manifold into a monadic and substantial unity permits the formation of a new, ontic type of manifold: Being is "a monad of multiple powers and a pluralized existence" (39.19-20). It is not a question here of the generation of multiple henads from some abstract unity, for Being *receives* a primordial henadic multiplicity. Rather, it is a question of the pluralization occurring *within each 'existential' henadic individual*, in particular the differentiation of that individual's *powers* or attributes, which are

potential universalities, from the *huparxis* itself which, as the very *uniqueness* of the henad, will resist ontological appropriation. This is the tension that I have identified as the engine of the procession of Being in Proclus: the expression of potencies by the henads creates a monadic center which is at once the diremption of each henad and a common space for the henadic collective. All intellection is reversion, *epistrophê*, and reversion is inseparable from the henad's self-alienation in Being: "How can there be reversion without distinction [*diakrithen*] (since all reversion seems to be the resolution of something into that from which its *being* divides it)?" (*ET* prop. 35).⁴ Unlike beings, the henads introduce this division into themselves through the expression of relations among one another, which is the very production of Being. Hence this monad, Being Itself, is at once the pluralization of each God and the unification of the Gods as a class: thus the Mixed is "the first and highest *diakosmos* of the Gods" (45.6-7), that is, the most universal classification of them. At the same time, it is not merely a matter of classification, but also of a state of the henad him/herself. Each henad passes *within* him/herself from the state of

⁴ References to the *Elements of Theology* are by numbered proposition in *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, ed. & trans. E. R. Dodds, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

positive, existential individuality to that of negative, diacritical particularity, from the state of primordial uniqueness to that of the *sole member of his/ her species*. This is the most universal understanding of a God's activity in general, and accordingly the transition to Being does not take place solely in the first intelligible triad, but on each and every plane of Being. [135]

II. THE THIRD INTELLIGIBLE TRIAD: HENAD AS PARADIGM

The third intelligible triad is "an intellectual God in the primary sense" (*prôtós*; PT III 14. 51.9-11). Each of the triads is, we may say, expressive of *what it is to be a God*; the third triad, specifically, of what it is to be an intellectual God. To be an intellectual God is a matter of a specific divine activity: it is to be a God cognizing.

The essence of the intellectual disposition for Proclus is a triadic disposition of the henad relative to self or other. The third intelligible triad, Proclus explains, "constitutes intelligible intellect *in relation to itself* [*peri heautên*] and fills it with divine unity, making power subsist as the *medium* between itself and being, through which it fulfills this being and converts it to itself" (PT III 14. 49.15-18). The intellect is thus a product of the henad to which the henad is *related*, and

this affects the relation between the henad and its power(s). The second intelligible triad already “revealed secondary being,” that is, intelligible-intellective being or Life, “from itself and in relation to itself [*peri heanton*]” (PT III 12. 46.21-2). But where Life, like the power(s) from which it springs, is a ‘revelation’, Intellect is a product, and it brings all the prior moments of the procession into concretion as products themselves. Thus Proclus explains that the third intelligible triad is “the Limit [*peras*] of all the intelligibles” (14. 49.23-4), where it is clear from the context that he does not merely mean “limite inférieure”, per Saffrey and Westerink. Rather, intelligible objects *qua* intelligible acquire their own limit, that is, the existence appropriate to them, in and through the intelligible intellect, which expresses relations among henads in an objective form.

For the henads as such are without relation: *ET* prop. 122 explains that “relation [*schesis*] is a qualification of being, and therefore contrary to its [the henad’s] nature.” The procession of Being, however, is precisely the emergence of relation *from out of* primordial henadic autarchy. Thus, Proclus explains that the first intelligible triad is treated in the *Parmenides* as “the One, Being, and the relation [*schesis*] between the two” (PT III 24. 85.17-8). Proclus preserves the henads from relation by construing the relation one would posit between any two henads not as one

thing, but as two, namely, a power in each henad *productive* of the relation (*IP* 1190, 936, 942).⁵ The powers of the Gods thus remain really inseparable from their divine individuality, while Being is an emergent third in the dyadic relations among henads and in each henad's self-relation. Indeed, the fact of this emergent thirdness, a formal unity—'unified', *hénômenos*, as opposed to 'unitary', *heniaios*—is more significant than whether it emerges from the dialectic within henadic individuals or between them, since it must ultimately be understood in any case as both the henad cognizing him/herself *and* the henads cognizing one another. [136]

The first site for this dialectic is the relationship between the demiurge and the paradigm (the third intelligible triad or 'Animal Itself'). In dealing with the problem of the union or separateness of demiurge and paradigm, a problem with historical depth in the Platonic schools, Proclus emphasizes the *asymmetry* between them, as he will later emphasize the *symmetry* in the relations between the intellectual Gods. "Animal Itself [*to autoζόιον*]," he explains, "comprehends

⁵ References to the *Parmenides* commentary are to the page numbers in the Greek text, translated in Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[*perieléphēn*] the Zeusian series in itself *intelligibly*, while as demiurge of the All, Zeus *intellectively* preestablishes in himself the nature of the Living [*tēn tou zōiou phusin*]" (PT V 27. 100.2-5). *Perilambanō*, to comprehend, pertains typically to powers in whole-and-part relationships (e.g., ET prop. 60), a relation originating among the divinities (prop. 150) and passed on to ontic principles, so that, e.g., Being and Life are in this relationship (prop. 105), as are divine and ontic principles in a certain respect (prop. 143); but between the divine and the ontic realms, the relation is also in a different respect absolute, so that a divine power can be said *categorically* to be uncircumscribed and comprehend everything (prop. 121). The hierarchical relationships between deities are just such relations, which concern the expression of powers in causal activity. With respect to the three moments of the divine nature, existence (*huparxis*), power (*dunamis*) and intellect (*nous*), the henads are existentially equal; dynamically they are in a host of essentially dyadic relationships of comprehension; and the characteristically intellectual relationship is that in which Zeus preestablishes the *nature* of Animality in himself—'comprehending' through the idea.

The third intelligible triad is "the first cause of production and demiurgy" (PT III 19 67.12-3). Concretely, Animal Itself is 'holistically' (*holikōs*) constitutive of living beings (53.14) through

embracing the four *fields* or *zones* of divine activity that ground the equivocal sense of ‘animality’ as applying to divine, angelic, daimonic and mortal animals respectively, and which arises from the different possible formal relations between the One and Being, that is, between each God and his/her production, in which the One (the God) is “absorbed by Being” and vice versa (*PT* III 27. 97.16ff). The demiurgy of the third intelligible triad, that is, of an intellective God as such, is a relation to objectivity. It has as its precondition that the One and Being are treated as distinct monads; the resulting vertical multiplicity, though, while expressing the objectivation of Being as a moment of the God, still occurs *within* each God; any relation *between Gods* is still implicit on this plane. Hence the God as intelligible animal in general is “one of a kind” (*monogenes*), while the demiurge’s specific animality “produces itself among beings ... together with the zoogonic cause, with which it constitutes secondary entities, mixing the genera of Being in the *kratêr* for the sake of the generation of souls,” (*PT* III 15. 53.15-18). The principal form of this cooperation in the intellective and subsequent divine orders is the emergence of familial relationships within the pantheon. The point of the zoogonic causality operated by feminine divinities is not birth—viz. the zoogonic *korai*, ‘maidens’, in the hypercosmic orders (*PT* VI 11)—but the expression of

relations among Gods [137] preexisting “themselves for themselves” (*IP* 936), these very relations generating the psychical plane of Being.

Qua paradigm, therefore, the intellective deity as such is relatively passive with respect to its intellective enactment. The demiurge *sees* the paradigm, as do our own souls (*IT* I 323),⁶ for it is “the most beautiful of intelligible objects” (*Tim.* 30d1-2), divine beauty as such, the beauty specific to every God *qua* God. It is that animal of which all other animals, divine and mortal alike, are parts insofar as they are intelligible objects, and hence we see it in each animal insofar as we see the totality, the All in it, the intelligible totality of the cosmos which is secured through each animal’s *own* integrity—the sense, that is, in which each animal is not an accident of the cosmos but an organic part of it. The Orphic Phanes, in contrast to the demiurge, “cherishes in his heart fleet, eyeless love” for the cosmos (*IT* II 85; III 101) for this God “neither requires eyes in order to see, nor ears in order to hear” (*IT* II 85). Note as well that Phanes’ love for the cosmos is ‘fleet’, *ôkus*, ephemeral as lacking temporal extension, for temporality is inseparable from intellective

⁶ References to the *Timaean* commentary are to volume and page in E. Diehl, *Proclus Diadochus In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-6).

formation. The demiurge interposes a *relation* between himself and the paradigm, so that one God “sees” the cosmos in another: “Plato asserts that the demiurge *looks to* the paradigm, indicating through sight intellectual perception [*noêsis*]” (*ITI* 324). With this noesis, a diremption of the primordial presence of all the Gods to each that characterizes the henadic manifold, come determinations definitive of intellective being, and which characterize the triangular relationship between demiurge, paradigm, and cosmos. Thus the demiurge desires that the processual totality should *approximate* himself (*panta ... paraplêsia*) (*Tim.* 29e), while the cosmos bears *likeness* (*homoiotês*) to the paradigm (*Tim.* 30c); the cosmos is “an image [*eikôn*] of the paradigm and a product [*apotelesma*] of the demiurge” (*PTV* 29 108.9-10).

Insofar as all the henads are in each, the demiurge may be said to contain the paradigm as much as the paradigm may be said to contain the demiurge. This is true of any two Gods, but the mediation between paradigm and demiurge founds intellective being as such. “In some places Plato says that the demiurge is the same [*tauton*], and in others that he is different [*beteron*] from the paradigm, and each of these appropriately” (*ITI* 324); note the use of the explicitly intellective language of identity and difference. In addition to the mutual inclusion of demiurge and paradigm in each other, there

is also a hierarchical relationship between them, or rather, *two* such relationships. Proclus discusses the reasons why we may regard now the one, now the other, as prior: the demiurge is referred to by Timaeus as “the best of causes” because Timaeus considers the third triad “according to its formal nature [*eidetikên phusin*] and not according to the unity [*henôsin*] in it and an hypostasis beyond the forms of the All” (PT V 29 107. 11-14). According to “the henads in them,” however, the paradigm is intelligible, the demiurge intellective, and the former *huparxis* is closer to the One (107. 19-23). [138]

The demiurge is treated as the agent in Timaeus’ account, the paradigm formally; in the Orphic theogony, by contrast, Phanes, in the position of the paradigm in the merely formal account, has his own agency prior to that of Zeus. The theogony is not a genesis of Gods, but an order of the deployment of causality: “The demiurge is contained [*periechetai*] by the intelligible animal according to the order of causation [*kata ton tês aitiâs logon*], and not as a part, and thus imperfect” (IT I 433). To be “closer to” or “further from” the One is a metric of the breadth of causation; the One is not a third relative to two henads. Proclus distinguishes formal and causal modes of containment (*periôchês*), “the one being such as that of parts in their wholeness,” i.e., formal,

“the other that of effects in their causes” (*IT* I 432). Hence the way a divine intellect ‘contains’ forms differs from the way it ‘contains’ partial intellects, e.g., subsequent divine processions in an intellective causal series. Each of the more ‘partial’ divine intellects “is all things in a self-perfect [*autotelôs*; cf. *ET* props. 64, 153] manner,” while each of the forms “is united to other forms, but is not all things. For each [of the partial divine intellects] is itself preserving its own individuality [*idiotês*] unmingled and unconfused” (*IT* I 432.8-11).⁷ An example would be the relationship of the Olympian children of Zeus to their ‘father’: as intellective causes, they presuppose Zeus’ wider activity, while *qua* Gods, each is an individual comprising all things.

In the passage from the *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus offers specialized terminology for dealing with the way in which some henads are said to be ‘prior’ to others, terminology which depends on the

⁷ The wording here closely parallels the contrast Proclus draws at *IP* 1048 between the different manners in which forms, on the one hand, and henads, on the other, are ‘all in all’, for “the individuality [*idiotês*] of each of them [the henads] is a much more perfect thing than the otherness of the Forms, preserving as it does unmixed all the divine entities and their proper powers distinct”; and again, at 1049 Proclus speaks of the “unmixed distinctness of the primal, supra-essential henads.”

determination of 'totality' (*to pan*) essential to the third intelligible triad: "All such things, therefore, as are in the paradigm are likewise in the demiurge; and in making the cosmos with reference to the paradigm, he also makes it with reference to himself. With respect to *allness* [*pantotês*], however, one is intelligible, the other intellective ... so that the demiurge, possessing all such as intelligible animal possesses, yet has an allness subordinate to that which is intelligible" (*IT* I 432.16-25). Totality is specific to the third intelligible triad as Wholeness was to the second. The priority of Wholeness lies in its ability to determine Totality *as a unit*: "The all is a whole, but the whole is not necessarily all ... whole is the coherence [*sunochê*] and integrity [*henôsis*] of the all" (*PT* III 20. 72.13-19). If we are to accord a proper sense to the term 'totality', the subordinate totality must somehow be *the same* totality as the superior one, and yet also really subordinate in its unit-character.

No henad preexists another. But the activity of one may presuppose that of another, as in the case of a deity who posits another as his/her 'parent'. An 'offspring' among the henads "exists 'for itself', and only then derives from [139] something else" (*IP* 936). The effect of the henad's positing his/her derivation is expressed in the totality dependent upon him/her. Each henad is absolute and autarchic, but one subordinates him/herself to another in

the exercise of certain powers, “as for instance in the demiurgic classes Zeus directs now Athena and now Apollo, and then again Hermes, and Iris; and all these obey the wishes of their father ... according to the demiurgic norm [*horon*] directing their own providential wills towards the entities secondary to them” (*IP* 940f). This subordination is founded in the relationship between demiurge and paradigm, which is also ‘paradigmatic’ for all paradigmatic relations among beings.

III. THE ACTIVITY OF THE INTELLECTIVE GODS: *DLAKRISIS*

In the *Philebus* (23d), Socrates entertains the notion that a fifth principle of Being shall be required in addition to Limit, the Unlimited, the Cause of mixture, and Mixture itself, namely *diakrisis*, the differential principle. Socrates defers consideration of this principle. In treating what we may call radical Being, Being Itself, there is not yet ground to distinguish between a being’s ‘mixed’ character and its position in a differential organization of Being. We take up *diakrisis* once we have detached Being as product from its producer, the henad as cause, inasmuch as in the purely differential system of being there is only relational, negative identity, and no place for the henad’s

primordial positivity. But there is no Being without henadic activity; and so this activity must adopt a different form to generate diacritical being. This is reflected in the structure of the intellective order, which no longer presents itself as nested triads, like the intelligible and intelligible-intellective classes, but as an integral hebdomad, a structural difference conveying immediately that the *collective* product of the intellective Gods can no longer be deduced from the simple determinations of henadic individuality.

The primary source of the hebdomadic structure in the intellective order is the guardian or protective function emerging there, effectively a fourth moment in the dialectical pattern of emergence whose structure in the pre-intellective organization was rigidly triadic. This fourth moment, attaching to each person of the paternal—i.e., primary-causal (*prôtourgon*, *ET* prop. 151; note also the gloss of “paternal” as pertaining to a God’s “existence proper” at *PT* V 39. 144.18-9)—triad in the intellective order, results in a hexad, to which a special *diacritical monad* is added, resulting in the hebdomad. Aside from the identification with the Kouretes in the intellective (*PT* V 35) and Korybantes in the hypercosmic orders (*PT* VI 13), the guardian function is presented more often as discrete ‘monads’, i.e., aspects or relations, of the intellective ‘fathers’ themselves,

as elements, that is, of their activity. This is true as well in the hypercosmic orders, insofar as the function is partly absorbed into important 'virgin' Goddesses active on that plane (previewed in the special role accorded to Athena in relation to [140] the guardian class at *PT* V 35. 128ff.). The diacritical monad, for its part, is a perfectly impersonal monadic position in the system, underscored by its systematic determination as *difference-from-self* (*PT* V 40. 148.6-7): it represents the accomplishment of the differential organization of the field of revelation, which has, just in becoming differential, become not just ontic, but nascently *ontological*.

The primary divine causality, the moments of positive divine activity, in the intellectual order is therefore outnumbered in its moments, four to three, by moments we might characterize as a *secondary* or reflective divine causality. This is in accord with the essentially negative, differential or diacritical nature of intellectual being. The guardian potency—or 'protective', 'immaculate', 'inflexible', et al., the terminology for this order being unusually diverse—maintains the hierarchical disposition existing, in particular, between the intellectual and psychical organizations, where Becoming constitutes itself in the relation of *likeness* to determinate, Intellectual Being. Its most overt function, therefore, may be characterized as

anti-psychologicistic, inasmuch as it prevents the intellective collapsing into the psychical. (It is thus easy to see why this function is even more prominent in the divine orders which carry out the procession of Soul itself.)⁸

More broadly, the positivity of the guardian moment lies in conserving the positivity of the product of the unfolding dialectic of henadic individuality at each stage. This function is inseparable from the *determinacy of dialectic itself*. The roots of dialectic lie in the emergence among the Gods of *mythic narrative*, and it is such narrative itself which is embodied in the seventh or diacritical monad insofar as it is not a divine person, a henad, but instead a conjunction of persons in action. The intellective and infra-intellective orders of Gods are deeply involved in complex mythic narratives. Indeed, the density of narrative interconnections seems to define an intellective

⁸ Psyche's division from intellect can be discerned in the guardian order's *regulation of motion*: thus the Kouretes are "the principal paradigms of all graceful motion" (V 35 128.9-10). Here intellect acts upon (psychical) motion, intellect and psyche being thus affirmed in their distinction. The ideal *motion* that founds the self-motion of psychical being, and hence the higher *indivision* of intellect and psyche, subsists on the intelligible-intellective plane; note in this regard that the "guardian good ... extends from the connective [i.e., intelligible-intellective] Gods to the intellective kings" (V 34. 125.27f).

God, and the practice of mythological hermeneutics results, generally speaking, in articulating the intellective plane of Being.⁹ The primordial intelligible organization, by contrast, emerges not from reflection on narratives, but from the elemental analytic of henadic existence.

The seventh or diacritical monad of the intellective order separates in particular the sovereignties exercised by Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus in the Hellenic field of revelation (*PT* V 36. 132f). Each of these sovereignties is intellective in its own right, but the diacritical monad “separates the Kronian genera from the [141] Ouranian, and the Zeusian from the Kronian, distinguishes the whole intellective organization from those prior and posterior to it, detaches the different causes in it from each other and always imparts secondary measures of sovereignty to secondary things” (V 3. 17.16-21). The means by which this separation occurs is the very mythic narrative of divine succession itself. The motif of ‘sections’ or ‘cuts’, *tomai*, in these narratives, stressed by Proclus but present in the tradition primarily in Hesiod’s account of

⁹ On mythological hermeneutics, see “The Theological Interpretation of Myth,” *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2005, pp. 27-41.

the revolt of Kronos against Ouranos,¹⁰ is symbolic in itself, but is also a synecdoche for the ‘cuts’ created by the narrative form itself; thus “the myth in the *Gorgias* (523a) ... detaches the realm [*archên*] of Zeus from the Kronian sovereignty, and it calls this realm secondary to that one and younger [*neôteran*]” (V 36. 132.16-19), though there are no literal ‘cuts’ in this narrative; the ‘cut’ in question is the diachrony introduced by *narrative itself* into the eternal divine nature.

The peculiar importance of the ‘cut’ inflicted upon Ouranos in Hesiod’s narrative lies as well in the cut or separation such narratives perform between those, like Euthyphro, who grasp only “the appearance itself” with regard to the “unlawful acts” in the myths, and those able to penetrate into their “mystical truth” and “concealed meaning” (V 3.18.9-16). This hermeneutical ‘cut’ between the exoteric and esoteric within a sacred discourse—*theomuthia*, ‘divine myth’—is itself ontological. We may compare it to the division introduced within the procession of the intellectual Gods by the demiurge’s address at *Timaeus* 42d to the “young Gods” (*neoi theoi*), discussed by Proclus at *IT* 3, 310f, in which it is the demiurgy of the *apparent* by the “young

¹⁰ Orphic frag. 154 (Porphyry, *De antro nymphae*. 16 p. 67 Nauck) refers as well to a castration of Kronos in the manner of Ouranos.

Gods” that characterizes their activity as “youthful” in contrast to the “ancient and venerable nature of the unmanifest [*aphanous*] demiurgy” (*IT* 3, 310.10-11) carried out by the ‘senior’ generation of intellectual Gods. The ‘young’ Gods are youthful “not as beginning to exist sometime,” but insofar as “bodies in process depend upon them, and these are not allotted existence eternally, but according to a whole <unit> of time” (*IT* 3, 311.7-10).

Hierarchical displacements of divine activity relative to one another can only occur on the common field of Being. Thus, by virtue of the diacritical monad “Zeus separates himself from the *monad* of his father, Kronos from the *kingdom* of Ouranos, and those secondary to Zeus, proceeding into a subordinate class, are separated from his perfect *providence*” (*PT* V 36. 132.23-27). In each case it is not *persons* who are separated, but *products*: an ontic position, a field of activity, a providential cognition (*pro-noia*). Narrativity is thus merely one dimension of the relational, differential Being produced within this order on the basis of the potential inherent in the henad as such, and which is embodied in the third intelligible triad. In the address to the “younger Gods”, the demiurge, who objectivized a relationship with the paradigm through his *noêsis*, now institutes through [142] his *logoi* a common *work* among its divine recipients: “The result of his words is to render

demiurgic the Gods receiving them ... each [of the encosmic Gods] partakes of the demiurgic [characteristic, *idiotês*] insofar as s/he is coordinated with the demiurgic monad ... If the speaker was a zoogonic God, we would say that s/he filled the hearers with divine life through her words; but since the demiurge is the orator, he imparts to the Gods the demiurgic characteristic, *distributes his singular demiurgy* among the manifold of encosmic Gods, and displays them as demiurges..." (IT 3, 198.9-199.7).

Proclus reminds us that the encosmic Gods who receive the demiurge's address, despite their diverse classifications—"demiurgic, zoogonic, connective, perfective, guardian, judicial, cathartic"—"nevertheless all partake of all powers" (198.25-9); that is, they are all henads and thus enjoy the basic henadic attribute of all-in-each. Therefore, the effect of the address of *logoi* from one God to another is to produce through discourse a univocal field that at once binds God to God, and divides them. Between demiurge and paradigm it was a pure *noêsis*; here it is a *logos*.¹¹ Proclus stresses the unity of the

¹¹ In the mediating position, we may note, is the establishment of the forms of law (*nomos*) and institution (*thesmos*) through the activity of the intelligible-intellective Gods (PT IV 17. 51-3), which is also the precondition for the acts within the succession myth to be characterized as "unlawful".

demiurge's discourse at *IT* 3, 202, when he states that "How those to whom the cosmos is allotted by the father are called 'Gods of Gods' (*Tim.* 41a) and according to what concept is not easy to indicate to the many, for there is the revelation of *a singular divine intelligence*¹² in these expressions." The demiurge's address is not immediately reducible to conceptual terms because it is first-person speech, hence sharing the nature of henadic individuality; but this direct address of a factual individual to a determinate (if unspecified) audience of others establishes the conceptual space of demiurgy.

Henadic mediation becomes concrete in the intellective order in the relationship between the first and third intellective 'fathers', e.g., Kronos and Zeus, in their reciprocal 'binding' of one another. Drawing upon unknown source material, Plato had already spoken of "the famous bonds of Kronos" (*Crat.* 404a), referring to Kronos as binding others. In the account of the procession of the intellective Gods, however, Proclus refers chiefly to Kronos' *being bound* by Zeus.¹³ The binding of

¹² Accepting the emendation of *mias* for *aidias* at l. 27.

¹³ There is a brief reference to the binding of the Titans by the Olympians in Hesiod (*Theog.* 718), but Proclus appears to be drawing upon Orphic traditions; Orphic frag. 154 (Porphyry, *De antro nymphae*. 16 p. 67 Nauck) refers to a binding of Kronos by Zeus.

Kronos by Zeus is in any case reciprocal for reasons philosophical rather than mythological: “in binding [*desmein*] his father, he [Zeus] at the same time binds himself [to him], for a bond is the comprehension [*perilēpsis*] of the things that are bound” (PT V 5. 21. 15-7). Zeus binds Kronos by [143] “holding Kronos in himself in a Zeusian mode” (IC 89.15-6).¹⁴ Proclus uses this terminology for the inherence of all the henads in each one: Kronos is in Zeus ‘zeusically’, Zeus is in Hera ‘heraically’ and so forth.¹⁵ This particular instance is special, however, in that it is rendered *thematic* in divine cognition, so that the *bond itself* becomes objective as a comprehension or *perilēpsis*, a term familiar from the intelligible-intellective plane. The bond between Kronos and Zeus thus becomes a connecting and containing ideal *space*. Henads precede their relations; hence the relationship between Kronos and Zeus is in the first place a power in Kronos of being-in-relation-to-Zeus, and a power in Zeus of being-in-relation-to-Kronos. In the emergence of intellective being,

¹⁴ References to the *Cratylus* commentary are to page numbers in G. Pasquali, *Proclus Diadochus In Platonis Cratylum Commentaria* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908); trans. B. Duval, *Proclus: On Plato's Cratylus* (London: Duckworth, 2007).

¹⁵ I have discussed this phenomenon particularly in “Polycentric Polytheism and the Philosophy of Religion,” *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008, pp. 207-229.

however, the relation is thought in its objectivity, and so becomes objective. Zeus “has turned back to Kronos, is dependent upon him, contemplates the lengths and widths of the Kronian ‘observatory’, and situates Kronos in himself ... So Zeus binds Kronos in himself firmly and permanently, and Zeus is bound to Kronos in like manner” (*IC* 89.13-18). Zeus makes Kronos’ viewpoint, his *periôpê*, intellectually accessible, and himself becomes cognizable as well. “Kronos is an all-perfect intellect, and the mighty Zeus is likewise an intellect. Each therefore being an intellect, each is also evidently an intelligible” (*PT* V 5. 21. 18-20)—as intelligent agents or subjects, Zeus and Kronos are also *objects* of intellect, reciprocally binding each other as objects of understanding.

In deities becoming objective to one another, therefore, Intellect itself subsists as a distinct plane of Being, which must be in some way *separate* from the Gods insofar as beings derive their forms from it, and this process of formation is not wholly reducible to divine participation—if it were, we would have no means for understanding beyond revealed theology. The *binding* of each other by intellectual Gods such as Kronos and Zeus, therefore, is essential to the relative *autonomy* of Intellect, that is, of the realm of Form. Being, as the common space of the Gods, comes from the Gods’ self-reflection as well as their

otherness-to-self, with which comes their otherness to one another. This occurs in stages: Phanês shines forth as manifestation or appearance itself, while Ouranos establishes primary place, *topos*, from which nothing would be separable, but for Kronos dividing intelligence from the scene or event of intellection (*noêsis*). Kronos binds others intellectually, returning all else to himself, but in Zeus, the third intellective ‘father’, the intellection itself achieves determinacy. Thus Proclus quotes the Platonist Amelius as referring to three demiurgies and sovereignties, one that *is* (Phanês), one that *has* (Kronos), and one that *sees* (Zeus) (*IT* I 306, III 103, interpreting *Tim.* 39e7-9), to which Proclus adds that we should understand Kronos as both *being* and *having* the intelligible and Zeus as *being*, *having* and *seeing* it (*PT* V 5. 23). Demiurgy simply *is* this effective seeing: seeing the forms of life with which the paradigm is [144] replete, the demiurge creates Soul as the vehicle for a manifold of beings to manifest themselves *to one another*.

The activity of the first intellective father—and we must always bear in mind that ‘father’ is a technical term in Proclus, not an anthropomorphism—is expressed in the determinations of *in self* and *in other* from the *Parmenides*. That neither of these apply directly to henadic individuality can be seen from the

fact that *in other* applies to the first father, while *in self* applies properly to the guardian monad attached to him. That is, the primary activity of the first intellective father is to project himself into the intelligible Other, returning it to himself in his secondary activity: “For he is in himself and in another. Insofar as he is a whole intellect, he acts toward himself, but insofar as he is in the intelligibles prior to himself, he establishes in another the all-perfect intellection of himself” (*PT* V 37. 135.17-21). The ‘priority’ of the intelligible to the first intellective father here is purely relative to his action; as Proclus reminds his readers a few pages later (141.25-7), one is never “attributing to the Gods elements of Being, but properties [*idiotêtas*] appropriate to them which are all-perfect and superior to beings.”

All Gods are supra-essential henads, no matter on what plane of Being they cast their activity. The intelligible *koinon* is inferior to the henadic individuals, *wherever* they may operate in the hierarchical organization, and so the highest intelligible is actually inferior to the ‘lowest’ of the Gods. Only by appreciating this fact may we properly grasp the significance of the first intellective father’s self-projection into the intelligible, which makes possible the third intellective father’s demiurgy. The demiurge organizes the cosmos according to a vision of the paradigm, that is, a vision of the

intelligibility of another God or of himself *qua* other. In this operation, *otherness* (*allotês*) gives birth to *difference* (*heterotês*). “The Other is present cryptically and causally in those [the intelligible triads] ... The in-another adheres to the difference associated with unitary number; but unitary number is suspended from the latent union of the One Being, on account of which also it is unitary” (*PT* V 37. 136.12-19). ‘Unitary number’ (*heniaios arithmos*) is henadic multiplicity, the analogue on a higher plane of our ‘numerical difference’. The otherness of henads to one another precedes difference as such, which is unthinkable without reciprocal identity. Proclus discusses the relations among these terms in an important technical discussion, in which the otherness of henads is distinguished from the difference of forms, for the latter is a “reciprocal otherness”: “[I]n the supra-essential realm, ... in place of the distinction [*diakrisis*] of coordinates from each other [we must postulate] individual peculiarity [*idiotês*]” (*IP* 1190.30f).

“This Other,” Proclus writes, speaking of the alterity into which the first intellectual father has projected himself, “pertains to that order according to which the power of difference is first manifest, as the offspring of intelligible and paternal power. Hence the Other was in the first [intelligible] triad latently, inasmuch as power was there” (*PT* V 37. 136.1-

4). The first intelligible triad is the [145] most universal expression of a God as active in the constitution of Being; its product is Being Itself. Each God, thus, is the first intelligible triad; but all the Gods are in each. In the first intelligible triad, the other Gods, who are the Other as such, each God being a primordial Self, are cryptically or latently (*kruphiôs*) present—which is as much as to say, present without mediation—as the continuum of power (*dunamis*) in the henadic person. The primary sense of power in the first intelligible triad is the manifold of attributes or qualities in the God which are the locus of universality in him/her. However, inasmuch as this is *the first difference*, namely that between the unique henadic individual and his/her properties—it also contains in latent fashion the *potential relations* between each God and any or all other Gods; the henad, as supra-essential, is “non-relational, though productive of a relation” (IP 936). In the intellective order this latent aspect of the henad becomes manifest, and henads are posited in relation to one another.

In the first stage of the process, the first intellective father, Hellenic Kronos, manifests other Gods as offspring, then reabsorbs them. “The first intellective father is ‘father’ through himself, but on account of the immaculate [monad], he contains [*periechez*] in himself the classes [*gene*] of himself, recalls them fixedly to

himself, and in his own selfhood [*beantotêti*]¹⁶ encompasses [*sunechei*] the intelligible multiplicities of the intellectives inseparable from his own monad” (PT V 37. 138.1-6). The “immaculate” (*achrantos*) or guardian monad functions here as an aspect of the henad’s activity, the aspect of *being-in-self*. The Others are present as an intelligible continuum; note the use of terms such as *periechein* and *sunechein*, which evoke the intelligible-intellective plane, as above we read that “the Other is latently and causally present in the intelligible of intelligibles [first intelligible triad], but essentially in the intelligible of the intelligible-intellective Gods” (136.12). But They are inseparable from his own intelligibility, his monadic or ontic identity. Thus his intelligence is ‘pure’ (*Kronos* as *koros nous*, pure intellect). The guardian monad here is the first intellective father’s resolution of the alterity present in him—the other Gods as well as his own content, properties, or attributes—into one common intelligible objectivity. A key expression Proclus uses for this activity in the first intellective father is to speak of the latter’s “wholeness”, *holotês*. Henads are prior to wholeness; mereology is constitutive of ontology as science of beings (ET props. 66-74).

¹⁶ Rejecting the unnecessary, though plausible, emendation to *pantotêti*, ‘allness’, at 138.4.

Accordingly, the first intellective father “is established *in another* insofar as he is [a] whole ... The parts of this wholeness are particular powers striving to proceed from the father, but established in and contained on all sides by it [the wholeness]. And this wholeness is itself a godhead [*theotês*] connecting [*sunektikê*] the intelligible parts in itself” (138.14-22). Kronos encompasses his children intellectively; but this relation, as a mythic *event*, is itself a divinity of sorts, acquiring autonomy through the diacritical monad, or difference-from-self.

[146] Indeed, each of the intellective fathers in some way experiences difference-from-self. The first intellective father *thinks himself*, the second intellective father, Hellenic Rhea, *moves herself*, the third intellective father, Hellenic Zeus, *relates to himself*. Just as the first intellective father, through the determinations of *being in other* and *being in self* projects himself into the intelligible “viewpoint” (*periôpê*) as a wholeness, so the second intellective father “is filled from transcendent Life”—that is, the second hypostasis—and so “is at once motion and that which is moved” (140.26-7). She is “the mover of wholes and first moved from herself” (142.9-10). The primary motion is ideal genesis; for as Proclus explains, while “that which is generated *simpliciter* receives essence, power and activity according to time, that which is in a sense generated”—ideal genesis—“possesses activity

in motion and duration” (*IT* I, 277). In an even broader sense of ‘generation’, however, “everything proceeding from a cause is called generated” (*IT* I, 280) and with respect to the Gods specifically “though we sometimes speak of generations of the Gods, we say this indicating their ineffable procession, the difference of the secondary relative to their causes ... for them, procession and generation are the same” (280.19-28). Procession is strictly speaking acausal for the henads, inasmuch as the One is not a cause; to be *caused* in general thus is a relation to the divine in general, while to be generated in any sense is to be posited in relation to *a certain* cause (*IT* I, 298.11-17). In this way, *generation* among the Gods elaborates the basic intellectual theme of *diakrisis* or determinacy. In the intellectual organization Gods *come to be caused* in the particularity of relations to one another, a prerequisite for the articulated condition of beings. As self-constituted (*authupostatos*), the henad “though you may conceptually divide it into cause and caused ... proceeds from its own being” (*IT* I, 281.6-10); but the procession is real, the uncaused Gods appropriating to themselves genuine relations of origin and locality.

The second intellectual father is responsible therefore for beings *qua* beings, from the highest to the lowest, *being generated* in any sense: she is “the generative source of

wholes and the principal [*archégon*] cause of all things” (142.3-4). Note here the technical term ‘source’, *pégé*, with its complementary ‘principle’, *arché*, in addition to the more subtle complementarity of ‘whole’ and ‘all’, corresponding respectively to the second and third intelligible triads. The second intellectual father is the “generative cause of all the Gods” (142.8-9), precisely insofar as they are ‘wholes’, i.e., treated as if they are beings, which are necessarily determined by mereological structures. By virtue of the second intellectual father, this implies an element of *narrative sequence*: “That which does not possess at once its whole essence or activity in unity is called ‘generated’... all motion subsists according to the part and is not whole at once” (*IT* I, 277.27-33). Mythically, Rhea is indeed a bountiful mother; but she is “generative cause of all the Gods,” with its explicit totality, from this intellectual causality she operates.

The third intellectual father is the demiurge, much of whose activity must be taken up in an account of the psychogonic work involved in the procession of the [147] hypercosmic Gods. I have spoken already of the demiurge’s relation to the paradigm; what remains is the role of the third intellectual father in completing the operation begun by the first. The intellectual order is grounded in its third moment, in its perfection or *telos*, as the

intelligible is grounded in its first or radical moment and the intelligible-intellective in its central or sustaining moment. The significance of the intellective procession lies accordingly in the demiurgic articulation of all that has come before, which he does by positioning himself in relation to it. If the first intellective father is a self-thinking deity, and the second a self-moving deity, then the third is a *self-relating deity* under the four-fold rubric of the determinations of identity and difference: *identity-with-self*, *identity-with-the-other*, *difference-from-the-other*, and *difference-from-self*.

The last of these belongs, as I have indicated, to the diacritical monad, while the third belongs to the third father's guardian or immaculate monad. Hence the function most proper to the demiurge is *identification*, underscoring that the sense of the entire divine procession is not the multiplication of an abstract unity, or differentiation within a totalizing substantial unity, but rather the emergence of community from concrete diversity. Prior to identity and difference, there is *self* and *other*: "From where does Parmenides say that this power [of difference, *heterotês*] come to him [the demiurge]? From the *in-self* and the *in-other*. For these [determinations] are in the first father unifically [*hênômenôs*], differentially [*diakekrimenôs*] in the third; there, determinacy [*diakrîsis*] presubsisted causally, while in the

demiurge it shines forth and reveals its proper power” (PT V 39. 147.2-7). *Diakrisis* manifests in the demiurge according to a dialectic in which “insofar as he [the demiurge] is *in another*, he is united to the intelligible of himself, but insofar he is *in himself* he is separated from it, because he has proceeded according to each of its [the intelligible’s] classes” (147.15-19). The demiurge projects himself into the intelligible object like the first intellectual father; but his being *in himself* is an *identification* with each formal moment (or ‘class’) produced by the elaboration of the intelligible object in its objectivity.

In this way, the demiurge transcends the disposition of in-self and in-other and establishes genuine identity and difference, and in doing so, makes the philosophical system possible. Hence the *self identity* of the henad, “the monadic and paternal characteristic” (144.14-15), presents the One in its self-identity, according to which we speak of ‘the One Itself’. ‘Characteristic’, *idiotês*, refers here not merely to a *particular characteristic*, namely, the characteristic of being monadic and paternal, but rather to the *monadic and paternal nature of the characteristic as such*. For Proclus has established *idiotês*, the positivity of henadic individuality, prior to formal identity-and-difference (IP 1049.23-27; cf. IP 1190.27-1191.1). Identity and difference occur against a common field, and it is this which demiurgy, more than any other divine

disposition, establishes through *identity-with-the-other*: “For the demiurge is present to all he produces and is the same in all things which he arranges, preestablishing in himself the generative [148] essence¹⁷ of wholes” (144.25-7), that is, of beings as formal natures. Beings in this way participate the demiurge and to that extent “he is the same with them” (145.24).

The demiurge’s *difference-from-other*, the immaculate/guardian function associated with him, on the other hand, establishes the demiurge as “unparticipated by other things” (146.2). Typically the condition of ‘unparticipated’, *amethektos*, is not associated with henads; the latter is thought of as a prerogative of the One Itself, and derivatively a property of the ‘unparticipated’ ontic hypostases that participate the various classes of Gods (*ET* props. 161-5). But to be ‘unparticipated’ is a property of “real Being”, *to ontôs on*, which is simply the being that is “attached to the Gods” (*ET* prop. 161). Thus we may say that in the operations of the demiurge, Being has truly

¹⁷ Rejecting the unnecessary emendation of *ousian* to *aitian*—were it the latter, there would be no need to specify that the demiurge has *preestablished* it in himself, a God being prior to *ousia* (substance or essence), while the exercise of ultimate causality is the proper station of the Gods.

been produced with the appearance of the 'unparticipated' One as a property of the henad.

Finally, in *differing from himself*, a function vested in the diacritical monad, but which Proclus treats as a virtual part of the suite of demiurgic powers, the demiurge lends himself to the grand narrative of theogony. Hence, e.g., Zeus reappears in the hypercosmic order, where he divides the cosmic sovereignty with his brothers Poseidon and Hades, after operating as *sole* cosmic sovereign on the intellectual plane (*PT* VI 8, pp. 34-42). Such divisions of divine persons are often treated by moderns as mere hermeneutical exigency; but that inconsistent narratives may apply to one and the same individual is essential to the nature of Being.

CONCLUSION

The determinations necessary for philosophy arise, therefore, out of narrative determinacy, and to this extent, from *determinate narratives*. What is the status, therefore, of the universality achieved? It is clear that no final 'demythologization' can occur, to the extent that revealed myth is inseparable from particular supra-essential individuals. To the extent, however, that the intellectual structures derive from general characteristics of narrativity, they

do not depend on any *particular* narrative, just as the intelligible structures, deriving from general characteristics of henadic individuality, did not depend on the analysis of this or that particular henad. But in neither case may we say that the formal is wholly independent of the existential. For Proclus, the exegesis of Plato can be no more independent of Hellenic theology than it can be of Plato's text; these are not 'material' determinations of a doctrine sufficient in its formality.

[149] More broadly, only the universality in the *aims* of the Gods of all peoples, a function of their universal goodness, allows one to predict some common result in the philosophical exegesis of discrete theologies. It would seem that the purpose of a text such as the *Elements of Theology* is to adumbrate such a general theology; it contains no references to factual theologies or even to Plato's texts. But its generality makes it not the most independent, but the most *dependent* of texts. In a way, it is paradoxical for Proclus to speak of a *general* theology, when it is the primacy of individuality for Platonism¹⁸ that makes Plato's theology necessarily *Hellenic* theology. Thus, at

¹⁸ "All those who have ever treated of theology have called 'Gods' whatever is primary *kata phusin*, and said that the science of theology concerns these things" (PT I 3. 12.11-13).

one typical moment, he urges us to turn “from the indefinite [*aoriston*] and common [*koinês*] doctrine concerning these Gods” to “the Hellenic tradition [*phémên*] concerning them,” with which he firmly associates Plato, who “follows the theologians of the Greeks as far as to the very names [of the Gods]” (*PT* V 35. 127.8-12). The procession of Being begins from the divine domain marked by proper names and particular languages, reaches through divine agency the domain of the formal, which is universal and hence indefinite, and then beyond to a lower particularity, such as ours, formally mediated in one respect, but possessing something proper to the divine as well in our unique agency, and the uniqueness of our traditions. This uniqueness does not prevent translation, any more than our own uniqueness preserves us from moral evaluation; but translation and evaluation alike would lose their point were they to proceed to eliminate their founding alterities.

THE HENADIC STRUCTURE OF PROVIDENCE IN PROCLUS*

The word *pronoia*, or ‘providence’, is always analyzed by Proclus as *pro-noia*, ‘pre-intellect’. We may thus in one respect regard it as the very mode of thinking of the Gods themselves, for since the existence of the Gods transcends intelligence, the Gods can only be said to *think* on behalf of those ontologically posterior to them; and thus their ‘thought’ is in its very nature a ‘forethought’ on behalf of beings. In another respect, however, *pronoia* is the operational dimension of what it is to be a God, for it is the very faculty of Goodness: “Good accedes to all things from providence alone, in the same manner as intelligence proceeds from intellect, and life and vital motion from soul,” (*Dec. dub.* III.17.1-4).¹ For its part, the Good itself *is* providence, for “the highest is not that which has the form of goodness [*agathoeides*] but that

* Lecture presented at the Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, March 11, 2010.

¹ Citations from *De decem dubitationibus circa providentiam* are to question number, paragraph number and line number within the paragraph of the Latin text as it appears in Daniel Isaac, ed. and trans., *Proclus: Trois Études sur la Providence*, vol. I (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003).

which does good [*agathourgon*],” (*El. Theol.* prop. 122).² And Proclus connects each God’s ‘pre-thinking’, or *pronoëin*, of the universal organization of things directly to their ‘existence’, or *huparxis*: “Every God in his own existence [*huparxis*] possesses the providence [*pronoëin*] of the universe [*tôn holôn*], and the primary providence is in the Gods,” (*El. Theol.* prop. 120). The constitutive feature of a God’s mode of existence is having all the other Gods and everything else *in* him/herself; and thus the coherence of this totality is an *enactment* of each God’s personal unity.

Providence is thus fundamentally active, rather than what we might imagine as a plan. But this *doing* is also inherently a way of *thinking*, because providence is both proactive, in having deployed successive modes of causality in the service of the total Good, as well as reconstructive, as *we* try to find the way of conceiving things that allows their providential ordering to shine through, and in so doing participate providence through the process of coming to know that we are known by the Gods (*Dec. dub.* III.16.20-1). In prop. 134 of the

² Citations from the *Elements of Theology* are to proposition numbers, with translations being those of E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), sometimes slightly modified.

Elements of Theology, Proclus states that “every divine intelligence exercises intellection *qua* intelligence, but providence *qua* God.” Such an intelligence, he explains, “communicates itself *qua* God to all things; but it is not present to all *qua* intelligence. For deity extends even to those things which the distinctive character of intelligence cannot reach.” It is easy to miss the deeper point here alongside the simpler one that all things desire the Good whereas “even of the beings fitted to participate intelligence not all desire it.” For it is really a matter here of the scope of providence, necessarily broader and deeper than the intellectual organization, which is marked particularly by the duality of potentiality and actuality, and of the structure this scope demands.

In the Platonic tradition, intellect never stands merely for the exercise of intelligence, but for the actuality of form, because it is “an intellectual act” in the first place “to generate and preserve the whole world of Forms,” (*In Parm.* 967).³ In the essay “Ten Doubts Concerning Providence”, Proclus begins his inquiry from the problem of the knowledge implicit in providence, which must be able to

³ Citations of the *Parmenides* commentary are to the pages in Cousin’s edition, and all translations from Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton Univ. Press, 1987).

evaluate or fix the “dignity” (I.2.4-7) of wholes and parts, eternal things and corruptible things, universals and particulars, participated and participant, and so must be a knowledge *prior to form* (I.4.30), that is, it must be *knowledge by unity* (34-5). This evaluation, in other words, must be distinct from the intellectual order of the universe; in it, the particular, the participant, the corruptible, are not simply to be valued according to the universal, the formal, the eternal, that is, according to their place in the hierarchical disposition of things. The perspective of providence, as *henological* rather than ontological, begins from a radical equality insofar as beings are valued as holistically-determined *units* rather than through the hierarchical relationships of part and whole or the likeness and unlikeness constitutive of approximation to form. As in the very procession of Being, the inquiry into providence begins from uniqueness (*idiotês*) and proceeds to community, under the patronage of “Hermes of the commons,” *koinos Hermês*, twice invoked as guide at the essay’s beginning.

That which “knows according to the one,” Proclus explains, “knows so far as the similar is known by the similar ... so far as that which proceeds from a cause is known by its cause,” (I.4.35-37). Thus, to know “according to the one” is to know something through the principle of individuation itself, but therefore

also necessarily *as* an individual, *by* an individual. Hence in his essay “On Providence, Fate and What Depends on Us,” Proclus explains that “when someone actualizes what really is the most divine activity of the soul,” she “will know only in the way the Gods know everything, in an ineffable manner, each according to their proper one,” a mode of knowledge which is neither temporal nor eternal (*De prov. et fato* §32).⁴ “The one of Providence,” its unit of measure, so to speak, while not the universal, is not, however, the particular either (I.5.11-12), the *atomon*.⁵ The One Itself cannot itself be some one thing, because it is not other than each unit except insofar as they, whether as wholes or as parts, distance themselves from being one *with themselves*, that is, insofar as their way of being negates their uniqueness. The operation of providence

⁴ Citations from this text are by paragraph numbers in *Proclus: On Providence*, trans. Carlos Steel (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 2007) and all translations are Steel’s.

⁵ Compare *El. Theol.* prop. 74, where what is *atomos* is treated as a whole, and hence not henadic; *In Parm.* 735 and 752, where “atomic monads” are the participants of “proximate forms” such as Human or Horse; *Plat. Theol.* III 15.53.12-3, which locates “atomic forms” in the demiurgic intelligence; and *In Tim.* I 425f, where Proclus follows Iamblichus in contrasting atomic and henadic unity. See also Proclus’ remark at *In Tim.* I 446.25 that “every nature at once *individual* (*kath’hekaston*) and *particular* (*merikon*) is material.”

becomes in this way a problem of integrity, of the way in which different kinds of individuals hold together, and in so doing hold together the procession of Being.

The procession of Being occurs through the development in and among beings of *reciprocal otherness* (*In Parm.* 1190), through which beings are subordinated to wholes ontologically prior to them, wholes-before-the-parts (*El. Theol.* prop. 67). This mediation renders their value *relative*, and hence unequal, in a way they are not *qua* units. Hence “inequality” is a key problem for Proclus in grasping providence, not only with respect to the inequality of human lives, that is, differences of individual fortune (VI.32.3-10), but also the “inequality” of different species (VII.43.1-9), so that the problem of “inequality” becomes as much that of a certain sort of *equality* or community (43.9-20), that is, insofar as having something in common with other individuals leads to an individual’s fate being unequal, so to speak, to their dignity.

Hence Proclus refers frequently to evils arising from “common corruptions” (VII.43.11,19), that is, corruptions arising from the participation in common units. In the city, diverse individuals suffer a common fate inasmuch as “parts, in consequence of their following wholes ... suffer something in conjunction with ... things of a different

nature," (VI.40.23-5). So too, "common passions" (VI.41.9-10) cut across the self-identity of souls. "Every city and every genus," he says, "is one animal, in a much greater degree than every person" (IX.59.2-5)—and that so many animals subsist in whole or in part *inside* diverse others in this fashion confuses our perception of providence, making it hard to identify the individuals involved and the scope within which providence appears, because the "self-motive agent" is from another point of view "the instrument of the universe ... co-adapting itself to that which uses it" (VI.39.25-8) and *vice versa*. From another point of view, daimons are said to preside over species, as well as over parts of the body, and thus over both the formal and real parts ('pieces') of the individual, whereas the Gods are present to all things and "all things are full of Gods" (III.16.12; cf. also *El. Theol.* prop. 134, quoted above). Clearly, all things are not full of all daimons: thus daimons are intermediaries for the part *qua* part; and transcending this condition and entering into direct participation of the Gods consists precisely in transcending mereology, so that one is conscious *immediately* of the divine influence (III.16.16-20).

The participation in forms thus has, from the henological perspective of providence, a surprising amount in common with the participation in the cosmic machinery of fate

(*heimarmenē*), a similar problematic applying to the part *qua* part, whether relative to a formal universal or the material whole of a city or the cosmos. Fate is the cause “of some connection between and sequence of things that occur,” and “the sequence of all concatenated events” is imposed upon them by fate “as the one transcendent cause of the connected things” (*De prov. et fato* §7). Proclus stresses the *transcendence* of fate over the connected things and events: “fate is not what is connected, nor the connection coming into it, but the connecting principle,” (§8). Henologically speaking, therefore, the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by fate, the very law-governed and mechanistic character, that is, which makes it attractive to Theodore the engineer, Proclus’ interlocutor, comes at the expense of the unity of the beings it embraces. Mereology, once again, is the key here:

nature in us binds together all the parts of our body and connects their interaction, and this nature can also be viewed as a kind of ‘fate’ of our body. For just as in our body some parts are more important and others less important and the latter follow the former, so too in the entire universe: the generations of the less important parts follow the movements of the more important ... (§12).⁶

⁶ Compare the terminology of parts “following” wholes at *Dec. dub.* VI.40.23-5, quoted above.

We may use the individual's *agency* to determine the scope within which they are knowable providentially, that is, according to the unity proper to them, since agency is unity. Thus "every body is necessitated to do what it does and to undergo what it undergoes, to heat or to be heated, to cool or to be cooled. There is no choice in bodies," (*De prov.* §13) because their 'agency', as it were, belongs to the machinery of fate, and is ascribed to *its* unity. But when the soul "reflects upon itself and sees its own essence, the powers in itself ... and the many lives of which it is the plenitude ... it discovers that it is itself a *rational world*," (§18; my emphasis).

In this way the soul comes into that which is "truly [its] power ... For it is the function of every power to contain and preserve its subject" (§23).⁷ The power that accords the soul its widest agency, and thus its widest determination, is virtue. The moral quality attributed to the agent already delimits them from the world, for "we do not say that the universe has this character, but the person who acts," (§35). But virtue also appropriates worldly events, making use of what does not depend on us and bringing order to what is given (§61). In this way we are as it were demiurges of our own rational cosmos; but the highest virtue is

⁷ *Sunechein kai sôzein*, on which see below.

not, for Proclus, an exercise of choice (*proairesis*), as for the Stoics, but of will (*boulêsis*), again for henological reasons: “the ancients,” we read, “do not identify choice and will,” for “the will ... only regards the good, whereas choice is likewise of good and not good things,” (§57). For a power to exercise authority over *all* things, it must be *unitary*, while choice is *dyadic*; but Proclus indicates that the distinction here may be a question of perspective upon the living agency. The faculty of choice, he explains,

would have become itself the power over all things, if it had not had the impulse of choice, but had only been will. For a willed life is in accordance with the good and it makes what depends on us extremely powerful and it is really godlike; thanks to this life the soul becomes god and governs the whole world, as Plato says. (§60)

Gods, in this respect, do not possess “choice” because they do not possess the requisite ambivalence or duality (§59).

The position of will relative to choice carries certain corollaries. If will is in the position of the good,⁸ and choice in the position of intellect, on account of its dyadic nature, then will is only of what is, and not of

⁸ *En tagathou taxei*, as is said of the “paternal” (*to patrikon*) in *El. Theol.* prop. 151.

what might be. Providence transmutes, in effect, all choice into will, which is, by definition, a will to the good; but will, inasmuch as it is, like the good, prior to form, is also necessarily at the same time the will *to* form, which, since the universe will not be perfect, according to Proclus, without *intermittent* as well as eternal participation, means also the will to privation-of-form.

This relationship between choice and will takes us from the determination of our unity relative to the world, to the determination of our unity relative to the Gods. In both cases, the problem is how providence values individual agents. Each God contains all the other Gods and all that is; therefore we are all, in some sense, *part* of each of them, but not in the same way that we are members of a species or citizens of a nation, for

the manner in which the gods contain all things is different and not at all comparable to the things that are produced by them ... the gods know what depends on us in a divine and timeless manner and yet we act according to our nature. And whatever we choose is foreknown by them, not because of a determination in us, but of one in them. (§65)

What then does the existence of *our* choice as a determination in each unitary deity do to our own agency/unity, and to theirs? When Proclus

takes up the problem of how providence “knows contingent things”, he explains that some of “the ancients” denied contingency in beings in order to preserve providence, while others retain contingency, but placed such things outside the scope of providence (*Dec. dub.* II.6.3-9). Both of these positions result from attributing to providence the same outlines as formal cognition, for which all will either come about on account of form or on account of ‘matter’, that is, the relative privation of form.

Proclus sublates this opposition through the formula according to which providence “knows the indefinite definitely” (II.8.28-9). The indefinite is still indefinite according to this formula; it is not simply conjured away in its indefiniteness. The ‘contingent’ agent’s causality is appropriated, not into a providence which is *en bloc*—for this would be necessity, as it is this which binds things together and attributes their causality to itself—but a providence in itself existential, and thus inherently individualized. Thus we may distinguish the knowledge proper to providence from the knowledge daimons possess of the indeterminate, characterized by Proclus as *discursive* (III.15.28), which will be deterministic, that is, knowledge of a finite thing in a finite way. The God’s knowledge, by contrast, being according to the mode of production proper to each thing (III.13.42-3), knows things according to their freedom, as

subjects, rather than according to their determination by fate or as objects. The daimon assigned to the individual before birth has a dianoetic knowledge of the life a soul has chosen, a knowledge that would infringe upon the person's perception of freedom were they aware of it, whereas the Gods know the agency involved in the original choice, which is alone utterly unique to that person. When it comes to providence, then, "the form of knowledge must not correspond to what the object of knowledge is, but to what the subject of knowledge is" (*De prov.* §64), whereas "every cognitive principle in act is reflected upon the object of its knowledge," and in this way Proclus argues that the "sensitive" and the "intellectual" soul must be distinguished due to the difference in their objects (*De prov.* §41). The formal faculty is qualified by its object and hence is in itself objectified, whereas providence is the 'subjective' knowledge *par excellence*, for it is will.

When Proclus shifts from speaking of providence's knowledge of things, to speak directly of providence *as cause*, and asks whether, if it is the cause of determinate and indeterminate things alike, it is the cause of both "according to one and the same thing, or according to different things" (III.9.2-5), the question of the unity of providence, as the specifically divine faculty, becomes a question

of the unity of the God as such. How does each God contain all things in such a fashion as to allow for real contingency? Proclus responds with recourse to the notions of finitude and infinity. Providence, that is, the God, is finite to itself, “for that which is infinite to itself is incomprehensible to itself; and hence it can neither hold together [*sunechein*] nor conserve [*sózēin*] itself. But each being conserves itself according to its power [*sôstikon esti kata dunamin*],” (III.11.15-19).⁹

Proclus thus treats providence here as a specific case, albeit perhaps the most universal, of a divine *power*. I have discussed elsewhere the generativity for Proclus of the dialectic of existence and power(s) in each God.¹⁰ Treating providence as a power allows us to understand how within the God there is finitude-to-self and infinity-to-self. The God is finite to him/herself, and individuals such as ourselves are finite to ourselves, but between us is the infinity-to-self of the God, which expresses itself in the God’s infinity-to-us: “each of the

⁹ Compare the description of unity in *El. Theol.* prop. 13 as that which “conserves [*sôstikon*] and holds together [*sunektikon*] the substance of each thing,” and the statement from *De prov.* §23 that “it is the function of every power to contain and preserve its subject.”

¹⁰ See, in particular, “The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus,” *Méthexis* 21 (2008), pp. 131-143.

things that are infinite is only infinite to the natures posterior to itself,” (III.11.20-1). The natures posterior to him/herself, therefore, are as it were the repositories of the God’s infinity-to-self, a relationship of infinity *among* the God’s powers, “for it is not surprising that among infinite powers, one is more infinite than another” (11.45). This relative non-comprehension of self, moreover, is the locus of Form, for Form emerges in the first place as the resolution of the opposition in the henad between existence and powers as the henad *thinking him/herself*. Hence we can apply Forms to Gods, treating henads as if they were an ontic manifold, though the henads are in fact *productive* of Forms. In similar, albeit inverted fashion, *we* comprehend Forms although we are also *products* of Form.

Providence embodies the infinite power of the henad insofar as the beings contained in the henad “according to the most profound union in the infinite depths of itself” (III.11.24-6) experience lack of identity-with-self, which the Gods therefore do not lack *for themselves*. Beings imitate henadic infinity through indeterminacy and imitate henadic unity through determination, “on account of which the first of the natures in this universe ... subsist according to one determination [*boros*],” (III.12.6-10). But the simplest natures with respect to *form* are not free; the simplicity that imitates henadic

unity belongs rather to atomic particulars, which are simple in one respect while hopelessly complex *qua* particulars. Socrates, insofar as he is simply Socrates, can be thought of as possessing a single determination; but in fact to be Socrates entails being human, animal, the son of Sophroniscus, and even to have been other sorts of being before and to be about to become other sorts yet. These multiple determinations express an absolute indefiniteness, albeit they are sources of relative definition at any given moment; but these contingencies are also manifestations of a will genuinely free.

Another aspect of the dialectic finite-to-self, infinite-to-other is that it constitutes the other as other, that is, the other *as object*. The relationship to Form is constitutive of the other as other, as it is of myself as other. To this we may compare the matter “in” the demiurge; that is, through the operation of his power of finitude-to-self, an opposition between form and matter occurs, which ultimately expresses the presence of the other henads *in* him, their presence to him as others being expressed in matter, insofar as this is the “disorderly motion” illuminated by the orders “prior” to him *qua* demiurge (*In Tim.* I 387)—that is, prior to him as an intellective God, though not as simply a God. Matter in this way expresses the *objective* presence to one another of the henads, as opposed to the

subjective presence-to-self of each, which manifests itself as well in the henadic intersubjectivity in the intelligible-intellective order, whereas the intellective order is the site of subject-object relationships.¹¹

There is a necessity, *anankê*, appropriate to the discussion of providence which is not the same as fate (*heimarmenê*), though Proclus elsewhere respects Platonic precedent for using the terms interchangeably (*De prov.* §13). Thus he explains that an ontic product considered with respect to its unity is necessary (*anankaion*), while considered as originating from infinity as a power of unity, the product is contingent (III.14.10-12). The being or event is “necessary” in this sense when considered as an inseparable part of some unit, contingent when considered in its nonidentity relative to some unit. Necessity here also expresses the unity with the knower of that which is known as timelessly actual, whereas the *knowledge of contingency* expresses non-identity with the knower: I do not know my own agency as ‘contingent’ in this sense, but only another’s. Accordingly, he speaks here in terms of a continuum between the merely determinate in any respect and the

¹¹ On henadic “intersubjectivity” as constitutive of the intelligible-intellective plane of Being, see my “The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods”, *Méthexis* 23, 2010, pp. 137-157.

necessary, such that whatever is actual, just insofar as it is actual is necessary (14.12-20). The prime case of such a unity would be the act of will, which is in this respect anything but 'contingent'. The contingent, he continues, "imitates the infinite power of the One, but not the power of itself. For every power is the power of another thing which possesses it, but not of itself," (14.20-2). That contingency is not a principle in its own right is grounded in the broader axiom that a power essentially lacks self-identity, because it is always the power *of* something. The unit-*qua*-unit, to which nothing belongs, is thus in the negative movement the ultimate referent of the deferral inherent in the potency as such, hence its ascription to the principle of individuation as such, while in the positive movement, the difference between a henad and a power of that henad is the "minimum distinction" (Damascius, *De Princ.* I. 118. 9-17) that '(em)powers' the procession of Being.

Providence imparts autarchy to primary beings (III.19.6-7), for what is *more one* is more sufficient to itself, whereas things whose unity entails other things are also sources of providence to one another, from which comes the unity of the world (III.18.7-8), divided natures being coordinated in this one good (III.18.12-3) through the exercise of the degree of autarchy they possess. Thus the "one" with

reference to which all things are coordinated is still *individuation*, but in less integral units this entails the others. Lesser units are thus like henads insofar as all are in each, but unlike them insofar as for the lesser units this is a matter of inherence, that is, of determination. This underlying henological structure allows Proclus ultimately to ascribe the cause of non-participation to the participants themselves, as a determination of their self-valuation that establishes their effective causality, even negatively.

Hence the activation of contraries, for example the corrupting and the corruptible, divides or destroys certain kinds of units inherently.¹² A more complex example is the opposition between reason and the contrary-to-reason or preter-rational (*para logon*). The contrary-to-reason is an evil specific to that with a natural disposition to reason (V.30.30-2); hence the soul with an irrational and rational component, such as our own, finds its rational component compromised by involvement in the realm of fate or mechanical force, while its

¹² For the ethics of individuation generated by such zero-sum relationships, see my "Hercules of the Surface: Deleuzean Humanism and Deep Ecology," in *An (Un)Likely Alliance: Thinking Environment(s) with Deleuze/Guattari*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 139-158.

irrational component preserves its own, lesser degree of unity. In effect, these two parts of the soul are drawn to different unities outside themselves, the one to the unity of intellect, the other to the unity of the world. But there is a good even to being divided; though participating less fully in the goods of which it partakes, the divided soul participates diverse goods and in this way helps to perfect the universe (V.31.8-11). And the opposition in the soul is not irreconcilable, for there is a higher mode of unity than either the cosmos or the intellect.

The reconciliation in question is not to be identified, though, with the intellectual recognition of the telos of embodiment. Rather, it lies in the identity of the *will*, “will” and “power” being the principal components of providence (III.18.21-28). The will that has chosen embodiment transcends the opposition between immortal and mortal constituents of the soul, an opposition which in fact only exists *for* the rational component; and thus there is a sense in which reason “acting as reason, impedes that in us which is divine and better than it, though in so doing it operates in accord with its nature; nevertheless, the divine prevailing, reason has the good to a greater degree” in virtue of “operating divinely” (V.30.41-5). This is in accord with the general structural principle that for beings, there is

always a “coordinate good” and a “greater good derived from that which is superior to itself” (30.45-7). Hence bodies are corruptible because of their participation in a unity better than themselves for which generation and corruption are of equal value. But the evil in the soul is “more various than that which is in bodies” (VIII.51.29-30), that is, more *idiosyncratic*, reflecting the fact that there is something in the soul that is *sui generis*. We can see from this why it is important for the Platonist to posit salvation by *sumbola*, the ‘tokens’ of the theurgist, alongside the reversion-to-Form.¹³ As illuminating as the Forms are in a relative sense, there is an absolute opacity to them. The necessarily idiosyncratic relationship to *sumbola*, however, for the Gods and for us as well, illuminates what would otherwise be a purely negative particularity.

The order of things is providential for Proclus because it supervenes upon their modes of unity. “All things are in all things, but in each appropriately,” (*El. Theol.* prop. 103); and what determines for each thing *how* all things are in it, is the good which it is capable of doing, the unities and planes of activity

¹³ On which see further my “Offering to the Gods: A Neoplatonic Perspective,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 2.1 (2007), pp. 1-20.

consistent with its own individuation. As such, the Proclean doctrine of providence provides no simple answers to the questions usually posed under this rubric, but it does provide a clear systematic orientation for the inquiry through the henological analysis of the objects and subjects of divine action.

CONCLUSION

This paper refers to the “henadic structure” of providence in two senses:

First, because the nature of providence is inseparable from the nature of the Gods themselves, because providence is the operationalization of that nature. What it is to be a God, is to be an absolutely unique individual containing in oneself supra-essentially or ‘existentially’—that is, in a mode superior to being—all that is. This is what it means to be a *henad*, a member of the polycentric set of ultimate units. In this sense, the henadic structure of providence is the goodness all things possess from being inalienable inclusions of each God or Goddess as such.

In the second sense, I speak of the henadic structure of providence because beings are the objects of providence just insofar as they partake of the nature of henads. In this sense, one could say that they are the objects of providence just insofar as they are capable of being subjects of providence as well. In this respect, the inquiry into providence is an inquiry into the modes of unity present in any given thing.

This gives to the Proclean doctrine of providence a somewhat more analytic quality than we might expect from a fundamentally theological doctrine, and indeed in his writings on providence Proclus more uses the voice of the Platonic structuralism of the *Elements of Theology* rather than that of the genetic account of the constitution of Being from the *Platonic Theology*; and there is little in the writings on providence of ‘theology’ in the strictest Proclean sense, in which we would have reference to factual myth and the arcana of actual cults, in which the nature of the Gods most directly expresses itself (he thus contrasts the “indefinite and common” general, i.e. philosophical, doctrine about the nature of the Gods to the culturally specific traditions of “theologians”, which are prior, at *Theol. Plat.* V 35. 127).

The analytic nature of the Proclean doctrine of providence comes about through the analysis of the necessarily composite nature of beings, who partake of henadic, that is to say divine, and ontic organizations, these organizations being fundamentally structurally different, the former polycentric, the latter monocentric and hierarchical. All beings, in the expression of their agency, which is their proper unity, partake of the providential organization, but insofar as unities of another order inhere in this agency, beings have a passive role to play as well in that organization.

The existence of what one might call thus a passive providential organization, that is, a hierarchical disposition of beings, is the source of all the 'hard problems' of providence, so to speak. In other works I have discussed, and will further elucidate in works forthcoming, how the ontic organization responsible for these traits emerges from the existentially fundamental henadic condition as an expression of the primary distinction between a God and that God's powers or potencies. In the doctrine of providence we see in the intelligent soul, the most complex and therefore delicate of unities, the furthest ripples of this moment of divine

non-identity which at once separates us from
and binds us to the Gods themselves.

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 1,600TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF PROCLUS
(FEBRUARY 8, 2012)**

It is often thought that Platonism looks primarily to another world, but all of the Platonist's worlds are here and now. Writers write for whomever can understand them, and whenever and wherever that person is, is the writer's here and now. I firmly believe that we are the first generation since the destruction of the institutions and traditions of the Platonic Academy with the possibility of truly understanding Proclean thought.

To understand Proclus properly is to grasp the significance of the whole of classical thought, of which he is the inheritor. He did not merely receive and transmit a body of doctrine, nor did his predecessors. At every stage, classical philosophy was defined, not by doctrines, but by the transformative labor of ideas, from its founding moments in cosmogonic poetry, to the discovery of dialectic in the era of the sophists and of Socrates, through the age of arguments between Platonists, Peripatetics, Skeptics, Stoics and Atomists that refined its concepts, to an age of existential engagement and crisis under the imperiate. In this era of late antiquity, stretching from Plotinus through Iamblichus to Proclus

and beyond to Damascius, the final successor, Platonism, having grown to embrace all that had been successful in the competing schools of the Hellenistic age, transformed and renewed itself to confront the anticosmic movements that threatened through their nihilism the enlightenment achieved in the Mediterranean world. This Mediterranean enlightenment promised, if it could be sustained, to propagate itself without bounds. Though the language in which it was practiced was still, for the most part, Hellenic, its practitioners, native speakers of the language of philosophy, were of every nation. There was no reason to think that this dialogue could not propagate itself in every direction, transformed by the civilizations it encountered, but remaining true to its faith in reciprocal enlightenment and the intelligibility of the universe.

The Platonic movement did not remain aloof to the gathering threat in the imperial era. Rather, it tapped anew into the reservoir that had always sustained it, the cosmogonic revelations of the Gods. Plotinus led a shift from the concern with intellective formation to a profound focus on existential henology, so as to better engage the new apocalyptic movements on a common experiential basis. Iamblichus clarified the relationship of philosophy to revealed theologies. Philosophy is informed by theologies, and can assume a

critical disposition toward them, but theologies, with their primary cosmogonic function operative at every moment, can neither be exhausted by philosophical appropriation nor reduced to types. The application of philosophical hermeneutics to the sacred texts of diverse traditions unleashed tremendous creative forces. It was this vital relationship to the cosmogonic narratives, to the salvific images, and above all else, to the ineffable persons of the Gods, that made the outstanding philosophical achievements of late antique Platonism possible.

Amid the storms of their era, Proclus and his colleagues labored with clarity in their awareness of the presence of a moment such as our own, in which problematics immanent to philosophy, even deprived of a cultural basis fully supportive of the insight into truth, would arrive at a fortunate configuration, and in which the forces of historical change, as obscure as they are, would conspire to make it possible for greater numbers of people, be they wholly deprived of philosophical instruction, to pursue the existential commitments that make the study of philosophy fruitful in life. Through his uncanny combination of inspiration and discipline, Proclus left as his legacy a body of thought so organic and systematic as to make it possible, with the correct basic orientation, not merely to

understand authentic Platonism, but to engage in its living practice.