

The Henadic Structure of Providence in Proclus*

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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 which does good [*agathourgon*],” (*El. Theol.* prop. 122).² And Proclus connects each God’s ‘pre-thinking’, or *pronoiein*, of the universal organization of things directly to their ‘existence’, or *huparxis*: “Every God in his own existence [*huparxis*] possesses the providence [*pronoiein*] 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.

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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).

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.

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 *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 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*

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).

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

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

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 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

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.”

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 (*heimarmenê*), 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

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 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

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

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

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 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

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

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 [*sôzein*] 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

⁹ Compare the description of unity in *El. Theol.* prop. 13 as that which "conserves [*sôstikon*] and holds together [*suneiktikon*] 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."

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 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" (11.4-5). 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 [*horos*]," (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

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

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 intellectual 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 intellectual 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

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.

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 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 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

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.

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 consistent with its own individuation. As such, the Proclean doctrine of providence provides no simple answers to the questions

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

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.

Introduction (Dalhousie University, 3/11/10)

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.