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# Σ Χ Ο Λ Η

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Ι ΚΛΑССИЧЕСКАЯ ΤΡΑΔΙЦΙΑ

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## ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ РЕДАКТОРА

Первый выпуск восьмого тома журнала приурочен к сравнительно недавно прошедшему 1600-летию со дня рождения одного из величайших платоников поздней античности Прокла (7/8 февраля 412, Византий – 17 апреля 485, Афины) и, наряду со специальными работами об афинской школе платонизма, включает в себя ряд статей, посвященных традиции платонизма от сократического метода в *Государстве* до оценки значения неоплатонизма в современной философии. Особое внимание уделено платоническому учению о красоте, метафизике Дамаския, учению о времени и вечности от Плотина и Боэция до Эйнштейна и, наконец, платоническим истокам учения о предопределении в иудейской философии эллинистического периода.

Во втором выпуске восьмого тома журнала исследование традиции платонизма продолжено. Русскоязычному читателю впервые предлагаются переводы классических исследований о неписаном учении Платона К. Гайзера и последних днях Академии в Афинах А. Камерона. Несколько статей, посвященных истории права и политического мышления в античности и раннем средневековье, выделены в отдельный раздел. Том дополнен рецензиями и аннотациями.

Следующий выпуск журнала будет посвящен естественным наукам в древности. Работы в этот сборник принимаются до конца ноября 2014 г. Приглашаем к сотрудничеству заинтересованных авторов.

Сердечно благодарим всех коллег и друзей, принявших участие в наших встречах, и напоминаем авторам, что журнал индексируется *The Philosopher's Index* и *SCOPUS*, поэтому присылаемые статьи должны сопровождаться обстоятельными аннотациями и списками ключевых слов на русском и английском языках.

Особое внимание обращаем на оформление библиографических ссылок. Подробные рекомендации см. здесь: [http://www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/1/schole-1-2-to\\_authors.pdf](http://www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/1/schole-1-2-to_authors.pdf). Информировать читателей, что все предыдущие выпуски можно найти на собственной странице журнала [www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/](http://www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/), а также в составе следующих электронных библиотек: [www.elibrary.ru](http://www.elibrary.ru) (Научная электронная библиотека) и [www.cceol.com](http://www.cceol.com) (Central and Eastern European Online Library).

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## EDITORIAL

The first issue of the eighth volume of the journal is dedicated to the Platonic Tradition and, especially, the great Platonist Proclus (February 7/8, 412 – April 17, 485). It contains an illustrated study of the Athenian school of Platonism and a series of articles, dedicated to various aspects of Platonism from Socratic method in the *Republic* and the concept of beauty in the *Timaeus* to Damascius' metaphysics, time and eternity in Plotinus and Boethius and the platonic origins of the idea of predestination in Hellenistic Jewish philosophy.

In the second issue we continue to study the tradition of Platonism, its sources and developing in later philosophy. Studies, dedicated to the history of law and political thought in Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, form a special section. The volume is supplemented with reviews and annotations.

Our next thematic issue (January 2014) will be dedicated to natural sciences in Antiquity. Studies and translations are due by November 2014. Interested persons are welcome to contribute.

I wish to express my gratitude to all those friends and colleagues who participate in our collective projects and seminars and would like to remind that the journal is abstracted / indexed in *The Philosopher's Index* and *SCOPUS*, wherefore the prospective authors are kindly requested to supply their contributions with substantial abstracts and the lists of keywords. All the issues of the journal are available online at the following addresses: [www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/](http://www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/) (journal's home page); [www.elibrary.ru](http://www.elibrary.ru) (Russian Index of Scientific Quotations); and [www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com) (Central and Eastern European Online Library).

*Eugene Afonasin*  
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СТАТЬИ / ARTICLES

THE HOUSES OF PHILOSOPHICAL  
SCHOOLS IN ATHENS

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ABSTRACT. In the first and second parts of the article we look at two archaeological sites excavated in the center of Athens, a building, located on the Southern slope of the Acropolis and now buried under the Dionysiou Areopagitou Street, known as House Chi, or the “House of Proclus”, and Houses A, B and C at the slope of the Areopagus overlooking the Athenian Agora. We outline and illustrate the basic finds and reexamine the principal arguments in favor of identifying these constructions as the houses of philosophical schools and, in the third part of the paper, offer a remark on religious practice in the Neoplatonic school.

KEYWORDS: Academy at Athens, Proclus, Damascius, Neoplatonism, classical archaeology.

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Proclus was born in Byzantium one thousand six hundred and two years ago (counting from February 7/8, 2014). Should we be astrologists, we would have given hours, although one must remember that the data provided by our principal source, Marinus, is contradictory and does not admit a final solution.<sup>1</sup> Still a child the future phi-

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<sup>1</sup> Deliberately choosing ‘pagan’ and symbolic landmarks in his almost hagiographic account, Proclus’ biographer and heir Marinus (*Vita Procli* 35–36, transl. M. Edwards) says that Proclus died at the age of 75 “in the 124th year since the reign of the Emperor Julian” (that is to say in 485, since Julian ruled from 361); “when Nicagoras the younger was archon of Athens” (this is useless for us in the absence of an appropriate archon list), “on the 17th of the Athenian month of Munichion”, “which is also the 17<sup>th</sup> of the Roman April” (the tenth lunar month of the classical calendar is probably synchronized here with the Roman solar month). Besides, his death – “the eclipse of the light of philosophy” – was surrounded by two more or less complete solar eclipses “so conspicuous that it become night by day... and the stars ap-

philosopher was taken by his parents to Xanthos. Educated in Lycia, Alexandria and Byzantium and when a young man he arrived in Athens, where he spent the rest of his long life, initially as a pupil of Plutarch and Syrianus, and later as the head of the Neoplatonic school.

The biographical evidence is supported by archeological findings, which in turn can be interpreted with the help of the narrative sources. Using this information one can hope to receive a fuller picture of the life and functioning of the Athenian school.

In the first and second parts of the article we will look at two archaeological sites excavated in the center of Athens, a building, located on the Southern slope of the Acropolis and now buried under the Dionysiou Areopagitou Street, known as House Chi, or the “House of Proclus”, and Houses A, B and C at the slope of the Areopagus overlooking the Athenian Agora. We will outline and illustrate the basic finds and reexamine the principal arguments in favor of identifying these constructions as the houses of philosophical schools. In the third part of the paper, we will offer a remark on religious practice in the Neoplatonic school.

## I

Marinus tells the story about Proclus’ successful prayer to Asclepius, which resulted in a miraculous recovery of one Asclepigeneia, “the wife of Theagenes our benefactor” (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 29, p. 35, 18–39 Saffrey–Segonds; transl. by M. Edwards):

Taken with him the great Pericles of Lydia, a man who was himself no mean philosopher, Proclus visited the shrine of the god to pray on behalf of the invalid. For at that time the city still enjoyed the use of this and retained intact the temple of the Savior. And while he was praying in the ancient manner, a sudden change was seen in the maiden and a sudden recovery occurred, for the Savior, being a god, healed her easily... Such was the act he performed, yet in this as in every other case he evaded the notice of the mob, and offered no pretext to those who wished to plot against him.

The house in which he dwelt was in this respect of great assistance to him. For in addition to the rest of his good fortune, his dwelling too was extremely congenial to

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peared” (scholars generally take them to occur on January 14, 484 and May 19, 486). Therefore, the philosopher died on April 17, 485. Proclus’ birth is coded by Marinus in the form of a horoscope, precise enough to determine (after some correction) the exact date – February 8, 412, which is however not compatible with the age of 75 (must be 74). Did Marinus make a mistake in his calculation? A. Jones (1999) reviews a number of interpretations of the horoscope and various emendations to it proposed by scholars since the seventeenth century. Thus, correcting the interpretation, proposed by Neugebauer and other scholars, Jones calculates that the horoscope was cast for a definite date, three hours before noon on either February 7 or 8, 412, and a place near Rhodes (not Constantinople, the real place of birth; it could well be Xanthos in Lydia, the place where Proclus spent his childhood), and suggests that Marinus could find the horoscope in Proclus’ archive and include it in his biography “without realizing that the precise birthdate was latent in it” (Jones 1999, 87). This explains why Marinus never states the date of Proclus’ birth explicitly: he simply did not know it.

him, being also the one inhabited by his ‘father’ Syrianus and by Plutarch, whom he himself styled his ‘forefather’.

Then he briefly describes its location as follows:

...γείτονα μὲν οὖσαν τοῦ ἀπὸ Σοφοκλέους ἐπιφανοῦς Ἀσκληπιείου καὶ τοῦ πρὸς τῷ θεάτρῳ Διονυσίου, ὀρωμένην δὲ ἢ καὶ ἄλλως αἰσθητὴν γιγνομένην τῇ ἀκροπόλει τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς.

Apparently he chooses the surrounding religious constructions as the appropriate landmarks and states, that “...it was a neighbor to the shrine of Asclepius celebrated by Sophocles, and [the shrine] of Dionysius by the theatre...” This is understandable since the purpose of Marinus is to emphasize Proclus’ intimate relations with the deities, especially Athena and Asclepius.

But what the last clause is about? Rosán (1949, 30) renders it thus: “...it could be seen or otherwise perceived from the Acropolis of Athena.”

Frantz (1988, 43) thinks that Marinus wanted to say by this phrase that the house “...could be seen, or at least discerned, by someone standing on the Acropolis of Athena”, writing that “Professor Harold Cherniss, who kindly looked at the passage with me, suggested that the dative, unless it is simply bad grammar, is used to emphasize the fact that the viewer is standing *on* the Acropolis. ‘Or at least discerned’ limits the preceding ‘visible’, rather than offering a senseless alternative ‘otherwise perceived’ (Rosán’s translation), and implies that someone standing on the Acropolis could see it with some difficulty. Homer Thompson, who happened to be in Athens at the time the problem arose, responded to a query whether the facts justified this interpretation with the following: ‘Looking over the present top of the south wall of the Acropolis one has no difficulty in seeing the supposed site of the house; but in Late Antiquity one would presumably have had to climb up to a sentry walk’” (1988, 43, n. 169).

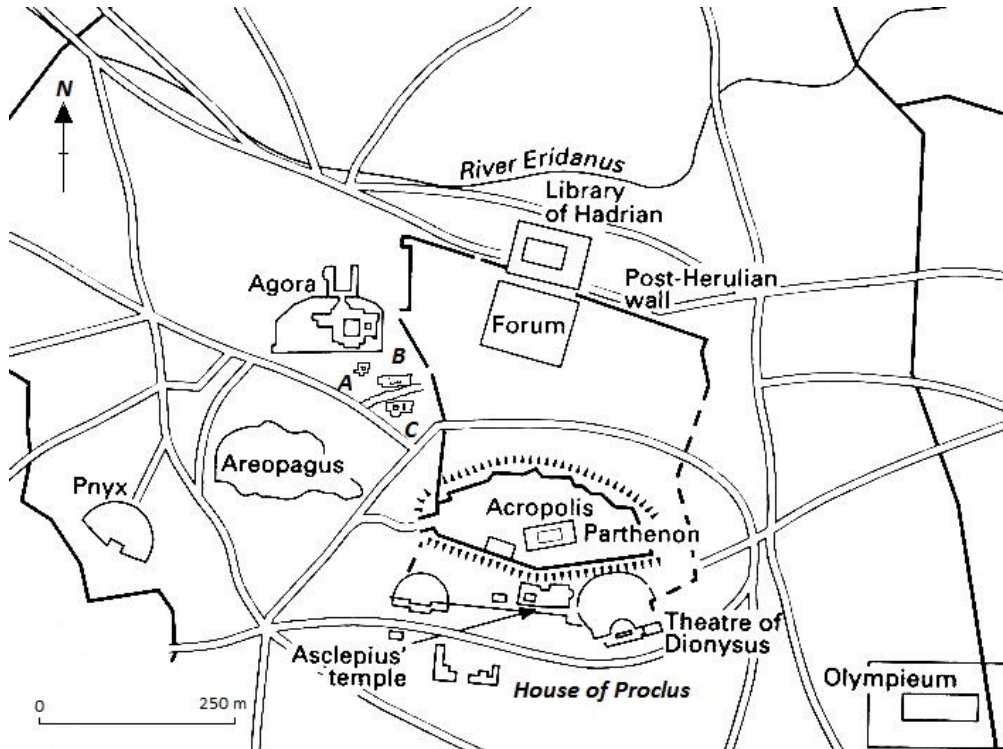
In his review of Frantz’s publication Castrén (1991, 475) takes this to mean that “the House of Proclus was visible from the Acropolis and *also otherwise* somehow manifest, obviously because of the considerable bulk of construction immediately below the eyes of the spectator”.<sup>2</sup>

More recently M. Edwards (2000, 104, n. 329) suggested it to mean that the house became visible from the acropolis only when the shrine of Asclepius was destroyed (“seen, or if not it became visible, from the acropolis of Athena”). The idea is attractive because it could be used for indirect dating of the temple’s destruction. But if this really be the case, why did Marinus, having mentioned the demolishing of the temple a few lines before the passage in question, not simply state this? Therefore it

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<sup>2</sup> Karivieri (1994, 116–117, n. 11) also quotes Rosán and writes: “Frantz (1988, 43) has missed out the word καὶ from between ἢ and ἄλλως in her reference to Marinus’ text, which, according to Castrén, changes the meaning of the phrase quite considerably.”

likely means that “someone standing on the Acropolis could see the house with some difficulty.”<sup>3</sup>



A Plan of Athens in the 5th century C. E.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, a large building complex on the southern slope of the Acropolis, located between the Odeum of Herodes Atticus and the Theater of Dionysus, was excavated in 1955 and matches this description. Unfortunately, the work was accomplished only partially and under extreme time pressure, before the Dionysiou Areopagiu Street was constructed over the site (Meliades 1955).

According to Dontas (1956) the building in its final form was constructed in the period between the end of the fourth and the beginning the fifth century C. E. Only the northern part of the area was excavated because “the rest expands under the area occupied by modern houses, in the back-yards of which could be observed its traces and floor-mosaics” (his article in: *Ergon tes Archaialogikes Etaireias kata to 1955* (Athena) 5–14, quoted in Oikonomides 1977: 11–12).

<sup>3</sup> Saffrey and Segonds (2001, 34) chose to translate it in a similar way: “...et que d’autre part elle était vue ou du moins pouvait être vue depuis l’acropole d’Athéna.”

<sup>4</sup> Illustrations and photos are prepared by the authors unless otherwise indicated.



*Above: the Dionysiou Areopagiou Street, present view (photographed by the authors in 2009);  
below: the area in the period of excavation in 1955 (after Frantz 1988)*

“This was no ordinary house by Athenian standards, – writes Frantz (1988, 43). – A large room opens into a wide apse (6.60 m. wide, 4.40 m. deep); the lower part of

the wall of the apse was surfaced with marble revetment slabs. Above the revetment the thickness of the wall diminishes, and in it were seven niches suitable for sculpture (as in the Areopagus houses). The floors of both parts of the room were covered with mosaics in elaborate geometric patterns, the apse being emphasized by having the floor laid at a slightly higher level. Against the outer face of the east wall of the apse was a small shrine of Cybele, identified by a statuette of the goddess in a niche in the wall. A statue base with a funerary relief carved on the front served as an offering table. Both pieces of sculpture were re-used in these positions..."

The excavators were the first to suggest that the building (now labeled as House Chi) can be identified with the one owned by Plutarch's family and associated with the names of the founder of the Athenian school of Neoplatonism and his closest associates, Syrianus and Proclus. Indeed, in addition to the fact that it perfectly matches Marinus' description, it clearly belongs to the type of buildings used in Antiquity. As Frantz writes, "for the gathering of audiences and accommodating lectures and called generally 'philosophical schools'." It is equally important that the building seems to be used continuously during the fifth century, but was abandoned in the sixth century C.E. The hypothesis has now been materialized in the form of a memorial plate hung *in situ*.<sup>5</sup>

The identification is also confirmed by the reach finds (artistic works and an inscription), illustrating religious and intellectual interests of its inhabitants. Apart of the shrine of Cybele and various religious objects (even a sacrificial knife in the neck of the piglet!), and numerous objects of everyday use (lamps, vases, etc), have been excavated in the building itself. Within a close vicinity were as well discovered numerous statues of the gods (including a statue of Isis); a portrait, tentatively identified as this of a philosopher; and an inscription with the words σοφίης and βίον. The head of a philosopher (some speculate of Plutarch) dated to the fifth century is also said to come from the vicinity.<sup>6</sup>

## II

According to Agathias Scholasticus (*On the Reign of Justinian*, 2.30.3) the last head of the Academy, Damascius (c. 458–after 538) managed to revitalize the school and to assemble in Athens the best philosophers 'from all over the domain of Hellenism.' But the philosophers had already been driven from the 'House of Proclus' by Plutarch's relatives (the legal owners of the building) and the house itself was extensively rebuilt or even abandoned (Karivieri 1994), so he had to find another location for

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<sup>5</sup> "The house in question fits all the topographical specifications in the *VP*, and furthermore, its site, as far as it could be estimated from its scattered known parts, precludes the existence of anything comparable in the area..." (Frantz 1988, 43).

<sup>6</sup> The objects are mostly kept in the Agora and Acropolis Museums; numerous illustrations are readily found in Frantz 1988 and Camp 1994.

his school.<sup>7</sup> An attractive hypothesis, now widely accepted, is that by P. Athanassiadi who suggested that he may well have established his school “in a superb building complex on the northern slope of the Areopagus, which must have functioned for many years as living quarters, as a teaching and research center, and as a place of worship” (Athanassiadi 1999, 47; Appendix I; PhH 145 and 151E with footnotes).

Look at the plan of Athens above: the Areopagus Houses A, B and C are found between the Areopagus and the Forum (the Roman Agora). Frantz (1988, 38) describes their location and major features as follows:

“The four buildings constituting the Areopagus group stood on the lower slopes of the hill, on terraces leveled for their predecessors. Their sitting and plans were conditioned by the two east-west streets that ran through the area and by the terrain itself. The northernmost, House A, was contiguous to the South Road, which forms the southern boundary of the Agora, but with a very slight difference in orientation so that its northwest corner encroaches on the road by about a meter. House B is about 15 meters to the southeast, a little farther up the hill; the eastern half was built against the remaining wall of the Upper South Road. House C lies still farther up the slope, directly across the road from House B. The south edge of the road therefore determined the line of its northern wall while a scrap in the hard rock of the Areopagus limited further expansion to the south. Of House D only the apse remains ca. 35 meters west of House C...”

The northern slope of Areopagus was inhabited from the classical times, and the houses were constantly rebuilt. Constructions visible now are mainly dated to the period after the Herulian attack in 267 C.E. and up to the sixth century. An example of longevity is a construction on the slope of Areopagus, west of House A, which was built in the fifth century B.C.E. and still occupied in the fifth century C. E. A few small marble figures were found here, including a statuette of Asclepius, a head of Sarapis, and a statuette of Tyche (Frantz 1988, 36ff).

A large central hall – the common feature of all the Areopagus houses as well as the House of Proclus (House Chi) – clearly indicates that the buildings served some public purposes. The halls and adjacent peristyle courts are admittedly perfect places for educational or religious gatherings, conducted privately. The chambers that surround the central hall could be used as “seminar rooms”, some sort of cabinets or

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<sup>7</sup> The story is thoroughly analysed by P. Athanassiadi (1999, 42 ff.). Marinus, the direct successor of Proclus, died in the early 490s. Since Isidore, whom Proclus himself listed among the successors, left Athens, the school was headed by Zenodotus or Hegias (or both) and started to decline (cf. *The Philosophical History*, 145 A: “We had never heard of philosophy being so despised in Athens as we saw it dishonored in the time of Hegias”; transl. Athanassiadi). According to Damascius, Isidore was then “elected a *diadochus* of the Platonic school in honorary rather than real terms” (*The Philosophical History*, 148 C). What concerns us here is that, having received the title from Isidore in c. 515, Damascius had to rebuild the school and needed a new place for it. For this purpose, as Athanassiadi rightly suggest, he could explore some old connections and turn to relatives of Theagenes (cf. *The Philosophical History*, 100) or Hegias, or any other wealthy Athenian of pagan sympathies.

private dwellings. At any rate, a building of this type, too spacious for private quarters and not suitable for official use could be well suited for hosting a private educational institution.

A perfect example of a similar type has been relatively recently uncovered in Aphrodisias. It is the so-called North Temenos House – a large building complex located near the temple of Aphrodite on the edges of the city-center (cf. picture below). This spacious construction with large apsidal halls and other rooms suitable for public use resembles the Areopagus houses in many ways and could also host a philosophical school.<sup>8</sup> The houses feature elaborate mosaic pavements and were adorned with sculpture. Some perfect specimens produced locally, including the marble paneling that decorated the walls, and a number of plaster capitals carved with Aphrodite, Eros and similar images, were found during the excavation and can now be seen in the museum. The houses were abandoned after the seventh century's earthquake.

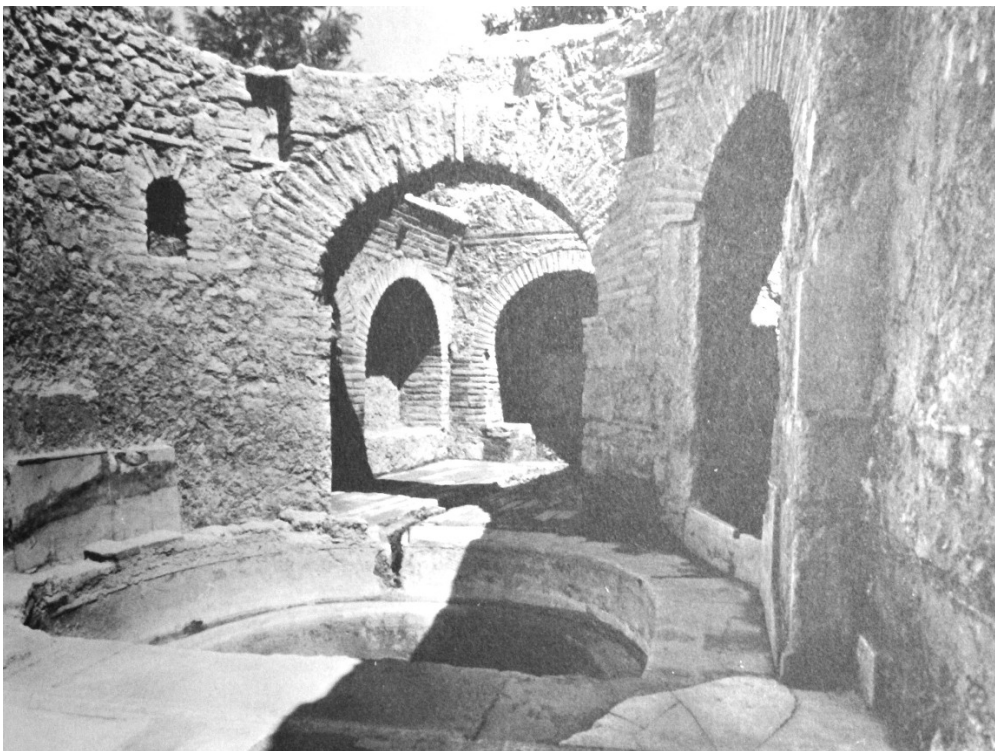


*The historians of ancient philosophy are visiting the 'House of Damascius'.  
March 2009, a conference "Iamblichus: his sources and influence"  
(organized by The Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens and  
the Centre for Ancient philosophy and the Classical tradition,  
Novosibirsk University, Russia)*

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<sup>8</sup> Erim 1989, 17 (a map) 65–67 (illustrations).





*House C, Nymphaeum; above: its present condition;  
below: its state in the time of excavation in the 1970s (after Frantz 1988)*

“The most important feature of House C is a nymphaeum leading down from the southeast corner of the central peristyle by two marble steps flanked by marble col-

umns to a small triclinium (ca. 3 x 3.50 m.). On its east side this looked into an apsidal room housing a semicircular pool... The motivation for this construction was obviously the ready availability of water from a fine fountain house into which the water from a spring higher up the hill had been channeled since the second or third century..." (Frantz 1988, 38)



*A part of a large building complex in Aphrodisias, North Temenos House, which is labeled as the school of philosophy residence*

Various sculptures, some in an excellent state of preservation, were found hidden in wells<sup>9</sup> and in the destruction debris over and around the houses. The most important are those found in two wells in House C. Some sculptures, like a superb head of Nike or a portrait bust of Antoninus Pius (both are on display in the Agora museum; S 2354 and S 2436), are more or less conventional, while the others, like small statues of Herakles and Hermes, heads of Nemesis and Helios, a statuette of a seated philosopher, and statuettes of Tyche, Serapis and Asclepius (S 871, 885, 875, etc.) represent religious and intellectual preferences of the Last Hellenes rather well.<sup>10</sup>

Reflecting the syncretic religious situation of Late Antiquity, the houses on the north slope of Areopagus seem to be hedged in by various public and private places of worship. For instance, three large blocks of Egyptian granite and an engraved bronze disk with Egyptian motives, found on the hillside, could indicate that a shrine of Isis was located somewhere in the area; a Mithraeum could be colated nearby,

<sup>9</sup> Did the inhabitants hope to return and recover their 'pagan' sculpture?

<sup>10</sup> The illustrations are found in Frantz 1988 and Camp 1994.

since two pieces of sculpture, associated with Mithras have been discovered in the vicinity; and a head of Selene in relief, which could somehow be related to a shrine dedicated to Hecate or Cybele, was found in a well down the hill (Frantz 1988, 37).



*Bronze Disk, Agora Museum B 904, after Frantz 1988*

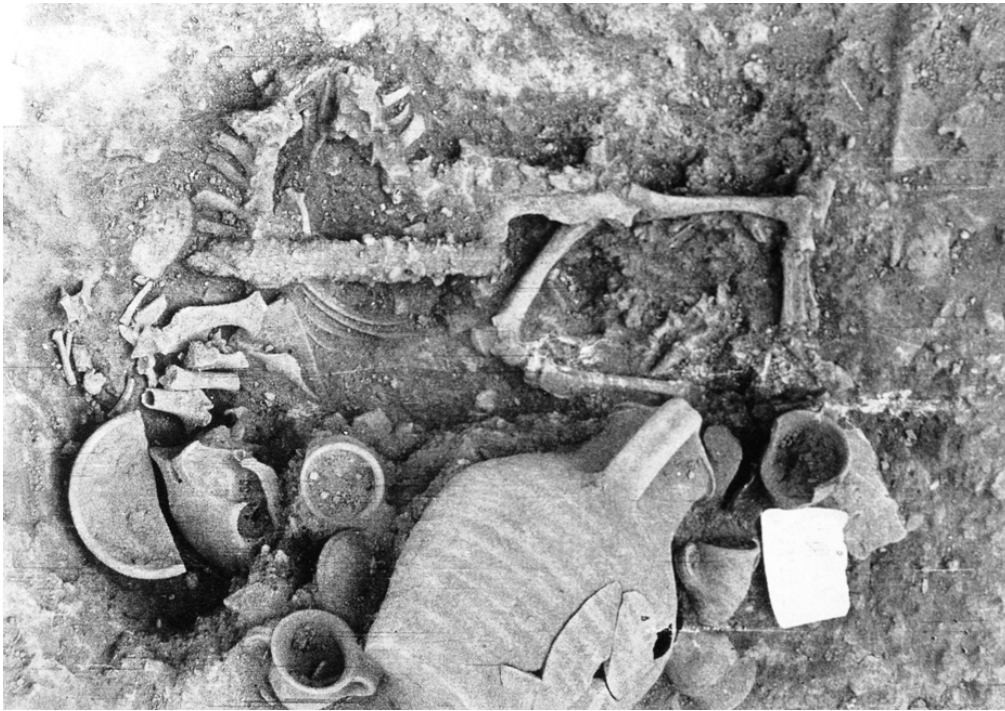
We do not know what happened to the buildings after 529, when the Academy was closed and its members immigrated to Persia.<sup>11</sup> Quite probably that afterwards the building continued to be used as a school, since in the seventh century it was still possible to study philosophy in Athens, as did Theodorus of Tarsus, before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 669 (Frantz et al. 1988, 33, n. 120; DOP 19, 1965).

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<sup>11</sup> For excellent accounts of the event cf. an article by Cameron 1969 and a more recent contribution by Hällström 1994. P. Athanassiadi (1999, 345 f.) speculates that the Church authorities could literally take revenge and, having confiscated House C, which she takes as the most probable place for the Academy, thus labeling it “the House of Damascius”, gave it to the local bishop. The idea is substantiated by the fact that the building continued to be used until the end of the sixth century while other houses on the slope of the Areopagus decayed, and that it was rebuilt to meet the needs of its new owners; the pagan elements of decoration (a fourth century votive relief of the cave of Pan; a statue of Athens) were deliberately damaged and a wall of the triclinium was ‘adorned’ with a coarse cross of inferior workmanship.

## III

We will conclude with a note on blood sacrifices. The most intriguing discovery in this respect is a grave of a year-old piglet, found in the ‘House of Proclus.’ For an unidentified reason the sacrificial knife was left in the neck of the victim and the grave was filled with other offerings, such as a lamp with a running Eros on the disk and vases. The find is variously interpreted by scholars. It could simply be related to the Roman ceremony of *Terminalia* (a ritualized setting boundary to the building). Also in the Roman context it could be an offering to the local *genii* on the occasion of, say, an important event or a safe return from a long journey. But it could well be a part of a rite dedicated to the Mother of the Gods, performed privately (or even secretly!), since an appropriate shrine is found in the house and, according to Marinus, the Neo-Platonists worshipped the Mother of the Gods in her various hypostases (cf. *Vita Procli* 19). The blood of an animal was also a proper offering to the moon-goddess or Hecate,<sup>12</sup> while according to Julian’s *Oratio* 5.177B–C a pig could be an appropriate offering for the gods of the underworld.



*The House of Proclus: the famous ‘piglet grave’ (after Frantz 1988)*

Our narrative source could perhaps elucidate this last point. Although no instance of a piglet (or any other animal) sacrifice is recorded, Marinus inform us that

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<sup>12</sup> For details cf. Karivieri 1994, 135f.

Proclus personally experienced “the fiery apparitions of Hecate” (having learned the rituals from Plutarch’s daughter Asclepigeneia)<sup>13</sup> and

...actually caused rains by an apposite use of a iunx (ἰυνγά τινα), releasing Attica from a baneful drought. He also laid down defenses against earthquakes, and tested the power of the prophetic tripod, and produced verses on its decline (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 28, p. 33, 19–26 Saffrey–Segonds; transl. by M. Edwards)

Marinus mentions other sacrifices practiced in the Neoplatonic school, and constantly emphasizes Proclus’ intimate relations with the gods, especially Asclepius and the female generative principle, which extends from the Moon to Hecate and Cybele.<sup>14</sup>

The *Iunx* (ἰυνξ, wryneck) is a bird (in mythology, a daughter of Pan and Echo) which has long been associated with love-spells in magic. In order to influence an unfaithful lover the sorcerer would catch a wryneck, fix her to a wheel and rotate it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Marinus, *Vita Procli* 28 (p. 33, 17–18 Saffrey–Segonds; transl. by M. Edwards). Apparently this Asclepigeneia introduced Proclus to special rites (in the manner Dyotima in Plato’s *Symposium* introduced Socrates to the ‘knowledge’ of Eros) and passed to him some sort of secret (theurgic) knowledge, learned from her father and Proclus’ spiritual ‘forefather’ (προπάτωρ, *Vita Procli* 29; p. 35, 35 Saffrey–Segonds, quoted above) Plutarch, who, in his turn, acquired it from his father Nestorius. By the way a daughter of this Asclepigeneia, Asclepigeneia the younger, – the one saved by Asclepius after Proclus’ prayer! – married the benefactor of the school archon Theagenes and became the mother of the future scholarch Hegias. The name Asclepigeneia hints at some ties which existed between the family and the cult of Asclepius, and it is not altogether trivial that Plutarch had chosen to pass his knowledge of religious rituals not to his son, but to his daughter (probably, as suggests J. Dillon (2007, 123, n. 16), because his son, Hierius, although a philosopher and a student of Proclus, was not, for some reason, a very satisfactory person for this purpose). Cf. Athanassiadi 1999 (*The Philosophical History*, 63B).

<sup>14</sup> For a recent account of Proclus’ religiosity cf. Dillon 2007. According to Marinus (*Vita Procli* 16), the young Proclus, just arrived from Alexandria to Athens, surprised his future teacher Syrianus by his devotion to the cult of Selene. Actually, as John Dillon convincingly shows, his prayer to the moon-goddess went far beyond a traditional religious observance, since the Moon for the Neo-Platonists represented the celestial level of the highest female principle of the Chaldean theology, Hecate. Besides, “if one turns to the Emperor Julian’s *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*”, one finds another deity also, Cybele, the Mother of the Gods, identified as the highest member of the chain of which the Moon is the lowest (*Oratio* 5.166 AB)... So when the Neoplatonic philosophers saluted the moon, they were in fact doing reverence to the whole chain of generative female principles descending from Hecate or Cybele” (Dillon 2007, 118–119). Concerning Asclepius one may note an instance of miraculous recovery of the young Proclus, when the son of Asclepius, Telephorus, appeared to him in a dream (*Vita Procli* 7); his visit to the temple of Asclepius in Athens on the occasion of Asclepigeneia’s illness (30, quoted above); or a story about Proclus’ recovery from arthritis, also in Marinus (31).

<sup>15</sup> In *Pindar*, Pythian 4.213–220 (transl. Steven J. Willett) the rite is described as introduced by Aphrodite and the wryneck is poetically called “the maddening bird”: *But the sovereign of swiftest darts, / Cyprogeneia, binding / the dappled wryneck / four-spoked upon an in-*

Later the term *iunx* and the magical procedures associated with it underwent some evolution. In the domain of love-magic it started to designate an appropriate instrument – the wheel – itself, while in the Platonic tradition it was understood symbolically as an Erotic binding force which links men to the gods. This interpretation is most famously found in the *Chaldean Oracles*, where the *iunges* ('the magic wheels of Hecate,' fr. 206 Des Places) are identified with the ideas (or thoughts) of the highest divine entity, the Father, while Eros ('the first to leap from the Paternal Intellect,' fr. 42 Des Places) is understood as a cosmic force which binds the worlds together and harmonizes the universe with the soul. The *iunges*, the lowest entities in the chain of being, acting as messengers and constantly moving from the Father to the material world, help the theurgist to connect the Primordial Triad of the Chaldeans with the rest of beings. Besides, the *iunges* are associated with some planetary forces, the 'Intellectual pillars' which support an ordered movement of the planets. The *iunges*, invoked by a theurgist, were thought to move physically to an appropriate planetary sphere and to provide a contact with the material world (fr. 77–79 Des Places).<sup>16</sup>

Rotating the wheel in the process of a theurgic rite, the sorcerer receives certain magical 'names' (fr. 87 Des Places), also called *iunges* (the divine messengers therefore are symbolically identified with the messages they brought from above). An *Oracle* states that the names, pronounced by those who understand the divine utterance, reveal to the theurgist their extraordinary powers (cf. fr. 150 Des Places).

According to Marinus, Proclus from time to time busied himself with practical religion, usually upon the request of others. His prayer "in the ancient manner" to Asclepius helped a woman to recover, and certain rites saved Attica from a drought and earthquake (*Vita Procli* 28–29, quoted above; cf. 17). We cannot be sure from the text whether Proclus performed the rites in a physical or a symbolic manner, but the instance of the piglet's sacrifice definitely suggests that the real animal sacrifices were normal for the period and could be a part of the religious practice of the Neoplatonic school. Marinus seems to confirm this, saying that Proclus, otherwise a strict vegetarian, ate meat 'for the sake of a rite' (*Vita Procli* 12 and 19). It is quite possible therefore that in order to influence weather the Neoplatonic philosopher "in the ancient manner" had used a real bird rather than a clever planetary device of a sort described by Psellus as "a sphere embedded with sapphire and swung around by means of a leather strap" (PG 122.1133 A 8–9; Majercik 1989, 30).

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*dissoluble wheel / first brought the maddening bird / to human kind and thus taught Aeson's son / skill in invocations and incantations, / that he might strip Medea of all reverence / for her parents and that Hellas, fiercely desired, / might set her whirling, as she blazed in spirit, / with the scourge of Persuasion.*

<sup>16</sup> For more details cf. Majercik 1989, 9–10, 16, 29, 171–172.

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## THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

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ABSTRACT: In the *Timaeus* Plato describes the world as the 'most beautiful' (*kallistos*, 29a5) of generated things. Perhaps indeed this is the first systematic description of the beauty of the world. It is, at any rate, one of the most influential statements of the theme. The Stoics were deeply convinced by it and later, in the third century A.D., at a time when contempt and hate for the world were propagated by Gnostic movements, Plotinus, interpreting the *Timaeus*, would write magnificent passages on the beauty and value of the world. But what does Plato mean by the 'beauty' of the world? What makes the world beautiful? In this paper these questions are approached first (1) by a brief discussion of the distinction which Plato appears to make in the *Timaeus* between beauty and the good. In one passage (*Tim.* 87c) 'measure' seems to relate to this distinction. It is suitable then (2) to look at a section of another late work of Plato, the *Philebus*, where the themes of beauty, goodness and measure may be compared in more detail. The theme of measure then takes us back (3) to the *Timaeus*, in order to examine the role played by measure, in particular mathematical measure, in constituting the beauty of the world. I discuss in detail the way in which mathematical structures make for the beauty of soul and body in the living whole that is the world.

KEYWORDS: Aesthetics, Antiquity, harmony, the beautiful and the good, *kalos kagathos*.

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In the *Timaeus* Plato describes the world as the 'most beautiful' (*kallistos*, 29a5) of generated things. Perhaps indeed this is the first systematic description of the beauty of the world. It is, at any rate, one of the most influential statements of the theme. The Stoics were deeply convinced by it<sup>1</sup> and later, in the third century A.D., at a time when contempt and hate for the world were propagated by Gnostic movements, Plo-

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<sup>1</sup> See P. Hadot (1992) 185-8.



tinus, interpreting the *Timaeus*, would write magnificent passages on the beauty and value of the world.<sup>2</sup>

But what does Plato mean by the 'beauty' of the world? What makes the world beautiful? In this paper these questions will be approached first (1) by a brief discussion of the distinction which Plato appears to make in the *Timaeus* between beauty and the good.<sup>3</sup> In one passage (*Tim.* 87c) 'measure' seems to relate to this distinction. It will be suitable then (2) to look at a section of another late work of Plato, the *Philebus*, where the themes of beauty, goodness and measure may be compared in more detail. The theme of measure will then take us back (3) to the *Timaeus*, in order to examine the role played by measure, in particular mathematical measure, in constituting the beauty of the world. I would like to discuss in detail the way in which mathematical structures make for the beauty of soul and body in the living whole that is the world.

### 1. A Distinction between Beauty and the Good

We are often reminded that the 'beautiful' (*kalos*) and the 'good' (*agathos*), in ancient Greek texts, are closely related in meaning. 'Beautiful', we find in these texts, can refer to moral quality and is not affected by a separation of aesthetics from ethics characteristic of modern thought. The closeness of the beautiful and the good in ancient Greek discourse is said in a nutshell by the expression *kalos kagathos*, which designates an admirable person.<sup>4</sup> It thus seems prudent to be careful of separating beauty from the good when speaking of Greek philosophical texts. Yet in Plato's *Timaeus* the main speaker, Timaeus, does seem to make a distinction between the beautiful and the good in some parts of his speech. If he does indeed do this, we would need to know in what way the distinction is made and what the distinction means for the relation between beauty and the good.

A first passage where the distinction can be found is at the beginning of Timaeus' speech, where he raises the question as to which model it was that the divine craftsman of the world, or demiurge, would have used in making the world:

We must go back to this question about the world: After which of the two models (*paradeigmata*) did [the world's] builder (*tektainomenos*) produce it – after that which is always in the same unchanging state, or after that which has come to be? If, now (*men*), this world is beautiful (*kalos*), and (*te*) its maker is good (*agathos*), clearly he looked to the eternal; on the contrary supposition (which cannot be spoken without blasphemy), to that which has come to be. Everyone, then, must see that he looked to the eternal; for the world (*men*) is the most beautiful (*kallistos*) of generated things and (*d'*) he is the best (*aristos*) of causes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Plotinus, *Enn.* II 9, 17; V 8, 8 and 13.

<sup>3</sup> The relation between beauty and the good in Plato's earlier work is discussed in a recent issue of *Classical Philology* (2010).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Plato, *Timaeus* 88c6.

<sup>5</sup> *Tim.* 28c5-29a6. I quote the translation by F. Cornford (1935), somewhat modified.

The Greek particles *men/te*, *men/de* suggest that the beauty of the world is contrasted with the goodness of the demiurge. It is because the demiurge is good and wishes the good that he makes a world which is most beautiful. The same contrast can be found a little later in the text:

Desiring, then, that all things should be good and, so far as it might be, nothing imperfect, the god took over all that is visible – not at rest, but in discordant and unordered motion – and brought it from disorder into order, since he judged that order was in every way the better. Now it was not, nor can it ever be, permitted for the best (*aristō*) to produce anything but the most beautiful (*kalliston*). (30a2-7)

The goal of the demiurge is the good, that is, he wishes to produce a world which is unified, self-sufficient, complete, harmonious, which functions correctly.<sup>6</sup> In producing this world, by imposing order, he achieves this goal and the result is a world which is most beautiful. We might infer then that the beauty of the world is what results when the good of the world is achieved.

Before developing these ideas in more detail, we should note that the world is the most beautiful of *generated things*. The model of the world (what I will call the 'intelligible paradigm') is *also* described as 'most beautiful', the most beautiful of *intelligible things* (30d2).<sup>7</sup> It thus seems that the question of the relation between the good and beauty concerns two levels: that of the model and that of the product made after the model. If the product, the world, is most beautiful because in it the good is achieved as far as possible, then in what sense is the model most beautiful? Perhaps in the sense that it is precisely the *model* of how the good can be realized. At any rate, we can say for the moment that the beauty of the world is not described simply by saying that the world realizes the good intended by the demiurge: it does this by being modelled after the most beautiful intelligible model (28a6-b2, 30c5-d2). To this we should also add that it is not just (or simply) the model that makes the world beautiful: by being a living animal having intelligence, the world can be 'more beautiful', 'most beautiful' (30b2-6).

Bringing these aspects together one might say then that the question of the relation between beauty and the good in the *Timaeus* involves several levels: the relation between the good and the beauty of an intelligible paradigm or model; the realization of the good as the beauty of the world through the world's relation to the intelligible paradigm and through the ensouled and rational life of the world. Before pursuing these themes further in the *Timaeus*, it may be useful to take account first of the treatment of the relation between the good and beauty in the *Philebus*.

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<sup>6</sup> The goal of the legislator in the *Laws*, the good, can be expressed by terms such as unity, friendship, harmony, happiness (688a, 693bc, 701d, 715c, 962a). Unity, friendship, harmony are also found in the world produced by the demiurge in the *Timaeus* (32c2, 34b4-9), a world which is a "happy (*eudaimôn*) god" (34b8).

<sup>7</sup> Beauty also characterizes the political model developed by the legislator in the *Laws* (746b8).

## 2. At the Entrance of the Good

A distinction between the good and beauty appears towards the end of a discussion presented in the *Philebus* concerning the good, understood as that which can make human life happy (11b4-5, d4-6). The competing claims of pleasure and intelligence to be the good are considered and neither, by itself, seems to satisfy completely.<sup>8</sup> A long analysis is proposed, differentiating between sorts of pleasure and sorts of intelligence (and knowledge), with a view to making a selection and a mix of them that would come near to the good.

Then here, one might say, we have at hand the ingredients, intelligence and pleasure, ready to be mixed, the materials in which, or out of which, we as builders (*dèmiourgois*) are to build our structure – that would not be a bad image.<sup>9</sup>

Since neither pleasure nor intelligence can claim to be, by itself, the complete good (61a1-2) and thus claim 'first prize', the question arises as to which of them may still obtain a 'second prize':

We shall have to grasp the good, either precisely or at least in rough outline (*tupon*), if we are to know to what we must give, as we put it, the second prize. (61a4-5)

It is proposed then to look for *where* the good is, as one might look for somebody by finding out first where the person lives (*oikêsin*, 61a9-b2). The good would seem to 'reside' in a certain mixture of kinds of knowledge and pleasure. This mixture includes forms of knowledge and pleasures which are pure and true and accompany virtue. Other pleasures which bring folly, evil and irrationality are to be excluded from a mixture that is to be the 'most beautiful' and peaceful, if one wishes to see, in the mixture, what the good might be "in man and in the universe" (63e7-64a3).

To me it appears that in our present discussion we have produced what might be called an incorporeal ordered system (cosmos) for the rightful control of a body which is ensouled... We now stand already at the entrance (*prothurois*) of the residence of the good. (64b6-c3)

What makes a mixture valuable and good is "the nature of measure (*metrou*) and symmetry (*summetrou*)" (64d9).

So now we find that the power of the good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful. For measure and symmetry everywhere, I imagine, are beauty and virtue. (64e5-7)

Although the progression of this argument is somewhat allusive, it does suggest a distinction between the good and beauty, as if beauty were where the good 'resides' (or 'takes refuge'). Beauty itself seems to have to do with an order in which the principal factors that make the order valuable are measure and symmetry. As this incorporeal

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<sup>8</sup> See already *Rep.* 505bd.

<sup>9</sup> 59d10-e3. I quote the translation by R. Hackforth (1945), somewhat modified. The image of the demiurge takes up a theme introduced earlier in the *Philebus*, at 27b1, of a demiurge who is a cosmic ruling intelligence (28c7) identified as Zeus (30d1-2).

order is described in the following pages, we find that what is of primary importance or value in the mixture is measure, the measured and the appropriate (66a6-8), which are followed, in declining order of importance, by symmetry, the beautiful, the complete and sufficient and suchlike (66b1-2). After them come intelligence, forms of knowledge and, finally, in the last place, certain pleasures (66b6-c5).

The images used in these final pages of the *Philebus* of a residence and its entrance seem to concern domestic architecture rather than something on a more monumental scale. Even so, it seems that analogies can be made with the cosmic construction of the *Timaeus*. The good, in the *Philebus*, is tracked down in its 'residence', which is approached by its entrance. The good takes refuge in the beautiful. The beautiful has to do with an order (*cosmos*), in which measure and symmetry appear to be crucial: they are responsible (*aitia*, 64d4) for giving the order its value. The order, in the mixture of ingredients, is constructed by the speakers in the dialogue, in particular Socrates, as an order *for* the life of a soul in body that may thereby be happy. The order itself is incorporeal, a model, we might say in a comparison with the *Timaeus*.

The analogies this suggests with the cosmic making of the *Timaeus* reinforce our impression in the *Timaeus* that the good is indeed to be distinguished from beauty, that beauty is where the good is found. In particular, the *Philebus* gives much emphasis to the importance of measure in producing an order where beauty comes to be. It is the moment then to return to the *Timaeus* and to the function of measure in the ordering of the world.

### 3. Measure in the World

A connection between the good, beauty and measure is suggested by Timaeus towards the end of his speech, when dealing with the relation between the human soul and body:

All that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is not without measure; accordingly a living creature that is to possess these qualities must have symmetry. Symmetries of a trivial kind we readily perceive and compute; but the most important and decisive escape our reckoning. For health or sickness, goodness or badness, the symmetry or lack of measure between soul and body themselves is more important than any other. (87c4-d3)

What is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful presupposes measure. 'Symmetry' (*summetria*) here seems to be the opposite of 'without measure' (*ametria*): as concerning the relation between soul and body, the one involves health and virtue, the other sickness and vice in soul and body. But prior to the relation between soul and body in humans, there is the symmetry constituted by the making of soul in general and of the body of the universe. I would like thus to go back to these more fundamental 'symmetries', as they are described earlier in Timaeus' speech, in order to

identify in particular what measure or symmetry it is that can make soul and body beautiful.<sup>10</sup>

(i) The Making of Soul (*Tim.* 35a-39e)

The demiurge of the world makes soul first (a)<sup>11</sup> by constituting (35a1ff.) what Cornford<sup>12</sup> describes as 'soul-stuff', a third kind of *ousia*, made up by mixing together 'being', 'identity' and 'difference', as these three are found in indivisible and in divisible being (presumably that which is unchanging and what is changing and generated, as these had been distinguished earlier, at 29a). The mix appears to be complete (although some force [35a8] is required to join 'difference' to 'identity!'). The 'soul-stuff' thus produced seems to be seen as a sort of two-dimensional strip or band: it must have both length and breadth, since it will later be divided 'lengthways' into further bands (36b7), but length seems to be its prominent dimension.

The demiurge then (b) divides this stuff (35b4ff., lengthways?) by measuring off intervals in it (36a1, *diastêmata*). This is done by marking off a portion of the whole (35b4-5), then by doubling and tripling, successively, this portion (so, by doubling the portion 1, doubled: 2, doubled: 4, doubled: 8; and by tripling 1, tripled: 3, tripled: 9, tripled: 27), giving the series of intervals thus produced: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 8, 27. The portion functions, I believe, as a measure, which, by doubling and tripling in alternating succession, produces a series of determinate intervals (or lengths) which are in proportion to the measure as doubles and triples of it. These proportions constitute "geometrical" progressions (1, 2, 4, 8; 1, 3, 9, 27) or "geometrical equalities" (identical ratios in  $1 : 2 = 2 : 4 = 4 : 8$ ; and in  $1 : 3 = 3 : 9 = 9 : 27$ ), the progressions being produced by the successive and alternating operations of doubling and tripling. The length of the first portion, used as measure, is not given (and perhaps not pertinent).

Once the succession of proportional intervals are marked out in the soul-stuff and thus *divide* it, these intervals are then *united* (36a) by the insertion in the intervals of two other proportionalities (which had been distinguished by the Pythagorean Archytas), harmonic and arithmetic proportions, which give 'identical' (*tautô*) and (quantitatively) 'equal' (*isô*) relations (36a3-5).<sup>13</sup> The 'hemiotic' (2 : 3), 'epitritic' (3 : 4) and 'epogdoadic' (8 : 9) intervals thus produced are completed by a final interval: 256 : 243.

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<sup>10</sup> I cover in the following roughly the same ground as G. Vlastos (1975), chapters 2 and 3, but in search of different things.

<sup>11</sup> 35a1 suggests a contrast between (a) that "out of which" soul is put together and (b) the 'way' in which it is put together.

<sup>12</sup> In his translation (above note 6).

<sup>13</sup> See Archytas fr. 2 (in C. Huffmann 2005, with commentary). The three proportionalities might be expressed as follows (see Huffmann 2005, 169): Geometrical proportion is based on identity of ratios (e.g.  $1 : 2 = 2 : 4$ , i.e. the ratio of 2); harmonic proportion is based on the same fraction of the extremes (e.g.  $6 : 8 = 8 : 12$ , i.e. the mean exceeds and is exceeded by the same fraction [ $1/3$ ] of each of the extremes); arithmetic proportion is based on identical quantity (e.g.  $2 - 1 = 3 - 2$ , i.e. the same quantitative difference of 1).

The summary I have just attempted to give of Plato's text is intended to emphasize (I hope reasonably) certain points: that an essentially one- (verging on two-) dimensional being is structured by imposing determinate intervals which both divide it and unite it; these intervals are proportions (of a given measure of the being) which express identity in the form of different kinds of equality (identity of ratios in geometrical and harmonic equality, quantitative identity in arithmetic equality). The proportions are first generated by operations of doubling and tripling a measure, operations which can be thus be considered as ways of making identity dimensional, at various degrees (doubling, then tripling): the intervals thus constituted, as equalities, are dimensional expressions of identity. The structure of soul-stuff thus consists of proportions (see 37a4), which give it identity in the form of different kinds or degrees of equality. Degrees of equality also mean degrees of inequality (equality of ratios in inequalities of quantities, and the reverse). Thus geometrical equality can also be described as an "unequal proportion" (*anisô summetrô*, *Laws* 744c).<sup>14</sup> Degrees of equality can be supposed to obtain in relation to their proximity to identity.

The mix of ingredients making up soul-stuff serves to introduce the capacity in soul to know both intelligible and sensible beings (37a2-37c5), whereas the structuring of soul by a system of proportions seems to be designed to introduce the account of the movements of the heavens and their production of time. The demiurge splits the soul-stuff, once structured, lengthways into two bands (36b7), each band being bent into a circle, the outer circle being designated (*epephêmisen*) by the demiurge as that of the identical, the inner that of the different (36c4-5). The outer circle is that of the invariant movement of the fixed stars. The inner circle, that of the different, is divided again into 7 unequal circles (those of the sun, moon and planets), of which three correspond to the double, three to the triple interval (36d2-3), three having a 'similar' speed, four a dissimilar speed, all moving in ratio (*logô*, 36d6).

Without going into the mechanics of this system, the way in which it articulates the distances and speeds of heavenly bodies, we can at least observe that it reflects a hierarchy of value in which the identical precedes the different and the different expresses itself in degrees of (in)equality, the double and triple, the similar and dissimilar. The structured, proportionate, movements of the heavens mark out in turn the parts of time, the most evident of which are the divisions into day, month and year. Time expresses, imitates, in number (*kat' arithmon*, 38a7), which must mean here in proportions (see also 38a7), the unity of its eternal model, the intelligible paradigm (37d6, 39e1).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Such proportions as the equal and the double are referred to as 'symmetries' in *Rep.* 530a1; *Phileb.* 25d11-e1.

<sup>15</sup> There appears to be a problem here. In speaking of the making of time, *Timaeus* seems to have the demiurge redouble his efforts to imitate the intelligible paradigm (37c6-d1), even though it seems that time results from the structure of soul. Does *Timaeus* wish to remind us of the theme of the imitation of the intelligible paradigm, which is not made explicit in the demiurge's making of soul? Or is *Timaeus*, as in some other places, confusing things a bit?

At this point it might be useful to take stock of what has been seen so far, as it might relate to the questions raised at the beginning of this paper. If what makes the beauty of the world is the realization of the good in it, this realization is achieved through imitation of the most beautiful model, the intelligible paradigm, and through the presence of rational soul in the world (above part I). Now if time, as the proportionately structured movements of the heavens, is an imitation of the intelligible paradigm, these proportions are first given to soul when it is constituted by the demiurge. It seems to follow from this that the demiurge imitates the intelligible paradigm in structuring soul. Rational soul makes the world beautiful in that it is structured in proportions which make of the ordered heavenly movements that it carries out an imitation of the intelligible paradigm. The proportions, as different kinds of equality/inequality, are expressions of different degrees of identity/difference, at first in the quasi one-dimensional nature of soul and then in the two (or three) dimensional heavens.

(ii) The Making of the Elements (53c-56c)

If the world, as a whole, is the most beautiful of generated things, it is not uniformly beautiful or perfect. The heavens represent what is most perfect in the world, which also includes lower levels of existence, a hierarchy amusingly suggested in the conclusion of Timaeus' speech in the account of the fall of souls from their former, stellar lives to the depths of slithering, murky, aqueous indignity. Having described the making of soul in the world, Timaeus also needs to account for the making of body. Body is constituted of the elements of fire, air, earth and water, and so Timaeus offers an account of how these elements are produced. If the demiurge makes the soul-stuff, before structuring it, he does not make the stuff of the elements, which pre-exists as a chaotic, irrational, indeterminate *milieu* (52d-53b), but simply imposes rational order on it (e.g. 53b4-5). Timaeus approaches the constitution of the elements in two steps, discussing first (53c-54d) certain mathematical structures, and then (54d-56c) dealing with the production of the elements from these structures.

The discussion of mathematical structures concerns geometrical figures, in particular different kinds of triangles. In comparison with the one-dimensional, linear structures of the proportions used in ordering soul, geometrical figures are two-dimensional structures out of which three-dimensional bodies can be built. A possible explanation of Timaeus' concentration on triangles would be that they are the simplest rectilinear figures (out of them squares and oblongs can be produced), whereas circles seem to be the privilege of the heavens. Timaeus asserts (53c8-d2) that all triangles derive from triangles having one right angle and two acute angles, which triangles he distinguishes into two kinds: those with equal sides and two half right angles (right-angled isosceles triangles, in Cornford's terminology); and those with unequal sides and two unequal angles (right-angled scalene triangles). He then says:

This [geometrical shape]...we suppose to be the origin (*archê*) of fire and the other bodies... But the causes (*archas*) of these from above (*anôthen*) god knows and he of men who would be a friend of god. (53d4-7)

I return in a moment to this enigmatic passage.

After having raised the question as to what the four 'most beautiful', dissimilar bodies might be that can be changed into each other, Timaeus returns to his triangles and then tells us (54a1-2) that there is only one form (or nature) of the isosceles triangle, whereas there are unlimited sorts of scalene triangles, of which the most 'beautiful' is that which, when doubled, makes an equilateral triangle (54a7). It appears thus that the most beautiful triangle is the equilateral triangle and the scalene triangle that can produce it by doubling. The equilateral triangle is characterized by equality (of sides and angles) and the best scalene triangle achieves this beauty by doubling, thus turning its inequality (of sides and angles) into the equality of the equilateral triangle. Equality and doubling thus obtain here also, as in the structure of soul, but now in the two-dimensional proportions of plane figures.

Timaeus then constructs the bodies of the four elements from these 'numbers' (*arithmôn*, 54d4). One element is composed of 4 x 6 isosceles triangles constituting a cube (earth), whereas the other three are made up of scalene triangles, the first (fire) being a pyramid, having equal and similar parts (2 x 3 x 4 scalenes), the second and third (air and water) being an octahedron and an icosahedron, i.e. multiples of these triangles (2 x 3 x 8; 2 x 3 x 20). The section closes with the following summing up:

And with regard to their number (*plêthê*), their motions, and their powers in general, we must suppose that the god adjusted them in due proportion, when he had brought them in every detail to the most exact perfection permitted by Necessity willingly complying with persuasion. (56c2-7)

#### 4. Some conclusions

For the purposes of this paper we do not need, I think, to get involved further in Timaeus' elemental Legoland.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps enough indications have been collected from Plato's text to support the following inferences as regards the relations between the good, beauty and measure as they characterize the world. I have suggested that what makes the world beautiful is the realization in it of the good. This realization is achieved in that (a) the demiurge orders the world in imitation of the most beautiful model, the intelligible paradigm. But what makes the world beautiful, we have also seen, is that (b) it is animated by rational soul. These two aspects come together in that the order of heavenly movements and of time, an imitation of the intelligible paradigm, reflects the structure of rational soul, as the demiurge articulated soul when making it. From this we can infer that the demiurge imitates the intelligible paradigm in structuring soul, this imitation expressing itself in the heavenly movements carried out by soul. The structure in question is one made up of proportions ('symmetries') which correspond to various kinds of equality/inequality, which in turn correspond to degrees of identity/difference in a dimensional being. Identity,

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<sup>16</sup> In my account I have left out in particular the problem of the transformation of elements into each other, a process which the interchangeability of triangles is supposed to solve.



given dimension, becomes the equality between terms differentiated in that dimension. The account of the making of the elements, in which we reach the constitution of three-dimensional body, makes use of the same themes as those appearing in the structuring of soul: here also, equality, as a proportion constituting two- and three-dimensional objects (geometrical figures and bodies), is fundamental. It is produced by processes of multiplication (at first by doubling), which extend in a range going to greater degrees of inequality. It thus appears that the demiurge uses the same principles in ordering the elements and body as those he uses in ordering the soul, even if much distinguishes soul from body (for example, soul-stuff is made by the demiurge and it is not three-dimensional), and this order is essentially the same: it is an order of proportions expressing equality/inequality to different degrees and developing from one-dimensional being to three-dimensional body.

I have suggested that equality is identity expressed in a dimension marked off by differentiated terms. The origin or principle of equality, the *archê* mentioned in the passage (53d4-7) cited above (p. 7), would then appear to be identity, as found in the intelligible paradigm. But perhaps this inference is too audacious, since such things are only known by god and by the man “who would be the friend of god”. It may also be too audacious to suggest as well that what makes the intelligible paradigm itself ‘beautiful’ is that realizes it, *as a paradigm* (as Platonic Form), the good. But such an inference might be made in analogy with the beauty of the world. The beauty of the world, in which the good is realized, is achieved through its structuring in terms of proportions (equalities) which express in particular, I suggest, identity in the intelligible paradigm.

In organizing a good city in the *Laws*, distributing property in terms of geometrical equality, the lawgiver exhorts us with these words:

Don't ignore likeness, equality, identity and the harmonious, either in number or in any faculty producing what is beautiful and good (*kalôn kagathôn*). (741a)

The citizens of a good city, and we as inhabitants of the world of the *Timaeus*, can observe these principles as expressed in the heavens and organize our lives so that they too will become beautiful and good (see *Tim* 47bc).

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# DAMASCIUS AND THE PRACTICE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE: ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION ABOUT AND COMMUNION WITH THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

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ABSTRACT: This paper is an overview and introduction to the key elements of Damascius' philosophy. I examine the attributes and the relationship between the Ineffable, the One, and the All as the cornerstones of his theoretical system. I then investigate the role of this system of thought for Damascius and his contemporaries as a guide to the philosophical life and its repercussions for attaining the highest principles. Is contemplation possible or are other means needed, such as theurgy and purification of the soul? Does the philosopher occupy a privileged position in this system, as in the preceding Platonic tradition or is the philosopher's position different, by the experience of void and the inability to speak about and grasp the 'nothingness' of the highest principles?

KEYWORDS: Damascius, Late Neoplatonism, One, Ineffable, *skotos*, philosopher, theurgy, purification, soul, First Principles, theology, philosophy, contemplation.

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## I. On First Principles: the Ineffable & the One

In the *De Principiis*,<sup>1</sup> Damascius applies a method that we can call *aporetic* – since he too uses the term – to investigate the limits of our reasoning in relation to the first principles. He usually concludes a section with a question which he then goes on to investigate by proposing alternative answers which in turn are questioned too. Each inquiry either reaches an acceptable solution or an impasse. He has been called a sceptic by many, an exponent of negative theology who questions the validity of negation by others, or even a mystic with a penchant for Oriental mythologies.

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of Damascius' passages from Greek are my own, unless otherwise stated.

It is true that the *Diadochus* often supplements his theoretical endeavours with mythological figures<sup>2</sup> (particularly from the Orphic tradition and the Chaldean Oracles, as well as from other sources) or visual imagery.<sup>3</sup> This interpretive method, whether allegorical or symbolic, is common to Platonic and Christian mystical writers, as well as to philosophical theologians of the East, such as Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist thinkers. In Damascius' view, non-philosophical myths, symbols, and figures are employed as objects of reflection because it is impossible to say anything adequate about the nature of the Ineffable, or of god.

The *Treatise* consists of an elaborate discussion of many speculative subjects.<sup>4</sup> I shall focus mainly on the One and the Ineffable. Turning first to the One, we notice that it is said to be everything and to produce everything. There is nothing that the One is not. It is therefore the cause of everything and embraces it. But owing to our inability to comprehend it, we divide ourselves in relation to it, affirming about it predicates that are familiar to us, only to realize that they are inadequate when applied to the One. So it remains unknowable and unmentionable because otherwise it would be Many.<sup>5</sup>

Damascius posits the Ineffable as the first of all principles, but the One – as the source of all things and principle of the All – is the highest principle in relation to the intelligible world. We might wonder whether the One fits better than the Ineffable into the line of the tradition<sup>6</sup> which holds the first principle of the All as the ultimate and greatest essence of philosophical knowledge, but in this case the suppression of the One by the ineffable principle seems unavoidable.

Even if we are satisfied by the handling of our doubts about the One, we could still make a final point: “since we don't have a notion, not even a conjecture as simple as the One,<sup>7</sup> how could we conjecture something beyond the last possible most simple notion and conjecture?” There is a certain amount of truth in such a doubt, because a conjecture beyond the One certainly seems to be inaccessible and inexplicable. But starting from what we already know, we should try to induce the inexpressible labours<sup>8</sup> that lead towards the inexpressible awareness of the sublime.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *De Princ.* III. 161. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> *De Princ.* III. 132. 22.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix for an outline.

<sup>5</sup> *De Princ.* I. 5.

<sup>6</sup> That the One for Damascius is transcended by the Ineffable seems to represent a departure from earlier Neoplatonic metaphysics. At the same time, these earlier thinkers did not think that the One was an object of “philosophical knowledge”: it transcends knowledge (i.e. *noēsis*) in Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus.

<sup>7</sup> In *De Princ.*I. 4, Damascius specifies that it must at least be the case that the principle of the All be transcendent to the All itself; the totality the most simple and the simplicity which has absorbed all things, that is the simplicity of the One.

<sup>8</sup> See Westerink's note on the use of the term *odyne* (labour, gestation) by Damascius and Proclus in *De Princ.* I, p.134. Plotinus also uses this metaphor, especially in VI. 7 and VI. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *De Princ.* I. 6. 7-16.

The One is by nature placed before the Many,<sup>10</sup> the more simple before that which is a composite in some way; the more comprehensive before that which it envelops. And maybe the absolute ineffable is so ineffable that we cannot even postulate about it that it is ineffable. As far as the One is concerned, it is ineffable in the sense that it escapes all synthesis of definition and name, and all distinction like that between the known and the knower.<sup>11</sup> While the Beyond [the Ineffable], is beyond contradistinction.<sup>12</sup>

“But if it [the Ineffable] is really without co-ordination and relation to everything else – and if it is nothing at all, not even the One itself – that exactly is its nature that we are in a position to know in a way, earnestly pursuing to make others equally capable of it. In addition, its unknowable character itself, either we know that it is unknowable, or we are ignorant of it”.<sup>13</sup> “So don’t we express an opinion about it in what we say? Or, if there is an opinion about it, it is also an object of opinion. Yes, but our opinion is that it is not, and this opinion is true as Aristotle<sup>14</sup> says”.<sup>15</sup>

“The One is completely unknowable and inexpressible. Why then look for something else beyond the inexpressible? It is maybe the case that Plato, made us ascend ineffably towards the Ineffable, by the mediation of the One. It is of the Ineffable that we always talk of as being beyond the One. Just like he made us turn to the One by the suppression of the One itself and of other things” (*De Princ.* I.9.8-14). But in what ways is the One more knowable than the Ineffable? Even human intellection of the highest kind, i.e. unitary *noesis* which conforms to it in character would not be able to grasp it, because it might prove to be of an unknowable nature. In the meantime other kinds of intellection are rejected.<sup>16</sup>

It is not clear whether these kinds of intellection can be realised in this world. The philosophic modes of existence, which include life in pure intellection can probably be realised both here and in the hereafter, “though in the hereafter they have an excellence far higher than here”.<sup>17</sup> And even though we conceive of the One in the integral purification of our thought towards that which is more simple and compre-

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<sup>10</sup> “How could we know that there is nothing beyond the One, which may have produced it? Because the many would have more than one cause. But in fact the Many need nothing else but the One; that, in other words, is the reason why only the One is cause of the Many” (*De Princ.* I. 5).

<sup>11</sup> *De Princ.* I. 10. 22-11. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *De Princ.* I. 6. 23-I. 7. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *De Princ.* I. 11. 21-12. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 11, 21a 32-3 and *Soph. Elench.* 5, 167 a 1.

<sup>15</sup> *De Princ.* I. 15. 6-8.

<sup>16</sup> *De Princ.* I. 10; I. 18. 2-10. He suggests that we can have reservations about knowledge of the Forms as well: “neither a mark, nor a name, nor a definition, nor science is appropriate in signalling the Form. For only an intellect could apply itself to the Forms, which [intellect] we do not yet have, for we like to argue dialectically.”

<sup>17</sup> *In Phaed.* I, 115. At this point we should consider that he might reiterate this view as part of the *Phaedo* commentary and not as his own.

hensive, that which is ‘more venerable’ must be elusive to all conception and conjecture.<sup>18</sup> But the One cannot be purely known by the philosopher. It is simply the highest of all principles that we “know or can conjecture about” as opposed to the Ineffable which lies beyond contradistinction.<sup>19</sup>

Damascius stresses that the desire to know often results in the positing of misleading *hypotheses*. What we say about the Ineffable is the product of our own emotional states<sup>20</sup> rather than the outcome of careful ontological investigation.<sup>21</sup> Even from the first lines of his *Treatise on First Principles* the practice of doubt is the way in which we can relate the One and therefore the Ineffable to what can be known: “That, which we call the unique principle of the All, is it beyond the All, or is it something that takes part in the All, like the top of the beings that proceed from it?”<sup>22</sup> By giving a negative answer to the second part of his question, Damascius induces an impasse for our thought and our way of thinking in relation to the first principles since they are beyond reach. The inaccessibility of the first principles entails the inability of the philosopher to experience them;<sup>23</sup> either by means of a vision of the Good, which Plato describes,<sup>24</sup> or by means of mystical experiences or visions, which Plotinus recounts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *De Princ.* I. 7.

<sup>19</sup> *De Princ.* I. 18. 2-5. Could this be a case of making a distinction, akin to Bertrand Russell’s, between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description? See Russell 1910-1911, 108–128.

<sup>20</sup> *De Princ.* I. 8. 17.

<sup>21</sup> “We accept fictions, about the things which are not, which are the products of our imagination, as if they were real things (in the same way that we represent the sun as having one foot diameter, while it is not of such dimensions). In the same way, if we form an opinion, either on the subject of that which is not in any way nor in any relation, or on the topic of the Ineffable, this belief is our deed, and in us it progresses towards the void; so, in grasping the Ineffable, we believe to having grasped it, but it is nothing in us, so much it eludes common thought” (*De Princ.* I.16).

<sup>22</sup> *De Princ.* I. 1. 5-7.

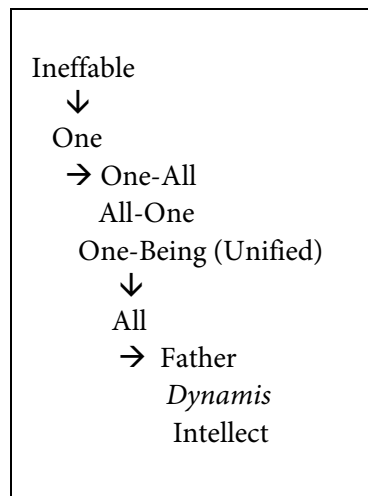
<sup>23</sup> *De Princ.* I. 17. 1-5.

<sup>24</sup> “When seen, it is inferred to be the universal author of all things, beautiful and right, parent of light and the lord of light in the visible world and the immediate and supreme source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that is the power upon which he, who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed” (*Republic*, 517c).

<sup>25</sup> Plotinus’ writings are full of mystical experiences related to contact with the intelligibles, since, as he says, actual union with the One is “our one resource if our philosophy is to give us knowledge of the One”. (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, tr. A. H. Armstrong (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1993: VI. 9. 3). Such a passage as the following describes the experiences of the initiated in contact with the One: “there was no movement in him and he had no emotion, no desire for anything else when he had made the ascent – but there was not even any reason or thought, and he himself was not there, if one must say this; but he was as if carried away or possessed by a god, in a quiet solitude and a state of calm... He had no thought of beauties, but had already run up beyond beauty and gone beyond the choir of

We might think that the things which comprise the All, can either be a principle or something which proceeds from a principle. According to Damascius, the All is neither. It is the totality of all we can conceive of; the plurality of many things of which there is a unique co-ordination, in a sense which includes their principle. In a few words we could say that the All contains its principle because that too is something we can conceive of in some way. But if it is true that the All is neither a principle, nor something which proceeds from a principle, did it come about suddenly out of nothing? Where did this differentiation and plurality that characterises the All spring from?<sup>26</sup>

In this classification of transcendental principles there are two possibilities:



(a) Either the first of all principles should be beyond the All; in which case the All would have to be the principle of itself simultaneously with being the All, and that would destroy its simple essence of being the All. (b) Or the first of all principles should be part of the All; in such a case the principle's identity is altered because it ceases to be merely a principle of the All but becomes part of the All too. This apparent contradiction in terms is solved by Damascius by positing the One as principle of the known world<sup>27</sup> and cause of the All.

Another strand of the *Treatise* is based on theological imagery much more than on pure philosophical speculation.<sup>28</sup> *Skotos* theology<sup>29</sup> is used to

complement the message conveyed in passages as the one above. Expressions such as *skotos*,<sup>30</sup> *skoteinoteta*,<sup>31</sup> are used in order to signify the impression we get of the world that lies beyond the intelligible. More particularly the word *skotos* is used to signify the One and often, in the terminology of the Egyptian priests the Pythagorean One; this is the equivalent of the Ineffable in Damascius. The 'one principle of everything',<sup>32</sup> 'the principle that is beyond the All',<sup>33</sup> 'the inexpressible principle',<sup>34</sup> and 'the ineffable principle'<sup>35</sup> are some of the expressions that alternate with *skotos*.

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virtues, like a man who enters into the sanctuary (*adyton*) and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine; ...And when one falls from the vision, he wakes again the virtue in himself... and he will again be lightened... This is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men, deliverance from the things of this world" (*Enn.VI. 9. 11*).

<sup>26</sup> *De Princ.* I. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *De Princ.* I. 3. 18-21.

<sup>28</sup> On defining Damascius' position on the map of philosophy versus theology cf. A. Kalogiratou (2007) 58-79.

<sup>29</sup> R. Mortley (1986).

<sup>30</sup> *De Princ.* II. 11. 4; II. 30. 9; III. 167. 5.

<sup>31</sup> *De Princ.* I. 13. 2; *De Princ.* I. 15. 17.

<sup>32</sup> *De Princ.* III. 167. 4.

Like Gregory of Nyssa (and indeed the following passage has several verbal similarities with Gregory's *Life of Moses*), Denys the Areopagite speaks of the dark cloud where "He who transcends all really is": "For not simply is the divine Moses bidden first of all to purify himself and then to separate himself from those not thus purified; but after all purification, he hears the many sounding trumpets and sees many lights which flash forth pure and widely diffused rays. ...And then Moses is cut off from both things seen and those who see and enters into the darkness of unknowing, a truly hidden darkness, according to which he shuts his eyes to all apprehensions that convey knowledge, for he has passed into a realm quite beyond any feeling or seeing... that<sup>36</sup> which is beyond all".<sup>37</sup> It is important to point out that the world of darkness is preceded in this passage by a realm of strong flashing light.

The "light of truth"<sup>38</sup> is also described by Damascius and Plato. It peoples the region exactly below the inaccessible principles and is a product of the One-Being,<sup>39</sup> to which Being is attached. This light is the region of the knowable. In the stages of his ascent when he encounters the world of the Intelligibles – before ascending to the highest principles of the *dark cloud*; the One and the Ineffable – the philosopher encounters visions of light.<sup>40</sup> He can probably compare the light that the *henad* throws on the Intelligible triad, to the sun-light that becomes many different colours through a cloud as a rainbow.<sup>41</sup>

This is where Intellect can function and apprehend realities in the realm of the intelligibles; at the 'front door' of the One.<sup>42</sup> In this Damascius is not alone. Plotinus too makes the distinction between One and Intellect and he describes the single instances which illuminate the life of the sage unexpectedly: "Often, I have woken up out of the body to myself and have entered into myself, going out from all other things; I have seen a beauty wonderfully great and felt assurance that then most of all I belonged to the better part; I have actually lived the best life and come to identity with the divine; and set firm in it I have come to that supreme actuality, setting myself above all else in the realm of Intellect. Then after that rest in the divine, when I have come down from Intellect to discursive reasoning, I am puzzled how I ever came down..."<sup>43</sup> Intellect for Plotinus is a separate *hypostasis* which comes directly

<sup>33</sup> *De Princ.* II. 10. 24.

<sup>34</sup> *De Princ.* II. 11. 2.

<sup>35</sup> *De Princ.* II. 30. 4.

<sup>36</sup> As we see from this passage, Christian authors too speak of god in relation to the All.

<sup>37</sup> Denys, *Mystical Theology* I.3: 1000B-1001A.

<sup>38</sup> *De Princ.* I. 122. 14.

<sup>39</sup> C.f. *De Princ.* I. 69. 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> *De Princ.* III. 141. 11-6.

<sup>41</sup> *De Princ.* III. 141. 20-142.11.

<sup>42</sup> On the relationship between this light and the One see *De Princ.* I. 125. 10-8.

<sup>43</sup> *Enn.* IV. 8. 1-9.

after the One. It may correspond to the Intelligible Triad of the Father, the *Dynamis* and the Intellect in the *Treatise on First Principles*.<sup>44</sup>

The ultimate principle is compared by Damascius to a shrine that generates all things ineffably, but it is one not to be penetrated. The word *adyton* that he uses to indicate the Ineffable was the room in the remotest part of the Greek temple. Such is the case with the temple of *Athena* in Athens, the Delphic temple and others.<sup>45</sup> Its inaccessible character symbolised the transcendence of the divine that was thought to be hidden there. All the pains and gestations (*odynai*) of our soul towards an understanding of the Ineffable (*aporrheton*) stop at the front door (*en prothyraï*) of the sanctuary and we are destined never to get in.<sup>46</sup>

The whole discussion in terms of light and darkness that relates to the first principles can be better explained when one thinks that our inability to grasp them does not lie in their own attributes, but is rather due to our limitations [or insufficiency]. Such as blindness could be to those who cannot see:

“It is in fact, as if though someone, blind by birth, would declare that warmth does not underlay colour. Or he will rather say, justly, that colour is not warm; for warmth is, in fact, possible to touch and he knows it by touch, while he doesn’t know colour in any way, except that it is not subject to touch; for he knows that he does not know it; and that is simply not his knowledge of colour, but knowledge of his own ignorance. And naturally, we too, in saying that this [principle] is unknowable, we do not declare something that pertains to it, but we confess our own state in relation to it; for the blind man’s insensitivity and blindness is not in the colour but in himself; and certainly, ignorance of that [principle] which we ignore is in us, for knowledge of the known is in the knower not in that which is being known”.<sup>47</sup>

In the simile of the Cave, Plato implies that it can only be the born philosopher – whose blindness is due to the transition from dark to light – who benefits from education. Education will not put light to blind eyes, or knowledge in a mind where it was not before. But the turning around of the prisoner’s body signifies the turning of the mind ‘from the world of becoming to the world of being’, away from ‘sensual indulgences or gluttony’ or any form of badness towards the Good. Virtues can be instilled only in those who have potential. In the same way Damascius seems to include philosophers in the category of those people who could never turn around to see the light, because of an inborn deficiency. So instead of seeing the light they are

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<sup>44</sup> For an in-depth discussion see J. Bussanich (1997).

<sup>45</sup> The same custom is still respected in Christian Orthodox churches, where usually the inner *sanctum* shelters the bones of a saint or some other sacred object and is inaccessible to the public.

<sup>46</sup> *De Princ.* I. 8. 6-20.

<sup>47</sup> *De Princ.* I. 12. 11-25.



blinded when they look at the Sun and see nothing but darkness. Darkness again is not an attribute of the Ineffable, but a natural reaction of the eyes that cannot see.<sup>48</sup>

## II. On First Principles & Soul Purification: the Philosopher

A question about Neoplatonic philosophy is whether rationalism can have a religious significance. There is a possible conflict in a system that contains a philosophic along with a religious representation of the universe divided into the categories of the sacred and the profane. The religious representation embraces truths revealed by the gods, whereby reality is a hierarchy of values which register a positive or negative sign according to whether the soul is purified or becomes impure in contact with them. According to the philosophic conception there is a rational background to reality, based on argument. In this case reason illuminates everything that can be explained and once justified anything can be good. Can the problem of destiny retain a meaning in a universe the principles of which are graduated according to a necessary law of reason? The originality of each Neoplatonic thinker will thus depend largely on the ways he will suggest to solve this problem.

The mystery religions during the first centuries CE were based upon the sentiment that the soul was bound to elements which rendered it impure. The proper function (goal) of religious practice consists then in delivering the soul, in enabling it to be reborn, by disentangling it from these elements. According to the Hermetic writings: “After this rebirth one remains the same, and yet one does not have the same substance. ... [the birth in Truth] is the death of the terrestrial body, at least in its power over the soul. The twelve wicked inclinations which are born of the body disappear one after another, driven off by the ten divine forces. Then you know yourself with an intellectual knowledge and you know our father.” The Mithraic theologians likewise blended their mysteries with cosmological representations. After death the soul, if judged worthy, ascends into the heavens.<sup>49</sup> The regions of the heavens are divided into seven spheres. When stripped of all sense-attachments, the soul enters the eighth heaven where it enjoys blessedness for ever.<sup>50</sup>

In Damascius’ philosophy, what degree of purity is necessary for a soul to attain immortality? Purity depends on the soul’s incarnate behaviour. Will the human being, whom a soul incarnates, be a philosopher? This depends on one’s previous ethical performance. As all Platonists are committed to “karmic ethics”, a soul could become a god or a daemon, because they too have souls. It all depends on the life it lead as an incarnate being and on the lives it lived before this one. Only the principles of this world – which are apprehended by intellect do not have souls and are rather akin to the Forms.

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<sup>48</sup> “So what? Don’t we think and persuade ourselves that this [the Ineffable] is so? Yes, but these are our own states about it, as we have often said. However, we have in us this opinion. Empty like an opinion on emptiness (*kenon*) and the unlimited (*apeiron*)”. (*De Princ.* I. 16).

<sup>49</sup> E. Vacherot (1845).

<sup>50</sup> A. Cameron (1969) 7-29.

Damascius rejects the importance of discursive reason or dialectics in apprehending the first principles – by pointing out that the way we think of and define the intelligible is only relatively speaking true in accordance with the way things really are.<sup>51</sup> He points out that this is so because the gods communicate these and other realities to us not in the way that they think of them because then we would not be able to understand. They speak them in human language. In the same way as they would speak Egyptian to the Egyptians and Greek to the Greeks. So the language that they use is concepts and verbs and nouns such as the ones that we use to describe them.<sup>52</sup>

Damascius does not describe a transcendental experience of the ultimate truth. He rather points to a way of super-human communication between the gods and man, whereby the products of contemplation refer back to human language, since the gods who communicate with us, relate them in our language. Does then contemplation consist of simply describing and connecting and analysing the different concepts the gods allow us to apprehend? In the contemplative life, the soul “considers the superior entities either as exerting providence over the lower degrees of being, or as remaining within themselves, or as connected with what is beyond” (*In Phaed.* I, 74). The activity of the gods is a kind of exertion of providence over the lower degrees of being, including human lives. Here we should also remember Denys *from the Areios Pagos*<sup>53</sup> who is one of the few authors in the early mystical tradition to acknowledge a reaching out of the god towards the *moving soul*.<sup>54</sup> The activity of intellect described by Damascius in such a state remains mysterious because it is far too passive to be taken as understanding.

On the other hand, for Damascius, death of the human body would be the single experience of loss of life. Death to the soul, (given the soul’s immortality which is established in the second part of the commentary on the *Phaedo*) is its separation from the body and therefore a constant state of purity and detachment (*In Phaed.* I, 52-3). Once this is established there is almost no oscillation of the philosopher between the life of the body and the intelligible world.

According to Plato, the soul must be cultivated as far as possible as if it were already disembodied, in that “practice for death” which is the philosophers’ proper occupation.<sup>55</sup> For Plato, the philosopher king is expected to play an active role in so-

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<sup>51</sup> “Except that we, in discoursing humanly about the super-divine principles, we cannot either conceive or name them in a way other than by using reasonings on the subject of these realities that raise themselves beyond all intellect, and life and the substance of all things” (*De Princ.* III. 140. 14-18).

<sup>52</sup> *De Princ.* III. 140. 12-25. See also S. Rappe (2000) xx + 266.

<sup>53</sup> He studied at the Academy during the late fifth or early sixth century CE. This dating is consistent with his apparent use of ideas found in Proclus and Damascius. See S. Gersh (1978).

<sup>54</sup> A. Louth (1981).

<sup>55</sup> “In the Republic he moved to recognition that conflict occurs in the soul itself. The passions and appetites are acknowledged to have their place in human life and attention is di-

ciety by teaching his fellow citizens<sup>56</sup> part of what he learnt in contact with the Good: “And if, said I, someone should drag him thence by force up the ascent which is rough and steep, and not let him go before he had drawn him out<sup>57</sup> into the light of the sun,<sup>58</sup> do you not think that he would find it painful to be so haled along, and would chafe at it, and when he came out into the light, that his eyes would be filled with its beams so that he would not be able to see even one of the things that we call real” (*Republic*, 515e-516a).<sup>59</sup> Damascius himself never describes any such experience related to the ultimate principles. A result of this is that he posits the first principle of all things as if it were ‘beyond reach’ and its existence related to itself but not to us.<sup>60</sup>

He thinks that if Plato himself might have come to the experience of the One he would certainly have concealed it: “And even if, having elevated himself to the One, Plato became silent, he thought it appropriate to keep absolute silence about that

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rected rather to their regulation than to their complete suppression. But Book X shows him still faithful to the conviction that the existence of these conflicting elements in the soul is only made possible by its association with the body, and that in its purity, in its “truest nature”, the soul is characterised by *philosophia*” (S. Gersch 1978, 25).

<sup>56</sup> Even though he may despise them so as to “say with Homer: Better to be a serf, labouring for a landless master and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner”. (*Republic*, 516d).

<sup>57</sup> When such a vision for Damascius is impossible, it is interesting to see that the Platonic future philosopher-king can not only see, but even be *dragged along* to his journey. Would the dragging along be perpetrated by his teacher? Plotinus thinks that it would: “Therefore, Plato says, ‘it cannot be spoken or written’, but we speak and write impelling towards it ... For teaching goes as far as the road and the travelling, but the vision is the task of someone who has already resolved to see” (*Enn.* VI. 9. 4. 11-4).

<sup>58</sup> The ultimate principle is assumed to be the Good in this case. However there exist accounts of Plato’s late period in philosophy according to which that could be the One. Aristotle’s account of the lectures *On the Good* mentions that Plato in his late years taught the One to be good. There is another indication as to whether Plato might have taken the One as first and ultimate principle of the all, and that is in the *Parmenides*. This dialogue has been interpreted by many as a mental exercise or even a joke, while by others, significantly the Neoplatonists, as a proof of Plato’s endorsement of their own interpretation of the One as ultimate principle. In the *Philebus*, Socrates says: “if we are not able to hunt the Good with one Idea only, with three we may catch our prey, Beauty, Symmetry, Truth”. If this is true when the Good (as it happens in the philosophy of Plotinus) lies below the One in the hierarchy, then this gives us an idea of how distant the One could be, compared to the Truth.

<sup>59</sup> We don’t know whether the use of sense perceptions in this case is due to the sense-related metaphors that accompany the vision.

<sup>60</sup> In this he resembles Gregory of Nyssa: “The soul, having gone out at the word of her Beloved, looks for Him but does not find Him. She calls on Him, though He cannot be reached by any verbal symbol, and she is told by the watchman that she is in love with the unattainable, and that the object of her longing cannot be apprehended.” (*Commentary on the Song XII*; 1037).

which is absolutely secret according to the ancient custom; for actually the word [on this subject] is very dangerous that happens to fall in simple ears".<sup>61</sup>

Plotinus too thinks we can come in contact with the Good: "So we must ascend again to the good, which every soul desires. ... and the attainment of it is for those who go up to the higher world and are converted and strip off what we put on in our descent; (just as for those who go up to the celebrations of sacred rites there are purification, and stripping off of the clothes they wore before, and going up naked) until, passing in the ascent all that is alien to the god, one sees with one's self alone. That alone, simple, single and pure, from which all depends and to which all look and are and live and think: for it is cause of life and mind and being".<sup>62</sup>

Damascius seems to assign a new mission to the philosopher and by "practice of death" he expects not simply the contemplation of the world of Forms through detachment from the sensible, he encourages a new way of recognising the limits of this world by discerning the void that surrounds it. However the human soul must forego the danger of following a different kind of void than the one which leads away from the sensible, towards true being.

"But, if the One is cause of the All and if it embraces all, which will be our way of climbing beyond it? For maybe we walk into the emptiness, strongly inclined towards nothingness itself; in fact, that which is not One, that is nothing in all justice." (*De Princ.* I, 5, 18-23). The philosopher who ventures beyond the One in search of the ultimate principle will discover that the most simple and comprehensive of all principles lies beyond conjecture and conception and its value lies in its simplicity. There is a difficulty that Damascius envisages in saying that the Ineffable is completely unknowable. If that is the case, how can he write about it? "For we certainly don't want to fabricate fictions, in a state of delirium over things we don't know. But if we are ignorant about it, how can we say that it is absolutely unknowable? And if we are aware of it, it is therefore knowable, since in being unknowable, it is recognised as such."<sup>63</sup>

According to Sarah Rappe, "this set of questions involves us in a second general assessment of the Neoplatonist tradition, involving matters of exegesis and interpretation, the status of philosophy, as a discipline that seeks to describe how things are, even if the very nature of reality precludes such description, and finally the relationship between words and reality as a whole. Can [the Ineffable and] the One be known or is it unknowable? In making even this kind of determination, we are already engaged in making statements that apparently predicate semantic descriptions of something that is, *ex hypothese*, not susceptible of any such statements".<sup>64</sup> Sara Rappe also argues that "Proclus and Simplicius both allow that any teaching about

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<sup>61</sup> *De Princ.* I. 9. 16-19. See also Plato's *Seventh Letter* 341b-345c on a similar train of thought.

<sup>62</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads* I. 6. 7. 1-12.

<sup>63</sup> *De Princ.* I. 11. 17-12. 6.

<sup>64</sup> Sara Ahbel-Rappe (2010) XX.

realities such as intellect and soul must take place by means of *endeixis*, by means of coded language". *Endeixis* is a term that occurs over a hundred times in the *De Principiis* alone.<sup>65</sup>

In a way therefore Damascius is telling us that the philosopher who might experience this kind of inability to grasp pure nothingness<sup>66</sup> is the one standing more closely to the truth. "And if that [the Ineffable] is nothing, let us say that the nothing is of two kinds, that which is better than the One and that which is beyond; and if we are walking on the void saying those things, then there are two ways of 'walking on the void' (*kenemvatein*), one is by falling into the unpronounceable, the other into that which does not exist in any way; for this one is unpronounceable, as Plato says too, but it is according to the worse, while that one is according to the best".<sup>67</sup>

Plotinus explains that "It is not in the soul's nature to touch utter nothingness; the lowest descent is into evil and, so far, into non-being; but to utter nothing, never. When the soul begins again to mount, it comes not to something alien but to its very self; thus detached, it is in nothing but itself; self-gathered it is no longer in the order of being; it is in the Supreme".<sup>68</sup> The difference between Plotinus and later Neoplatonists like Damascius is that the latter won't allow for the absolute detachment of the soul from the body, while the body is still alive. It thus becomes impossible for the soul to venture completely into the positive nothingness of the Ineffable, because it is always bound to the body and that results in its inability to escort its own self, so as to say, into that which is total nothingness and alien to the soul.

But for Plotinus there is a danger: many a soul loses itself in multiplicity. Instead of finding its true self it discovers self-determination and separateness from the Father: "when it goes towards itself, (...), wishing to be directed towards itself it makes an image of itself, the non-existent, as if walking on emptiness (*kenemvatousa*) and becoming more indefinite; and the indefinite image of this is in every way dark: for it is altogether without reason and unintelligent".<sup>69</sup> He of course suggests a different way of finding a soul's true self: "Our country from which we came is there our father is there. How shall we travel to it, where is our way of escape? We cannot get there on foot; for our feet only carry us everywhere in this world, from one country to another. You must not get ready a carriage, either, or a boat. Let all these things go, and do not look. Shut your eyes, and change to and wake another way of seeing, which everyone has but few use".<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> S. Rappe (2000) 209-210.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *De Princ.* I. 7. 24 and I. 16 on the two different kinds of void and nothingness. Clearly Damascius is here referring to the negative kind of destructive void on the nothingness that ensues from matter and also about a possible connection between the notions of nothingness and the unlimited.

<sup>67</sup> *De Princ.* I. 7. 23-8. 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Enn.* VI. 9. 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Enn.* III. 9. 3. 10ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Enn.* I. 6. 8. 22-8.

For Damascius, philosophy can end when one is totally purified: the lifting up to pure intelligence through the path of goodness and wisdom (*In Phaed.* I, 41). By purifying herself, a soul can rise above all bodily affects and die in a way of separation from the body. When staying by herself, she can contemplate reality and perfection. She can pass beyond discursive knowledge to a knowing more immediate, more intuitive. The mind there thinks reality; there is unity between knower and known; Is this possible in our world? Does the figurative entail a physical death of the body? Not necessarily.

Purification (*catharsis*) is a sort of six-step preparation which aims to detachment from the body and all bodily concerns: (a) pleasure and pain, (b) luxurious food or the appetite for meat, (c) sense-perception and (d) imagination, (e) the multiplicity of opinion and (f) the complexity of discursive reason. (*In Phaed.* I, 120). Both purification and contemplation are the ways to god. Whereas the former leads to a god who is by himself alone and transcends all things, the latter leads to a god of a higher order who is united with the principles beyond himself (*In Phaed.* 119). Is union or contact with a god a way of acquiring knowledge? It seems that it is, because Damascius distinguishes himself from his predecessors when he adds a third kind of philosophical life to the two previously existing ones: the life of political action and life in contemplation. He adds purification.

Purification however is a process with progressive steps, while contemplation reflects a constant activity of mind for the one who has attained it. According to *In Phaed.* I, 121 “the same relation that exists between education and life in society, exists also between the life of purification and the life of contemplation”. One may argue that life in society signals the end of someone’s education because he/she knows all that he/she needs to know. On the other hand, ‘life in education’ is often of a higher intellectual standard as the ascent of Plato’s philosopher-king towards the sun indicates. Moreover, as Damascius says in *De Phaed.* I, 100 one cannot distinguish the “learners” i.e. those who are still preparing themselves to become philosophers from the “crowd”, because they both experience the same unpurified ways of feeling and emotions. Only true philosophers can be distinguished from the crowd and that probably means that it does not matter whether they are purified or political or just contemplating kinds of person.

So what is it that the purifying philosopher does differently, how does he qualify for a standard of understanding<sup>71</sup> as elevated as the one that life in contemplation provides? In other words, is there a way other than contemplation of approaching the divine?<sup>72</sup> In this, it seems that Damascius has distanced himself from the Plotinian way to answer this question which would have been a categorical “no”.

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<sup>71</sup> Regarding the portrayal of Socrates, Plato’s exemplary philosopher, by Damascius see A. Kalogiratou (2006) 45-54.

<sup>72</sup> “...which means could we use to ascend beyond it? For maybe we might find ourselves in the void, extended towards nothingness itself; for that which is not One, is nothingness in all truth” (I. 8. 9-11).

For all the Neoplatonists it is evident that the hierarchy of existence is simple at both ends: top and bottom; and more complex in the middle. The Ineffable and pure matter - both simple and represented by the void in Damascius' philosophy - are respectively above and below other more complex intelligible entities that people the world of the All. This observation provides the rational justification for theurgy which was practiced by Iamblichus and later Neoplatonists (in marked contrast to Plotinus, who disapproved of magic). So they seem to confirm Hierocles' view of Neoplatonism as the "purified philosophy of Plato".<sup>73</sup>

Since lower beings are simpler than intelligent beings, and therefore participate in higher hypostases, it might be argued that magical practices, using plants and potions, for example, are more likely to influence higher beings than the merely rational exercises of humans. So, whereas for Plotinus the only activities which draw man near the One are *eros*, *logos* and contemplation, for Iamblichus, Proclus,<sup>74</sup> Damascius and their contemporaries, theurgy is more effective.

According to Algis Uzdaviny, "theurgy' is literally god's work (from 'theoi'='gods' and 'ergon'='work', activity, operation). (...) For theurgists, the intellect must be engaged, which in turn means that they must not only purify their bodies and lower souls but also their minds. This would involve a regimen of study that includes not only philosophy but also sacred ritual."<sup>75</sup>

One more reason for Damascius to favour theurgy in relation to 'union with the One' for example, is that he posits as first principle an entity, the Ineffable, which is by his own definition, unknowable; therefore, not possible to approach with the mind. His description of this principle is problematic, however, in the sense that one cannot be certain that they are a philosopher or a wise man with the ancient Greek notion of the word, if one cannot feel getting close to first principles by contemplation, theurgy or union.

Damascius, in his book, with the significant title *Philosophical History*, describes a spiritual not an intellectual journey. He maintains that "the Orphic and Chaldean lore" is characterized as superior to "philosophical common sense" (*ton koinon philosophias noun*) (PH 85A).<sup>76</sup> He mentions a lot of incidents that point to the strong links of late Neoplatonism to spiritualist practices. His involvement in these practices did not discredit him as a philosopher in the eyes of his contemporaries. It rather highlights the fact that the changes that led to the philosophers of the west being alchemists, had already become apparent in his day. Polymnia Athanassiadi

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<sup>73</sup> Photius, *Bibliothèque* 214 (173a ff.).

<sup>74</sup> According to Proclus, theurgical power is "better than any human wisdom or knowledge" Iamblichus' longest extant work *On the Mysteries* is concerned mainly with little else. See H. D. Saffrey & L. G. Westerink (1968) I.25.

<sup>75</sup> A. Uzdaviny (2010) 4.

<sup>76</sup> P. Athanassiadi (1999a) 181-182. See also pp. 149-183 regarding the provenance of the *Chaldean Oracles* as well as their use by Damascius and his contemporaries.

suggests that Damascius held in the Academy “esoteric sessions on the Chaldean Oracles”.<sup>77</sup>

The aspiring philosopher, according to Damascius, is thrown into an abyss of semblance between the highest points of his universe and the lowest, as a lot of the attributes he ascribes to the Ineffable characterise also matter: empty, void, dark. This entails a danger, not envisaged by previous Neoplatonic authors: a philosopher could be immersed in matter, while thinking that he has conquered wisdom and the intelligible world, be it by the practice of theurgy or otherwise. In Neoplatonism reaching wisdom and knowledge are highly subjective experiences, but one could always wonder who could guide others and judge their progress, when the way is marred with too much consistency, making parts of the same universe too similar to differentiate. In this case initiation is indeed needed and the uninitiated run a grave risk of falling off the cliffs of wisdom into the abyss of matter rather unknowingly.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> P. Athanassiadi (1999) 46.

<sup>78</sup> I would like to thank John Bussanich for his many important comments. An earlier version of this paper was presented and generously commented upon by those present at Richard Sorabji’s Post Aristotelian Philosophy Seminar, King’s College London, 1998.



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# PREDESTINATION AND ESSENISM

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**ABSTRACT:** The widely spread Essenes practice of the future events prediction is likely to be based on their belief in the absolute predestination. In this light the hitherto unclarified etymology of the very term Ἐσσαῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί can be traced to the Aramaic notion חשיא (pl. st. emph.)/resp. חשיאין (st. abs.; sing. חשא), which is likely to be interpreted as “what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”; this derivation appears to be relevant not only semantically, but also linguistically. Thus the term “Essenes” can be interpreted as the “fatalists” (see e.g. Tantlevskij 2013). The doctrine of predestination also plays the key role in religious outlook of the Qumran community, and it is considered to be one of the most fundamental arguments in favor of the Qumranites identification with the Essenes. Some Platonic-Pythagorean (not only Stoic) doctrines can be regarded as certain Hellenistic parallels to the Essenic-Qumranic conception of predestination.

**KEYWORDS:** Judean history and ideology in Hellenistic and early Roman periods, sectarian Judaism, Essenes, Qumran community, history of ancient philosophy, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, predestination, eschatology.

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Identifying the Essenes mode of life with that of the Pythagoreans, Josephus Flavius (*Jewish Antiquities* XV, 371) singles out the attitude towards predestination (εἰμαρμένη; lit. “fate”, “destiny”) as the main aspect of the religious sects separation in Judea (XIII, 171–173). At this the very essence of the Essenes’ doctrine, according to Josephus, is “that all things are best ascribed to God” (XVIII, 18). Also this idea seems to be implicitly attested in Plinius the Elder’s *Historia Naturalis* V, 73. The widely spread Essenes’ practice of the future events prediction is likely to be based on their belief in the absolute predestination. In this light the hitherto unclarified ety-

mology of the very term Ἐσσηαῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί can be traced to the Aramaic notion חשיא (pl. st. emph.)/resp. חשיאן (st. abs.; sing. חשא), which is likely to be interpreted as “what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”; this derivation appears to be relevant not only semantically, but also linguistically. Thus the term “Essenes” can be interpreted as the “fatalists” (see e.g. Tantlevskij 2013).

The doctrine of predestination plays the key role in religious outlook of the Qumran community, and it is considered to be one of the most fundamental arguments in favor of the Qumranites identification with the Essenes. On the basis of the main Qumran manuscripts analysis one can conclude that, according to the sectarians views, the idea/plan of the future Universe arises originally in God’s Mind (סכל, בינה), Thought (מחשבת), and the world itself is created through His Knowledge (דעת). It is possible to assume that the terms מחשבת, סכל/בינה, דעת can be correlated here with some Greek philosophical notions. One can connect these notions (in particular, in the light of Philo of Alexandria’s writings) with the term λόγος, which is sometimes implied as a synonym of the divine “mind” in some Hellenistic philosophical constructions. On the other hand, one can mention the Platonic-Aristotelian notions παράδειγμα and νοῦς, denoting mind or thought, which rule the Universe.

The fact that the idea of predestination was not alien to the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions can be confirmed by the following arguments. First of all, let us point out the fr. 88 from Eudemus of Rhodes’ *Physics*, in which the Pythagoreans belief in absolute universal reiteration, originating from their conviction in the existence of rational-numerical regularity, ruling the world, is attested. Secondly, one can point out some of Plato’s indications scattered in his texts to the necessity and pre-determination of what is going on – from the image of the “golden thread” in his *Laws* (644c–645a) and the famous “Ananke’s spindle” from his *Republic* (616c) to the discussion about the necessity and regularity of the world’s epochs in his *Statesman* (268e ff.). According to the *Republic*, people elect their own destiny based on the experience gained in previous incarnations of the eternal souls. This choice can’t be changed: the next “chance” will appear only before the next birth. “Retentive” individuals who do not drink too much water from the river Amelet are allowed to accept their fate as something due. In many places in Plato’s dialogues Socrates predicts his own fate, and his behavior during the trial and after it can be understood as an example of philosophical acceptance of the inevitable future. Constant references to the voice of the demon further reinforce the feeling that according to Plato, Socrates was a man who knew how to read his own fate. Thus, his “paradigm” from the *Timaeus* appears to be not only as a static, but also as a dynamic “design” of the being. Especially clear this idea can be seen in Plato’s teaching of the direct and mediated world’s governing by a god in the epochs of Kronos and Zeus (*Statesman*, *ibid*). If the “retrograde” moving of the universe means a change of the direction of time, then it can be assumed that in the “age of Kronos” the creation of fates of those who will live in the “times of Zeus” takes place. They live the “opposite lives” by revolting from the ground and moving from old age to youth, and then to the infant state.

Thus the “age of Kronos” is not only a good time of direct world’s governing by gods, but also the time of formation of the fates unfolding in the “age of Zeus”.

However, in this age the Space is inclined to deviate from the paths, which have been prepared for it by the demiurge, therefore people do not accomplish their mission. Arbitrariness dooms them to the afterlife retribution and to a series of rebirths – when people, but not gods, choose fate. In the *Republic* Lachesis says: «Ephemeral souls! Here is the beginning of a turn, fatal for the perishable generation... For no divinity shall cast lots for you, but you shall choose your own deity» (*Republic* 617d-e). Only philosophers, following the “circle of identity”, i. e. the laws and norms established by the demiurge, carry out their inclinations obtained during the previous cycle. Thus we meet with two levels of fatalism – one from Kronos, proper and good, and another one from the man himself associated with the nature of “other”, which is fraught with accidents and mistakes leading to evil.

These Platonic-Pythagorean doctrines can be regarded as certain Hellenistic parallels to the Essenic conception of predestination. We know that the Pythagoreans were among the first in the history of Greek literature to offer allegorical interpretations of the Greek mythology. In this connection let us mention that Clement of Alexandria considered Philo of Alexandria – whose views seem to be akin in some aspects to those of the Essenes-Qumranites – to have been a “Pythagorean” (*Stromata* I 72 4; II 100 3). Naturally, we can speak about the “Pythagoreanism” of Philo to the same extent, as of the Essenes-Qumranites’ “Pythagoreanism”.

The latter ones, being not inclined to the onto-cosmological speculations, emphasize the eschatological component in the idea of the indispensable predestination. It is even possible to say that in their view, the whole world history, not yet started, has already been realized, and accomplished in its ideal form in God’s Mind. A human being appears to be a twofold essence, selfness, and exists in two hypostases – as a pre-created God’s idea and as a creature of the Universe. All this helps to understand the firm confidence of the Qumranites that the prophetic predictions of their Teacher of Righteousness, endowed with a secret “knowledge” directly from God’s Mind, Thought (see, e. g., *The Thanksgiving Hymns of the Teacher*; *The Peshar Habakkuk*), as well as the prognostications of their other leaders, «in the hearts of whom God has put an intellect that they can interpret the words» of the biblical prophets, will be put into effect without fail. Thus, God was immanent to the (future) Universe before Creation; or, in other words, the Universe, existing ideally in God’s Mind, is immanent to Him.

On an eschatological New Creation, in Metahistory, when the world will know God and God will be with the world and *in* the world, and the world – with Him and *in* Him, He also comes to be immanent to the created Universe, but on the other manner. Perceiving Concepts and Projects of the Creator, the Qumranites appear to be not a blind tool in the hand of Providence, but deliberate co-creators, cooperators of the Lord, *voluntary* and *freely* carrying out the Divine Plan, realizing His Will.

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# «ЕССЕЙ КАК ПИФАГОРЕЙЦЫ»: ПРЕДЕСТИНАЦИЯ В ПИФАГОРЕИЗМЕ, ПЛАТОНИЗМЕ И КУМРАНСКОЙ ТЕОЛОГИИ

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THE ESSENES AS THE PYTHAGOREANS: PREDESTINATION IN PYTHAGOREANISM,  
PLATONISM AND THE QUMRAN THEOLOGY

ABSTRACT: The widely spread Essenes practice of the future events prediction is likely to be based on their belief in the absolute predestination. In this light the hitherto unclarified etymology of the very term Ἐσσηαῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί can be traced to the Aramaic notion אַשְׁנָה (pl. st. emph.)/resp. אַשְׁנָה (st. abs.; sing. אַשְׁנָה), which is likely to be interpreted as “what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”; this derivation appears to be relevant not only semantically, but also linguistically. Thus the term “Essenes” can be interpreted as the “fatalists” (see e.g. Tantlevskij 2013). The doctrine of predestination also plays the key role in religious outlook of the Qumran community, and it is considered to be one of the most fundamental arguments in favor of the Qumranites identification with the Essenes. Some Platonic-Pythagorean (not only Stoic) doctrines can be regarded as certain Hellenistic parallels to the Essenic-Qumranic conception of predestination.

KEYWORDS: Judean history and ideology in Hellenistic and early Roman periods, sectarian Judaism, Essenes, Qumran community, history of ancient philosophy, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, predestination, eschatology.

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«Ессеи... ведут тот же образ жизни как те,  
кого греки называют пифагорейцами»  
(Иосиф Флавий, *Иудейские древности* XV, 371)

## I

Тайны<sup>1</sup> иудейской секты ессеев (II в. до н. э. – I в. н. э.) начинаются уже с их наименования, засвидетельствованного у античных авторов: Ἐσσηῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί.<sup>2</sup> Этимология данного обозначения затрудняет даже их современника Филона Александрийского (ок. 30 г. до н. э. – ок. 40 г. н. э.), в сочинениях которого встречается самое раннее из дошедших до нас упоминаний общины ессеев.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ср. Иосиф Флавий, *Иудейская война* II, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Основные дошедшие до нас сведения о ессеях содержатся в трудах проживавшего в Египте еврейского философа и экзегета Филона Александрийского *О том, что каждый добродетельный свободен* XII, 75–87, *Апология* (отрывок о ессеях из этого несохранившегося трактата Филона зафиксирован в сочинении христианского историка и писателя Евсевия Кесарийского [ок. 260–339] *Приготовление к Евангелию* VIII, II, 1–18) и *О созерцательной жизни* [о терапевтах, вероятно, египетской ветви ессейского движения]; в *Естественной истории* V, 17, 73 римского ученого, государственного деятеля и военачальника Плиния Старшего (23/24–79); трудах иудейского историка и государственного деятеля, фарисея Иосифа Флавия *Иудейская война* I, 78–80; II, 111–113, 119–161, 566–568; III, 9–12; V, 142–145, *Иудейские древности* XIII, 171–172, 371–379; XV, 371–379; XVII, 346–348; XVIII, 11, 18–22 и *Автобиография* 10–12; в сочинениях церковных писателей Ипполита Римского (ок. 170–235) *Опровержение всех ересей* IX, 18–28, Епифания Саламинского (ок. 310/320–402/403) *Панарион* X, XIX, XX, 3, 1–4, XXIX и Евсевия Кесарийского *Церковная история* IV, 22, 4–7 (пассаж из несохранившейся работы христианского автора II в. Гегесиппа). Отдельные сведения о ессеях сообщают также философ-неоплатоник Порфирий (ок. 233–ок. 300) в трактате *О воздержании* IV, 11–13, Синесий Киренский (370/375–413/414) в *Дионе* 3, 1–3 (отрывок из недошедшей до нас работы оратора и философа кинико-стоического толка Диона Хрисостома [ок. 40–120]), латинский писатель и ученый III в. н. э. Солин в *Собрании достопримечательностей мира* 35, 9–12, христианские авторы Иероним в *О знаменитых мужах* XI, Филастрий (ум. ок. 397 г.) в *Книге о различных ересьях* 9, Нил Синайский (ум. ок. 430 г.) в *Трактате о монашеской практике* 1–4, Исидор Севильский (ок. 560–636) в *Этимологиях* VIII, 5, 5; наконец, о них говорится в *Хронике* VI, 5 византийского летописца Георгия Амартола (IX в.) и в *Хронике* VI, 1 монофизитского патриарха Михаила I Антиохийского (1126–1199), а также в *Апостольских конституциях* VI, 6 (сборнике церковных правовых и литургических текстов, созданном ок. 380 г. адептом арианства) и составленной в Византии ок. 1000 г. энциклопедии – т. н. Лексиконе Суды 3123 («Ессеи»). Нил Синайский и Георгий Амартол возводят ессеев к иудейским аскетам рехавитам, о которых рассказывает пророк Иеремия (гл. 35).

<sup>3</sup> Ср. Филон Александрийский, *О том, что каждый добродетельный свободен* 75: «По моему мнению, они (т. е. ессеи. – И. Т.) получили (свое) наименование, хотя это и не в строгом соответствии с греческим языком, от своего благочестия (δὸ βίητος)».

Предпринималось множество попыток выявить этимологию этого названия, три из которых заслуживают, как представляется, особого внимания: от сир./арам. כּסִּפ *кас(с)аййа*, «благочестивые»; от арам. כּשִׁפ *асаййа*, «целители»; от евр. имени *Ишай* (Иессей; отец царя Давида; ср. вариантное греческое написание у Епифания Саламинского: Ἰεσσαίοι.<sup>4</sup> В то же время следует отметить, что предлагаемые этимологии термина «ессеи» носят достаточно спекулятивный и обобщенный характер и, как правило, небезупречны лингвистически. Например, что касается получившей наибольшее распространение этимологии от כּסִּפ, «благочестивые», то в данном случае а priori возникает ряд трудностей. Прежде всего, если название этой секты действительно восходит к обозначению «благочестивые», то здесь следовало бы, скорее, ожидать стандартное арамейское обозначение כּסִּפ/כּסִּפִּי חасидин/хасидаййа (resp. евр. כּסִּפִּי חסידים), как мы с этим встречаемся в Маккавейских книгах (1 Макк. 2: 14, 7: 12–13; 2 Макк. 14: 16), где данный термин устойчиво передается как Ἀσιδαῖοι. (Наименование некоей группы «благочестивых» передается именно как כּסִּפִּי חסידים, например, в псевдэпиграфе *Видение Гавриила* А 16 (рубеж эр); в рукописи из пещеры в Вади-Мураббаат [Mur 45, 6]).

Если обратиться к названиям двух других основных иудейских религиозно-политических течений эпохи эллинизма и раннеримского периода – «фарисеи» и «саддукеи», – то они передают самую суть их *Sitze im Leben*. «Фарисеи», по словам Иосифа Флавия (37/ 38 – после 100 гг. н. э.), «считаются наиболее точными экзегетами законов» (*Иудейские древности* II, 162) – и, по всей вероятности, отсюда и их наименование *перушаййа*, т. е. «толкователи» (от *перуш*, т. е. «толкование», «комментарий»). Что касается «саддукеев» (*цаддукаййа* / *цедукаййа*), то это обозначение указывает на то, что – это священническая «партия» (αἵρεσις) и их ядро составляют священники, возводящие свой род к первосвященнику Цадоку и претендующие на выдвижение из своей среды первосвященника (каковые действительно часто выходили из среды саддукеев).

В этом отношении наиболее предпочтительной оказывается этимология термина Ἰεσσαίοι / Ἰεσηνοί, которая основывается на важнейшем отличительном аспекте учения секты ессеев, специально выделенном Иосифом Флавием, – доктрине о предестинации. Именно, имеется в виду корреляция обозначения Ἰεσσαίοι / Ἰεσηνοί с арамейским понятием כּשִׁפ חַשְׁשָׁאָא, *хашшаййа* (или *хашшаййа*; pl. st. emph. / resp. כּשִׁפ, *хаш(ша)ин*, st. abs.; sing. כּשִׁפ חַשְׁשָׁא или *хашша*), которое М. Ястров интерпретирует как «what man has to suffer, predestination, luck».<sup>5</sup> То есть «ессеи» – это «последователи судьбы», «фаталисты», те, кто верят в предопределение.<sup>6</sup> Отметим ad hoc, что эксплицитно выраженное в рукописях Кумранской общины учение о Божественном предопределении послужило важ-

<sup>4</sup> Tantlevskij 1997, 1999 и 2004, 67–79; Тантлевский 2012, 313–346.

<sup>5</sup> Jastrow 1926 (s. v.). В то же время М. Соколов затрудняется в интерпретации данного термина, оставляя его без перевода (Sokoloff 1992, s. v.).

<sup>6</sup> См., например, Тантлевский 2013.



нейшим аргументом для исследователей, идентифицирующих эту конгрегацию как *ессейский* центр.

Термин  $\kappa\omega\pi$  засвидетельствован в Большом мидраше на *Книгу Плача*, или Эха Рабба, который наряду с сочинениями Берешит Рабба и Песикта де-Рав Кахана, является древнейшим произведением мидрашистской литературы. Данный мидраш написан на т. н. иудейском палестинском арамейском языке, «продолжавшим, в отличие от других западных арамейских языков среднего этапа, один из письменных староарамейских языков западной ветви».<sup>7</sup> Что касается лингвистической составляющей вопроса, то было обращено внимание на следующее явление:  $\text{het}$  ( $\eta$ ), за которым следует краткий «а» в закрытом слоге с невелиризованными согласными, появляется в греческих транскрипциях эллинистически-римского времени как эпсилон ( $\epsilon$ ): например,  $\text{Hammot}$  обычно передается как  $\text{H}\epsilon\mu\mu\alpha\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ .<sup>8</sup> Передача *шин* через *сигму* или две *сигмы* (например, *Ишай* – *Иессей*; *хошен* – *ессен* [см. раздел II]) – часто встречающееся явление. Таким образом, как лингвистически, так и содержательно рассматриваемая этимология термина «ессеи» представляется наиболее выигрышной.

## II

Иосиф Флавий, лично<sup>9</sup> изучавший «на практике» иудейские религиозные течения, сообщает в *Иудейских древностях* (XIII, 171–173), что в Иудее к середине II в. до н. э. (при Ионатане Хасмоне; 152–142 гг. до н. э.) возникают религиозные течения фарисеев, ессеев и саддукеев. При этом важнейшим аспектом размежевания этих течений иудейский историк считает их отношение к *предопределению*:

Что касается фарисеев, то они говорят, что определенные события совершаются по предопределению (или: «по провидению»;  $\epsilon\iota\mu\alpha\rho\epsilon\upsilon\eta$  дословно означает «судьба», «рок».<sup>10</sup> – *И. Т.*), но не все; в отношении иных событий зависит от нас, будут ли они иметь место или нет.<sup>11</sup> Племя ессеев полагает, что предопределение является господином всего, и все случающееся с людьми не может происходить без его определе-

<sup>7</sup> Лёзов 2009, 459. Памятники иудейского палестинского арамейского созданы преимущественно в Галилее. О его особенностях см., например: Немировская 2009, 531–562.

<sup>8</sup> Albright–Mann 1969, 108.

<sup>9</sup> См. *Жизнеописание* II, 10–12.

<sup>10</sup> Ср. характерное кумранское понятие  $\text{גורל}$  *горал*, «жребий».

<sup>11</sup> Ср. сентенцию известного законоучителя-танная, соратника Симона Бар-Кохбы рабби Акивы (ок. 50–135 гг. н. э.): «Все предвидено, но свобода воли (букв. «полномочие». – *И. Т.*) дана» (*Авот* III, 19); ср. также Вавилонский Талмуд, *Берахот* 33b: «Все в руках Небес за исключением страха Небес» (ср. *Авот* I, 3); Вавилонский Талмуд, *Шаббат* 104a: «Если человек избирает, чтобы творить добро, силы небесные помогают ему; если (же) он избирает, чтобы творить зло, они оставляют ему путь открытым».

ния. Саддукеи же совершенно отвергают предопределение, считая, что такового вообще не существует и что людские поступки не совершаются в соответствии с его предначертаниями, но все находится в нашей власти, так что мы сами ответственны за наше благополучие, равно как вызываем на себя несчастья по нашей собственной безрассудности.<sup>12</sup>

В другом месте *Древностей* (XVIII, 18) иудейский историк пишет, что «по учению ессеев, все предоставляется на усмотрение Бога». Что же касается фарисеев, то «хотя они и постулируют, что все совершается по предопределению, они, однако, не лишают человеческую волю побуждений к совершению того, что в его силах, ибо по благорасположению Бога происходит слияние постановлений предопределения и воли человека с его добродетельными и порочными намерениями» (XVIII, 13).<sup>13</sup>

Согласно традиции, зафиксированной Иосифом Флавием в *Иудейских древностях* III, 214–218, около 107 г. до н. э. (при Иоанне Гиркане) прекратилось свечение двенадцати камней наперсника первосвященника Иерусалимского Храма и сардоникса-застежки на его правом плече, символизировавшее Божественное Присутствие при священнодействиях и осуществлении пророчеств. Иудейский историк пишет, что названию наперсника первосвященника *ἑσσηύ* (так Иосиф Флавий воспроизводит греческими буквами библейский термин *! V, X, хошен*) соответствует греческий термин *λόγιον*, «прорицание» (ср. Сеп-

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<sup>12</sup> Ср.: «Вот, Я сегодня предложил тебе жизнь и добро, смерть и зло... Во свидетели пред вами призываю сегодня небо и землю: жизнь и смерть предложил Я тебе, благословение и проклятие. Избери жизнь, дабы жил ты и потомство твое» (*Втор.* 30: 15, 19). Ср. также, например: *Иер.* 21: 8; *Притч.* 12: 28; *Сир.* 15: 11–17: «Не говори: “От Бога мой грех...”». Бог сначала создал человека, а затем предоставил его собственным побуждениям. Перед тобою огонь и вода: можешь протянуть руку куда хочешь. Перед человеком – жизнь и смерть, и что ему нравится, то будет ему дано».

<sup>13</sup> Ср. *Иудейскую войну* II, 162–163, где говорится, что фарисеи «приписывают все предопределению и Богу, однако поступать справедливо или несправедливо, прежде всего, в силах человека, хотя предопределение соучаствует в каждом действии». Раввинистическую интерпретацию дилеммы *предестинация – свобода воли* можно также проиллюстрировать двумя пассажами из Вавилонского Талмуда – из трактатов *Нидда*, 16б и *Хагига*, 15а. В первом отрывке мы читаем: «Имя ангела, назначенного управлять зачатием, – Лайла (м. р.; букв. “ночь”. – *И. Т.*). Он берет каплю спермы, кладет ее перед Святым, будь Он благословен, и спрашивает: “Владыка мироздания! Кем должна стать эта капля? Превратится ли она в человека сильного или слабого, мудрого или глупого, богатого или бедного?” Однако не упоминается о том, станет ли она человеком нечестивым или праведным». Во втором тексте говорится следующее: «Святой, будь Он благословен, сделал двойника для всего, что Он сотворил... Он сотворил благочестивого и нечестивого, Он сотворил Рай и Ад. Каждый имеет две доли, одну в Раю и одну в Аду: благочестивый человек, показавший себя достойным, получает в Раю свою долю и долю своего соседа; нечестивый человек, показавший себя виновным, получает в Аду свою долю и долю своего соседа».

туагинту: λοῦεῖον).<sup>14</sup> С другой стороны, на основании того, что Иосиф Флавий употреблял для обозначения ессеев наименование Ἐσσηνοὶ (наряду с термином Ἐσσαιῶται) и специально подчеркивал то, что их лидеры обладали даром пророчества (а ессеи Йехуда возглавлял целую школу учеников, обучающихся пророчеству),<sup>15</sup> можно допустить, что историк усматривал в термине *ессены* / *ессеи* именно значение «прорицатели». И как раз на вере в абсолютную предопределенность, по-видимому, и основывалась распространенная среди ессеев практика предсказаний будущих событий.

Форма написания термина «ессеи» как *essenī* встречается у Плиния Старшего (23/24–79 гг. н. э.), бывшего в Иудее с армией Веспасиана. Римлянин пишет в своей *Естественной истории* V, 73:

К западу от Асфальтового озера (т. е. Мертвого моря. – *И. Т.*)... проживают ессены – племя уединенное и наиболее удивительное изо всех во всем мире. Они живут без женщин, отвергают плотскую любовь, не знают денег... Изо дня в день количество их увеличивается благодаря появлению массы утомленных жизнью пришельцев, которых волны судьбы влекут к обычаям ессенов. Таким образом, – этому трудно поверить – в течение тысяч поколений существует вечный род, хотя в нем никто не рождается...

Упоминание о «судьбе» (*fortuna* = εἰςαρμένη у Иосифа Флавия) в данном контексте может как раз подразумевать веру ессеев в предопределение, по которому, как считали общинники, они и оказывались в общине.

### III

Концепция предестинации является, по сути, ключевой в религиозно-философских воззрениях Кумранской общины, проживавшей близ северо-западного побережья Мертвого моря во II в. до н. э. – I в. н. э.<sup>16</sup> Как было отме-

<sup>14</sup> *Иудейские древности* III, 163, 217.

<sup>15</sup> О ессеиких прорицателях см. Иосиф Флавий, *Иудейская война* I, 78–80; II, 111–113; *Иудейские древности*, XIII, 311–313; XVII, 346–348; XV, 371–379.

<sup>16</sup> Около трети обнаруженных в кумранских пещерах рукописей (фрагменты более 800 экземпляров) являются собственно произведениями кумранитов, остальные – библейские тексты (порядка 200), псевдэпиграфы и другие произведения, принесенные извне и созданные либо еще до возникновения общины (как, например, отдельные произведения енохического цикла), так и современниками общинников, по всей вероятности, близкими к ним по религиозным воззрениям. Около 90% текстов написаны на еврейском языке. Произведения собирались, а частью переписывались десятилетиями. Нельзя сомневаться в том, что практически все находящиеся в библиотеке общинников книги (независимо от их кумранского или внекумранского авторства) почитались и изучались ими. И, конечно же, то, что в них было выражено, легко могло экстраполироваться кумранитами на их харизматического лидера – Учителя праведности и на его адептов; в произведения кумранитов инкорпорировались содержащиеся в них эсхатолого-апокалиптические, мессианско-сотерологические и другие религиозные представления, а содержание большинства из них явно рассматривалось как

чено выше, именно этот аспект является одним из ключевых аргументов в пользу идентификации Кумранской общины с ессеями.<sup>17</sup> (Вероятно, данная

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повествующее о судьбах общины и предсказывающее, в том числе, об искупительно-спасительной миссии кумранского лидера.

Вероятно, аналогичный характер и структуру могли иметь библиотеки некоторых других иудейских религиозных сообществ, а также библиотеки ранних христианских общин. Представим, например, что могло входить в библиотеку конкретной раннехристианской общины: помимо собственно новозаветных произведений (если речь идет о библиотеке общины II века), включая отдельные новозаветные апокрифы, здесь, естественно, должен был быть текст Еврейской Библии в греческом переводе (или в оригинале у иудео-христиан), псевдэпиграфы (ср., например, Завещание Иуды, в котором цитируемый Енох почитается в качестве пророка; христологические интерполяции в *Завещаниях Двенадцати патриархов* и т. д.), некоторые произведения уставного и ритуального толка (ср., например, *Дидахе*), произведения отдельных раннехристианских лидеров и др. Собственно христианских сочинений, по всей вероятности, было меньшинство (сам Новый Завет в три раза менее объемён, чем Еврейская Библия), – а произведений, созданных в недрах той или иной конкретной христианской общины, вообще мизерное количество, – однако содержание нехристианских по своему происхождению произведений, включая тексты Еврейской Библии (как и произведений, принесенных из других общин христианского / иудео-христианского толка), естественно, интерпретировалось ранними христианскими общинниками как относящееся к Иисусу из Назарета, в которого они верили как в Мессию-Христа, и к ним самим как новому Израилю. В первые же десятилетия после возникновения христианства собственно христианскими по происхождению были, вероятно, только *Логии* Иисуса, отдельные Послания, антологии цитат мессианско-эсхатологического характера, вероятно, уставные произведения и некоторые другие.

Исходя из сказанного выше, присутствие в библиотеке, обнаруженной в пещерах Кумрана, некумранских по происхождению произведений вовсе не свидетельствует о том, что данное собрание рукописей не могло принадлежать одной общине (Кумранской ессеиской общине), как полагают некоторые исследователи.

<sup>17</sup> Сопоставление основных социально-экономических характеристик Кумранской общины (общность имущества, коллективное хозяйство, коллективный обязательный труд, совместное решение важнейших вопросов жизни конгрегации, коллективные трапезы, целибат [соблюдавшийся, по крайней мере, на определенных этапах большинством общинников], аскетизм, эскапизм), ее центральных идеологических представлений (помимо доктрины о предестинации, также дуализм, концепция индивидуального избранничества членов общины, учение о бессмертии души и эсхатологическом воздаянии, пацифистские установки [до начала *эсхатологических* войн]), особенностей культа и отдельных положений религиозных предписаний (например, временный отказ от храмовых жертвоприношений и спиритуализация культа, ритуальные омовения, предваряемые покаянием души, солнечный календарь) с образом жизни и мировоззрением иудейской религиозной секты ессеев/есенов (II в. до н. э. – I в. н. э.) привело абсолютное большинство исследователей к выводу, что рукописи Мертвого моря принадлежали *ессейской* конгрегации. Кумранитам, как и ессеям, были присущи альтруистические тенденции.

община являлась головным центром есеевского религиозно-политического движения.) Приведем характерный пример из одного кумранского Благодарственного гимна (1QH IX = 4Q432 2), созданного, вероятно, основателем и харизматическим лидером Кумранской общины, фигурирующим в рукописях под обозначением Учитель праведности:

Все начертано пред Тобою (הכול קקוק לפניכה) памятным резцом  
на все периоды вечности (לכול קצי נצח),  
и циклы вечности (по) числу (их) лет  
на все их установленные периоды;  
и они не будут сокрыты  
и не прекратятся пред Тобою (строки 23–25).

То есть, для Бога нет ни прошлого, ни будущего, для Него все – настоящее, вечное «теперь». Показательны и другие строки Гимна:

В Твой Премудрости [Ты] ус[тановил] вечные [...];  
до творения их Ты знал все их деяния во веки вечные.  
[Без Тебя ни]что не делается,  
и ничто не познается без Твоей воли (строки 7–8).

Все в мире вышнем, небесном (связанное с ангелами, духами, светилами) и в мире дольном (имеющее отношение к людям и их духовной жизни, свершающееся на земле, в морях и безднах) изначально предустановлено (строки 9–34). Даже «плод уст» (פרי שפתים), т. е. речения отдельных лиц, известны Богу еще до их произнесения, ибо предопределены Им.

И через несколько десятилетий преемник Учителя праведности, автор кумранского Комментария на Аввакума (1QpHab) продолжает выражать уверенность в том, что «все периоды, установленные Богом, наступают в свой черед (или: “в свои назначенные сроки”. – И. Т.), как Он предназначал относительно ни[x] в тайнах Своей Премудрости» (1QpHab 7: 13–14).

В целом, на основе анализа основных рукописей Мертвого моря – Устава Кумранской общины, Благодарственных гимнов, Свитка войны сынов Света против сынов Тьмы, Комментариев-*Пешарим* на книги пророков и Псалмы и других – можно прийти к выводу, что, по представлениям кумранитов, первоначально идея, план будущего мироздания возникают в Разуме (בינה *Бина*, סכל *Сехел*), Мысли (מחשבת *Махашевет*) Господа Бога, и творится оно через Божественное Знание (דעת *Даат*):

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Показательно также, что Плиний Старший, Дион Хрисостом и Солин локализовали центральное есеевское поселение («город»; Синесий, *Дион* 3, 2) на северо-западном побережье Мертвого моря, т. е. в том районе Иудейской пустыни, где проживала Кумранская община.

Его Знанием (или: “посредством Его Знания” – *И. Т.*) все получило существование... (Устав Кумранской общины (1QS) 11: 11).<sup>18</sup>

При этом термины *Махашевет*, *Бина* / *Сехел*, *Даат*, вероятно, рассматривать здесь в качестве еврейских эквивалентов греческого понятия *логос*, которое в стоическом понимании могло, в частности, интерпретироваться как божественный «разум».<sup>19</sup> Можно сказать даже, что вся мировая история, еще не начавшись, *уже состоялась* в идеальной форме в Мысли Господа. Жизнь каждого человека, праведника и нечестивца, – включая не только его поступки, но и мысли, побуждения, чувства и даже отдельные слова, – оказывается *реализованной* идеально в Божественном Разуме еще до творения его души и тела; так что человек выступает как бы двуединой сущностью, самостью, существует как бы в двух ипостасях – как дотварная идея Господа и как тварь мироздания. Основы такого рода представлений содержатся уже в библейских текстах. Например, в Псалме 139[138]: 16 сказано:

Зародыш мой видели очи Твои;  
в Книге Твоей<sup>20</sup> записаны все дни, (для меня) назначенные,  
когда ни одного из них (еще не было).

Аналогично говорит и пророк Иеремия (1: 5):

Еще не образовал Я тебя во чреве,  
(а уже) знал тебя;  
еще не вышел ты из утробы,  
а Я освятил тебя:  
пророком для народов Я поставил тебя.

В свете сказанного становится понятной твердая уверенность кумранских общинников в том, что пророческие предсказания и другие свидетельства их Учителя праведности, наделявшегося тайным «знанием» непосредственно из Разума, Мысли Господа (Благодарственные гимны Учителя, *rassim*; Комментарий на книгу пророка Аввакума (1QpHab) 2: 2–3, 7: 4–5), а также предвещения тех их лидеров, «в сердца которых Бог вложил разум, чтобы истолковывать слова» библейских пророков (ср., например, 1QpHab 2: 7–10), непременно исполнятся – ведь все предвещаемое *уже исполнилось* в Божественном Замысле. Таким образом, до Творения Господь был имманентен (будущему) мирозданию; или, иначе, мироздание, идеально пребывающее в Разуме Бога, имма-

<sup>18</sup> В *Притч.* 3: 19–20, 8: 22–31 и *Иер.* 10: 12 = 51: 15 эксплицитно выражается идея о творении Богом мироздания через Свою «Премудрость» (חכמה *Хохма*), «Разум» (חבורה *Тевуна*), «Знание» (דעת *Даат*), «Силу» (קוצ *Коах*). (Ср. *Сир.* 24: 3 и сл.; 11Q Ps<sup>a</sup> *Sirach*, *Сир.* 51: 13 и сл.; *Премудр. Сол.* 9: 1–2 (ср. также: 16: 12, 18: 15–16.); 4Q422 (*Paraphrase of Genesis-Exodus*) кол. 1, фр. 1, 6; *Юб.* 12: 4; *1 Ен.* 90: 38 и др. Ср. также: *Ин.* 1:1–3.

<sup>19</sup> Об эллинистических «богословских» представлениях см. Светлов 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Имеется в виду *Божественная Памятная Книга*, вероятно, тождественная с *Книгой Жизни* (Пс. 69[68]: 29); ср. *Исх.* 32: 32–33, *Ис.* 4: 3, 34: 16, *Иез.* 13: 9, *Мал.* 3: 16, *Дан.* 7: 10, 12: 1.

нентно Ему. (Таким образом, «смысл и назначение» истории уже реализовались в ее идее в Разуме Бога.) После эсхатологического Нового Творения, в Метаистории, когда мир узнает Бога и Бог будет пребывать с миром и *в мире*, а мир – с Ним и *в Нем*, Он также оказывается имманентен сотворенному Им, но на ином уровне.

#### IV

Возникает вопрос о том, имели ли эти представления какие-то предпосылки или параллели в античной культуре, взаимодействие с которой проявилось в целом ряде культурных феноменов. В частности, термины *מחשבה*, *סכל/בינה*, *עט*, вероятно, допустимо рассматривать здесь в качестве еврейских эквивалентов некоторых греческих понятий.

Как было отмечено выше, можно (в частности, в связи с творчеством Филона Александрийского) связать эти понятия с термином *λόγος*, которое в эллинистических философских построениях подчас выступает синонимом божественного «разума». Однако следует так же указать на платоно-аристотелевские понятия *πράξειμα* и *νοῦς*, которые указывают на тот же разум или замысел, управляющий Космосом. Тот факт, что тема предопределения была не чужда пифагорейской и платоновской традиции, подтверждается рядом обстоятельств. Во-первых, укажем известный фрагмент 88 из *Физики* Евдема Родосского, где говорится о вере пифагорейцев в буквальное повторение всего в мире, вызванной их убежденностью в наличие рационально-числовой закономерности, управляющей миром.

Во-вторых, упомянем разбросанные по текстам Платона указания на необходимость и предопределенность происходящего – от образа «золотой нити» в *Законах* (644c–645a) и знаменитого «веретена Ананки» из *Государства* (616c) до обсуждения необходимости и закономерности смены мировых эпох в *Политике* (268e и далее). Согласно *Государству*, человек избирает свою судьбу исходя из опыта, накопленного в прошлых воплощениях вечной по своей природе души (618–620). Этот выбор поменять нельзя: следующий «шанс» появится только перед очередным рождением. «Памятливость» отдельных людей, которые не слишком сильно пили из «реки забвения», позволяет им принимать судьбу как что-то должное (621a). Во многих диалогах Платона Сократ предсказывает свою судьбу, а его поведение на суде и после суда может быть примером философского принятия неизбежного будущего. Постоянные отсылки к голосу демона еще более усиливают ощущение, что для Платона Сократ был человеком, который умел прислушиваться к собственной судьбе. Таким образом, «парадигма» из диалога *Тимей* выступает не только статическим, но и динамическим «предначертанием» сущего. Особенно отчетливо это видно в платоновском учении о прямом и опосредованном управлении миром со стороны бога в эпохи Кроноса и Зевса (*Политик*, там же). Если «попятное» обращение универсума означает изменение направления «стрелы времени», то можно

предположить, что в «веке Кроноса» происходит создание судеб тех, кто будет жить во «времена Зевса». Восставая из земли и двигаясь от старости к молодости, а затем к младенческому состоянию, они проживают «жизни наоборот» (*Политик* 270d-e). Таким образом, «век Кроноса» – это не только благое время прямого воздействия богов на мир, но и эпоха формирования судеб, разворачивающихся в «век Зевса».

Впрочем, Космос в нашу эпоху склонен к отклонению от путей, которые предуготовил ему демиург, поэтому и люди не исполняют своего предназначения. Самоволие обрекает их на загробное воздаяние и на череду перерождений, когда не боги даруют людям судьбу, но смертные сами избирают ее. В *Государстве* Лахесис говорит: «Эфемерные души! Вот начало оборота (περίοδου), гибельного для тленного рода... Ибо теперь не вы достанетесь даймону в удел, но сами его выберете» (617d-e). Лишь философы, следующие «кругу тождественного», то есть законам и нормам, установленным демиургом, реализуют заложенные при прошлом круговороте задатки. Выделяются, таким образом, два уровня фатализма: один – от Кроноса, должный и благой, другой – от самого человека, связанный с «иным», чреватый случайностями и ошибками, приводящими к злу.

Отсюда видно, что эссеическое мировоззрение могло иметь в качестве эллинистической параллели, кроме прочего, платоно-пифагорейскую философию. Мы знаем, что пифагорейцы были одними из первых аллегорических толкователей в истории греческой словесности. Напомним, что Филона Александрийского, чье мировоззрение, возможно, имело релевантные эссеям-кумранитам черты, Климент Александрийский называет «пифагорейцем» (*Строматы* I 72, 4; II 100, 3). Безусловно, о «пифагореизме» Филона можно говорить лишь в том же ключе, что и о «пифагореизме» эссеев и кумранитов.

Последние, не склонные к онто-космологическим спекуляциям, выделяют в идее необходимого предопределения ее эсхатологическую составляющую. Постигая Предначертания и Замыслы Творца, кумраниты оказываются не слепым орудием в руках Провидения, но сознательными *сотворцами, сотрудниками Господа, добровольно и свободно* осуществляющими Божественный План, творящими Его Волю. В этой связи показателен следующий пассаж из Устава общины (1QS) 9:24–25:

И всем тем, что происходит с ним (т. е. с членом общины. – *И. Т.*), он удовольствуется свободно, и помимо Воли Бога он ничего не хочет (или: “не желает”. – *И. Т.*), и все речения уст Его он одобряет (букв. “удовольствуется” (ими). – *И. Т.*), и не желает ничего, чего (Он) не заповедал; и постоянно он наблюдает Суд (или: “Правосудие”. – *И. Т.*) Бога...<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Эту доктрину можно сопоставить с сентенцией одного из основателей стоицизма Клеанфа (ок. 330–232 гг. до н. э.), переведенную Сенекой (5 г. до н. э. – 65 г. н. э.) в *Нравственных письмах к Луцилию* (CVII, 11) как: “Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt” – «Желающего судьба ведет, не желающего – тащит».



Постепенное постижение Божественного Предопределения – или, если говорить по-другому, «Необходимости» – делает общинников все более свободными, ибо «Необходимость» оказывается, в конечном счете, лишь непознанной Свободой. С этой точки зрения, постоянно осененные Святым Духом небожители (в том числе, духи почивших праведников), воля которых объективно и субъективно (в той мере, в какой вообще можно говорить о дифференциации субъекта и объекта в трансцендентном мире) слилась с Волей Божьей, могут считаться, по сути, абсолютно свободными. Однако, в Конце Дней, когда небеса и земля станут едины, все праведники достигнут этого состояния.

Что касается нечестивцев, то их деяния, совершаемые – как это кажется на субъективном уровне – по их свободной воле, объективно предопределены и мостят им дорогу в подземное царство мертвых – Шеол и к последующим эсхатологическим наказаниям.<sup>22</sup>

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Итак, рассмотрение термина Ἑσσαιῶν в качестве греческой передачи арамейского понятия כּוּשָׁפּ, *хаиш(и)аййа* не встречает лингвистических трудностей, и, как представляется, отражает наиболее отличительную и характерную составляющую учения ессеев – веру в предестинацию. Показательно, что как раз отношение к предопределению и привело, согласно Иосифу Флавию, к появлению основных течений в иудаизме в эпоху эллинизма. И когда иудейский историк, изучавший фарисеев, саддукеев и ессеев на практике и писавший как по-арамейски, так и по-гречески, сообщает в *Иудейских древностях* XIII, 172, что «племя ессеев полагает, что предопределение (судьба / рок. – И. Т.) является господином всего (τὸ... τῶν Ἑσσηνῶν γένος πάντων τὴν εἰμαρμένην κυρίαν ἀποφαίνεται), и все случающееся с людьми не может происходить без его определения», он тем самым, возможно, как бы имплицитно раскрывает тайну их имени: Ἑσσαιῶν / Ἑσσηνοί верят в предестинацию – по-арамейски כּוּשָׁפּ *хаиш-шаййа* / כּוּשָׁפּ *хаиш(ша)ин*, т. е. «ессеи» – суть «фаталисты».

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<sup>22</sup> Сказанное, как кажется, дает возможность отчасти согласовать предестинацию и свободу воли и на рациональном уровне.

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## TIME AND ETERNITY FROM PLOTINUS AND BOETHIUS TO EINSTEIN

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ABSTRACT: This article seeks to show that the views on time and eternity of Plotinus and Boethius are analogous to those implied by the block-time perspective in contemporary philosophy of time, as implied by the mathematical physics of Einstein and Minkowski. Both Einstein and Boethius utilized their theories of time and eternity with the practical goal of providing consolation to persons in distress; this practice of *consolatio* is compared to Pierre Hadot's studies of the "Look from Above", of the importance of concentrating on the present moment, and his emphasis on ancient philosophy as providing therapy for the soul, instead of mere abstract speculation for its own sake. In the first part of the article, Einstein's views are compared with those of Plotinus, and with the elucidation of Plotinus' views provided in the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*. The second part of the article studies Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, which, contrary to recent interpretations, is indeed a genuine consolation rather than a parody thereof. The *Consolation* shows how the study of the Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum can lead the student along the path to salvation, by awakening and elaborating his innate ideas. To illustrate this doctrine, a passage from the little-known Pseudo-Boethian treatise *De diis et praesensionibus* is studied. Finally, after a survey of Boethius' view on fate and providence, and Aristotle's theory of future contingents, I study Boethius' three main arguments in favor of the reconcilability of divine omniscience and human free will: the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, the principle that the nature of knowledge is determined by the knower, and finally the doctrine that God lives in an eternal present, seeing past, present, and future simultaneously. This last view, developed primarily from Plotinus, is once again argued to be analogous to that advocated by contemporary block-time theorists on the basis of Einsteinian relativity. God's supratemporal vision introduces no necessity into contingent events. Ultimate, objective reality, for Boethius as for Plotinus and Einstein, is atemporal, and our idea that there is a conflict between human free will and divine omniscience derives from a kind of optical illusion, caused by the fact that we cannot help but think in terms of temporality.

KEYWORDS: Plotinus, Boethius, Einstein, Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a way of life, Philosophy of time, Aristotle, future contingents, free will, predestination, innate ideas, Pseudo-Boethius, *De diis et praesensionibus*, necessity, Proclus, Porphyry.

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I. EINSTEIN AND THE *PLOTINIANA ARABICA*  
ON TIME AND ETERNITY

1. Panofsky on Serapis

In a classic article,<sup>1</sup> Erwin Panofsky dealt with the interpretation and ancient sources of the painting entitled “Allegory of Prudence”, now in London’s National Gallery. Attributed to Titian,<sup>2</sup> this work depicts a male head with three faces – elderly, middle-aged, and young – which is associated with the heads of a wolf, lion, and dog respectively. The work’s Latin inscription: “The present acts prudently on the basis of the past, lest it disfigure future action”<sup>3</sup> makes it clear that the three animal heads correspond to the three main divisions of time: past, present, and future.

Before giving a history of the manifestations of this symbolism throughout the Middle Ages and into the period of the Counter-Reformation, Panofsky sketches its ancient origins. He identifies the main source of this iconographical tradition in a passage from the fifth-century Latin author Macrobius (*Saturnalia* I, 20, 13-16), adding that other details of the painting are to be sought in ancient cult statues and other figurative representations of the Hellenistic Egyptian divinity Serapis.

Macrobius informs us that the statue of the Alexandrian god Serapis or Sarapis, who is to be identified with the sun, was accompanied by the figure of a three-headed animal. Of the beast’s three heads, the largest one in the middle was that of a lion; on the right was the head of a dog, and on the left that of a wolf. All three heads were surrounded by a serpent, whose head reached up to the god’s right hand, by which he dominated the monster like a dog on a leash. Macrobius tells us that of the three animal heads, the lion signifies the present because of its power, violence, and burning impetuosity; the wolf’s head signifies the past, since the past snatches away the memory of things; finally, the dog represents the future, which flatters us with hope like a fawning pet. Macrobius gives no interpretation of the serpent that surrounds this beast, but since we are told that time obeys its *auctor*, we must, I think, understand that Serapis/Sol is the creator of time. Panofsky,<sup>4</sup> following Macrobius, therefore interprets Titian’s image as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Panofsky 1993.

<sup>2</sup> I am not concerned here with the correctness of this attribution, which Panofsky holds to be unquestionable. Wind (1968<sup>2</sup>, 260 & n. 4) is inclined to attribute the painting to Titian’s disciple Cesare Vecelli.

<sup>3</sup> EX PRAETERITO / PRAESENS PRVDENTER AGIT / NI FVTVRAM ACTIONEM DETVRPET.

<sup>4</sup> Panofsky 1999, 22: “Si un serpent entoure le corps d’où sortent les trois têtes, il est l’expression d’une plus haute unité dont présent, passé et avenir ne sont que les modes: la temporalité dont l’absence de début et de fin a très tôt été symbolisée par un serpent de «l’éternité» qui se mord la queue”.

If a snake surrounds the body from which the three heads emerge, it is the expression of a higher unity, of which present, past, and future are only the modes: temporality, whose lack of beginning and end was symbolized early on by a snake biting its tail.



I think Panofsky is essentially right, with one exception: rather than “temporality” or duration, the serpent probably signifies the absence thereof; that is, eternity. If this is right, we thus have a conception, dating from the fourth or fifth century AD at the latest, in which time is considered as secondary to and embraced by eternity. On this view, time, with its divisions of past, present, and future, is an epiphenomenon, while the fundamental reality underlying it is identified as eternity or timelessness (Greek *aiôn*, Latin *aeternitas*).

## 2. Einstein als Beichtvater (Einstein the Confessor)

A current debate in the philosophy of time is that between advocates of the so-called block universe view, otherwise known as eternalists, and those, known as presentists, who defend the reality of the passage of time and of its division into past, present and future. I will not enter details of this debate here, but I would like to sketch the contemporary origin of this idea in the theories of Albert Einstein, then compare it with a manifestation of a similar idea, first in Plotinus and then in the Medieval Arabic adaptation of Plotinus' *Enneads* that circulated under the title of the *Theology of Aristotle*. In the process, we'll glimpse some of the ethical implications of the controversy in both ancient and modern discussions.

A popular literary genre in ancient philosophy was that of the *consolatio*, in one variety of which the philosopher provided arguments intended to alleviate the grief of someone who had recently suffered the loss of a loved one.<sup>5</sup>

Whether he knew it or not, Albert Einstein was continuing this tradition when, in 1949, he wrote to a Rabbi whose young daughter had died:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe", a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us [...] our task must be to free ourselves from this prison [...].<sup>6</sup>

Pierre Hadot called attention to this text in a book first published in 2001. As he points out there, the idea that many of our worries and sufferings come from our false sense of isolation from the whole constituted by the universe is typical of Einstein, who elsewhere writes that to determine a human being's value, we must discover the degree to which he has liberated himself from himself.<sup>7</sup> Hadot relates this attitude to the ancient spiritual exercise of the "look from above", in which we imagine flying high above the scenes of our daily life, in order to realize the pettiness of our day-to-day worries and anxieties. We all have a natural tendency to consider

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<sup>5</sup> Examples include Cicero's (lost) consolation to himself; Seneca's three consolations, addressed to Marcia, daughter of the Roman historian Cremutius Cordus; to his mother Helvetia, and to Nero's freedman Polybius; and Plutarch's *Consolation to Apollonius*. The most famous and influential example is no doubt Boethius' *Consolation of philosophy*, which we'll investigate below.

<sup>6</sup> Einstein's quote was cited by Pierre Hadot in a book of interviews published in 2001 (p. 263), but it proved hard at first to track down Einstein's utterance. As he wrote at the time (op. cit. 263-4): "Michael Chase and I have searched for years in Einstein's published works. Impossible to find it". I was finally able to identify the source and include in my revised translation of Hadot's book: it comes from W. Sullivan, "The Einstein papers: a man of many parts", *New York Times*, March 29, 1972. See Hadot 2011, 169; 205 n. 4.

<sup>7</sup> "The true value of a human being is determined primarily by the measure and the sense in which he has attained to liberation from the self". Einstein 1949, 7.

ourselves the center of the universe, interpreting everything in terms of our own likes and dislikes: what we like is good, what we don't is bad. If it rains on a weekend, then that's bad, because it spoils our plans for a picnic: we do not take into consideration the fact that the rain may be good for the region, territory, or country as a whole. For ancient schools of thought such as the Sceptics, by contrast, the key to happiness, says Hadot, is to “strip off man completely, or liberate oneself entirely from the human point of view”.<sup>8</sup> In Antiquity, Hadot writes elsewhere, “philosophy was held to be an exercise consisting in learning to regard both society and the individuals who comprise it from the point of view of universality”,<sup>9</sup> and “philosophy signified the attempt to raise up mankind from individuality and particularity to universality and objectivity”. Hadot went on to discuss the notion of a “practical physics”, the goal of which was, by contemplating the vast spaces of the universe, to be able to put human worries and problems into perspective, and thereby gain peace of mind. Hadot liked to quote Marcus Aurelius (*Meditations* 9, 32) in this regard: “You have the power to strip off many superfluous things that are obstacles to you, and that depend entirely upon your value-judgments; you will open up for yourself a vast space by embracing the whole universe in your thoughts, by considering unending eternity”.

Michele Besso had been Einstein's closest friend since the days when the two were fellow-university students at Zurich, then worked as patent clerks in Bern. After a lifelong friendship, in which Besso served as the main sounding-board for many of Einstein's most revolutionary ideas, Besso died in March 1955, only a month before Einstein's own death, whereupon Einstein wrote a letter of consolation to Besso's family:

Now, with his departure from this strange world, he has slightly preceded me once again. This means nothing. For us believing physicists, the distinction between past, present and future has only the meaning of an illusion, albeit a persistent one.<sup>10</sup>

For Einstein, then, at least at this late stage of his life, it seems that ultimate reality is eternal, and time – a mere illusion. It follows that death is also a mere epiphenomenon, that is, a surface phenomenon without substantial reality or importance: As Porphyry claimed in his *Sentences*, time is a *parupostasis*. It is worth quoting the exegesis of this quote by Einstein given by the philosopher of science Michael Lockwood (2005). According to Lockwood, our grief at the death of a loved one has three primary motivations. Two of these cannot be alleviated by Einsteinian physics: (1) the thought that we shall never see the deceased person again, and (2) the idea that a

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hadot 1995, 112-113.

<sup>9</sup> Hadot 1995, 242.

<sup>10</sup> “Nun ist er mir auch mit dem Abschied von dieser sonderbaren Welt ein wenig vorausgegangen. Das bedeutet nichts. Für uns gläubige Physiker hat die Scheidung zwischen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft nur die Bedeutung einer, wenn auch hartnäckigen, Illusion”. Einstein to Vero and Mrs. Bice, March 21, 1955, Einstein Archive, reel 7-245. My translation.

valuable life has been cut short.<sup>11</sup> Einstein's consolation is, says Lockwood, directed at a third source of grief: the notion (3) that the dead person “no longer exists, is simply not there anymore”. This last source of grief, Lockwood continues, derives from the fact that we equate existence *tout court* with existence now, at the present moment. However, such a view “makes sense only if we think of time in a way that physics shows to be mistaken”. Einstein contends, and Lockwood agrees, that the terms “past”, “present” and “future” do not express objective differences in time, but relative differences, in the same sense as such terms as “to the east”, “here” and “there” express relative differences in space. But if this is so, says Lockwood, people who *have lived* in other times are analogous to people who *are living now* in other places. It follows that

death is not the deletion of a person's existence. It is an event, merely, that marks the outer limit of that person's extension in one (timelike) spatio-temporal direction, just as the person's skin marks out the limit in other (spacelike) directions (...) Einstein is urging us to regard those living in times past, like those living in foreign parts, as equally out there in space-time, enjoying the same flesh-and-blood existence as ourselves. It is simply that we inhabit different regions of the continuum.

What could have led Einstein and his interpreters to talk this way?

### 3. Einstein on time: the theoretical background

One of my favourite films from the 1970's was the Swiss director Alain Tanner's *Jonas who will be 25 in the year 2000*. In one scene, a high-school teacher walks into his class with a length of blood sausage and begins to chop it into slices with a meat-cleaver: each slice, he explains, can be considered a moment in history. If, following Einstein's theory of special relativity as modified by his former math teacher Hermann Minkowski, we imagine reality as a four-dimensional spacetime continuum, then we can imagine the sausage as representing a world-tube, or the three-dimensional trajectory traced by a person or thing as he, she or it travels through spacetime. In the case of a conscious being, each slice of the sausage can be imagined as a “now” from that being's perspective, containing everything in the universe he/she/it considers to be simultaneous at that instant. Yet the compatibility between what two or more moving observers consider to be simultaneous, and even the ob-

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<sup>11</sup> It is not clear to me why Einstein's consolation cannot be directed to source (2) as well. Another possible consolation for source (2) might be the claim that the goodness and/or happiness of a life do not depend on temporal duration: it might be claimed that an instant of maximal goodness or happiness is equivalent in value to any arbitrary duration of such goodness/happiness. See, for instance, Plotinus, *Enneads* I 5, 7, 22-26: “Happiness... must not be counted by time but by eternity; and this is neither more nor less nor of any extension, but is a ‘this here’, unextended and timeless”. On this notion in Epicureanism, taking up notions from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, K 3, cf. Krämer 1971, 187ff.



jectivity and meaningfulness of the very notion of simultaneity, were among the first casualties of Einstein's special theory of relativity, published in 1905.

This theory, which showed that instead of representing the world we live in as specified by four dimensions, three for space and one for time, we must think of spacetime as constituting an indivisible whole, led to a number of other paradoxical results. At speeds close to that of light, time slows down and the length of objects contracts. Most interestingly for our theme, what one observer perceives as space, another one in motion may perceive as time: thus, time and space may transform into one another. Finally, depending on whether or not they are in motion with regard to one another, another observer may not consider as simultaneous two events that seem clearly simultaneous in my own reference frame; likewise, he, she or it may consider an event that seems to me to be in my future as having already occurred in his/her or its past.

To exemplify these ideas, I'd like to offer a variation on a thought-experiment presented by Brian Greene (2004). Imagine if you will that I am standing here, but that a friend is standing on a planet 10 billion light years away. Each of us has a handheld device called a simultanophone, which provides a constantly-updated list of all the spacetime events its owner considers to be simultaneous at each instant – for instance, right now my simultanophone lists “Barack Obama going for a walk, Queen Elizabeth snoring, the sun rising over Australia, etc., etc”. Now, my friend, although he is very far away, is – for all intents and purposes – immobile with respect to me: that is, we share the same reference frame. The list of events on his simultanophone is therefore identical to mine, and we consider the same events to be simultaneous. Suppose, however, that my friend gets up and decides to go for a brisk jog away from me: his simultanophone will now indicate events under the subheading “earth” that *my* phone indicates took place 150 years ago, and should he decide to jog in my direction, his simultanophone will list events that my phone says lie 150 years in the future. Let's say, moreover, that my friend owns a supersonic car, and decides to hop in and drive away from me at a speed of 1000 miles per hour. His simultanophone will now list events that happened 15,000 years ago in my perspective; and if he should slam on the brakes, turn around, and gun his engine in the other direction, that is, toward me, his list of simultaneous events will include events that, as far as I am concerned, lie 15,000 years in the future.

As if these results aren't odd enough, Einstein's theory of special relativity also states that there's no reason why either viewpoint – mine or my friend's – should be considered right and the other wrong: both simultaneity lists are equally valid. There is no basis on which to decide between them.

Such phenomena are far from being the only relativistic effects affecting time and simultaneity: others are brought about when one observer is imagined to travel at speeds approaching the speed of light, such as the famous twins paradox. But the simultaphone phenomenon seems particularly revealing. In the words of Brian Greene (2004, 138-39):

If you buy the notion that reality consists of the things in your freeze-frame mental image right now [i.e., in my example, the list of simultaneous events that appears on your simultaphone], and if you agree that your now is no more valid than the now of someone located far away in space who can move freely, then reality encompasses all of the events in spacetime.

In other words, if another observer in motion with regard to me can *already* regard as present to him events that *I* think are in the future, then there's a sense in which future events *already* exist, and past events *still* exist. In the words of Greene, "Just as we envision all of space as really being out there, as really existing, we should also envision all of time as really being out there, as really existing, too (...) the only thing that's real is the whole of spacetime".

As Paul Davies has written, such considerations seem to leave us no choice but to consider that "events in the past and future have to be every bit as real as events in the present. In fact, the very division of time into past, present and future seems to be physically meaningless. To accommodate everybody's nows (...) events and moments have to exist 'all at once' across a span of time" (Davies 1995, 71). Or in the words of Hermann Weyl (2009):

The objective world simply is, it does not happen. Only to the gaze of my consciousness, crawling upward along the life line of my body, does a section of this world come to life as a fleeting image in space which continuously changes in time.

If we leave aside the scientists and turn to literature, perhaps the best portrayal of the block-time view appears in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, when Billy Pilgrim describes the perspective of the Tralfamadorians:

The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on earth that one moment follows another like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever.

Once again, we are reminded of Pierre Hadot's "view from above", by means of which, the soul is "capable of observing the totality of space and time", and "has no fear even of death" (Hadot 1995, 242). The view from above turns out to resemble what Huw Price (1996) has called the "view from nowhen", that is, the ability to consider reality as characterized by the simultaneity of the block-time view, rather than the fleetingness of a flowing "now".

#### 4. Time and Eternity in Plotinus and the *Plotiniana Arabica*

One could go on to follow the ramifications of Einstein's views in contemporary debates within the philosophy of science between presentists (those who believe only the present exists) and eternalists. Here, one would have to discuss MacTaggart's influential distinction between A-series (a series of events that are relative to the present, such as "one year ago", considered less real) and B-series (events that have

permanent temporal labels, such as “New Year’s Eve 2011”, considered more real), and go on discuss the views of such current advocates of block-time as Huw Price and Julian Barbour. But that will have to be the topic of another publication.

Instead, I’d like to consider what I think are some similar views to that of Einstein in Plotinus, the third-century CE founder of Neoplatonism, and an adaptation of his thought in the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, a ninth-century Arabic work that was highly influential on Islamic thought.

The broad outlines of Plotinus’ thought are well known: from the ineffable first principle imperfectly known as the One or the Good, reality emanates forth timelessly and eternally, like light from a lamp. This emanation first produces the Intellect (Greek *nous*), which contains the Platonic forms of sensible reality. Since it is unchanging, the Intellect is characterized by eternity (Greek *aiōn*), which can be considered the life of the intellect.<sup>12</sup> More precisely, Plotinus describes eternity as “that unchanging life, all together at once, already infinite, completely unswerving, standing in and directed toward the one”,<sup>13</sup> or else as “life in rest, in the same thing and identically, already infinite”.

From the hypostatized Intellect derives the hypostasis of Soul, and it is not until this stage that time appears upon the scene. Originally consubstantial with the Intellect, the Soul eventually gets tired of remaining in the intelligible world and contemplating the intelligible Forms. Some force or faculty within it feels curiosity and a desire to become independent and individualized. As a result, it “temporalizes itself”, creating the sensible universe at the same time as it creates time. Whereas eternity can be said to be the life of the intellect, time is the life of the soul.

I find it interesting that according to Plotinus, there’s an ethical element to the distinction between time and eternity. Soul abandons Intellect and creates time because it’s unsatisfied with its lot – its eternal contemplation of the forms and proximity to the One – and wants more. But the very fact that time and/or the soul always wants something more explains why it’s never complete, never really what it is, but always one-thing-after-another.<sup>14</sup> Eternity, by contrast, is already precisely what it is, and therefore has nothing further to seek for. Whereas eternity is the satisfied repose of something that already is all that can be, already possessing, all at once,

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<sup>12</sup> This idea probably derives from Plato’s *Timaeus* 37d, where Plato writes the following about the Intelligible Being (in Greek *to autozōiōn*), that is, the world of forms that served as model for the Demiurge’s creation of the world: “for the nature of the living being (*toū zōou*) happened to be eternal”. *Aiōn* originally meant “life-span”.

<sup>13</sup> *Ennead* III 7 (45), 11, 3-5: τὴν ἀτρεμῆ ἐκείνην καὶ ὁμοῦ πᾶσαν καὶ ἄπειρον ἤδη ζωὴν καὶ ἀκλινῆ πάντῃ καὶ ἐν ἐνὶ καὶ πρὸς ἐν ἑστῶσαν. Armstrong’s translation here is surprisingly poor.

<sup>14</sup> Thus, Plotinus can say (III 7 (45), 13, 26) that time “runs along or together with” (*συνθεῖ καὶ συντρέχει*) the soul. Eternity, in contrast, “does not run alongside time or extend itself along with it” (*οὐ συμπαραθέων οὐδὲ συμπαρατείνων αὐτῇ*, *ibid.*, 44-45).

everything it could ever desire,<sup>15</sup> time is the headlong, endless pursuit of something more, since by definition it cannot possess everything it desires all at once.

This, as Pierre Hadot has repeatedly stressed, is a key theme in Greek moral thought. Most of us are unhappy most of the time precisely because we are never happy with what we've got, but always believe that we need something else in order to be happy: the result of this spiritual restlessness is, of course, that we are never actually happy but postpone our happiness indefinitely to that hypothetical future in which we will win the lottery, get that big promotion, or finally be able to buy that new I-Phone. Should we ever actually achieve any of these things, of course, we derive only the most fleeting enjoyment from them, because by that point our hopes, desires and acquisitiveness have seized upon another object, which, once again, we are convinced will bring us happiness.

#### 4.1. Plotinus on "always"

One of the points Plotinus emphasizes when trying to make clear the difference between time and eternity is the potentially misleading function of the word "always" (Greek *aei*). We see this in a passage from *Ennead* III 7 [45] 6, where, speaking of eternity, he writes<sup>16</sup>:

So it does not have any "this and that"; nor, therefore, will you be able to separate it out or unroll it or prolong it or stretch it; nor, then, can you apprehend anything of it as before or after. If, then, there is no before or after about it, but its "is" is the truest thing about it, and itself, and this in the sense that it is by its essence or life, then again there has come to us what we are talking about, eternity. But when we use the word "always" and say that it does exist at one time but not at another, we must be thought to be putting it this way for our own sake; for the "always" was perhaps not being used in its strict sense, but, taken as explaining the incorruptible, might mislead the soul into imagining an expansion of something becoming more, and again, of something which is never going to fail. It would

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ennead* V, 1, 4, 13: "Why should it [sc. the Intellect] seek to change when all is well with it? Where should it seek to go away to when it has everything in itself?"

<sup>16</sup> Οὐκ ἔχει οὖν ὅτιοῦν [τὸ] ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο, οὐδ' ἄρα διαστήσεις, οὐδ' ἐξελίξεις, οὐδὲ προάξεις, οὐδὲ παρατενεῖς, οὐδ' ἄρα οὐδὲ πρότερον αὐτοῦ οὐδέ τι ὕστερον λαβεῖν ἔχεις. Εἰ οὖν μήτε πρότερον μήτε ὕστερον περὶ αὐτό, τὸ δ' «ἔστιν» ἀληθέστατον τῶν περὶ αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτό, καὶ οὕτω δέ, ὅτι ἐστὶν ὡς οὐσία ἢ τῷ ζῆν, πάλιν αὖ ἡκεῖ ἡμῖν τοῦτο, ὃ δὴ λέγομεν, ὁ αἰών. Ὅταν δὲ τὸ αἰεὶ λέγωμεν καὶ τὸ οὐ ποτὲ μὲν ὄν, ποτὲ δὲ μὴ ὄν, ἡμῶν, ἔνεκα [τῆς σαφηνείας] δεῖ νομίζειν λέγεσθαι· ἐπεὶ τό γε αἰεὶ τάχ' ἂν οὐ κυρίως λέγοιτο, ἀλλὰ ληφθὲν εἰς δῆλωσιν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου πλανῶ ἂν τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς ἕκτασιν τοῦ πλείονος καὶ ἔτι ὡς μὴ ἐπιλείψοντός ποτε. Τὸ δὲ ἴσως βέλτιον ἦν μόνον τὸ «ὦν» λέγειν. Ἀλλὰ ὡσπερ τὸ ὄν ἀρκοῦν ὄνομα τῆ οὐσίᾳ, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὴν γένεσιν οὐσίαν ἐνόμιζον, ἐδεήθησαν πρὸς τὸ μαθεῖν καὶ προσθήκης τοῦ αἰεὶ. Οὐ γὰρ ἄλλο μὲν ἐστὶν ὄν, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ αἰεὶ ὄν, ὡσπερ οὐδ' ἄλλο μὲν φιλόσοφος, ἄλλο δὲ ὁ ἀληθινός· ἀλλ' ὅτι τὸ ὑποδυόμενον ἦν φιλοσοφίαν, ἢ προσθήκη τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ ἐγένετο. Οὕτω καὶ τῷ ὄντι τὸ αἰεὶ καὶ τῷ «ὦν» τὸ αἰεὶ, ὥστε λέγεσθαι «αἰεὶ ὦν»· διὸ ληπτέον τὸ αἰεὶ οἶον «ἀληθῶς ὦν» λέγεσθαι καὶ συναιρετέον τὸ αἰεὶ εἰς ἀδιάστατον δύναμιν τὴν οὐδὲν δεομένην οὐδενὸς μεθ' ὃ ἤδη ἔχει· ἔχει δὲ τὸ πᾶν.

perhaps have been better only to use the word “existing”. But, as “existing” is an adequate word for substance, since, however, people thought becoming was substance, they required the addition of “always” in order to understand [what “existing” really meant]. For existing is not one thing and always existing another, just as a philosopher is not one thing and the true philosopher another, but because there was such a thing as putting on a pretense of philosophy, the addition of “true” was made. So too, “always” is applied to “existing”, that is “*aei*” to “*on*”, so that we say “*aei on* [aion],”, so the “always” must be taken as saying “truly existing”; it must be included in the undivided power which in no way needs anything beyond what it already possesses; but it possesses the whole.

The Greek word for eternity is *aiôn*, and a popular etymology, current at least since the time of Aristotle, analysed it as deriving from *aei* (“always”) + *ôn* (“being”), so that eternity would mean “always being”. The temptation, then, is to think of what’s eternal as something that just exists for a long time, and perhaps forever. But this is wrong, says Plotinus: what is eternal is not what exists for a long or infinite time, that is, what has a long or infinite duration, but what has no duration at all. What’s eternal or in eternity is not in time, but has an existence that is atemporal or durationless.

### 5. Plotinus *apud Arabes*

Sometime in the first half of the 9th century CE, a group of translators at Baghdad, centered around the great philosopher Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (ca. 801-873) set about translating a number of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic. Among these was the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, a text which, although purporting to be by Aristotle, in fact consisted in a series of paraphrased extracts from the last three books of Plotinus’ *Enneads*, together with explanatory glosses and interpolations. Scholars are still divided as to the exact origin and purpose of this work, but the fact remains that it ended up being extremely influential on subsequent Islamic philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

In the eighth treatise of this work, the author of the *Theology* is discussing the ways we can come to know the Intelligible world. If we wish to see this world, he writes, we should begin by looking at the soul, which contains things like the senses and the intelligence. We are to abandon sense and follow intelligence, for although sense allows us to know such individual beings as Socrates, intelligence allows us to grasp the universal man (*al insān al-mursal* p. 11, 9 Badawī). In this world, the soul possesses universal notions only by means of discursive reasoning, which starts out from specific premisses and continues, following logical steps, until it reaches a conclusion. Things are different in the intelligible world: there, one can see the universal ideas with one’s one eyes (*‘iyānān*), since everything is fixed, stable and perpetual. The author continues as follows:

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<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, M. Aouad 1989.

Plotinus, <i>Ennead</i> , V, 1, 4	Translation Armstrong (Loeb Classical Library), modified	<i>Theology of Aristotle</i> , p. 111, 12f. Badawi = 107-108 Dieterici = vol. II, p. 269, §120-121 Lewis	Translation Lewis (in <i>Plotini Enneades</i> , vol. II, Paris-Brussels 1959)
ἀλλ' ἐν αἰῶνι πάντα, καὶ ὁ ὄντως αἰὼν, ὃν μιμεῖται χρόνος περιθέων ψυχὴν τὰ μὲν παριείς, τοῖς δὲ ἐπιβάλλων. Καὶ γὰρ ἄλλα καὶ ἄλλα αὖ περὶ ψυχὴν· ποτὲ γὰρ Σωκράτης, ποτὲ δὲ ἵππος, ἔν τι αἰεὶ τῶν ὄντων· ὁ δὲ νοῦς πάντα. Ἐχει οὖν [ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ] πάντα ἔστώτα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, καὶ ἔσ τ ι μ ὀ ν ο ν , καὶ τὸ «ἔστιν» αἰεὶ, καὶ οὐδαμοῦ τὸ μέλλον– ἔστι γὰρ καὶ τότε– οὐδὲ τὸ παρεληλυθός–οὐ γάρ τι ἐκεῖ παρελήλυθεν– ἀλλ' ἐνέστηκεν αἰεὶ	...all things are in eternity, and the true eternity, which time imitates, running round the soul, let- ting some things go and attending to others. For around Soul things come one after another: now Socrates, now a horse, always some one particular being, but Intellect is all things. It has there- fore everything standing in the same thing, and it merely is, and its “is” is for- ever, and nowhere does the future exist, for then too it is – nor the past – for nothing there has passed – but they are always present ( <i>enestēken</i> )	<i>wa-innamā hiya qā'ima faqaṭ, wa-l- qiyām hunāika dā'im bi-lā zamān māḍin wa lā ātin, wa-dālika anna al- ānī hunāika ḥāḍir wa-l-muḍiy mawjūd</i>	Cleave to mind, be- cause sense knows only individual things, such as Socra- tes and such-and- such a horse; sense is only capable of ap- prehending articular things, whereas mind lets you know what 'man' is in general, and what 'horse' is in general...the sub- stances in that noble world being all of them permanent and abiding in one thing of them; they are simply permanent. Existence <sup>18</sup> there is everlasting, without time past or future, because the future there is present and the past existent

As is often the case, the Arabic paraphrase of Plotinus contained in the *Theology of Aristotle* here says basically the same thing as Plotinus, only a bit more explicitly. Plotinus says the Intellect “is” is forever, that it has no place for the future or for the past. The Arabic Paraphrast comes right out and says why this is the case: if there is no past or future time in the Intelligible world, as Plotinus stated, it is because the future there is present and the past existent.

I submit it would be hard to find a pithier summary of the “block universe” view we have found emerging from Einstein and developed by physicists and philosophers over the past century or so, than the formulation “the future is present and the

<sup>18</sup> “Permanence” Lewis. But the Arabic *qiyām* can also mean ‘existence’ or ‘subsistence’; cf. Wehr s.v.

past existent". The difference, and it is an important one, is that Plotinus and his paraphrast reserve this durationless mode of being for the intelligible world, allowing the sensible, phenomenal world in which we all live to be characterized by flowing time. Defenders of the block universe view, for their part, tend to speak instead of reality vs. illusion: reality is tenseless, whereas our perception of that reality, is, owing to some psychological or physiological quirks of our nature, artificially tensed and divided into past, present and future. The distinction may be more terminological than substantive, however: both Plotinian Neoplatonists and contemporary eternalists agree that the fundamental nature of reality is timeless, while the passage of time is, in some sense, a secondary, derivative, or illusory feature of our experience.

### 6. Conclusion: some thoughts on methodology

We thus seem to have found a close parallel between conceptions of time set forth, on the one hand, by a third-century CE Egyptian-born Neoplatonist and his followers, and, on the other, by a German Jew from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Now, of course, someone might accept the broad outlines of what I've just presented, but respond by saying "So what?" It seems quite unlikely that Einstein ever read Plotinus, much less the *Plotiniana Arabica*. Why is it interesting that two thinkers, so different in history, cultural, linguistic and intellectual background happened to come up with similar ideas?

One might answer that one possible explanation of this coincidence is that the ideas in question are simply correct: Einstein came up with them on the basis of his scientific training, Plotinus on the basis of his philosophical studies and, perhaps, his personal mystical experience. Or perhaps we don't need to hazard such a risky proposition, and can content ourselves with adopting Max Jammer's (1999, 212) view that

there persist throughout the history of scientific thought certain ideas, patterns, or paradigms that may have been influential, even if only subconsciously, on the construction of a new theory (...) a study of such anticipations can provide some information about the ideological background that supported the formation of the new theory.

This study of "the informative importance of anticipations", which the historian M. Sachs (1973) has called "invariant ideas with respect to change from one contextual framework to another", may thus be one a number of methods capable of shedding light on the scientific theories that shape our modern world.

## II. BOETHIUS ON TIME, ETERNITY, PROVIDENCE AND PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Born sometime between 475 and 480, Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius made it his life's work to provide the Latin-speaking world with complete access to Greek philosophical instruction. To do so, he set out to do nothing less than translate into Latin and comment upon all of Aristotle and Plato. He was not able to complete this plan, however, partly because he also wrote a number of other important treatises, on music, astronomy, geometry, and theological issues, and partly because his life was cut short when he was accused of treason in 524 under the reign of Theodoric,<sup>19</sup> thrown in jail, and condemned to death.<sup>20</sup> It seems to have been in prison, or perhaps merely under house arrest,<sup>21</sup> that Boethius wrote his most famous work, the *Consolation of Philosophy*. Here, following an ancient philosophical and literary tradition, he mobilized the resources of philosophy to provide comfort for someone in a difficult position. Yet this consolation was addressed not, as was customary, to a friend, acquaintance or family member, but to himself.<sup>22</sup> Unlike most of the Greco-Roman tradition of consolation, however, Boethius' *Consolation* is staged as a dialogue, written in prose interspersed with verse, between the imprisoned Narrator – Boethius himself – and a female personification of Philosophy.

Few ancient works have been subject to such divergent modern interpretations. Although its title and content seem to place it squarely within the literary genre of the consolation,<sup>23</sup> some influential commentators have claimed that the *Consolation*

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<sup>19</sup> In 493, Theodoric defeated the Herulian Odoacer – who had deposed the last Roman Emperor Romulus Augustulus in 476 – and established himself as ruler over Ravenna. Under Theodoric's reign, Boethius became consul in 510, then *magister officiorum* in 522.

<sup>20</sup> More specifically, he came to the defence of the senator Albinus, accused of treason in 524 for corresponding with the Byzantine emperor Justin. Boethius seems to have been tried and convicted *in absentia* at Rome, perhaps on the basis of forged letters, and executed, perhaps by being clubbed to death, in Pavia; cf. Tränkle 1973. Beets (2005, 19) avers that Boethius died “sous la torture”, but does not reveal the source of his information.

<sup>21</sup> Scheible, for instance (1971, 3), doubts that such a work could have been completed without access to a library.

<sup>22</sup> This was not unheard-of in the Greco-Roman tradition of consolations; cf. Gruber 178, 27; Erler 1999, 116; Chadwick 1981, 224; Bechtle 2006, 267.

<sup>23</sup> I adopt Donato's definition of a consolation as “a text that (i) manifests the author's awareness that language has therapeutic power and (ii) tries to heal by employing whatever argument, register of language, or linguistic device the author deems appropriate for the case at hand”. Donato's work, excellent for its analyses of the first part of the *Consolation* and for its account of the history of consolation as a literary genre, virtually ignores the contemporary philosophical context and must therefore be supplemented by the works of Baltes, Erler, and Beierwaltes. In particular, Donato's denial (p. 14 n. 49) of the relevance of the doctrine of *anamnēsis* is, I believe, quite mistaken; cf. e.g. Schmidt-Kohl 1965, 18ff, citing *Cons.* 3.c11.15-16.



of *Philosophy* is in fact a parody of a consolation.<sup>24</sup> In particular, the philosophical arguments of the work's second half are held to be deliberately feeble, in order that the reader may conclude that philosophy is ultimately unable to provide consolation.<sup>25</sup> I believe that this viewpoint is profoundly wrong-headed, and based on inadequate knowledge of the literary genre of the consolation and, above all, of the nature and structure of the Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum at the end of Antiquity. In what follows I'll argue that Boethius' *Consolation* is an excellent example of the ancient conception of philosophy as therapy for the soul: as such, it uses both rhetorical techniques and rational arguments in a way that echoes the progressive nature of the Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum. In the second part of this paper, I'll discuss the three main arguments Boethius uses to try to resolve the apparent conflict between divine prescience and human free will, paying particular attention to the way he mobilizes Neoplatonic definitions of time and eternity.

### 1. Boethius on philosophy as therapy

That philosophy was often considered as capable of providing therapy for the soul has been pointed out in a number of important publications.<sup>26</sup> This was especially true of the Hellenistic period, in which the various Schools concentrated their attention on teaching students how to achieve happiness during their earthly existence. It has been argued that in Neoplatonism, the emphasis shifts from this world to the next, in that the main concern is henceforth how to ensure the soul's flight from the sensible and return to its intelligible homeland.<sup>27</sup> Far from being discarded, however, the Hellenistic teaching on how to ensure terrestrial happiness, including the notion of philosophy as therapy of the soul, were preserved, but relegated to the status of a preliminary ethical instruction to be administered to students before they embarked on the properly philosophical study of Aristotle and Plato.

In the Neoplatonic schools of Boethius' time,<sup>28</sup> students began by receiving a pre-philosophical ethical training, based on such works as the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*, the *Manual* of Epictetus,<sup>29</sup> or the speeches of Isocrates and Demosthenes. Only after completing this training did they advance to the study of logic, in the form of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, followed by Aristotle's *Organon* in the order in which we read it

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<sup>24</sup> From a formal viewpoint, the *Consolation's* mixture of poetry and prose is held to be more characteristic of Menippean satire, while its various parts seem so different that some have thought the work was a clumsy combination of two or three quite different sources.

<sup>25</sup> Most influentially, this is the view of John Marenbon (2003a, 146-163; 2003b; 2005). See also Relihan 2007, and the critical discussion of these views in Donato 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Voelke 1993; P. Hadot 1995; and the literature cited by Druart 2000, 25.

<sup>27</sup> Erler 1999; cf. Theiler 1964.

<sup>28</sup> On this curriculum, see I. Hadot *et al.*, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> The first part of Simplicius' commentary on this work, like the first part of the *Consolation*, is devoted inter alia mastering one's emotions; cf. I. Hadot 1996; Erler 1999, 114-115.

today. The student then moved on to what was sometimes called the “Lesser Mysteries” of philosophy, viz. Aristotle’s works on physics and psychology (*De Caelo*, *Physics*, *De anima*), culminating in his *Metaphysics*, before moving on to the “Greater Mysteries” in the form of a selection of Plato’s *Dialogues*, culminating in the *Timaeus* and, as the ultimate metaphysical revelation, the *Parmenides*.

Boethius’ *Consolation* contains, as it were, an illustration of this Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum in action. In the person of the Narrator, who, although he is a philosopher, has forgotten almost all he learned as result of his personal misfortunes,<sup>30</sup> we have an example of a philosophical beginner who must first be purified of his mistaken beliefs and the consequent emotions of bitterness, self-pity, lethargy and despair. The fact that he is a professional philosopher, however, allows Philosophy to give him an accelerated course, as it were, and introduce him, after he has begun to recall his philosophical knowledge by the middle of the book, to some of the more difficult and advanced questions of metaphysics, culminating in the discussion of the relation between divine omniscience and human free will. It is likely that the *Consolation* as we have it is incomplete, and that the missing final part would have described the Narrator’s ultimate philosophical liberation, consisting in his return to the intelligible Fatherland and/or the vision of God in which, for Boethius as for Augustine, ultimate happiness consists.<sup>31</sup>

Following an ancient philosophical tradition, Philosophy begins her therapy with easier, more elementary philosophical remedies before moving on to more heavy-duty philosophical considerations.<sup>32</sup> The work’s first part corresponds to what’s been called a “praeparatio platonica”,<sup>33</sup> in which philosophical *topoi* culled from a variety of philosophical schools,<sup>34</sup> usually in the form of brief, easily memorizable sayings, are used to provide a preliminary ethical purification before the student, in this case, Boethius as Narrator, is ready to be initiated into more difficult philosophical arguments. In the book’s second half, then, Philosophia uses a combination of arguments that are by no means lacking in rigor or persuasiveness, in order to come up with a solution to the age-old problem of the apparent conflict between human free will and divine omniscience that is, I believe, as philosophically respectable as any that have been suggested. It is, moreover, a solution that receives some support from the findings of contemporary physics.

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<sup>30</sup> In the words of Druart (2000, 26), he is “a slightly disabled learner” of philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> On the incomplete nature of the *Consolation* as we have it, cf. Tränkle 1977; Baltes 1980, 333ff. Contra: Lerer 1985, 232ff. On happiness in Augustine, cf. Beierwaltes 1981.

<sup>32</sup> Donato 2012, 28, citing *Cons.* 1.5.11-12; 1.6.21; 2.1.7-9; 2.3.4; 3.1.4. As Druart points out (2000), the same distinction between lighter/easier and weightier/more difficult remedies is to be found in al-Kindi’s *Art of dispelling sorrows*.

<sup>33</sup> Erler 1999.

<sup>34</sup> On this “paraenetic eclecticism” (P. Hadot 1995, 124), cf. I. Hadot 1969, 3 n. 18; 21 n. 71; 44; 54 n. 86; 82-83.

The work begins with the Narrator<sup>35</sup> complaining to Philosophy about the main cause of his suffering: his loss of his freedom, possessions, and good name, and the injustice of a world in which evil men are allowed to prosper, while the good – here of course the Narrator is thinking primarily of himself – are forced to submit to all kinds of undeserved indignities, from loss of possessions and honors to exile, imprisonment and even death. The Narrator asserts that he has no doubt that the world and all the events occurring within it are governed by God and His divine Providence,<sup>36</sup> but the apparent triumph of injustice almost makes him doubt the goodness of the divine economy.

The Narrator must be cured of this wallowing in self-pity, which has led him to forget himself.<sup>37</sup> Thus, after he has been allowed to unburden himself by complaining about his problems, Philosophy begins the process of consolation which will restore him to the philosophical knowledge he had once acquired but now, under the stress of prison and imminent death, has forgotten.<sup>38</sup>

For a Neoplatonist, this forgetfulness is crucial. While the soul's initial descent into the body is not generally considered a misfortune or a sin,<sup>39</sup> its involvement with the material world and consequent subjection to the passions, which lead it to forget its divine origin, is held to be morally culpable as well as disastrous. Only by turning within<sup>40</sup> can the soul remember its divine origin and thus begin the arduous<sup>41</sup> upward path back to its intelligible homeland.

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<sup>35</sup> I will henceforth refer to the personage who recounts the *Consolation* in the first person singular as “the Narrator”, in order to distinguish this literary persona from the historical Boethius.

<sup>36</sup> This knowledge is the sign that the Narrator still retains a *scintillula* of the divine knowledge he enjoyed as a pre-incarnate soul, and which will allow him, by means of the *redux ignis/ anagōgos erōs*, to rise back up out of his current fallen state toward the intelligible, and then the *summum bonum* (*Cons.* I.6.3-20; cf. Baltes 1980, 326), homeland of the soul.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. 1.2.6; 1.6.18 (*oblivio sui*); Baltes 1980, 325. This is almost certainly the meaning of Philosophy's brusque dismissal of the Muses (1.1.7-12), who have been inspiring the elegiac poem in which Boethius pours forth his sorrows.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 1.2.3-5; 1.6.7-20; 3c.12; 4.1, etc., Donato 2012, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Theiler 1966, 289ff., citing especially Synesius, *De insomniis* 8, 3, vol 1, p. 283 Lamoureaux/Aujoulat; Pfligersdorffer 1976, 141.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Boethius, *Cons.* 2.4.22-3: *Quid igitur o mortales extra petitis intra vos positam felicitatem? ...Estne aliquid tibi te ipso pretiosius?*” On the importance of self-knowledge, cf. Theiler 1966 217f.; P. Hadot 1968, I, p. 91 n. 1; Simplicius, *In EE*, 30, p. 302, 32ff. ed. I. Hadot (1996): τὸ Γνώθι σαυτὸν τοῦ θεοῦ παράγγελμα... ὃ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος πάσης ἐστὶ φιλοσοφίας καὶ εὐζωΐας. Cf. Ambrose, *De Isaac* 4, 11 (perhaps following Porphyry, cf. Dörrie 1964): ea [sc. anima] insurgens de corpore ab omnibus fit remotior atque intra semet ipsam divinum illud, si qua insequi possit, scrutatur et quaerit.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Porphyry, *Ad Marc.* 6-7.

## 2. Boethius and the Neoplatonic theory of innate ideas

The background here, it seems to me, is the Neoplatonic doctrine according to which the pre-existent soul enjoys contemplation of the intelligible world<sup>42</sup> as it accompanies the chariots of the gods in their journeys around the supracelestial place (*hyperouranios topos*, *Phaedrus* 247a),<sup>43</sup> but then becomes dissatisfied and turns its attention toward the lower regions of matter and the sensible world. In the instant it does so, the soul is provided with a vessel (Greek *okhêma*<sup>44</sup>) made of a pneumatic substance intermediate between air and fire, which allows it to be transported through the celestial spheres<sup>45</sup> and also serves, during its earthly existence, as the intermediary between soul and body. Finally, when the soul reaches earth it is “sown” within a body (*in caelum terramque seris*, *Cons.* 3. c9), which, owing to the darkness and heaviness it derives from matter, obstructs the soul’s memory, so that it can no longer recall the visions of the intelligible world it enjoyed prior to its incarnation, nor can it perceive the order within the world (5. c3.8ff.).<sup>46</sup> Yet all is not lost: although it is buried deep within the body, the soul retains a spark of divine fire or light, which Boethius refers to as the *semen veri* (3. c11.11); *redux ignis*, or *scintillula animae* (1.6.20).<sup>47</sup> This spark needs only to be revived by means of teaching, as if by blowing air on warm ashes (*uentilante doctrina* 3. c11.11-12).

This inner spark of truth, which Boethius describes as our inner fortress (4. c3.33ff.), to which the sage withdraws in times of trouble, constitutes the center of mankind and of the soul (4. c3.34ff.; 3. c11.11-14). It is the locus of happiness

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Boethius, *Cons.* 5. c3, 20-24:

*An cum mentem cerneret altam  
pariter summam et singula norat,  
nunc membrorum condita nube  
non in totum est oblita sui  
summamque tenet singula perdens?*

<sup>43</sup> The seat of God, according to Boethius (*Cons.* 4. c1.16ff.; 3. c2.17f).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Boethius, *Cons.* 3. c9: *levibus curribus*; Ambrose, *De Isaac* 8, 67: *currilia illa animarum*.

<sup>45</sup> In Porphyry’s version of this theory, which was common to Gnosticism, Hermetism and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the soul acquires specific features of its character as it descends through each of the planetary spheres. Cf. Chase 2004.

<sup>46</sup> The Neoplatonists often symbolize this state of forgetfulness by speaking of the drink of forgetfulness offered to souls as they enter the material world; cf. Theiler 1966, 289f. This forgetfulness is made worse, during the soul’s terrestrial existence, by the “twin founts” of pleasure and pain: cf. Synesius *Hymn* I, 658f. *ἰδίων τ’ ἀγαθῶν ἔπιεν λάθαν*; Porphyry, *De abstinencia* I, 33: *δύο πηγαὶ ἀνεῖνται πρὸς δεσμὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνταῦθα, ἐξ ὧν ὡσπερ θανασίμων πωμάτων ἐμπιπλαμένη ἐν λήθῃ τῶν οικείων γίγνεται θεαμάτων, ἡδονὴ τε καὶ λύπη*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Contra acad.* 1.3; *De ord.* 1.1.3; *De trin.* 10.3.5: *An aliquem finem optimum, id est securitatem et beatitudinem suam, uidet per quandam occultam memoriam quae in longinqua eam progressam non deseruit, et credit ad eundem finem nisi se ipsam cognouerit se peruenire non posse?* Cf. Porphyry, *On abstinence* 3.27.

(2.4.22), our proper good (2.5.24), truth (3. c11.1ff.; 5. c3.20f.; 5. c4.24ff.), freedom (2.6.7), peace, and security (2. c4.19f.; 2.6.7). As the obligatory starting-point<sup>48</sup> for our metaphysical ascent back to the source of our being, it represents our unbroken link with the intelligible world.

The question of how we can remain in contact with the intelligible even when the soul is incarnated in a terrestrial body was one that always preoccupied the Neoplatonists. Plotinus solved it, at least to his own satisfaction, by his doctrine of the undescended part of the soul: although our lower or vegetative soul, seat of such psychological faculties as sensation, representation, memory, and discursive thought, comes down from the intelligible world at the moment of incarnation and is thenceforth present throughout the body, the higher part of the soul, intellect (*nous*) or intuitive thought, always remains above in the intelligible world.<sup>49</sup>

Plotinus' successors almost unanimously rejected this view, and to replace it Plotinus' student Porphyry<sup>50</sup> seems to have reactivated the Stoic doctrine of innate ideas as modified by Antiochus of Ascalon and later by the *Chaldaean Oracles*. A good summary of this doctrine is provided by a work ascribed to Boethius but now usually considered pseudonymous, the *De diis et Praesensionibus*<sup>51</sup>:

For we consist of two things, soul and body. The soul is immortal. If it is immortal, it descends from the divine things. But if it descends from the divine things, why is it not perfected by the possession of all virtues? Let the state of this matter be drawn from the very sanctuaries of philosophy. For the soul, before it is wrapped in the garment of bodily contact, examines *in that watchtower of its absolute purity* the knowledge of all things most perfectly. However, once it sinks into this body of clay, its sharp vision, obscured by the darkness of earthy mingling, is rendered blind to the clarity of its inborn vision. However, the seed of truth lies hidden within, and is awakened as it is fanned by instruction. For they say it can by no means happen that from childhood we have notions, which they call *ennoias*, of so many and such great things inserted and as it were sealed upon our souls, unless our soul flourished in its cognition of things before it was incarnated. Nor does the soul fully see these things, when it suddenly entered such an unaccustomed and turbulent abode; yet once it collects itself and becomes refreshed in the course of the ages of life, then it recognizes them by remembering. For after the soul is ensnared and enveloped by some thick cover of

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Cons.* 3.3.1: Vos quoque, o terrena animalia, *tenui licet imagine* uestrum tamen principium somniatis uerumque illum beatitudinis finem licet *minime perspicaci* qualicumque tamen *cogitatione* prospicitis, eoque uos et ad uerum bonum naturalis ducit *intentio*...

<sup>49</sup> *Enneads* 9 (VI, 9), 5, 7-9. On this doctrine, cf. Sorabji 2004, vol. 1, 3(e), 93ff.

<sup>50</sup> For Porphyry's doctrine of the innate concepts (*ennoiai*), see for instance *Ad Marcellam* 25-26: the Intellect has established the divine law in accordance with the concepts for the sake of salvation; it has imprinted and engraved them in the soul from the truth of the divine law (ὁ δ' αὖ θεῖος ὑπὸ μὲν τοῦ νοῦ σωτηρίας ἔνεκα ταῖς λογικαῖς ψυχαῖς κατὰ τὰς ἐννοίας διετάχθη (...) ὁ νοῦς τὰς ἐν αὐτῇ ἐννοίας, ἃς ἐνετύπωσε καὶ ἐνεχάραξεν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ θείου νόμου ἀληθείας).

<sup>51</sup> Stangl (1893) declared the work to have been written as a completion of Boethius' lacunary *Commentary on Cicero's Topics*, probably in the first half of the twelfth century. I know of no more recent study of the *De diis et Praesensionibus*.

the body and undergoes some forgetfulness of itself, when thereafter it begins to be wiped clean and denuded by study and instruction,<sup>52</sup> then the soul reverts and is called back to the manner of its nature (...) Socrates declares all this more clearly in the book entitled *Meno*, asking a certain little boy some geometrical questions about the dimensions of a square. He answers them like a child, yet the questions are so easy that by answering little by little he reaches the same result as if he had learned geometry. Socrates will have it that follows from this that learning is nothing other than remembering. He explains this much more accurately in the speech he gave on the day in which he left this life.<sup>53</sup>

In post-Porphyrion Neoplatonism, it is this divine spark or inner seed<sup>54</sup> that provides the link between the fallen, incarnate human soul and the intelligible world. In Proclus, it develops into the doctrine of the “One within us”, which is itself a development of the Chaldaean concept of the “flower of the intellect” (*anthos noou*), a faculty of the soul that allows contact with the ineffable,<sup>55</sup> while in the Latin world, following Augustine, it becomes the doctrine of the *acies mentis*.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> This is a key point: intellectual pursuits, perhaps the study of the liberal arts, can begin to wipe off (*detergeor* = Greek *apomassô*) the stains that accrue to the soul – or more precisely, to the soul’s astral body – in its descent through the spheres toward incarnation. On the cycle of the liberal arts, which, in their codification by Porphyry, were to be studied before embarking upon a philosophical education, see I. Hadot 1984.

<sup>53</sup> Pseudo (?)–Boethius, *De diis et praesensionibus*, in I. C. Orellius – I. G. Baierus, eds., *M. Tulli Ciceronis Scholiastae*, I, Turici: Typis Orellii, Fuesslini et Sociorum, 1833, p. 390, 35–391, 24: duobus enim constamus, anima et corpore. Anima immortalis est. Si immortalis est, a divinis descendit. Si ergo a divinis descendit, cur omnium virtutum habitu perfecta non est? Quod quale sit, ab eiusdem philosophiae adytis eliciatur. Anima enim necdum in contagionis corporeae indumento evoluta, in illa absolutissimae puritatis suae specula omnium rerum peritiam perfectissime considerat. Postquam autem in hoc luteum corpus obruitur, acies eius terrena admixtionis tenebris caligosa ab illa suae ingenitaeque visionis claritudine caecatur. Latet tamen introrsum semen veri, quod excitatur ventilante doctrina. Aiunt enim nullo modo fieri posse, ut a pueritia tot rerum atque tantarum insitas atque quasi consignatas in animis notiones, quae ennoias vocant, habemus, nisi animus ante, quum incorporaretur, in rerum cognitione viguisset. Neque ea plane videt animus, quum repente tam insolitum tamque turbulentum domicilium immigravit: sed quum se recollegit atque recreavit per aetatis momenta, tum agnoscit illa reminiscendo. Postquam enim quodam crasso corporis tegimine irretita anima et circumfusa quandam sui oblivionem subierit, quum deinde studio ac disciplina detergeri coepit atque nudari, tunc in naturae suae modum animus revertitur atque revocatur (...) Quod totum evidentius declarat Socrates in illo libro, qui Menon inscribitur, pusionem quandam interrogans quaedam geometrica de dimensione quadrati. Ad quae sic ille respondit, ut puer: et tamen ita faciles interrogationes sunt, ut gradatim respondens eodem perveniat, quasi geometrica didicisset. Ex quo effici vult Socrates, ut discere nihil aliud sit nisi recordari. Quam rem multo accuratius ille explicat in sermone, quem habuit eo die, quo excessit e vita.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Synesius, *De Insomniis* 4, 40 (*endothen sperma*); *Dion* 9, 16.

<sup>55</sup> On this doctrine, see, for instance, Gersh 1978 119–121, with further literature; Beierwaltes 1985, 275f.

<sup>56</sup> For references, cf. Hankey 1999, 35 & n. 162.

In the *Consolation*, therefore, Philosophy will attempt to fan the smothered spark of the Narrator's soul, reviving his memories of his pre-incarnate intellectual visions by words which, to quote Simplicius "uttered forth from the [teacher's] concept (*ennoia*), also move the concept within [the soul of the student], which had until then grown cold".<sup>57</sup> The passage from Simplicius, which complements the passage from the Pseudo-Boethius we have just studied, is worth quoting:

As for the soul, when it is turned towards the Intellect, it possesses the same things [sc. as the Intellect] in a secondary way, for then the rational principles (*logoi*) within it are not only cognitive, but generative. Once, however, the soul has departed from there [sc. the intelligible world], it also separates the formulae (*logoi*) within itself from beings, thereby converting them into images instead of prototypes, and it introduces a distance between intellection and realities. This is all the more true, the further the soul has departed from its similarity to the Intellect, and it is henceforth content to project (*proballesthai*) notions which are consonant with realities. When, however, the soul has fallen into the realm of becoming, it is filled with forgetfulness<sup>58</sup> and requires sight and hearing in order to be able to recollect. For the soul needs someone who has already beheld the truth,<sup>59</sup> who, by means of language (*phônê*) uttered forth from the concept (*ennoia*), also moves the concept within [the soul of the student], which had until then grown cold<sup>60</sup> (...) For intellections (*noêseis*) which proceed forth from other intellections<sup>61</sup> also cause motion immediately, connecting the learner's intellections to those of the teacher, by becoming intermediaries (*mesotêtes*) between the two. When intellections are set in motion in an appropriate way, they fit realities, and thus there comes about the knowledge of beings, and the soul/s innate *eros*<sup>62</sup> is fulfilled.

Let's return to the *Consolation*. After the introductory first book, Philosophy's consolation takes place in three stages from books 2-5.<sup>63</sup>

1. In *Cons.* 2.1-4, the Narrator's soul is purified of its false beliefs.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hoffmann 1987.

<sup>58</sup> The theme of forgetfulness goes back ultimately to Book 10 of Plato's *Republic* (621a-c), with its myth of the plain of Lèthê.

<sup>59</sup> That is, according to Hoffmann (1987, 83ff.), the philosophy teacher. Cf. Proclus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, §235, 8-10 Westerink = vol. 2, p. 285 Segonds.

<sup>60</sup> On the *logoi* in the soul – portions of the *nous* which is the substances of the intelligible Forms – as a spark buried in ashes, the rekindling of which constitutes the process of learning, cf. Philoponus, *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, p. 4, 30ff. Hayduck.

<sup>61</sup> Sc. those of the teacher.

<sup>62</sup> On the soul's innate *erôs* for knowledge, derived ultimately from Plato's *Symposium*, cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.*, I, 25, vol. I, pp. 109, 10-110, 8 Saffrey/Westerink; *In Tim.*, vol. I, p. 212, 21-22 Diehl.

<sup>63</sup> Baltes 1980, 326-327, who shows the parallel to the scheme utilized in the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinoos (2nd-3rd cent. CE). For an alternative analysis, cf. Courcelle 1943, 280: (1) in Book two, Boethius is brought back to the self-knowledge of which he'd been temporarily deprived; (2) from Book III to halfway through Book IV, he is reminded of the proper end of things. Finally, (3) from the last part of Book IV to the end of Book V, he is informed of the nature of the laws that govern the world. Cf. Zambon 2003.

2. Stage two has two further subdivisions. In the first (*Cons.* 2.5-8), the Narrator's innate natural concepts are awakened and brought to light; while in the second (*Cons.* 3.1-8), these concepts are purified and made to appear as starting-points for further progress.

3. Finally, from *Cons.* 3.9 to the end of the work, the Narrator learns the doctrines which are to perfect his soul.

### 3. Boethius on Providence and Fate

Throughout the first four books of the *Consolation*, Philosophy uses a mixture of rhetorical persuasion and philosophical *topoi*<sup>64</sup> to console the Narrator and reassure him that despite appearances to the contrary, there really is a benevolent, divine Providence behind the apparent injustices of life's events. Yet the problem of the suffering of the just and the flourishing of the unjust<sup>65</sup> has not yet been solved, and continues to trouble the Narrator. Beginning with the second half of Book IV, therefore, Philosophy discusses the themes of providence, fate, and free will. An initial distinction is to be made between providence and fate: Providence, characterized by simplicity and simultaneity, is the plan in the divine mind that embraces all things at once, while fate is the way, in which that plan unfolds in the sensible world, subject as it is to time and space. Providence is to fate as being is to becoming.<sup>66</sup> Like spheres<sup>67</sup> rotating around a pivot, where the central sphere approaches the simplicity of the center and acts as a pivot for the rest, while those farthest away from the center sweep out greater distances, so the closer beings are to the simple center of provi-

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<sup>64</sup> Philosophy's consolatory *topoi* include a discussion of the nature of Fortuna; the ordinary, unsurprising nature of what is happening to the Narrator; a reminder of his previous successes and honors; and the ultimate insignificance of such honors. Cf. Donato 2012.

<sup>65</sup> A question that is discussed as the sixth of Proclus' *Ten problems concerning Providence*. Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 466d-481d, cited by Zambon 2003, n. 79.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.3, 5.14-25 = Sorabji 2004 4b1; Proclus, *On Providence*, 10, 13-14 = Sorabji 2004 4b5; Sharples 1991, 29-31.

<sup>67</sup> Boethius, *Cons.* 4.6.15: *Nam ut orbium circa eundem cardinem sese vertentium etc.* In his translation of the *Consolatio*, Guillaumin (2002, 172, 64) is categorical: "Il s'agit bien de «cercles», *orbis*, et non pas de sphères". Yet when Boethius quotes Parmenides (*Cons.* 3.12.37: "sicut... Parmenides ait ... rerum *orbem* mobilem rotat"), he clearly renders the Greek σφαῖρα by *orbis*. As far as 4.6.15 is concerned, modern translators are pretty well unanimous: Lazam (1989) and Vanpeteghem (2005) translate *orbium* by "cercles", Moerschini (1994) by "circonférence", Chitussi (2010) and Dallera (1977) by "cerchi", Gegenschatz/Gigon by "Kreise". It is also true that Boethius' closest immediate model, Proclus, *Ten doubts concerning providence* 5, 23ff., speaks of a *kuklos*. Yet I believe Boethius has deliberately modified his Greek model and chosen to speak of spheres: only spheres, not circles, rotate around an axis (*cardo*). Perhaps following Porphyry, Proclus envisaged the relation between universe and its place (*topos*) as that between two concentric spheres, one (immobile) of light and the other (mobile) containing matter: cf. Simplicius, *Corollary on Place*, in Simplicius, *In Phys.*, p. 612, 28ff. Diels.



dence,<sup>68</sup> the more they are removed from the intricate chains of fate. For Boethius, the main goal of this image seems to be to emphasize that while all things subject to Fate are also subject to Providence, the reverse does not hold true.<sup>69</sup> Fate is characteristic only of the spatio-temporal world, so that the possibility remains open to mankind, by rising up to the level of Intellect, of freeing himself from Fate.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, we have the following analogies<sup>71</sup>:

Under jurisdiction of <i>providentia</i>	:	Under jurisdiction of <i>fatum</i>
center	:	sphere
being	:	becoming
eternity	:	time <sup>72</sup>
providence	:	fate
intellect	:	reason

In each of these cases, the items listed in the right-hand column can be viewed as an unfolding, development or emanation of the items in the column on the left. Viewed in another way, the left-hand column represents a condensed, concentrated version of the right-hand column.

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, ch. 145, p. 183, 18f. Waszink: et divina quidem atque intellegibilia quaeque his proxima sunt secundum providentiam solam, naturalia vero et corporea iuxta fatum.

<sup>69</sup> As I. Hadot points out (2001, p. CLI), the doctrine of the subordination of fate to providence is common to all Neoplatonists. Cf. Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, ch. 143-147, for instance p. 182, 4 Waszink: fatum quidem dicimus ex providentia fore, non tamen providentia ex fato. Boethius' immediate source is likely Proclus; cf. *De providentia*, III, 13 in the Latin translation by Moerbeke: [providentiam] omnibus superstantem intelligentialibusque et sensibilibus superiorem esse fato, et que quidem sub fato entia et sub providentia perseverare (...) que autem rursus sub providentia non adhuc omnia indigere et fato, sed intelligentialia ab hic exempta esse.

<sup>70</sup> Liberation from fate was a main goal of Hellenistic religion and philosophy; cf. Festugière 1944-1954. According to Arnobius (*Adversus Nationes* 2.62), such liberation was what was promised by the *viri novi*, who may have been followers of Porphyry; cf. Courcelle 1953. But as Theiler has pointed out (1966, 102 & n. 235) freedom from fate was also promised by the Christians; cf. Tatian, *Ad Graec.* ch. 9, p. 10 Schwartz; Marius Victorinus, *Ad Galat.*, PL 8, col. 1175. According to Clement of Alexandria (*Extracts from Theodotos* 74, 2) Christ descended to earth in order transfer those who believed in him from fate (*heimarmenê*) to providence (*pronoia*). Like the Roman emperor according to Firmicus Maternus (2, 30, 5) so the Chaldaean theurges claimed to be above fate and the influence of the stars; cf. Theiler 1966, 292.

<sup>71</sup> Boethius, *Cons.* 4.6.15-17; cf. Bächli 2001, 22; Bechtle 2006, 271.

<sup>72</sup> On the relations between being and eternity on the one hand, and time and the sensible world on the other, cf. for instance Proclus, *In Tim.*, 3.28.11-14.

We have here a kind of résumé of the late Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation. Entities are conceived as existing in concentrated (Greek *sunêirêmenon*), unextended, point-like form in the intelligible world, before being “unwound” like a ball of thread, “unrolled” like a carpet, or “unfolded” like a sheet of papyrus, into the temporally and spatially extended form they assume in the sensible world.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4. Boethius on predestination and free will

##### 4.1. Aristotle on future contingents

The Narrator now finds himself confronted by a question similar to the one that arises in the case of contemporary block-time theory. If, as many contemporary philosophers believe, the entire future course of events is already laid out and already “exists” in a sense that is arguably just as strong as the sense in which the past and present exist, the problem arises of what becomes of human free will. If there is to be free will, we usually think that what seem to us to be our freely chosen decisions must have some causal efficacy: they must make a *difference* in the world, and if we had chosen to take some decisions other than the ones we actually did, we believe that the world would have turned out differently, to however slight an extent. Yet if the future *already* exists, how could our future decisions possibly change it? Similarly, says the Narrator in Boethius’ *Consolation*, if God is omniscient, He knows everything that will happen, including the thoughts, desires, inclinations and decisions of my own mind. If He knows *already*, for instance, that I will get up at 8.00 AM tomorrow, how could I possibly be free to choose to sleep until noon?

An excellent summary of this view is attributed to the Stoics by Chalcidius<sup>74</sup>:

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<sup>73</sup> For Proclus (*In Parm.* 1217.17f.; *In Tim.*, 3.26.23f.; 43.17), primary time, which he calls first (*prôtistos*), absolute (*apolutos*), and without relation (*askhetos*), remains itself immobile, before it develops (*anelittôn*) into the time that is counted. For Simplicius, *In Phys.*, p. 1155, 15f. Diels, time and temporal things “unwind (*ekmêruetai*) their integrality in accordance with motion and coming-into-being”, cf. Damascius *De princ.* I., p. 4, 23; 141, 25; 158, 7; 164, 15; 214, 17; 282, 23; *In Parm.*, 89, 5-13; 151, 28; *On time, space, and number*, quoted by Simplicius in his *Corollarium de tempore*, *In Phys.*, 9, p. 780, 30 Diels. In addition to *ekmêruô*, other Neoplatonic terms designating this process include *anelittô/anelixis*; *anaptussô/anaptuxis*. Cf. Boethius, *Cons.* 4.6., where providence is defined as *temporalis ordinis explicatio*. This notion has its origins as far back as Cicero, for whom (*De divin.* 127) future events develop *quasi rudentis explicatio*.

<sup>74</sup> Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, c. 160, p. 193, 17-194, 4 Waszink, translation Den Boeft 1970, 47: Aiunt: “Ergo, si deus cuncta ex initio scit, antequam fiant, nec sola caelestia, quae felici necessitate perpetuae beatitudinis quasi quodam fato tenentur, sed illas etiam nostras cogitationes et uoluntates, scit quoque dubiam illam naturam tenet que et praeterita et praesentia et futura, et hoc ex initio, nec potest falli deus, omnia certe ex initio disposita atque decreta sunt, tam ea quae in nostra potestate posita esse dicuntur quam fortuita nec non subiecta casibus”. These concerns were already current in Origen’s day; cf. the fragment of his *Commentary on*

So, if God knows all things from the beginning, before they happen, and not only the phenomena of heaven, which are bound by a fortunate necessity of unbroken blessedness as by a kind of fate, but also those thoughts and desires of ours; if he also knows that, which is contingent by nature, and controls past, present and future, and that from the beginning, and if God cannot be mistaken, the conclusion must be that all things are arranged and determined from the beginning, things said to be within our power as well as fortuitous and chance events.

Although this passage from Calcidius is probably extracted from Stoic objections against the *Timaeus*, it is clearly a version of the famous problem of future contingents, set forth most influentially by Aristotle in ch. 9 of his *De interpretatione*. Aristotle's argument goes something like this: all assertoric statements are either true or false. But if we apply this universally valid principle to the case of individual future events, that means that the statement "There will be a sea-battle tomorrow", is also true or false right now. If that statement is true now, however, then it seems to be *necessarily* true that there will be a sea-battle tomorrow; while if the statement is *false* now, then it seems to be *impossible* for there to be a sea-battle tomorrow. In either case, there is no room for chance here – everything is pre-determined or fore-ordained – and therefore none for free will. The occurrence or non-occurrence of the sea-battle tomorrow is already predetermined, and there's nothing we can do about it. Aristotle solves the problem, at least in his own view, by stating that while it is necessary now that either (p) there will be a sea-battle tomorrow or (~p) there will not be a sea battle tomorrow, i.e. in modern logical notation

$$N(p \vee \sim p)$$

Yet it is not the case that it is necessary now that (p) be true, and it is also not the case that it is necessary that (~p) be true, i.e.

$$\sim(Np) \wedge \sim(N\sim p)$$

Mountains of books have, of course, been written on this chapter of Aristotle's *De interpretatione*.<sup>75</sup> In Antiquity, the Stoics accepted that the proposition "There will be a sea-battle tomorrow" is true today, so that the occurrence/non-occurrence of the sea-battle is already fixed now, while the Epicureans maintained that the statement is neither true nor false. Against these and other views, Boethius, following Ammonius, will argue that statements about future contingents are true or false, but are so indefinitely (Greek *aoristôs*).<sup>76</sup>

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*Genesis* preserved by Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 6.11.31ff. Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato* 30.

<sup>75</sup> For contemporary interpretations, see Sorabji 1980; Gaskin 1995, Blank *et al.* 1998, Seel 2001.

<sup>76</sup> Sharples 2009, 211.

4.2. *Boethius on divine omniscience vs. human free will*

To solve the conflict between divine omniscience and human free will, Boethius, in the final book of the *Consolation*, will make use of three principles, all of which he takes from earlier or contemporary Greek philosophy, although it can be argued that his own particular way of combining them makes his solution original and distinct. These are

1. The distinction between absolute and conditional necessity;
2. The principle that the nature of knowledge is determined by the nature of the knower, rather than by the nature of the thing known<sup>77</sup>; and finally
3. The notion that God experiences all of time as we experience the present; in other words, that God experiences all of time, past, present, and future, simultaneously, or that God lives in an eternal present.

Let's go over Boethius' three principles in order.

4.2.1. The distinction between absolute and conditional necessity<sup>78</sup>

Boethius distinguishes between two kinds of necessity.<sup>79</sup> Absolute necessity is that which is involved in statements like "the sun will rise tomorrow" or "all living beings have a heart", or "all men are mortal": they are true independently of any condition, such as when they are uttered or who utters them. Other propositions are true with only conditional necessity: "Socrates is sitting down", for instance, or "Plato is going for a walk" is necessarily true while (and only while) Socrates is in fact sitting down and Plato is in fact going for a walk, respectively. The same is true for phenomena like chariot races: the drivers' skillful maneuvers are necessary while I am observing them, but they were not necessary beforehand, since they are the result of the drivers' free will. Thus, things and events that are simply necessary are so because of their own nature; things and events that are conditionally necessary are so owing to extrinsic or accidental circumstances.

This argument is in fact based on an adaptation of the Aristotelian definition of knowledge: if I *know* something, then the object of my knowledge *necessarily*<sup>80</sup> is the

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<sup>77</sup> Scholars refer to this as either the Iamblichus principle or the Modes of Cognition principle. Cf. Ammon. *In De Int.* 135.14-137.1 = Sorabji 2004 3a10; Huber 1976, 40ff.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Obertello 1989, 95ff.; Weidemann 1998; Bechtle 2006, 274f.

<sup>79</sup> Weidemann (1998) has, I believe, convincingly refuted the idea (Sorabji 1980, 122) that Boethius' distinction between simple and conditional necessity amounts to the distinction between *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis*.

<sup>80</sup> As Weidemann points out (1998, 198), Boethius' addition of the modal operator "necessarily" transforms Aristotle's consequentiality relation of *being* into a consequentiality relation of *necessity*.

way I know it to be, simply because that's the way knowledge (Greek *epistêmê*, Latin *scientia*, Arabic *'ilm*) is defined – at least in one of its many Aristotelian senses.<sup>81</sup>

One Aristotelian text that is important in this regard is this one from the *De interpretatione* (19a23-6):

That what exists is when it is, and what does not exist is not when it is not, is necessary.<sup>82</sup>

For Aristotle, there can be *epistêmê* in this strict sense – the sense, that is, in which such knowledge is always true (*APo* II, 19, 100b18) – only of universals.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the reason why knowledge is bereft of falsehood is that it is *necessary* for things to be in the way knowledge understands them to be.<sup>84</sup> This is clear, for instance, from a passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VI, 3, 1139b20-25):

We all suppose that what we know is not capable of being otherwise (...) therefore the object of knowledge is of necessity. Therefore it is eternal, for things that are of necessity in the unqualified sense are all eternal<sup>85</sup>; and things that are eternal are ungenerated and imperishable.

The reason this distinction is important is as follows: the Narrator reasons that (1) necessarily, if an event *p* will happen, then God foresees it ( $N(p \rightarrow F(G, p))$ ); and (2) necessarily, if God foresees *p*, it will happen ( $N(F(G, p) \rightarrow p)$ ). Note that the necessity here bears upon the entire implication: it is a *necessitas consequentiae*. It has been argued<sup>86</sup> that Boethius now makes a simple logical mistake, inferring from (1) and (2) that (3) if *p*, then necessarily God foresees *p* ( $p \rightarrow NF(G, p)$ ), and (4) if God foresees *p*, then necessarily *p* ( $F(G, p) \rightarrow Np$ ), where in both the latter cases the necessity bears upon the consequent (*necessitas consequentis*).

I believe this analysis is mistaken. Boethius does believe both (3) and (4) are true, but they are true only *conditionally*, where the condition is God's knowledge. In other words, the necessity imposed by God's knowledge of a future event is of the same kind as that which necessitates that Socrates be sitting when I know he is sitting: such conditional necessity (*kath' hupothesin* in Greek<sup>87</sup>; *secundum praecessionem* in the Latin of

<sup>81</sup> "It is impossible for that of which there is knowledge in the absolute sense to be otherwise <than it is>," says Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* (I, 2 71b9-15), which led Thomas Waitz to comment (II, 302) that "veram scientiam non dari nisi eorum quae aeterna sint nec unquam mutantur".

<sup>82</sup> Τὸ μὲν οὖν εἶναι τὸ ὄν ὅταν ᾗ, καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν μὴ εἶναι ὅταν μὴ ᾗ, ἀνάγκη. Cf. Frede 1972.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Metaph.* K 1, 1059b26; 2, 1060b20; B 6, 1003a15; M 9, 1086b5.10; 1086b 33; *Anal. pr.* 31 87b33, *De an.* 2.5417b23; *EN* 7, 6, 1140b31; 1180b15. This is perhaps why the Narrator begins by speaking not of knowledge but of opinion, only to slip into talking about knowledge by virtue of the (Platonic!) equivalence true opinion = knowledge.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Cons.* 5.3.21: Ea namque causa est cur mendacio scientia careat, quod se ita rem quamque habere necesse est uti eam sese habere scientia comprehendit.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *De Caelo* I, 12, 281a28-282a4.

<sup>86</sup> Graeser 1992; Marenbon 2003a, 533ff.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Eustratius, *In EN VI*, p. 293, 1-2 Heylbut (CAG 20): ὡς εἶναι τὰ ἀπλῶς ἐξ ἀνάγκης πάντα αἰδία. ἀπλῶς δὲ λέγομεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὅσα μὴ καθ' ὑπόθεσιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης, οἷον τὸ

Chalcidius<sup>88</sup>) imposes no constraint upon Socrates, but simply concerns the nature of knowledge.<sup>89</sup> As Boethius will claim, such future events can be said to be necessary with regard to God's knowledge but free with regard to their own nature.

These considerations go some way toward explaining the key point of how God can know future events, which are by their nature indeterminate, in a determinate way. The reason why this seems counter-intuitive to us is that we believe there can only be knowledge of things that are certain, so that if God has certain knowledge of future events, such events must already be decided. Yet this view presupposes at least two further assumptions: that knowledge is determined by its object, and that God's knowledge of the future is like ours. Boethius' additional two principles will attempt to undermine both these assumptions.

#### 4.2.2. The principle that the nature of knowledge is determined by the nature of the knower

Like his opponents the Stoics, the great Peripatetic philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias had considered it axiomatic that modes of knowledge are conditioned by the objects of their knowledge.<sup>90</sup> In the case of future contingents, it follows from this principle that the gods can possess only an open, uncertain, or indeterminate knowledge of future events, which are by their nature open, uncertain, and indeterminate. The Middle Platonists and the fifth-century Latin author Chalcidius agreed that God or the gods can have only a contingent knowledge of what is contingent.<sup>91</sup>

According to such Neoplatonists as Proclus and Ammonius, probably the most immediate influences on Boethius,<sup>92</sup> it is because we assume that the gods' knowledge is like ours that we end up with either the Stoic view that everything is determined in advance, or the Peripatetic view that providence extends only as far as

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καθησθαί τινα ἔστ' ἂν κάθηται ὁ καθήμενος, ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι λέγομεν τὸ καθῆσθαι αὐτόν, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἀπλῶς ἀλλ' ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ("thus, all things that are simply by necessity are perpetual [*aidia*]. We call 'simply by necessity' whatever is not hypothetically (*kath' hupothesein*) by necessity: for instance, the fact of sitting: as long as the seated person is sitting, we say that the fact that he is sitting is necessary, yet not simply but by hypothesis (*ex hupotheseôs*)").

<sup>88</sup> Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, p. 186, 15 Waszink.

<sup>89</sup> In the words of Bächli 2001, it is an "epistemological necessity".

<sup>90</sup> Huber 1976, 13f., citing Alexander, *De Fato* 200, 15ff.

<sup>91</sup> Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, c. 162, p. 195, 1-17 Waszink.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Proclus, *De decem dubitationibus* 7; *De prov.* 64, 1-4 Ammonius, *In de interpretatione* 132, 6ff.; 135, 16-19. Zambon (2003) has made a persuasive case for the argument, against Courcelle, that many elements in Boethius' thought derive from his reading of Porphyry rather than any hypothetical sojourns in Athens or Alexandria. In the present case, however, the parallels between Boethius and Proclus/Ammonius seem so close that influence of the latter on the former seems highly likely, unless we were to postulate the existence or some otherwise unknown source (a lost work, or part of a work, on providence by Porphyry?) common to both Boethius and Proclus/Ammonius.

the sphere of the moon. In fact, says Proclus, the reverse is true: it is not the nature of the known objects that determines knowledge, but the nature of the cognitive faculties of the knower. Thus, for instance, the gods know the objects of their knowledge in a manner that is superior to the ontological status of the objects they know<sup>93</sup>:

Every god has an undivided knowledge of things divided and a timeless knowledge of things temporal; he knows the contingent without contingency, the mutable immutably, and in general all things in a higher mode than belongs to their status (...) their knowledge, being a divine property, will be determined not by the nature of the inferior beings which are its object but by their own transcendent majesty (...)

Proclus states the same view in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*<sup>94</sup>:

(...) the gods themselves know what is generated (*genêton*) in an ungenerated way, and what is extended in an unextended way, and what is divided undividedly, and what is temporal atemporally, and what is contingent necessarily.

Yet that this doctrine of the dependence of knowledge on the knower's cognitive faculties goes back at least to Porphyry is, I believe, implied by a passage from the latter's *Sententiae*<sup>95</sup>:

...to that which is by nature multiple and endowed with magnitude [i.e., the sensible. – MC] the partless and non-multiple [i.e., the intelligible] is endowed with magnitude and multiplicity [i.e., with the characteristics of the sensible] (...) to that which is naturally partless and non-multiple [the intelligible] that which has parts and is multiplied [the sensible] is partless and non-multiple [i.e. has the characteristics of the intelligible]...

This passage is difficult, and has occasioned quite a bit of discussion, but its gist seems clear: the way *x* appears to *y* depends not upon *x*, but upon *y*. According to standard Platonic doctrine, intelligible or incorporeal realities (*x*) are in themselves partless, non-multiple and unextended, while material and corporeal realities (*y*) have the opposite characteristics: they are divided, multiple and extended in space and time. What Porphyry claims, in his clumsy, jargon-laden language, is that to *y*, *x* appears as endowed with the properties of *y*. To *x*, by contrast, *y* is endowed with the

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<sup>93</sup> Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 124, p. 110, 10-13 Dodd; translation Dodds, p. 111: Πᾶς θεὸς ἀμερίστως μὲν τὰ μεριστὰ γινώσκει, ἀχρόνως δὲ τὰ ἔγχρονα, τὰ δὲ μὴ ἀναγκαῖα ἀναγκαίως, καὶ τὰ μεταβλητὰ ἀμεταβλήτως, καὶ ὅλως πάντα κρειττόνως ἢ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν τάξιν. εἰ γὰρ ἅπαν, ὅ τι περ ἄν ἦ παρὰ τοῖς θεοῖς, κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἔστιν ιδιότητα, δῆλον δῆπουθεν ὡς οὐχὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν χειρόνων φύσιν ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς οὕσα ἢ γνῶσις αὐτῶν ἔσται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἐκείνων ἐξηρημένην ὑπεροχήν.

<sup>94</sup> Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 352, 5-8 (my translation): αὐτοὶ δὲ οἱ θεοὶ καὶ τὸ γενητὸν ἀγενήτως καὶ τὸ διαστατὸν ἀδιαστάτως ἐγνώκασιν καὶ τὸ μεριστὸν ἀμερίστως καὶ τὸ ἔγχρονον διαωνίως καὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ἀναγκαίως.

<sup>95</sup> Porphyry, *Sententiae* 33, in Brisson *et al.*, 2005, vol. I, p. 346, 21-33 = p. 36, 12-37, 5 Lamberz. Translation J. Dillon, loc. cit., vol. 2, p. 816-817: τῷ μὲν ἄρα πεπληθυσμένῳ φύσει καὶ μεμεγεθυσμένῳ τὸ ἀμερές καὶ ἀπλήθυντον μεμεγέθυνται καὶ πεπλήθυνται (...) τῷ δ' ἀμερεῖ καὶ ἀπληθύντῳ φύσει ἀμερές ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπλήθυντον τὸ μεριστὸν καὶ πεπληθυσμένον (...)

properties of *x*. To sensible reality, which is divided, pluralized and located in space, intelligible reality – in itself bereft of these characteristics and qualified by their opposites – appears as endowed with plurality and magnitude.

For Porphyry, then, at least at the time he wrote the *Sentences*, it seems that the way an object of knowledge appears to a knower is determined not by the object's characteristics, but by the cognitive faculties of the knower. All the more strange then, is the testimony of Proclus, who writes, immediately after the passage quoted above<sup>96</sup>:

Let us not think, then, that knowledge is characterized by the objects of knowledge, nor that what is not fixed is not fixed among the gods<sup>97</sup>, as the philosopher Porphyry says – for he affirmed that which would have better left unsaid – but that the mode of knowledge becomes different along with the differences of the knowers.

According to Proclus' testimony, then, Porphyry (wrongly) believed that it is the known object, not the knower that determines the mode of knowledge.

I can see only two possibilities of resolving this apparent contradiction. Either Proclus has misunderstood Porphyry, attributing to him, for instance, a Peripatetic doctrine upon which Porphyry may have been reporting; or else Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus* was an early work, and he later changed his views on this subject under the influence of Plotinus. More research would be needed to enable a choice between these two alternatives.

In any case, the view that knowledge depends on the knower, not the object of thought, became standard Neoplatonic doctrine after Iamblichus. According to Proclus' student Ammonius, since all things are present to the gods in an eternal now,<sup>98</sup> their providence, like their creative activity, is exercised without the change implied by ratiocination or deliberation, but by their very being (*autôî tôi einai*). Since their own nature is determinate, the gods know all things, including future contingents, in a determinate way. Boethius, then, following his Greek sources, concludes that “all that is known is comprehended not according to its power, but rather according to the faculty of the knowers”.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 352, 11-16 = Porphyry, *In Tim.*, fr. 2.45 Sodano: μή γὰρ οἰηθῶμεν, ὅτι ταῖς τῶν γνωστῶν φύσεσιν αἱ γνώσεις χαρακτηρίζονται, μηδ' ὅτι τὸ μὴ ἀραρὸς οὐκ ἀραρὸς ἐστὶ παρὰ θεοῖς, ὡς φησὶν ὁ φιλόσοφος Πορφύριος – τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνος ἀνεφθέγγετο, ὅπερ τ' ἄρρητον ἄμεινον – ἀλλ' ὅτι ταῖς τῶν γνωσκόντων διαφοραῖς ἀλλοῖος γίνεταί τῆς γνώσεως ὁ τρόπος.

<sup>97</sup> In other words, Porphyry allegedly claimed that what is in reality not fixed or established (*mê araros*) also appears to the gods in the same way: as non-fixed or indeterminate (*mê araros*). This is precisely the position of Alexander of Aphrodisias.

<sup>98</sup> Ammon., *In De int.*, p. 133, 25: ἀλλὰ πάντα παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐνὶ τῷ νῦν ἐστὶ τῷ αἰωνίῳ ἰδρυμένα. Cf. Chalcidius, *In Tim.*, ch. 25, p. 76, 4-5 Waszink: temporis item species praeteritum praesens futurum, aevi substantia uniformis *in solo perpetuoque prasenti*. Waszink 1964, 43, 47, 70 traces the source of this Chalcidian chapter back to Porphyry.

<sup>99</sup> Boethius, *Cons.* 5.4.25; cf. 5.4.38; Huber 1976, 40ff.; Den Boeft 1970, 53ff.



## 4.2.3. The notion that God lives in an eternal present

Now that it has been established that knowledge is determined by the knower, Boethius moves on to deducing God's mode of cognition from His nature. God is eternal (*Cons.* 5.6.2.10-14), and this leads us to Boethius' definition of eternity, perhaps the most famous and influential ever formulated in the Western tradition: Eternity is the perfect possession, all at once, of unlimited life (*Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*).<sup>100</sup> This definition can be better understood, Philosophy claims, by comparison with temporal things: whatever lives in the present proceeds, when it is present, from the past to the future, and nothing constituted within time can equally embrace the complete extent of its life. Temporal beings cannot yet apprehend the future, while they have already lost the past. Even in today's life, Philosophy continues, you mortals live in no more than that mobile, transitory moment. Whatever is subject to time, even if, as Aristotle thought was true of the world, it never begins nor ends, should not be called eternal, for it does not embrace all at once the extent of its life, even if it should last forever: it doesn't yet possess the future, and it no longer possesses the past. What does deserve to be called eternal is what comprehends and possesses the entire fullness of unlimited life, lacking nothing future nor past: in full possession of itself, it must always both remain present to itself, and have present to itself the infinity of mobile time. People are wrong to conclude from Plato's statements that this world had neither beginning nor end<sup>101</sup> that this makes the world co-eternal with its creator<sup>102</sup>: it's one thing to lead a life through an unlimited period, as Plato says of the world, and quite another to have equally embraced the total presence of limitless life, as is proper to the divine mind. The world cannot properly be called eternal, therefore, but should be called perpetual.<sup>103</sup>

## 5. Boethius on the eternal now

God, Boethius continues, is not greater than created things by the mere quantity of time, but by the characteristic property of his simple nature. As Plotinus had already

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* III 7 (45), 11, 3-5: Eternity is "that unchanging life, all together at once, already infinite, completely unswerving, standing in and directed toward the one". For a complete list of the parallels between *Consolation* Book V and *Ennead* III 7 (45), cf. Beierwaltes 1967/1981, 198-200.

<sup>101</sup> Presupposed here, as if it went without saying (as indeed it did for the late Greek Neoplatonists) is the view that Plato's creation narrative in the *Timaeus* is to be understood symbolically or allegorically.

<sup>102</sup> Origen was accused of making the creation coeternal with God: cf. Methodius, *On generated things*, ap. Photius, *Library* 302a30ff.

<sup>103</sup> On this distinction, cf. Chase 2011, 127-130.

argued, Time's infinite motion tries vainly to imitate the presential status of immobile life, but cannot equal it, so that it sinks from immobility into motion, and into the infinite quantity of past and future. Unable to equally possess the complete plenitude of its life, temporal beings strive to fill this void by constantly accumulating an unending series of transitory instants. Perhaps we can use a modern analogy: let's assume Bill Gates is not just rich, but infinitely rich. Then time's attempt to equal eternity would be analogous to, and as futile as, trying to equal Bill Gates' infinite wealth by saving, say, a penny a day. Nevertheless, since time bears within it, in the guise of the present moment, a kind of image of eternity's eternal present, it lends to whatever it touches the appearance of existence.<sup>104</sup>

### 5.1 Boethius and the Neoplatonic theory of time

To understand this notion, we need to bear in mind the basic structure of the Late Neoplatonic theory of time.<sup>105</sup> Beginning with Iamblichus, the Neoplatonists proposed a three-level hierarchy, in line with the doctrine of the triple universal, according to which each Intelligible Form or Idea has three phases: unparticipated, participated, and in the participants.<sup>106</sup> Corresponding to the unparticipated Form is Eternity (Greek *aiôn*), followed by two kinds of time: corresponding to the participated Form, an intellectual time that is stable, motionless, partless, and generative; and corresponding to the participants, the time we experience in the sensible world, which is generated and constantly flowing.

This inferior time flows from the future into the past along the sides of a triangle (**Table 1**), and only at the vertex of the triangle does the flowing now that constitutes our present moment touch the immobile Intellectual time, which is a direct emanation from, and therefore an image of eternity. This is, as it were, the metaphysical background for Boethius' assertion that the now represents our only point of contact with eternity, an idea he shares with his near-contemporary Damascius, for whom the present instant is a "trace of eternity" (*ikhnos aiônion*) at which eternity comes to be within time (*en khronôi to aei on estin*).<sup>107</sup>

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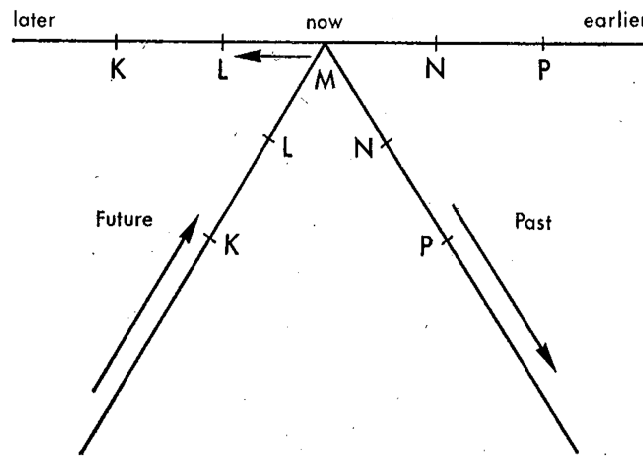
<sup>104</sup> *Cons.* 5.6.12: huius exigui uolucrisque momenti, quae quoniam manentis illius praesentiae quandam gestat imaginem, quibuscumque contigerit id praestat ut esse uideantur.

<sup>105</sup> The best exposition of this difficult theory is probably Sambursky/Pines 1987; cf. Sorabji 1983, 33-45.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Iamblichus, *In Tim.*, fr. 60 Dillon; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 24.

<sup>107</sup> Damascius, *In Parmenidem* II, 12<sup>3</sup>.c<sup>1</sup>, vol. III, p. 189, 20 Westerink-Combès. Cf. already Proclus, *In Tim.* III, p. 44, 21-22 Diehl: "Everything is present in the now" (*Kai en tôi nun to pan*). Similarly, although more colorfully, Meister Eckhart describes the now as "a taste of time" (*Nû...ez ist wol ein smak der zît*, cf. *Werke*, ed. N. Largarier et al., 2 vols., Frankfurt a.M. 1993, vol. 2, p. 48). On the concept of the eternal now in the philosophy of Proclus, cf. Roth 2008.

Table 1



Since, according to Boethius' second principle, every nature understands what's subject to it according to its own nature, and God's nature is always eternal and praesential, it follows that his knowledge remains in the simplicity of his presence, embracing the infinite extent of the past and future, considering everything in his simple cognition as if it were happening now.<sup>108</sup> The presence by which God discerns everything should be characterized, Boethius informs us, not so much as foreknowledge (*praescientia*) of the future as knowledge of a never-deficient instant; it should be called providence (*pro-videntia*) rather than foreknowledge, where the prefix *pro-* can be interpreted as a kind of spatial priority rather than a temporal one.<sup>109</sup> From his supratemporal vantage point, God sees all the temporal events in the world's history simultaneously, like clothespins on a laundry line, or the slices of a sausage or a loaf of bread. The events we see as occurring in succession, one after another, or in *taxis* (to speak in Aristotelian terms), God sees as simultaneously present and separated only by their *thesis* or position.

We see here several themes that are present *in nuce* in Plotinus, and are more fully developed in such post-Plotinian thinkers as Iamblichus and Damascius:

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *Cons.* 5.c2.11-12: quae, sint, quae fuerint, veniantque/uno mentis cernit in ictu.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *Cons.* 5.6.17: Unde non praevidentia sed providentia potius dicitur, quod porro a rebus infimis constituta quasi ab excelso rerum cacumine cuncta prospiciat. Boethius is very fond, particularly in Book V, of the term *prospicio* in the sense of "look forward or into the distance, look out, look, see" (Lewis & Short s.v. I) for designating the divine vision. Cf. *Cons.* 5.2.11: Quae tamen ille ab aeterno cuncta prospiciens providentiae cernit intuitus; 5.3.4: Nam si cuncta prospicit deus neque falli ullo modo potest; 5.3.28: ... diuina mens sine falsitatis errore cuncta prospiciens; 5.4.33: ...illo uno ictu mentis formaliter, ut ita dicam, cuncta prospiciens. As Bächli points out (2001, n. 83), Boethius uses the verb *prospicere* "mit Bezug auf den quasi-zeitlosen 'Blick von oben'". On the spiritual exercise of the "View from above" in ancient philosophy, cf. Hadot 1995, 238-251.

1. In order to overcome time and perceive eternity, we must eliminate the difference between them: that is, we must convert space into time.<sup>110</sup> In our everyday phenomenal experience, space is characterized, as Aristotle affirms, by position (*thesis*) or the fact that all its parts are simultaneously present; time by order or succession (*taxis*), i.e. the fact that no two of its parts exist simultaneously. In contrast, Boethius' near-contemporary Damascius taught that we can learn to perceive "integral" or "intellectual time", which exists simultaneously as a whole.<sup>111</sup>

2. One way to achieve this perception of time as simultaneously existent is to concentrate on the present moment. As we've seen, as the "nows" or instants of phenomenal time surge forth from the future, only to disappear into the past, there is an instant at which they touch immobile, stable, intellectual time, which is itself an emanation of eternity. In the midst of time, we can experience a glimpse of eternity thanks to the present moment, which is not point-like, according to Damascius, but is divisible and has a certain extension (*diastêma*).

Thus, while Boethius seems mainly to follow Plotinus, perhaps through the intermediary of Porphyry, as far as his doctrine of time and eternity is concerned, the *Consolation* nevertheless shows traces of familiarity with post-Plotinian developments of that doctrine, particularly those of Iamblichus and Damascius.

## 6. Boethius and Relativity

I believe that Boethius' use of the principle that God lives in an eternal present involves notions very close to those mobilized in the current debate in the philosophy of time between eternalists, or advocates of the block-time view, and presentists, who defend the objective reality of the flow of time. For the Block-timers, who take seriously the view of reality as a four-dimensional continuum as set forth by Einstein and Minkowski, all the moments of time exist simultaneously, so that the past continues to be, while the future already is, just as real as the present. Presentists, in contrast, subscribe to the common-sense view that time flows: only the present is real, while the past is no longer and the future is not yet real. In a nutshell, Boethius will argue that God views reality from the block-time perspective (which, of course, also corresponds to an objectively true picture of reality), while we humans see things from a presentist perspective.

It is only the element of time that introduces what seems to be a contradiction between God's universal foresight and our free will. In other words, it is only because we imagine that God knows our *future* acts and thoughts *beforehand* that we believe,

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<sup>110</sup> Likewise, in a mystical narration by the Iranian philosopher Qāzī Sa'īd Qummī, "succession becomes simultaneity, and time becomes space, as a function of that sublimation which brings it to a more and more subtle state" (Corbin 1969). It is, of course, a basic postulate of Einsteinian special relativity that temporal coordinates can be transformed into spatial ones, and *vice versa*; see for instance Davies-Gribbin 1992, 79-82.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Galpérine 1980.

since only what is certain can be known, that our acts and thoughts are already determined. As we've seen, Boethius' ingenious solution will consist in denying that God *fore-knows* or *fore-sees* anything at all.<sup>112</sup> Since the future tense does not apply to Him or to His knowledge, he sees all things as if they were present; and since the mere fact of our observing human actions in the present imposes no necessity on such acts, neither does God's omniscient vision and knowledge of all our acts and thoughts – past, present or future – necessitate those acts and thoughts. God sees all the moments of the world's history, and hence, all the moments of our lives, spread out before him at once. If he distinguishes between, say, my decision to rob a bank tomorrow and my actual robbing of the bank, it is not because one event is chronologically "later" than another, but because they occupy different positions in the series of spacetime events, all of which are simultaneously present to God's vision. It is in this sense that one might say that God sees the world the way Einstein and Minkowski taught us, in the first decades of the 20th century, to see space and time: the world consists not of a three-dimensional space and a separate one-dimensional time, but of a four-dimensional spacetime manifold, consisting of spacetime events. Although God does not see these events as *temporally* prior or posterior to one another, he can perfectly well perceive their *causal*, *logical*, and *ontological* anteriority or posteriority. Likewise, Boethius argues, God can tell which events are necessary (the sun's rising), and which are contingent (my going for a walk), just as a human being simultaneously observing necessary and contingent events in the present is able easily to distinguish them. This is what allows Boethius to conclude that God's foreknowledge (*praevidentia*) should in fact be called *pro-videntia*, where the prefix *pro-* may connote priority in space, not time. If we could raise ourselves up to this Gods-eye view, we would see that there is no conflict between divine omniscience and our free will, since God's supratemporal vision introduces no necessity into contingent events. Our idea that there is such a conflict is, almost literally, an optical illusion, caused by the fact that we cannot help but think in terms of temporality.

Boethius' view of God's ontological state as an eternal present, developed primarily from Plotinus' theory of time as eternity as presented in *Ennead* 3.7, is thus the crowning jewel in the argumentative apparatus Boethius uses to solve the conflict between divine foreknowledge and human freedom of the will. There is no such thing as divine *praescientia* (foreknowledge): God sees all things in an eternal present, whereby he distinguishes between past and present events not by their *chronological* order or occurrence, but their *casual* anteriority or posteriority. His knowledge of events that seem to us future is therefore no impediment to our freedom, any more than my observation of a man crossing the street imposes any necessity on him. To be sure, if I *know* that he is crossing the street at time *t*, then it is *necessary* that he be crossing the street at time *t*, but this kind of factual, conditional, or epistemological necessity, based as it is on the Aristotelian definition of knowledge and the fact that things must neces-

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. *Cons.* 5.6.16-17: *praevidentiam...non esse praescientiam quasi futuri sed scientiam numquam deficientis instantiae rectius aestimabis.*

sarily be *as* they are *when* they are, imposes no constraints on the man in question. As I observe the man walking and a contemporaneous sunset, I know immediately that the former is a free act originating in the individual's volition, while the latter is a necessary event. Likewise, God's vision observes all our thoughts and acts, past, present and future, as if they were simultaneously present, but like our human vision this divine vision imposes no necessity on what it observes, and like our own vision, God's vision is perfectly capable of distinguishing, among the phenomena it observes, between the necessary and the contingent.

It has been objected<sup>113</sup> that this characterization of divine knowledge entails that I know something God does not know: I know which events are past and which are future. But this seems to me to be incorrect, or at least misleading. First of all, from a divine perspective, the past-present-future distinction has no objective reality but is a mere illusion caused by our limited conceptual apparatus. Alternatively, if we wished to say that this division is objectively real, it is so only in the sense that the distinction between "x is standing to my left" and "y is standing to my right" is real: these are mere relations that depend on my individual perspective at a given instant. Likewise, what I consider past and future depends merely on my perspective as a temporal being. To claim that God is unaware of such relational properties does not seem to present a serious challenge to his omniscience.

I submit, moreover, that it is not even true that God is unaware of the past-present-future distinction. As we have seen, Boethius' conception of divine vision corresponds rather closely to the way reality should be viewed from the perspective of relativistic physics, that is, as a four-dimensional spacetime continuum. Here, the history of the world and of any individual object can be envisaged as a world-tube, where each instant can be viewed as a three dimensional slice of the tube. Given that any spatio-temporal event can be identified on the tube by a series of four coordinates, it would be easy for God to situate on my world-tube my instantaneous existence in my Paris study at, say, 12:43 on May 2, 2013. But it would be just as easy for him to deduce that an event x, which can be situated at a point on the tube corresponding to my study at 12:32 on May 1, would be in what *I consider* the past, and that an event occurring in the same place at 12:32 May 3 would be in what *I consider* the future. True, God would not "know" that a given event *is* past or future, because such alleged facts are not genuine objects of knowledge but at best mere relational properties, and at worst illusions. We must bear in mind that, for Aristotle and for Boethius, for x to be *known* implies that x is not only *true* but *necessarily true*. But it is not *true*, much less *necessarily true*, that a given event is past or future with regard to me: such a viewpoint is merely an illusion caused by my partial, limited temporal perspective. Similarly, if a stick partially submerged in water looks bent to me, we would not say that an omniscient God "knows" that the stick is bent, but that He knows that the stick *looks bent to me*.

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<sup>113</sup> Sorabji, in Blank *et al* 1998.

## 7. Conclusion

Far from being a parody or a conglomeration of unconvincing arguments thrown together any old way, Boethius' *Consolatio* represents a meticulously crafted whole, although it may be an unfinished one. In its first half, it shows how philosophy, which is a way of life rather than a mere series of abstract arguments, can be used as therapy of the soul. It does so by providing an illustration of the Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum in action, whereby, after an initial moral purification from false ideas and opinions, the beginning philosophy student's innate ideas are gradually awakened and reactivated, thus rendering his soul capable of undertaking the return to its intelligible homeland. In the work's second half, the narrator, now restored to his status as an advanced student of philosophy, is presented with a coherent set of arguments intended to show why and how divine omniscience does not jeopardize human free will. This is done by a skillful interweaving of the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, the principle that knowledge is conditioned by the knower rather than the object of knowledge, and the principle that God's eternal mode of being grants Him a cognitive mode whereby He sees past, present and future as given simultaneously in an eternal present.

Finally, lest this latter point be dismissed as mere Neoplatonic mysticism, I have argued that it corresponds to the view that seems to be a virtually inescapable consequence of special relativity. As a number of contemporary scientists, historians, and philosophers of science have concluded, if Einstein and Minkowski are right, the passage of time we seem to experience is in fact an illusion, and reality must be represented from the perspective of block-time, in which all spacetime events, regardless of whether they seem to us to be past, present, or future are, as it were, laid out in advance and endowed with equally objective existence. Boethius speaks of the possibility of raising oneself up to this Gods-eye view of things,<sup>114</sup> and he is echoed by the theoretical physicist Thibault Damour:

The structure of the theory of relativity suggests that if one could free oneself from the thermodynamic and biological constraints that condition us, in everyday life, to live reali-

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<sup>114</sup> Boethius, *Cons.* 5.5.12: Quare in illius summae intellegentiae cacumen si possumus erigamur. Bächli (2001, 45f & n. 102) argues on the basis of 5.5.11: 'Si igitur uti rationis participes sumus ita diuinae iudicium mentis habere possemus', that human beings possess the *intellectus* as an inherent faculty: "Nach Boethius verfügen wir als vernünftige Wesen über ein «Kriterium» (*iudicium*) zur Beurteilung des göttlichen Geistes". But Bächli is basing himself on the reading *possumus* at p. 154, 45 Moreschini, a reading supported only by Ms. N = Neapolitanus = Napoli, Bibl. Naz. G IV 68 *post correctionem*: Mss. O<sup>2</sup> M L Ha T N W C V<sup>2</sup> H A and B have *possemus*, while Mss. O K T F V H<sup>2</sup>A<sup>2</sup>G have *possimus*. Moreschini rightly prints *possemus*, a subjunctive which indicates a remote possibility. Thus, here at least Boethius is not claiming we can have such a faculty (habere *possumus*), but discussing what *would* happen if we *could* or *did* have it (habere *possemus*). On the question of whether the intellect is constitutive part of man, cf. Magee 1989, 141-149.

ty in the form of a “temporal flux”, one could, by analogy, “super-live” our life “in a block”, as a part of the four-dimensional space-time block of Minkowski.

To give some idea of what such a perception might be, I’d like to conclude by comparing two texts, one attributed to Mozart,<sup>115</sup> the other by Boethius:

My brain catches fire, especially if I am not disturbed. It grows, I develop it more and more, ever more clearly. The work is then finished in my skull, or really just as if, even if it is a long piece, and *I can embrace the whole in a single glance*, as if it were a painting or a statue. In my imagination, I do not hear the work in its flow, as it must appear in succession, but *I have the whole in one block*, as it were. What a gift! Invention, elaboration, all that happens within me as in a magnificent, grandiose dream, but when I manage to super-hear the assembled totality, that’s the best moment (...) it is perhaps the greatest benefit for which I must thank the Creator.

For as a craftsman, taking beforehand in his mind the form of the thing to be made, carries out the effect of his work, and leads it through the orders of time *what he had seen simply and in the mode of the present*, so God arranges the things that are to be made singly and stably through providence, but he administers the very things he has arranged through fate in a multiple, temporal way.<sup>116</sup>

Thanks to his genial intuition, Mozart (or his plagiarizer) was able to view his finished work all at once (cf. Boethius’ *uno ictu*<sup>117</sup>) in his mind, in a manner completely free of temporal succession. Similarly, Boethius’ craftsman first perceives the whole of his product simply and in a manner characteristic of the present (*praesentarie*), then sets about realizing this preconceived image within space and time. Boethius’ God acts in an analogous way: From the summit (*cacumen*) of his lofty vantage-point, God perceives, through his providence, the totality of the world’s occurrences as simultaneously present. He then realizes this divine plan in the spatio-temporal order by means of Fate, or the inexorable chain of causes and events. Yet fate has no

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<sup>115</sup> Cited by Jean and Brigitte Massin (1970, 474). The authenticity of this text, first published by Rochlitz in 1815, is subject to caution. I thank M. Thibault Damour for pointing out this reference to me.

<sup>116</sup> Boethius, *Cons.* 4.6.12: *Sicut enim artifex faciendae rei formam mente praecipiens mouet operis effectum et quod simpliciter praesentarieque prospexerat per temporales ordines ducit, ita deus prouidentia quidem singulariter stabiliterque facienda disponit, fato uero haec ipsa quae disposuit multipliciter ac temporaliter amministrat.* Cf. Proclus, *On Providence* 12, 65: “Your machine, which uses cylinders, pulleys and corporeal materials, did not exist corporeally in your foreknowledge, but here imagination contained, in an incorporeal and living way, the logos of what was to be, whereas the machine came into being corporeally, put together out of inner knowledge which was not such. If this is how things are in your creation, what would you say of the fore-knowledge of the gods, in which pre-exists what is, for us, is ineffable, truly indescribable and impossible to circumscribe...the gods know divinely and intemporally what depends on us, and we act as we naturally tend to do, and what we choose is foreknown to them, not by the term in us, but to the one in them”.

<sup>117</sup> The Latin *uno ictu* almost certainly corresponds to the Greek *haplêi epibolêi*. On the meaning of this expression in Proclus, cf. Roth 2008, 318f.



access to the innermost citadel of human freedom: while my act of walking may be determined by cause and effect, my decision to go for a walk is completely free of all determinism.<sup>118</sup>

While most contemporary advocates of the block-time view, including Einstein, seem content to accept that this perspective implies a universal determinism, Boethius thus suggests a possible way out. Only time,<sup>119</sup> or rather the notion of time, gives us the impression that divine omniscience implies predestination, with its concomitant assumptions of determinism and lack of human freedom. Through the study of the Late Neoplatonist philosophical curriculum, perhaps with the addition of divine grace, Boethius believes we can achieve the “View from above” that would allow us to view reality as it truly is in itself: timeless and eternal. Should we reach this goal, we will see that the alleged conflict between divine prescience and human free-will was as illusory, albeit just as persistent, as time itself.

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<sup>118</sup> Bächli 2001, 37f.; Bechtle 2006, 272–273.

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# TAKING THE STRICT ACCOUNT OF TECHNE SERIOUSLY: AN INTERPRETIVE DIRECTION IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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ABSTRACT: I argue that the strict account of techne agreed to by Socrates and Thrasymachus in *Republic I* provides a useful framework for addressing a central question of the dialogue as a whole: how philosophy might belong to the polis. This view depends upon three positions: 1) that Plato invites us to interpret the relationship between techne and polis outside the terms of the city-soul analogy, 2) that the strict account contributes to a compelling description of vocational work, and 3) that this description determines what Socrates means by a true polis, and thus frames the problem of philosophy's political inclusion.

KEYWORDS: Techne, Polis, Plato's *Republic*, Thrasymachus.

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The theme of the polis is the occasion for Socrates to investigate several topics in *Republic*. According to his most explicit methodological framework, Socrates treats the polis as a large surface upon which dim eyes can read the logos of justice, the proper place of which (443c) is the individual soul. The polis theme thus serves the needs of a peculiar sociological and psychological inquiry in which the discussion of society is something slightly more than a veiled discussion of the individual soul.<sup>1</sup> The relation of the city to the soul, however, is only part of the story. The topics of philosophical psychology and sociology are overtaken at the center of the text by a question about whether the whole of philosophy itself, as a vocational interest, belongs to the polis.

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<sup>1</sup> A concise account of how to analyze this relationship can be found in Ferrari 2005.

In the early books, the pursuit of this question already leads to a way of talking about the polis that clearly exceeds the terms of the city-soul analogy. The citizen-workers who are the sole inhabitants of the “true” city in book two are not merely an external manifestation of the appetitive or money-loving division of the soul. Even when Socrates considers this basic class of citizens as one part of a political unity, he does not understand them exclusively in terms of their procurement of material goods.<sup>2</sup> The *demiourgoi* also represent the way in which one properly belongs to a polis in general. In turn, belonging to the polis through one’s work is not merely an image for how psychological functions belong to the individual soul. Socrates’ investigation of this issue is already preparation for the central question of whether the philosopher can belong to the polis through philosophizing.

In *Republic*, the way in which one belongs to the polis is by having a techne.

Socrates will consider as technai the work of all three classes that make up his ideal city, as well that of the philosophers themselves. As Leo Strauss has noted, in *Republic* citizenship itself is equated with being a craftsman of one kind or another.<sup>3</sup> Provisionally, we can understand techne to mean job, task, and calling, according to it the range of meanings we can discern in “vocation.” Because it is by virtue of one’s techne that one belongs to the polis, the question of the philosopher’s political inclusion must be oriented by the analysis of the meaning of techne. The natural starting point for this analysis is the “strict account” of techne initiated by Thrasymachus in book one. While Socrates’ interest in “taming” Thrasymachus may suggest that he never actually assents to the positions he adopts during this discussion, we will try the experiment of taking the strict account in all philosophical seriousness. Socrates’ agreement to pursue this account, and his inquiry into its implications, lays the basis for his development of the polis theme throughout *Republic*, and, at its center, the question of philosophy’s political inclusion.

The strict account of techne is strict because it forces us to abandon commonsense interpretations of what it means to “have a job.” Normally, everyone speaks about technai as if they belong to people. Someone is a doctor or a cobbler because it is what she does. Her reasons for doing it, and doing it in the way she does, are only apparent when considered in the context of her personal motivations and the circumstances from which they arise. As against this ordinary way of speaking, the account considers doctors or cobblers exactly insofar as they are doctors and cobblers; it views the worker from the perspective of that which makes her a worker.

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<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Schofield (2006, 257) has precisely identified the point at which Socrates begins speaking of the producer class as concerned with money and material acquisition. This comes at 434a, directly before the partition of the soul, as if to prepare that class to function in the psychological discussion: “From then on, his way of identifying the third class is to talk of the business or money-making class...anticipating the specification of ‘gain-loving’ as one of the three species of human being in book 9.”

<sup>3</sup> Leo Strauss (1964, 79) provides citations showing that soldiers, philosophers, and even God appear as “artisans” in *Republic*.



This means that rather than understanding the *techne* within the context of personal motivations belonging to the worker, the account will only consider the worker insofar as she is motivated by the *techne*. In Thrasymachus' first statement controlled by the strict account, this focusing has a temporal sense. He will consider the worker to be a worker only *when* she is actually working, which means only when she is under the discipline of the *techne*:

According to the strict account...no one of the workers errs. For it is *when* his knowledge fails (abandons him) that the one erring errs – at which point he is not a worker; with the result that not one worker or expert or ruler errs *at the very time* when he is ruling, but everyone would say that the doctor erred and that the one ruling erred. (340e)<sup>4</sup>

At no point will Socrates challenge Thrasymachus' decision to view work as under the perfect guidance of knowledge. Instead, remaining within the parameters of the strict account, he uses the opportunity to focus on the kind of knowledge that a *techne* is. Such knowledge, says Socrates, stands in a particular relationship to the objects over which it is set. Each technical knowledge is organized so as “to seek and to furnish what is advantageous” for its subject matter (341d). The subject matter requires such attention because it is *πονηρὸν*, deficient or lacking in one respect or another. The *techne* itself, however, is not *πονηρὸν*. Its whole being consists in attending to the advantage of its object, and it does not seem to require the attention of yet another *techne* in order to achieve this more perfectly (342a). Clearly, Socrates cannot reasonably deny that other *technai* may furnish the tools or materials necessary for carrying out a certain job. His point is rather that in attending to the advantage of τὸ *πονηρὸν*, the *techne* itself “orders” those tools and materials (both in the sense of demanding and arranging). In this, the *techne* requires no technical assistance and is already as perfect as is possible. From this self-sufficiency of the *techne* and the standing-in-need of its subject matter, Socrates concludes that “the *technai* in fact rule over and are stronger than that of which they are the *technai*” (342c).

There is, of course, a well-known eristic context for this exchange. Thrasymachus introduces the strict account in order to defend his thesis that justice is the advantage of the stronger. His first full formulation of the thesis defines justice as obedience to rulers, who are stronger than the ruled, and are thus able to impose laws that serve their own interests. It is in response to Socrates' objection that rulers can make mistakes, thus enforcing laws contrary to their interests, that he first enforces the strict account. For him, its most important consequence is that all work, strictly considered, is constantly accompanied by knowledge, and thus essentially free of error. By carrying the account further, Socrates discovers that the ruling-ruled relation, which Thrasymachus understood as occurring between two distinct groups of people within the

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<sup>4</sup> The temporal interpretation of the genitive absolute (ἐπιλειπούσης γὰρ ἐπιστήμης) is justified by the following ὅταν. Throughout, I provide my own translations when something relevant to the argument is at stake in the Greek. Otherwise, I rely on G. M. A. Grube's translation, revised by C. D. C. Reeve (1992), indicating slight modifications as my own.

practice of a particular “ruling” *techne*, is a universal feature of *technai* as such. Thrasymachus’ definition of justice is now in jeopardy. If “ruling” in Thrasymachus’ sense is only a particular species of the ruling that belongs to all *technai*, and if this ruling is essentially concerned with attending to the advantage of what is weaker than itself, then a ruler (in the narrow sense), precisely insofar as he is in the possession of a *techne* (is “one of the workers”), is not guided by his own advantage.

In the development of the strict account, the argumentative fallout of Socrates’ position is not as important as its reinterpretation of interpersonal relationships as occurring within the *techne*’s relationship to *its own* subject matter. Socrates first introduces the topic of *techne* into the conversation through a similar maneuver. Before Thrasymachus’ intervention, the standing definition of justice was that attributed to Simonides: “it is just to give to each what is owed to him” (331e). Polemarchus, steered away from an economic interpretation by Socrates, comes to interpret the definition as meaning that I owe help to my friends and harm to my enemies. Socrates formulates the principle behind this interpretation to be: it is just to give to each what is appropriate to him (332c). Up to this point, the conversation has assumed that justice prescribes what owed or appropriate things one should give to *others*. Now, Socrates introduces *techne* into the discussion:

Then what do you think he’d answer if someone asked him: “Simonides, which of the things that are owed or that are appropriate for someone or something to have does the *techne* we call medicine give, and to whom or what does it give them?”

It’s clear that it gives medicines, food and drink to bodies.

And what owed or appropriate thing does the *techne* we call cooking give, and to whom or what does it give them?

It gives seasonings to food. Good.

Now, what does the *techne* we call justice give, and to whom or to what does it give it?

If we are to follow our previous answers, Socrates, it gives benefits to friends and does harm to enemies. (332b-d, Grube–Reeve. Translation modified.)

Polemarchus does not say that medicine gives health, which is owed or appropriate to the sick, or that cooking gives food, which is owed or appropriate to the hungry. The analysis he gives, and which Socrates approves, considers *technai* as giving what is owed or appropriate to the subject matter over which they are set. We expected to hear that cooking is a friend to the hungry, but have learned that it is a friend to unseasoned food. In the (ultimately ill-fated) attempt to treat justice as a *techne*, “friends” and “enemies” will occupy the structural position, not of the hungry or the sick, but of food and bodies: a subject matter, either a whom or a what, which is in some respect *πονηρὸν*, and to which the *techne* gives what is owed or appropriate.

In the strict account, Socrates will ground this indebtedness of the *techne* to its subject matter in an attitude of devoted focus that defines the worker as such.

No one in any position of rule [i.e. in the possession of a *techne*]<sup>5</sup>, insofar as he is ruling [i.e. working], either looks after or orders what is advantageous to himself but what is advantageous to what is being ruled and for which he would work, and looking (βλέπων) to that and to what is advantageous and suitable to it (τὸ ἐκείνῳ συμφέρον καὶ πρέπον), he says what he says, and does what he does, and so forth (342e).

This account is indeed implausible if it is taken to concern the psychological motives one might have for going to work. In her commentary on *Republic*, Julia Annas takes just such an approach, and accordingly finds Socrates' point of view "artificial," and "absurdly optimistic."<sup>6</sup> Both judgments are based on the fact that the account goes against our normal intuitions about why people work. On our interpretation, however, the strict account of *techne* does not concern the motives behind a *techne*, but rather the kind of looking internal to the accomplishment of the *techne* itself. It considers the worker, not as an individual who works, but precisely to the extent that her looking is brought under the discipline of a *techne*. The elimination of all motives except those grounded in securing the advantage of the subject matter is not the result of a reflection that "artificially" chooses to abstract from certain features of a concrete action. It is instead effected in the working itself. A *techne* is a knowhow that lives in the disciplined look of the working worker. Only to the extent that the speech and actions of the worker are guided by this disciplined looking do they enter into the work at all.

The passage at 342e is a description of *techne* in its living methodical accomplishment. The looking, for instance, that is in the possession of the sewing *techne* looks to the garment, which is in some way *πονηρὸν*: deficient, wanting or even completely lacking. It looks to this in terms of *what is advantageous for it* (τὸ συμφέρον). This means that in addition to looking to what is deficient (what is worked on) it looks to what is needed in order that this deficiency may be provided for (what is worked with). Looking to something is not the same as seeing something; it refers to what is salient, what calls for notice. Something's calling for notice follows strictly from its relevance for giving advantage to what is worked on. The garment (τὸ *πονηρὸν*) is damaged in this way and thus *requires* these needles, these stitches, etc. The sewer is distinguished from the non-sewer because she regulates her actions in strict accordance with such requirements as are discerned by this two-pronged look. The abstract knowledge she may have about methods and tools only testifies to her being in the possession of a *techne* if it was once called forth by live imperatives detected in the field of work itself.

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<sup>5</sup> The conversation (342c-d) leading up to this statement makes it absolutely clear that a "position of rule" means being in the possession of a *techne*, not being a "ruler" in the narrow, conventional, sense. Directly before stating his general principle, Socrates reminds Thrasymachus that "a doctor in the precise sense is a ruler of bodies" and "a ship's captain in the precise sense is a ruler of sailors."

<sup>6</sup> Julia Annas 1981, 47, 49.

The technical product or result (what is worked for) is also manifest in the field of work. It too appears strictly as fulfilling the requirements of the deficient subject matter, not external human interests. Socrates does indeed hold it essential to a techne that it prove capable of producing a useful result. Already, in his first discussion of technai with Polemarchus (333a), he assumed that the individual in the possession of a techne is a useful individual, someone who can be a good partner or offer help. In the strict account, he introduces this aspect of techne in a more precise fashion:

Don't we say that each of the technai is different from the others in that each has a different power (δύναμιν)?...Therefore each renders (παρέχεται) to us some distinctive service (ὠφελίαν) but not one that is common, for example doctoring the service of health, and piloting the service of safety at sea. (346a)

We have seen that each techne looks to τὸ πονηρὸν in terms of τὸ ζυμφέρον, what it requires. Everything the worker says and does she says and does under the guidance of this looking. Each techne also possesses a distinctive δύναμις in accordance with which it produces an ὠφελία.<sup>7</sup> But the worker at work does not *look to* the result interpreted as a service (ὠφελία); her work renders it up (παρέχεται).

We can clarify this distinction between the product seen as a service and the product seen as the advantage of a deficient subject matter by way of an example. Early in his discussion with Thrasymachus (341e), when he is trying to establish techne as a form of rule over τὸ πονηρὸν, Socrates says that the doctoring art was discovered in order to provide for the deficiency of the body by seeking its advantage. Now, when he is explaining the place of ὠφελία (346a), he identifies the service of doctoring as “health.” Within the structural analysis of the medical techne, are not the advantage (τὸ ζυμφέρον) of the deficient body (τὸ πονηρὸν) and health (ὠφελία) one and the same? They do indeed refer to the same object: the human body as healthy. For the one doctoring, however, the healthy body is never salient as something serviceable in the sense that it satisfies a human need or requirement.

Whatever appreciation the doctor may have for the healthy body as a source of happiness or vitality, it is not to this that she looks in her work. To the doctor in the strict sense, the healthy body does not appear as something someone needs or requires. And this holds whether she is working on herself or on someone else. The look under the discipline of the techne only apprehends the healthy body as something πονηρὸν, which thus has *its own requirements* to which the indebted technician must respond. One in the possession of the sewing techne does not look to the garment as something providing warmth, protection, or concealment. It is the wearer of the garment who looks to these things, and it is not the special business of the sewer to put herself in the wearer's place. The sewer's knowledge that warm gar-

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<sup>7</sup> Socrates will distinguish the δύναμις of each techne on the basis of the ὠφελία that it makes possible. This is in accordance with his general doctrine of powers that he lays out while considering the epistemic possibilities of the soul (477c).

ments are a help to cold people is in fact incidental to the knowledge that defines her craft and makes her a sewer.<sup>8</sup>

It is according to this technical distinction between τὸ πονηρὸν and its τὸ ξυμφέρον, on the one hand, and ὠφελεία on the other, that we should understand the famous exchange between Socrates and Thrasymachus about shepherding. Having listened to Socrates demonstrate how the strict account implies that every worker is interested solely in the advantage of the weaker thing over which his *techne* rules, Thrasymachus, accusing Socrates of naïveté, attempts to root the worker's self-interest in his directedness toward the anticipated product of his work. Thrasymachus' shepherd only "seeks the good" of his sheep in "looking to" (βλέποντας) the good of his master and himself (343b). In the eyes of the shepherd, everything he so carefully works on and works with is taken up into an encompassing concern for the satisfaction provided by the product. Mediating social relationships may mean that this product directly satisfies people other than the shepherd himself (indeed, Thrasymachus speaks of the shepherd's master). But every worker, insofar as he is in the possession of a *techne*, attends to his work only because he is first of all attending to his own satisfaction. At the highest level of abstraction from his product's use-value, this would mean that he looks to make money. Socrates' response, which is where he first introduces the terms δύναμις and ὠφελεία into the account (346a), amounts to an insistence on the technical suspension of all personal interests:

Shepherding is concerned only to provide what is best for the things it is set over, and it is itself adequately provided with all it needs to be at its best when it doesn't fall short in any way of being the *techne* of shepherding. That's why I thought it necessary for us to agree before that every kind of rule, insofar as it rules, *does not seek anything other* than what is best for the things it rules and cares for... (345d Grube-Reeve, modified with my emphasis)

This approach to *techne* does not, as Strauss for instance supposes, imply the thesis that the genuine worker is altruistic. Strauss points out that in the paradigmatic case of statecraft, Socrates claims that the rulers rule by looking to the advantage of the ruled. It seems natural, then, that we should recognize concern for others as a general feature of all *technai*: "For the artisan in the strict sense proves to be concerned not with his own advantage, but with the advantage of the others whom he serves: the shoemaker makes shoes for others and only accidentally for himself; the physician prescribes things to his patients with a view to their advantage." The artisan in the strict sense, he concludes, "is only concerned with the well-being of oth-

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<sup>8</sup> In his study of *Republic*, Leon Craig (2003, 163) writes of a basic "conflict of interest" between the craftsman and the consumer. The craftsman wants money, and the consumer wants quality. Such an observation belongs to a psychology of economics. Within the strict account of *techne*, however, we may speak of a deeper conflict of interest between the worker and the consumer. The worker at work is interested in products solely as fulfilling the needs of the worked-on subject matter. The consumer is interested in them as serving human needs.

ers.”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the strongest evidence in the strict account for Strauss’ interpretation is a passage often translated to the effect that “no doctor, insofar as he is a doctor, looks after or orders what is advantageous to the doctor, but what is advantageous to *the patient*” (342d my emphasis). Does this not show that Socrates’ technician, precisely insofar as he is guided by his disciplined look, looks after others?

When we consider the passage in context, another interpretation suggests itself. This comment about doctoring occurs within a list of examples by which Socrates hopes to illustrate that no *techne* seeks the advantage of *anything else* other than that of which it is the *techne* (342b). Medicine, says Socrates, considers the advantage only of *the body*, horsemanship only that of *horses*, etc. (342c). These subject matters, these things of which each respective *techne* is the *techne*, are what technical knowledge “rules over” (342c). Having established this, he now asks Thrasymachus about the doctor once more: “Then, isn’t it the case that no doctor, insofar as he is a doctor, looks after or orders what is advantageous to the doctor but to τὸ κάμνοντι [literally: what is sick]? For the doctor in the precise sense was agreed to be a *ruler of bodies*” (342d, my emphasis). To drive home his point, Socrates then asks Thrasymachus the same question about the captain, who has been strictly defined as “a ruler of sailors”(342d). Such a man looks after the advantage “of the man who is a sailor and is ruled.” (342d). On the basis of these cases Socrates now states that no one in the possession of a *techne* looks after or orders his own advantage, but the advantage of that which his *techne* rules. Clearly, the participial phrase τὸ κάμνοντι refers to the sick body, the designated subject of medical rule.

For Socrates, what is worked for is what is worked on. The only advantage *looked to* by a *techne* is that of its subject matter, the deficient object over which it properly rules. In certain cases, such as captaining or statecraft, Socrates formally identifies this subject matter with human beings considered in some particular respect. But in the case of shoemaking, for instance, the object whose advantage is sought is the shoe itself, not other people (and accidentally the shoemaker himself) insofar as they require shoes. Thrasymachus understands Socrates’ intent well enough. The latter, he says, is under the delusion that shepherds ultimately look to the good of *the sheep* rather than the good that may come to themselves and their masters. He does not accuse Socrates of believing that shepherds look after the advantage of the hungry and the cold. The thesis that Thrasymachus challenges Socrates to defend is not that technical accomplishment is altruistic, but rather that it does not look to its ὠφελεία, its product understood as a fulfillment of human needs or interests.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Strauss 1964, 79.

<sup>10</sup> We can see why Socrates’ attempt to posit wage-earning as a distinct *techne*, which can operate concurrently with all the others, raises difficult structural issues for the strict account. If wages are the service of wage-earning, then what might its deficient subject matter be? By categorizing wage-earning as a *techne*, Socrates rules out the possibility that the wage-earner, insofar as he is a wage-earner, looks after his own interests, or those of anyone else.

The rigorous separation between τὸ πονηρὸν and ὠφελεία indicates that a techne becomes what it is under a suspension that sets it off from engagement with human interests. My being in the possession of a techne does not imply anything about my interest in helping others or in helping myself. The strict account of techne does not break work apart into an abstract knowledge and an application of that knowledge as determined by the “moral character” of the worker. Someone who uses “her skills” or “her knowledge” in order to satisfy a personal need or damage the object of work is not, to that very extent, working. She is outside the discipline of techne. When technical vision looks into the dimension of human interests, it will do so only insofar as these figure in the field of work defined by τὸ πονηρὸν and its τὸ ζυμώρον. The looking itself is not engaged by these interests. For it, the ὠφελεία has no salience. Questions about self-interest and altruism are not relevant in a reflection on the worker in the strict sense imposed by the account. Indeed, there is a kind of inhumanity about the technician. She is not interested in the benefits that accrue to the community through her work because she responds solely to the work-object itself. Yet, in this very devotion, she is of value to the community, a good partner.

This being the case, we are left to wonder how the categories δύναμις and ὠφελεία enter into the rigorous analysis of techne. First with Polemarchus (333a) and then again with Thrasymachus (346a), Socrates conducts the pedestrian exercise of listing off the powers and services of various technai. The method involved here is based on the simple perception of use-values within a given social context. Educated perception already understands products as such, i.e. as the result of human activities and as meant for specific uses. From here, one can explicitly identify various serviceable products as the result of various productive activities, thereby understanding the social value of the activities themselves. One thus sees how the various technai fit into the life of a community. For the acculturated adult, an exercise like this is child’s play. Socrates has his interlocutors carry it out in a removed overview of technai, not by an inward consideration of technical looking in the manner imposed by the strict account. So the question remains as to whether and how the δύναμις and ὠφελεία become present for the worker in the strict sense.

When Socrates conducts the pedestrian exercise in the identification δύναμις and ὠφελεία in the case of various technai, he speaks as someone imbedded in a particular social world in which people go to work at useful things. Of course, this understanding of how any given techne “fits-into” the whole of social life is not the sole prerogative of administrative reflection. It also functions as an interpretive background available in the work itself. But if the suspension of personal interests carried out by the worker at work takes place against an interpretive background in which the product of work remains comprehensible as an ὠφελεία, is not the basic point Thrasymachus wanted to make about workers still valid? Perhaps he misspoke in claiming that the shepherd, as such, looks only to the advantage of his master and himself; but he nonetheless understands his work within a context of human interests. Since Socrates has no doctrine of altruism to oppose to Thrasymachus, should

we not admit that once we have taken this context into account, each will pursue self-interest (broadly understood) so far as she is able?

It was precisely in order to appeal to such a context of interest that Thrasymachus first introduced the concept of the polis into the discussion. Until that point (338d), Socrates and his interlocutors had considered justice as the source of norms for individual behavior without considering its function in collective life. Thrasymachus wants to address justice within a critical political economy that takes the polis as its primary unit of analysis. His polis is a context of struggle between rulers and ruled in which each worker-citizen with open eyes understands everything in terms of self-interest. It is by appropriating the polis theme that Socrates will extend the strict account of *techne* into the dimension of technical δύναμις and ὠφελεία.

When we follow Socrates here, we adopt a highly artificial perspective on the polis. It is not in view as a complex sociological phenomenon, but solely as a community of workers in the strict sense. Just as one is permitted to understand obviously unrealistic aspects of Socrates' political descriptions by anticipating that the polis functions as the soul writ large, so can we also understand them within the methodological context determined by the search for the proper interpretation of δύναμις and ὠφελεία. For this inquiry, the polis is under consideration strictly as a coordination of *technai* in terms of their serviceability and correlative power. Strauss observes that "when Socrates speaks about the primary needs which bring men together, he mentions food, housing, and clothing but is silent about procreation. He speaks only of those natural needs which are satisfied by means of arts...He abstracts from procreation in order to be able to understand the city as an association of artisans..."<sup>11</sup> It is not some inattentiveness to the facts of city life that causes Socrates to present the polis in this fashion. He is rather concerned with the fitting together of *technai* themselves in order to approach the particularly problematic case of philosophy.

Each polis of *Republic* is a coordination of *technai* considered on such a scale that it serves no further technical goal.<sup>12</sup> Because of this lack of an external aim, the polis can function as a work-world from whose horizon the serviceability of *techne* becomes understandable in a unique form. The doctor, for instance, may understand herself as a hospital worker, or a functionary of healthcare as a whole, thus situating her work within a broader cooperation of *technai* guided by its attendance to an enlarged subject matter. But if she were to understand herself as a polis-worker, she would interpret her work as accomplishing nothing other than the polis itself as a coordination of *technai*. To achieve a political understanding of one's *techne* would be to understand why, apart from the production of any particular result, one coordinates one's work with that of others at all. The enumeration of technical services

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<sup>11</sup> Strauss 1964, 95-6.

<sup>12</sup> Only under this definition does the polis make sense as the appropriate analogy for the tripartite soul in the consideration of justice. When the individual soul is investigated as an articulated whole, it is from the perspective of its inward ordering, not the goal at which it aims.



and powers that Socrates attempts with Polemarchus and Thrasymachus is a way of distinguishing technai from one another. It does not consider the criterion of serviceability that makes the various services serviceable. Such a consideration can only occur from the perspective of the polis as a whole, or for the citizen who makes herself responsible for that perspective. It will remain for Glaucon and Adeimantus to discover the principle of technical serviceability. They do so through the building of cities.

If the polis were not a context that already encompasses every work-world, each worker, in “going to work,” could choose to bring her working capabilities and products into relation with those of others for the first time. In making this choice, she might understand why it was important to go to work in the polis at all. She would thus gain insight into the originating principle (ἀρχή) of the polis as a coordination of technai. In *Republic*, we have privileged access to this principle because Socrates and his interlocutors build their cities in speech. Their words are the source of its very origination. Socrates and his pupils will not only carry out their work as founders in accordance with this ἀρχή, at key points they will also reflect upon it as an explicit theme, and attempt to formulate it. Glaucon and Adeimantus, the builders of these cities, have just provided a trenchant justification for Thrasymachus’ political economy of self-interest, a justification from which they want to be dissuaded. The discussion regarding the ἀρχή of the polis will thus proceed by distinguishing the true principle of city construction from a pseudo-principle, with which it is initially confused. Only a polis constructed according to the true ἀρχή will prove capable of including the philosophical vocation according to its proper ὠφελεία and δύναμις.

It is according to the pseudo-principle that Socrates and Adeimantus explicitly construct the first city of *Republic*. Though this polis will contain both justice and injustice (369a), Socrates guides Adeimantus into understanding its foundation according to the following ἀρχή:

Well then, a polis is born, as I suppose, since it happens that each of us is not self-sufficient, but in need of many things – or do you mean to found the polis in some other principle?... Indeed, then, one seeking out another for one need (χρεία), and another for another, we, needful of many things (πολλῶν δεόμενοι), assemble in one dwelling place, many partners and allies – for this dwelling together we established the name “polis.”...Indeed, one man gives a share to another, another to another, if he gives something or receives it, *believing it to be better for himself*. Come then, let us make a polis in speech from this principle. Our need (χρεία), as it seems, will make it. (369b-c)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> We translate ἀρχή as “principle” or “originating principle,” rather than “beginning.” The ultimate justification for this decision comes in book IV at 433b-c, when Socrates, referring to their city-building in book two, says εὐθὺς ἀρχόμενοι τῆς πόλεως οἰκίζεῖν κατὰ θεόν τινα εἰς ἀρχὴν τε καὶ τύπον τινὰ τῆς δικαιοσύνης κινδυνεύομεν ἐμβεβηκέναι. “Immediately upon our beginning to construct the polis, we happen, with the help of some god, to have hit upon something of a principle and blueprint of justice.” The precise part of the conversation to which Socrates here refers is most likely 370b, where Socrates first introduces the idea that

It is because human beings are naturally πολλῶν δεόμενοι that each goes to work in the context of the polis. It is as if each pre-political worker were to say to herself: I can better fulfill my own multifarious need (χρεία) by entering into commerce with others than by attempting to accomplish this on my own. Each worker uses the polis for his own purposes. The founders themselves act according to this motive. Socrates and Adeimantus will construct the polis according to *their need*, conjuring into being the workers capable of fulfilling it.

In such an understanding of the polis, the virtue of the division of labor is that each can better fulfill his own needs through the mediation of exchange. Specialization, says Socrates, results in “more plentiful and better quality goods” (370c). Each goes to work in her own field because the ὠφελεία she thereby renders will better fulfill the needs of others and, ultimately, her own. Others are partners and allies for me in my fulfillment of my own needs. The political δύναμις of work lies in its ability to procure this fulfillment. The principle governing the coordination of technai is thus economic in nature. Economics is the secret of political association. Each worker will understand her fitting into or belonging to the polis because she knows that her needs, whether basic or extravagant,<sup>14</sup> bind her to the work and needs of others. A polis is essentially a need-coordinating mechanism. This conception conforms perfectly to Thrasymachus’ account of technical accomplishment. Socrates himself will assert that every existing polis of which he is aware has been built up according to this principle of association. The principle is completely at odds, however, with Socrates’ own account of the citizen-worker in the strict sense.

The true ἀρχή of the polis (or the ἀρχή of the true polis – 422e) is political justice itself, defined as doing that task for which one is by nature suited (433a). A true polis is not a need coordinating mechanism, but a vocational horizon. The coordination of technai serves to free vocational work from the material interests of life and allows it to become an end in itself. Already in the construction of the first city, Socrates shows that the political division of labor responds to concerns other than the effi-

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the polis affords each the opportunity to carry out a single task (ἔργον) to which he is by nature suited.

<sup>14</sup> The admission of extravagant needs or luxurious products into the polis is the result of Glaucon’s intervention that begins at 372c. Socrates consents to building a luxurious city only after remarking that the “true” or “healthy” city is the one constructed to satisfy modest or basic needs. Of course, it is in the attempt to satisfy these multiplying needs that the founders confront the necessity of war, and thus of training the guardians that will ultimately require a philosophical education. This distinction between the healthy and feverish cities, and the development through which the later is ultimately reformed, are important features of polis-construction in *Republic*. However, we must not confuse this issue with the more basic problem animating the polis-construction. This is to distinguish the true ἀρχή of the polis, which will indicate the definition of justice. Socrates clearly holds that the construction of the first (moderate) city already allows for a research into its justice *and injustice* (371e). He reacts to Glaucon’s complaint that he has built a city fit only for pigs by saying that studying a luxurious city will *also* serve the purposes of such a research (372e).

cient production of high-quality products. It is right for each citizen-worker to perform one task, not only because it will yield a greater quantity of better goods, but because it gives expression to the diversity of human nature and because each worker is one person, not many (370b). Later (423d), Socrates will assert that the worker *becomes one* by doing the one task for which she is suited. It is in order to be able to undertake this kind of work that one would enter in the polis in the first place. Each *techne* has a δύναμις and ὠφελεία insofar as it frees up each worker for dedication to her own vocational work.

Farming is not serviceable because it satisfies the potter who is happy eating corn. The happiness that comes from the fulfillment of multifarious need is not political happiness. Those called potters may be happy eating corn and those called farmers dining on fine china. It is possible to construct a “city” in this fashion, but then “a farmer wouldn’t be a farmer, nor a potter a potter, and none of the other schemas of work, from which a polis is born, will at all hold up” (421a). The strictness of Socrates’ account of the polis as a coordination of *technai* is here quite evident. If one “is talking about farmers and banqueters who are happy as they would be at a festival rather than in a polis, then he isn’t talking about a polis at all, but about something else” (421b, Grube–Reeve. Translation modified). Geographically speaking, a festival may be in a city. For the strict account, it is in principle an extra-political affair. To enter into the polis by going to work is precisely to renounce the self-interested directedness towards χρεία. The aim of the city is not consumption,<sup>15</sup> but the life of production itself: vocational repayment of debts to τὸ πονηρὸν. Each *techne*, no matter the nature of its product, renders a service and exercises a correlative power because it contributes to a thriving vocational life for all. The polis exists in order that each might be able to pursue her own work.

It is the law of the polis that upholds this founding principle. The function of law, says Socrates, consists in

harmonizing the citizens by persuasion and constraint, making them give a share of service (τῆς ὠφελίας) by which each would be able to serve (ὠφελεῖν) the community, and when it introduces such people into the polis, it does so not in order that each be allowed to go to work at whatever each wants, but in order that it may dispatch them for the binding together of the polis. (519e-520a)

The citizen-worker does not first of all belong to the polis and then experience the law. It is the law itself that introduces and dispatches her into the polis. In turning to one’s own work out of obedience to the law, and thus understanding one’s *techne* from the perspective of the polis as a whole, one becomes a citizen. Socrates

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<sup>15</sup> Multifarious need naturally needs to be fulfilled within the polis. The life of need fulfillment is not eradicated. It does, however, become a subordinate part within the functioning of the polis as a whole (just as the appetitive part of the tripartite soul is inside the psychological whole). Needs need to be satisfied because they fulfill conditions necessary for the self-realization of the community according to its originating principle.

usually describes the politically incorporated techne as an ἔργον, which readily translates as work or job. But for work to be political work, for it to be a “vocation of the city” (433a), it must contribute to the proper functioning of the whole. ἔργον thus means assigned task or function. An ἔργον is assigned by the law that enforces the just arrangement of the political whole. By having and fulfilling one’s techne as an ἔργον, one upholds the shape, or the formal constitution (πολιτεία) of the polis.

The question of philosophy’s political inclusion will be posed according to the terms generated by the strict account of techne. Focused engagement (τὸ βλέπειν) in philosophical matters will have to render up an ὠφελεία that harmonizes the community as a whole, thus exercising a political δύναμις within the polis. Philosophy must come to experience its work as an ἔργον in response to an imperative that has the force of a justly imposed law. Only thus will the philosopher become a genuine citizen who contributes to and obeys the πολιτεία. This is what it would mean for philosophy to be included in the polis.

The difficulties associated with this inclusion all stem from the purely theoretical nature of the vision that guides philosophical work. The one who is a philosopher in the strict sense, says Socrates (500c), has no leisure to look toward the practical affairs of human beings (βλέπειν εἰς ἀνθρώπων πραγματείας). It is striking to note that Socrates will consider the impracticability of philosophy as a problem *within* the structural analysis of techne provided by the strict account. Philosophy is also a techne. It is unique, he says, because it

attempts to grasp, concerning everything, according to a methodical route, what each is. All the other technai are either oriented toward the opinions and desires of human beings or toward generation and composition or toward tending to what is being grown and composed – each and every techne being turned toward its work. (533b)

The central books of *Republic* grapple with the difficulties of philosophy’s political inclusion by reflecting on the philosopher as a figure in a hypothetical city. We only enhance our appreciation of these reflections by bearing in mind the structural level of analysis introduced by the strict account of techne. At this level, “the philosopher” is not a psychologically and socially motivated individual who also practices philosophy, but an individual exactly insofar as she is involved in the actual attending that makes of her a philosopher. The structural question is whether *that life*, which lives solely in its orientation to the field of work proper to philosophy, can comprehend its power and serviceability within a social world. Conceiving philosophy’s inclusion in the polis is not a matter of showing how purely theoretical interests remain connected to a broader social context because the philosopher too is a needful human being, with a body that wants rest, food, shelter, companionship, etc. This is surely a sociological fact, albeit an uninteresting one. However, according to the strict accounts of techne and polis, the body of the philosopher would only live

and sleep in the city if her vocational life, according to its own interests and motives, fits into the community.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In *Theaetetus*, Socrates, comparing the philosopher to the “practical man,” asserts that “only the body of the philosopher lives and sleeps in the polis” (173e). His mind, concerned with philosophical things, has no business there. This way of looking at things assumes the commonsense perspective that the polis is a need coordinating mechanism, and addresses the problem of philosophy’s political inclusion on that basis. According to the strict account of *Republic*, however, one does not belong to a polis because her needs motivate her to settle in the vicinity of others.

# АКТУАЛЬНОСТЬ ИДЕЙ ПРОКЛА ДИАДОХА В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ КУЛЬТУРЕ

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THE IDEAS OF PROCLUS DIADOCHUS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO MODERN CULTURE

**ABSTRACT:** The paper defends the thesis that Proclus Diadochus' ideas are still relevant in modern culture. It appears that the ideas of Neoplatonism as a whole and these of Proclus' in particular matter at least in some aspects of modern culture (or 'sets of ideals and norms'), such as the foundations of politics, the basic characteristics of philosophy and the fundamental aspects of understanding of the human existence. In the sphere of politics, one can note the ideas useful for creating of the non-totalitarian forms of ideology. In contemporary philosophy (esp. the phenomenological line of investigations) the Neoplatonic studies can be interpreted as one of the bases (or 'sources') of understanding of rational knowledge. The ideals of material harmony (true beauty) are essential for understanding of the human existence.

**KEYWORDS:** Athens, Neoplatonism, Proclus, contemporary philosophy, ideology, human existence, culture.

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Афинский неоплатонизм (Плутарх Афинский, Сириан, Прокл, Дамаский и др.) – одно из последних ярких проявлений античной мысли. Именно в рамках данной школы нашло свое историческое завершение тысячелетнее развитие греческой философии. Представители школы сформировали целостную картину мира, активно (хотя уже все более в сфере идей, нежели в области конкретных действий) конкурировавшую с набравшим к V веку силу христианским богословием.

Афинский неоплатоники, создав системы, обобщавшие и поднимавшие на уровень философской рефлексии образы традиционной мифологии, выдвинули в целом мироутверждающие положения. Этим разработки афинского неоплатонизма выгодно отличаются от другого соперника христианства в эпо-

ху раннего средневековья, такого как гностицизм (Афонасин 2003, 176–212). Гностицизм (во всяком случае, языческий), будучи, с одной стороны, логическим завершением общеантичных установок (например, противопоставления интеллигибельного и материального), с другой стороны, предлагал последовательно пессимистический подход к пониманию действительности. Вместе с тем актуализировались призывы к скорейшему разрушению материального мира как мира зла, и в этом аспекте гностицизм раскрывал возможности выхода за пределы смыслового универсума античности. В свою очередь неоплатоники, занимая более сдержанную позицию, видели в материальном мире дефицит проявленности умозрительного Блага, но надежд на возвращения к Благу как таковому не отвергали.

В связи со всем этим, равно как и с тем, что афинский неоплатонизм долгое время находился в относительном забвении и лишь в последнее время стал предметом тщательного анализа, не вызывает сомнений историко-философская актуальность изучения афинского неоплатонизма. Так, А. Ф. Лосев замечает:

После Плотина Прокл – самая крупная фигура во всем четырехвековом неоплатонизме. Да и Плотину он уступает только в новизне и оригинальности своих идей, поскольку Плотин созидал новую систему философии, Прокл же только углублял и детализировал эту систему. Однако в этом последнем отношении он безусловно превосходит Плотина; и это превосходство резко бросается в глаза в связи с огромной аналитической силой его ума, большим разнообразием его интересов, мастерством микроскопических исследований отвлеченнейшего логического предмета, а также в отношении тончайшего философско-филологического вникания в текст Платона, куда нужно прибавить еще очень четкий философский язык, местами доходящий до изложения в виде геометрических теорем и доказательств и часто удивляющий какой-то юридической отчеканенностью выставляемых положений (Лосев 2000, 30).

В то же время для авторов, ориентированных на проблемы современности (этика, политика, теория познания, онтология и т. д.), актуальность идей Прокла менее очевидна. Со времен эпохи Просвещения в науке принято опираться на идею прогресса, искать прогресс в результатах исследований, а значит, отказывать более раннему знанию в ценности относительно более позднего. Именно такие воззрения обнаруживаются и в рамках позиции многих современных авторов, ориентированных на актуальные дискуссии и пролагающие малоинтересными размышления, реализованные в прошлом.

Показательными в этой связи выглядят следующие слова Р. Рорти (высказанные, правда, в несколько другом контексте):

Время от времени я натывался в философских журналах на сложные и запутанные проблемы – из разряда тех, которые возбуждают огромный интерес и в то же время столь незнакомы, что я не знал, что и думать о них. Я чувствовал, что мой моральный долг – познакомиться со встретившейся проблемой и разработать свой, альтернативный, способ ее разрешения. Иногда чувство вины за неисполненное про-

должало мучить меня на протяжении пяти-десяти лет, хотя я так ничего и не делал, чтобы облегчить это чувство. В конце концов, однако, я часто обнаруживал, что проблема, которую я игнорировал, испытывая муки совести, исчезла с философской сцены, что никто из моих коллег больше не работает над ее решением и что нет никакого упоминания о ней в философских журналах. Тогда я поздравлял себя с разумной предусмотрительностью и приходил к мнению, что поступал достаточно мудро, ожидая исчезновения проблемы, правильно угадав ее эфемерность (Рорти 1997, xvii; пер. В. В. Целищева).

Именно в изживании «псевдопроблем», ориентации на проблемы позитивные, решение которых позволяет приращивать знание, видится нам одна из важных примет современной эпохи. Не миновали такие установки и философии. В современных условиях, во времена господства аналитической линии англо-американских исследований (а с ней и обновленных вариаций позитивизма) мысль «мертвой» эпохи (поздней античности) *a priori* как будто не может иметь силу. Необходимо ориентироваться на современную литературу, современные идеи, и тогда можно внести вклад в решение проблем общества и культуры.

Верна ли такая точка зрения в абсолютном смысле? Как представляется, полностью согласиться с ней мешает одно очень важное обстоятельство. Самая суть философии, ее «протоархе», если угодно, заключает в себе идею о том, что значимость философских открытий (выдвижение и разработка идей, их реализация, проверка и т. д.) обнаруживается обычно *post factum*. Так, разработки И. Канта были адекватно поняты и оценены спустя более полувека с его смерти. Как представляется, общим правилом для философии выступает именно то, что оценка философских идей требует временной дистанции.

В этом контексте раскрывается проблематика нашего исследования. Мы полагаем, что идеи Прокла (и вообще неоплатонизма афинского толка) актуальны в современной культуре. Причем идеи Прокла оказываются актуальны не только в качестве исторического факта, но и в отношении жизненных сил современной эпохи (понимая «современную эпоху» предельно широко, как новое и новейшее время).

Аргументация тезиса об актуальности идей Прокла в современной культуре исходно может быть выстроена в рамках указания связи идей, высказанных Проклом, с диалектическими исследованиями (в частности, исследованиями Г. Гегеля и его последователей). Так, А. Ф. Лосев замечает:

Теоретическая основа философии Прокла та же, что и у других неоплатоников, то есть это есть учение о трех универсальных ипостасях – едином, уме и душе – с воплощением этих трех ипостасей на одном универсальном теле, космосе... Нам представляется, что те диалектические триады, которыми оперирует философия нового времени и прежде всего Гегель, в значительной мере приближаются к такому пониманию диалектической триады у Прокла (Лосев 2000, 68).



Из этого ясно, что между позициями Гегеля и Прокла есть существенное сходство. Но есть и важное различие. А. Ф. Лосев полагает следующее:

...диалектический метод, как он формулируется с легкой руки Гегеля, часто трактуется как весьма абстрактная схема, а именно как разделение и соединение отвлеченных понятий, и только. Ничего общего с этим не имеет диалектика Прокла. У этого философа диалектика в первую очередь является исканием *истины*, а также и ее нахождением. В силу этой причины диалектика всегда говорит о красоте и *сама является красотой*, божественной красотой. А в таком случае она есть также и *любовь* к истине и красоте, и в этом отношении несравнима ни с какими другими методами философии (Лосев 2000, 69).

Нетрудно увидеть, что в рамках позиций Прокла и Гегеля, с одной стороны, наблюдается акцент на триадах (единое – ум – душа у Прокла; тезис – антитезис – синтез у Гегеля), которые обнаруживаются в основах развития сущего. С другой стороны, можно отметить, что в работах Гегеля отстаивается позиция, согласно которой диалектическое движение понятий ведется от абстрактного к конкретному (в целом от Абсолютной Идеи к Абсолютному Духу). В рамках неоплатонической традиции, напротив, прослеживается относительная деградация (выхолащивание, абстрагирование) Единого при его переходе к более низким ступеням.

В связи с этим указание на методологическое сходство неоплатонических построений и современных (идущих от Гегеля) диалектических изысканий не может служить достаточным основанием для актуализации идей Прокла Диалога в современной культуре (а точнее в культуре нового и новейшего времени).

В то же время именно вывод о расхождении неоплатонического триадизма и современной диалектики парадоксальным образом указывает на незадействованный потенциал некоторых неоплатонических идей. Хорошо известны упреки наследников гегелевской линии со стороны либеральных мыслителей в том, что именно стремление подвести сущее под единый («историцистский») принцип диалектического развития лежит в основе тоталитарных учений XX века. Так, К. Поппер замечает:

В наше время [30-40е годы XX века – С. К.] гегелевский истерический историцизм все еще оплодотворяет современный тоталитаризм и помогает ему быстро расти. Использование его подготовило почву для образования слоя интеллигенции, склонного к интеллектуальной нечестности... Мы должны извлечь из этого урок, заключающийся в том, что интеллектуальная честность является фундаментом всего, чем мы дорожим (Поппер 1992, 72; пер. под ред. В. Н. Садовского).

Из всего этого становится ясно, что альтернативная точка зрения, которую представляет Прокл, имеет значение в отношении конституирования идеологии нетоталитарного общества. В общем плане Прокл замечает следующее:

Стало быть, на основании сказанного необходимо сделать вот какие выводы: многое участвует в едином; единое не смешивается с множеством; нет ничего лучшего, чем единое, и, напротив, именно оно и будет причиной бытия многого, так как все, лишаящееся единого, сразу же устремляется в небытие и к собственной гибели. Немногое же сущее не будет не только не-многим, но и чем бы то ни было вообще. Действительно, бытию единым противоположно бытие ничем, а, в свой черед, бытию многим – бытие не-многим. Стало быть, поскольку единое и многое не тождественны друг другу, не-многое и ничто также не тождественны (*Платоновская теология*, II, 14, 8–17; Прокл 2001, 106; пер. Л. Ю. Лукомского).

В связи со всем этим построения Прокла можно понять так, что триадизм будет совпадать с выходом на символическое единство сущего, которое внешним образом представляет собой мифологическое разнообразие (в смысле множества мифологических образов). В каждом из этих образов базовое единство проявляется только символически (в рамках общности смысловых структур). Реальным остается несводимость к тотальному единству.

В качестве общей иллюстрации сформулированных положений можно привести особое понимание «божественной» природы числа. В интерпретации Прокла единицы (точнее, «единства») являются базисом, который разделяется на локальные единства. Прокл замечает:

...если существует множество богов, то множество это единично. Однако ясно, что оно существует, если только всякая изначальная причина управляет собственным множеством, подобным его и сродным (*Первоосновы теологии*, II, 113; Прокл 1993, 84; пер. А. А. Тахо-Годи).

Точно так же следует сказать и о любом обществе, в котором отдельные люди создают институты, не растворяясь в этих институтах до конца. Естественно, что в данном отношении таких людей нет оснований понимать в качестве действительных богов. Но и полностью лишать их творческого начала тоже нет необходимости.

Итак, особенности традиций мысли, обнаруживаемые в рамках неоплатонизма и в современной версии диалектики, раскрывают как расхождения в философско-методологическом отношении, так и пересечения в социально-философском плане. Можно заключить, что неоплатонизм, как минимум с точки зрения философии политики, поразительно актуален в современной культуре.

Не менее выигрышным является сравнение неоплатонических построений с феноменологическими разработками Э. Гуссерля. Так, может быть выявлено терминологическое родство, в особенности явное при соотнесении идей Э. Гуссерля и некоторых средневековых интерпретаций неоплатонизма (Харанаули 1990). В этом отношении средневековый грузинский комментатор Прокла Иоанэ Петрици отмечает следующее:

Но сейчас уразумей, что силу и деятельность души [греки] называют *дианою*, силу и деятельность разума – *ноэма*, а кроме того постигаемый разумом внешний объект – *ноэтон* (Петрици 1984, 29; пер. И. Ц. Панцхавы).

Различение данного рода может быть соотнесено с идеей различения акта сознания (в особенности направленности на некоторую предметную область) и условий выполнения таких актов (способов данности предметов сознанию), на разных этапах развития своей позиции последовательно проводившегося Э. Гуссерлем. Более того в «Идеях к чистой феноменологии» Э. Гуссерль практически полностью воспроизводит указанную выше терминологию, фиксируя в структуре сознательной деятельности («сознания чего-то») «ноэматическое наполнение», единицей которого выступает «ноэма» (Гуссерль 2009, 282). Важно, однако, заметить, что ноэматическое наполнение Э. Гуссерль не ограничивает сферой разума (мышления):

Восприятие, к примеру, обладает своей ноэмой, на нижней ступени – смыслом восприятия, т. е. воспринимаемым как таковым. Подобно этому всякое воспоминание обладает воспоминаемым как таковым, именно как своим, точно так же, как в нем есть «подразумеваемое» и «сознаваемое»; суждение, в свою очередь, обладает как таковым тем, о чем выносятся суждение, удовольствие – тем, что доставляет удовольствие, и т. д. Ноэматический коррелят, который именуется здесь (в чрезвычайно расширительном значении) «смыслом», следует брать точно так, как «имманентно» заключен он в переживании восприятия, суждения, удовольствия и т. д., т. е. точно так, как он предлагается нам переживанием, когда мы вопрошаем об этом чисто само переживание (Гуссерль 2009, 282; пер. А. В. Михайлова).

Из этого ясно, что практически все сферы сознания (восприятие, мышление, память и др.) обладают своими «ноэмами», которые в этом (и только в этом!) смысле можно сблизить с понятием «априорной формы чувственности» И. Канта (1999, 75–76). В смысле же, вкладываемом в активность разума неоплатониками, ноэма Гуссерля занимает место «ноэтона»:

Понял ты, что есть ноэтон? Это – объект разума или познания. Слушай дальше: иное есть раз-мышление, как сказано выше, когда речь шла о душе, и иное – уразумение, акт разума, который мы упомянули, говоря о разуме, что мы также показали (Петрици 1984, 29; пер. И. Ц. Панцхавы).

Из этого ясно, что «ноэтон» есть предметное содержание познания, основанного на разуме.

Э. Гуссерль предлагает наряду с ноэмами различать также и процедуры ноэсиса (и единичные моменты таких процедур – ноэзы), которые являются «интенциональными коррелятами» ноэм (Гуссерль 2009, 299–309). Именно единство двух сторон сознания – ноэсиса и ноэмы – в сфере разумного познания может быть, по всей видимости, соотнесено с неоплатоническим понятием «дианою».

Из чего становится ясно, что неоплатонические идеи могут быть использованы для изучения сознания и его роли в познавательной деятельности.

Не менее любопытными являются перспективы актуализации некоторых идей Прокла в рамках пересечения обсуждаемой нами проблематики в отношении постмодернистских разработок. Мы постараемся раскрыть такие пересечения, несмотря на то, что они могут показаться несколько надуманными и даже насильственными. Хорошо известно, что, например, Ж. Делез всерьез полагал, что на пути уточнения логики смысла его протагонистами были представители ранней Стои, в особенности Хрисипп. Главными же антагонистами выступают сторонники линии Платона-Аристотеля как линии репрессивной силы здравого смысла (Делез 1995, 11–12). Соответственно в число антагонистов по необходимости должны были бы попасть и неоплатоники.

В то же время можно привести такие слова А. Ф. Лосева, в свете которых отношения неоплатоников и постмодернистов могут быть осмыслены с иной стороны:

Платон в *Тимее* (37 с) пишет, что космос – это есть «изваяние вечных богов», которое «движется и живет». Космос, по Платону, есть не что иное, как живая статуя, в которой содержится не только ее интеллект, составляющий ее «адамантову структуру», но и живая, вечно подвижная жизнь с соответствующим ей телом. Этот текст платоновского *Тимея* Прокл (*In R. P.* II 212, 20–213, 11) с большим воодушевлением приводит и подвергает подробному анализу (Лосев 2000, 302–303).

Из этого ясно, что проблематика телесности играла существенную роль в неоплатонических построениях, хотя до сих пор распространено мнение о том, что материальное в рамках неоплатонизма – это не только низший, но и ничтожный, малозначимый уровень бытия.

Во многом те же вопросы интересовали и сторонников постмодернистской линии исследований. Так, Ж. Делез замечает:

В системе языка обнаруживается, таким образом, некая консистема сексуальности, которая подражает смыслу, нонсенсу и их организации: симулякр фантазма (Делез 1995, 292; пер. Я. И. Свирского).

Из этого ясно, что логика смысла связывается со структурами телесности, в особенности с сексуальностью (и механизмами подавления). Интерес постмодернистов в данном случае понятен и целиком и полностью закономерен. Но как быть с утверждением А. Ф. Лосева, позволяющим как будто переосмыслить господствующую комментаторскую традицию относительно неоплатонизма?

Как представляется, обращение к следующим замечаниям Прокла позволяет разрешить возникшее затруднение:

Итак, всякая смесь, образовавшаяся правильно, как говорит Сократ, должна обладать вот какими свойствами: красотой, истиной и соразмерностью. Действительно,

правильность смеси предоставляет отнюдь не какое-либо привходящее безобразие, поскольку оно оказывается причиной ошибочности и беспорядочной обманчивости; и если истинность порой будет отделена от чистого, входящего в состав сущего, то смешение не сможет возникнуть, напротив, все тогда исполнится призрачностью и не-сущим; без соразмерности же не будет существовать общности и гармоничного сочетания стихий. Стало быть, необходимо, чтобы соразмерность обусловливала единство смешивающихся предметов и их подобающую общность, истина подразумевала бы их чистоту, а красота – упорядоченность; все перечисленное делает целое достойным любви (*Платоновская теология*, III, 43, 4–16; Прокл 2001, 185; пер. Л. Ю. Лукомского).

Не менее важно, что в другом месте Прокл формулирует такие положения:

Самая же первая и единичная красота отличается не только от видимых прекрасных тел, обладающих объемом, от присущей им соразмерности, душевной слаженности или умного света, но и от той, которая проявляется в самих вторых или третьих выходах богов за свои пределы. Она располагается как однородная в выси умопостигаемого и уже оттуда приходит ко всем божественным родам и освещает как их сверхсущностные генады, так равным образом и те, которые соотносятся с сущностью, вплоть до своих зримых вместилищ (*Платоновская теология*, I, 106, 10–18; Прокл 2001, 81; пер. Л. Ю. Лукомского).

Из всего этого ясно, что не всякое материальное тело готов ценить (и любить) Прокл, а только тело гармоничное, прекрасное в своей соразмерности. Идеалы прекрасного, тем самым, поднимаются над сферой телесного.

В то же время в постмодернизме телесное само выступает совокупностью критериев, позволяющих осмысливать человеческое бытие. Показательными в этом смысле выступают два высказывания, одно из которых принадлежит Ж. Делезу, а второе обнаруживается в работах Ж. Деррида:

Извращенное поведение тоже неотделимо от движения метафизической поверхности, которая вместо подавления сексуальности использует десексуализированную энергию для того, чтобы ввести сексуальный элемент как таковой и зафиксировать его с пристальным вниманием (Делез 1995, 294; пер. Я. И. Свирского).

Наша влюбленная бюрократия, наш эротический секретариат, мы им чересчур много верили, чтобы потерять над ними контроль или память (Деррида 1999, 116; пер. Г. А. Михалкович).

Нетрудно увидеть, что в рамках постмодернизма сфера телесного наделяется особым смыслом. Тело (и его проявления) суть предельное понятие, замещающее ранее располагавшиеся на том же месте классические идеалы Истины, Красоты, Блага.

Неоплатоники в целом и Прокл в частности предлагают альтернативный путь. По этому пути пытались когда-то идти в эпоху Возрождения. В современной культуре тот же путь остается своего рода дорожной картой, движение

по которой остается до конца не утраченной возможностью. Из всего этого ясно, что в отношении новейших направлений философской мысли, тесно связанных с тематикой человеческого бытия, идеи афинского неоплатонизма обладают своего рода отрицательной актуальностью. Другими словами, идеи афинских неоплатоников в целом и Прокла в частности оказываются актуальными «от противного».

Итак, нам представляется, что идеи Прокла Диадоча актуальны как минимум в трех сферах современной культуры (понимаемой в качестве совокупности идеалов и норм): в основах политики, в базисных характеристиках современной философии, а также в границах фундаментальных аспектов понимания человеческого бытия. В отношении основ политики актуальны идеи, позволяющие сформировать идеологию нетоталитарного общества. В плане современной философии (в частности феноменологической линии исследований) неоплатонические разработки могут быть проинтерпретированы как одна из основ (источников) осмысления рационального познания. В отношении понимания человеческого бытия актуализируются идеалы материальной соразмерности (истинной красоты).

В число перспектив исследования входит разработка отдельных аспектов выявленных параллелей и пересечений неоплатонических идей и философии Нового и Новейшего времени. В частности, темой отдельного исследования могли бы стать любопытные нюансы отношений феноменологии и неоплатонизма. Ведь, в отличие от идей сугубо научных, философские идеи не устаревают и не умирают, а только лишь меняют свои облики и области применения, продолжая влиять на мир культурных связей и отношений с прежней силой.

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## АННОТАЦИИ

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ДОМА ФИЛОСОФСКИХ ШКОЛ В АФИНАХ

Язык: английский

Выпуск: СХОЛН 8.1 (2014) 9–23, илл.

Ключевые слова: Академия в Афинах, Прокл, Марин, Дамаский, неоплатонизм, классическая археология.

Аннотация. В первой и второй частях статьи мы рассматриваем два археологических памятника, расположенных в центре Афин: строение на южном склоне Акрополя и в настоящее время скрытое под улицей Дионисия Ареопагита, известное как дом Хи (Chi), или «дом Прокла», и дома А, В и С на склоне Ареопага со стороны Афинской агоры. Мы описываем основные археологические находки и анализируем аргументы в пользу идентификации этих строений в качестве домов философских школ. В третьей части статьи, на основе нарративных источников и археологических данных, мы высказываем несколько замечаний о возможных религиозных практиках неоплатонической школы.

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КРАСОТА МИРА В «ТИМЕЕ» ПЛАТОНА

Язык: английский

Выпуск: СХОЛН 8.1 (2014) 24–33

Ключевые слова: эстетика, античность, гармония, красота и благо, *kalos kagathos*.

Аннотация: В *Тимее* Платон описывает мир как «прекраснейший» (*kallistos*, 29a5) из сотворенных вещей. Возможно, это исторически первое систематическое описание красоты мира. В любом случае, перед нами одно из наиболее влиятельных рассуждений на эту тему. В свое время, оно оказало фундаментальное влияние на стоиков и позднее, в третьем веке н. э., когда презрение и ненависть к миру стали базовым элементом гностического движения, Плотин, также истолковывая *Тимей*, высказал немало соображений о красоте и значимости мира. Однако что Платон считал «красотой» мира? Что делает мир прекрасным? Обсуждая эти вопросы в данной статье я, во-первых, кратко рассматриваю различие между красотой и благом, которое Платон, по-видимому, проводит в *Тимее*. В одном месте (*Tim.* 87c) это различие похоже связано с понятием «мера». В этой связи, во-вторых, представляется уместным обратиться

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к другой поздней работе Платона, *Филебу*, на основании которого темы красоты, блага и меры могут быть сопоставлены более подробно. Тема «меры» снова возвращает нас к *Тимею*, где, в-третьих, мы исследуем роль меры, в особенности, математической, в придании миру красоты. Особое внимание уделяется обсуждению того, как математические структуры порождают красоту в душе и теле, создавая цельное живое существо, которое и есть мир.

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ДАМАСКИЙ И ФИЛОСОФСКИЙ ОБРАЗ ЖИЗНИ:

О НЕВОЗМОЖНОСТИ ДОСТИЖЕНИЯ ПЕРВЫХ НАЧАЛ  
И ЕДИНЕНИЯ С НИМИ

Язык: английский

Выпуск: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 34–49

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: Дамаский, поздний платонизм, Единое, невыразимое начало, *skotos*, философ, теургия, очищение, первое начало, теология, философия, созерцание.

АННОТАЦИЯ: В статье исследуются ключевые элементы философии Дамаския. Я рассматриваю атрибуты невыразимого начала, Единого и «Всего» и связь между ними в качестве краеугольных камней его теоретической системы. Затем я перехожу к изучению значимости для Дамаския и его современников этой схемы в качестве руководства в философской жизни. Достаточно ли созерцания, или же дополнительно необходимы такие средства, как теургия и очищение души? Занимает ли философ привилегированное положение в этой ситуации, как это было принято считать в предшествующей философской традиции, или же опыт пустоты, невыразимости и невозможности ухватить «ничто» высших начал изменяет его положение?

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ПРЕДЕСТИНАЦИЯ И ЕССЕИ

Язык: английский

Выпуск: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 50–53

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: Иудейская история и идеология в эллинистический и раннеримский периоды, секты в иудаизме, ессеи, кумранская община, история античной философии, пифагореизм, платонизм, предопределение, эсхатология.

АННОТАЦИЯ: В статье рассматриваются аргументы в пользу этимологии термина Ἐσσηῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί, основанной на важнейшем отличительном аспекте их учения – доктрине о предестинации. Именно, имеется в виду корреляции обозначения Ἐσσηῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί с арамейским понятием כּשׁפּ הַשָּׂאֻוּא. То есть «ессеи» – это «последователи судьбы», «фаталисты», те, кто верят в предопределение. В связи с этим рассматриваются ряд пифагорейских и платонических доктрин, которые могут быть соотнесены с учением о предестинации, что расширяет наши представления о фатализме в античном мире и проясняет, отчего Иосиф Флавий сравнивает ессеев с пифагорейцами.

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«ЕССЕИ КАК ПИФАГОРЕЙЦЫ»: ПРЕДЕСТИНАЦИЯ В ПИФАГОРЕИЗМЕ,  
ПЛАТОНИЗМЕ И КУМРАНСКОЙ ТЕОЛОГИИ

Язык: русский

Выпуск: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 54–66

Ключевые слова: Иудейская история и идеология в эллинистический и раннеримский периоды, секты в иудаизме, ессеи, кумранская община, история античной философии, пифагореизм, платонизм, предопределение, эсхатология.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются аргументы в пользу этимологии термина Ἐσσηῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί, основанной на важнейшем отличительном аспекте их учения – доктрине о предестинации. Именно, имеется в виду корреляция обозначения Ἐσσηῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί с арамейским понятием כּשִׁפּ הַשָּׂאָוּא. То есть «ессеи» – это «последователи судьбы», «фаталисты», те, кто верят в предопределение. В связи с этим рассматриваются ряд пифагорейских и платонических доктрин, которые могут быть соотнесены с учением о предестинации, что расширяет наши представления о фатализме в античном мире и проясняет, отчего Иосиф Флавий сравнивает ессеев с пифагорейцами.

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ВРЕМЯ И ВЕЧНОСТЬ ОТ ПЛОТИНА И БОЭЦИЯ ДО ЭЙНШТЕЙНА

Язык: английский

Выпуск: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 67–110

Ключевые слова: Плотин, Боэций, Эйнштейн, Пьер Адо, философия как образ жизни, философия времени, Аристотель, будущие случайности, свободная воля, предопределение, врожденные идеи, Псевдо-Боэций, *De diis et praesensionibus*, необходимость, Прокл, Порфирий.

Аннотация: В статье показано, что представления о времени и вечности у Плотина и Боэция аналогичны так называемой теории «блок-времени» (этернализму) в современной философии времени, основанной на математической физике Эйнштейна и Минковского. Как Эйнштейн, так и Боэций использовали свои теории времени и вечности в практических целях, для утешения людей в горе. Эта практика «утешения» (*consolatio*) сопоставляется в статье с размышлением Пьера Адо, который во «Взгляде свыше» рассуждает о важности сосредоточения на текущем моменте и значимости античной философии в качестве лекарства для души, а не отвлеченной спекуляции. В первой части статьи идеи Эйнштейна сопоставляются с воззрениями Плотина и развитием его теории в арабской «Теологии Аристотеля». Во второй части статьи рассматривается «Утешение философией» Боэция, которое, вопреки мнению некоторых авторов, следует считать настоящим утешением, а не пародией на него. В «Утешении» показано, как неоплатоническая образовательная программа может помочь ученику на пути спасения, пробуждая и развивая в его душе врожденные идеи. Эта доктрина иллюстрируется выдержкой из малоизвестного трактата *De diis et praesensionibus*, приписываемого Боэцию. Наконец, после очерка учения Боэция о судьбе и промысле и Аристотелевой теории о будущих случайностях, я рассматриваю три основных аргумента Боэция в пользу согласования божественного всезнания с человеческой свободой во-

ли: различие между абсолютной и условной необходимостью; принцип, согласно которому природа знания определяется познающим; и наконец, доктрина, согласно которой бог живет в вечном настоящем, одновременно созерцая прошлое, настоящее и будущее. Можно показать, что этот последний аргумент, восходящий в общих чертах к Плотину, также аналогичен рассуждениям современных теоретиков «блок-времени», основанных на теории относительности Эйнштейна. Само по себе божественное сверх-временное видение не делает случайные события необходимыми. Высшая, объективная действительность, как для Боэция и Плотина, так и для Эйнштейна, вневременная, и наша идея о том, что существует конфликт между человеческой свободной волей и божественным всезнанием – это результат своего рода оптической иллюзии, обусловленной тем, что мы можем мыслить только в терминах временности.

КЕННЕТ НИС

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ПРИНИМАЯ СТРОГОЕ ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ ТЭХНЭ ВСЕРЬЕЗ:

ИНТЕРПРЕТАТИВНОЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЕ В «ГОСУДАРСТВЕ» ПЛАТОНА

Язык: английский

Выпуск: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 111–125

Ключевые слова: Тэхнэ, Полис, *Государство* Платона, Фрасимах.

Аннотация: Я считаю, что строгое определение «тэхнэ», принятое Сократом и Фрасимахом в первой книге *Государства*, полезно для понимания центрального вопроса всего диалога: Как философия может быть включена в жизнь полиса? Эта точка зрения предполагает, 1) что Платон приглашает нас истолковать связь между «тэхне» и полисом вне рамок аналогии города и души; 2) что строгое определение помогает убедительно описать профессиональный труд; и 3) что это описание позволяет понять то, что Сократ называет истинным полисом и, значит, определить проблему включенности философии в политическую жизнь.

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АКТУАЛЬНОСТЬ ИДЕЙ ПРОКЛА ДИАДОХА В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ КУЛЬТУРЕ

Язык: русский

Выпуск: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 126–135

Ключевые слова: афинский неоплатонизм, Прокл Диадох, современная философия, идеология, человеческое бытие, культура.

Аннотация: Идеи неоплатонизма в целом и разработки Прокла в частности имеют значение как минимум в трех сферах современной культуры (как совокупности идеалов и норм): в основах политики, базисных характеристиках философии и в границах фундаментальных аспектов понимания человеческого бытия. В отношении основ политики актуальны идеи, позволяющие сформировать идеологию нетоталитарного общества. В плане современной философии (в частности феноменологической линии исследований) неоплатонические разработки могут быть проинтерпретированы как одна из основ (источников) осмысления рационального познания. В отношении понимания человеческого бытия актуализируются идеалы материальной соразмерности (истинной красоты).

## ABSTRACTS

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THE HOUSES OF PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS IN ATHENS

LANGUAGE: English

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 9–23

KEYWORDS: Academy at Athens, Proclus, Damascius, Neoplatonism, classical archaeology.

ABSTRACT. In the first and second parts of the article we look at two archaeological sites excavated in the center of Athens, a building, located on the Southern slope of the Acropolis and now buried under the Dionysiou Areopagitou Street, known as House Chi, or the “House of Proclus”, and Houses A, B and C at the slope of the Areopagus overlooking the Athenian Agora. We outline and illustrate the basic finds and reexamine the principal arguments in favor of identifying these constructions as the houses of philosophical schools and, in the third part of the paper, offer a remark on religious practice in the Neoplatonic school.

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THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD IN PLATO’S *TIMAEUS*

LANGUAGE: English

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 24–33

KEYWORDS: Aesthetics, Antiquity, harmony, the beautiful and the good, *kalos kagathos*.

ABSTRACT: In the *Timaeus* Plato describes the world as the ‘most beautiful’ (*kallistos*, 29a5) of generated things. Perhaps indeed this is the first systematic description of the beauty of the world. It is, at any rate, one of the most influential statements of the theme. The Stoics were deeply convinced by it and later, in the third century A.D., at a time when contempt and hate for the world were propagated by Gnostic movements, Plotinus, interpreting the *Timaeus*, would write magnificent passages on the beauty and value of the world. But what does Plato mean by the ‘beauty’ of the world? What makes the world beautiful? In this paper these questions are approached first (1) by a brief discussion of the distinction which Plato appears to make in the *Timaeus* between beauty and the good. In one passage (*Tim.* 87c) ‘measure’ seems to relate to this distinction. It is suitable then (2) to look at a section of another late work of Plato, the *Philebus*, where the themes of beauty, goodness and measure may be compared in more detail. The theme of measure then takes us back (3) to the *Timaeus*, in order to examine the role played by measure, in particular mathematical measure, in constituting the beauty of the world. I discuss in detail the way in which mathematical structures make for the beauty of soul and body in the living whole that is the world.

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DAMASCIUS AND THE PRACTICE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE:

ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION ABOUT

AND COMMUNION WITH THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

LANGUAGE: English

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 34–49

KEYWORDS: Damascius, Late Neoplatonism, One, Ineffable, *skotos*, philosopher, theurgy, purification, soul, First Principles, theology, philosophy, contemplation.

ABSTRACT: This paper is an overview and introduction to the key elements of Damascius' philosophy. I examine the attributes and the relationship between the Ineffable, the One, and the All as the cornerstones of his theoretical system. I then investigate the role of this system of thought for Damascius and his contemporaries as a guide to the philosophical life and its repercussions for attaining the highest principles. Is contemplation possible or are other means needed, such as theurgy and purification of the soul? Does the philosopher occupy a privileged position in this system, as in the preceding Platonic tradition or is the philosopher's position different, by the experience of void and the inability to speak about and grasp the 'nothingness' of the highest principles?

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PREDESTINATION AND ESSENISM

LANGUAGE: English

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 50–53

KEYWORDS: Judean history and ideology in Hellenistic and early Roman periods, sectarian Judaism, Essenes, Qumran community, history of ancient philosophy, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, predestination, eschatology.

ABSTRACT: The widely spread Essenes practice of the future events prediction is likely to be based on their belief in the absolute predestination. In this light the hitherto unclarified etymology of the very term Ἐσσαιῶν / Ἐσσηνοί can be traced to the Aramaic notion חשיא (pl. st. emph.)/resp. חשיאן (st. abs.; sing. חשא), which is likely to be interpreted as “what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”; this derivation appears to be relevant not only semantically, but also linguistically. Thus the term “Essenes” can be interpreted as the “fatalists” (see e.g. Tantlevskij 2013). The doctrine of predestination also plays the key role in religious outlook of the Qumran community, and it is considered to be one of the most fundamental arguments in favor of the Qumranites identification with the Essenes. Some Platonic-Pythagorean (not only Stoic) doctrines can be regarded as certain Hellenistic parallels to the Essenic-Qumranic conception of predestination.

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THE ESSENES AS THE PYTHAGOREANS:  
PREDESTINATION IN PYTHAGOREANISM, PLATONISM  
AND THE QUMRAN THEOLOGY

LANGUAGE: Russian

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 54–66

KEYWORDS: Judean history and ideology in Hellenistic and early Roman periods, sectarian Judaism, Essenes, Qumran community, history of ancient philosophy, Pythagoreanism, Platonism, predestination, eschatology.

ABSTRACT: The widely spread Essenes practice of the future events prediction is likely to be based on their belief in the absolute predestination. In this light the hitherto unclarified etymology of the very term Ἐσσηαῖοι / Ἐσσηνοί can be traced to the Aramaic notion כּוּשִׁיָא (pl. st. emph.)/resp. כּוּשִׁיָא (st. abs.; sing. כּוּשָׁא), which is likely to be interpreted as “what man has to suffer, predestination, fortune”; this derivation appears to be relevant not only semantically, but also linguistically. Thus the term “Essenes” can be interpreted as the “fatalists” (see e.g. Tantlevskij 2013). The doctrine of predestination also plays the key role in religious outlook of the Qumran community, and it is considered to be one of the most fundamental arguments in favor of the Qumranites identification with the Essenes. Some Platonic-Pythagorean (not only Stoic) doctrines can be regarded as certain Hellenistic parallels to the Essenic-Qumranic conception of predestination.

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TIME AND ETERNITY FROM PLOTINUS AND BOETHIUS TO EINSTEIN

LANGUAGE: English

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 67–110

KEYWORDS: Plotinus, Boethius, Einstein, Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a way of life, Philosophy of time, Aristotle, future contingents, free will, predestination, innate ideas, Pseudo-Boethius, *De diis et praesensionibus*, necessity, Proclus, Porphyry.

ABSTRACT: This article seeks to show that the views on time and eternity of Plotinus and Boethius are analogous to those implied by the block-time perspective in contemporary philosophy of time, as implied by the mathematical physics of Einstein and Minkowski. Both Einstein and Boethius utilized their theories of time and eternity with the practical goal of providing consolation to persons in distress; this practice of *consolatio* is compared to Pierre Hadot’s studies of the “Look from Above”, of the importance of concentrating on the present moment, and his emphasis on ancient philosophy as providing therapy for the soul, instead of mere abstract speculation for its own sake. In the first part of the article, Einstein’s views are compared with those of Plotinus, and with the elucidation of Plotinus’ views provided in the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*. The second part of the article studies Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, which, contrary to recent interpretations, is indeed a genuine consolation rather than a parody thereof. The *Consolation* shows how the study of the Neoplatonic philosophical curriculum can lead the student along the path to salvation, by awakening and elaborating his innate ideas. To illustrate this doctrine, a passage from the little-known Pseudo-Boethian treatise *De diis et praesensionibus* is studied. Finally, after a survey of Boethius’ view

on fate and providence, and Aristotle's theory of future contingents, I study Boethius' three main arguments in favor of the reconcilability of divine omniscience and human free will: the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, the principle that the nature of knowledge is determined by the knower, and finally the doctrine that God lives in an eternal present, seeing past, present, and future simultaneously. This last view, developed primarily from Plotinus, is once again argued to be analogous to that advocated by contemporary block-time theorists on the basis of Einsteinian relativity. God's supratemporal vision introduces no necessity into contingent events. Ultimate, objective reality, for Boethius as for Plotinus and Einstein, is atemporal, and our idea that there is a conflict between human free will and divine omniscience derives from a kind of optical illusion, caused by the fact that we cannot help but think in terms of temporality.

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TAKING THE STRICT ACCOUNT OF TECHNE SERIOUSLY:

AN INTERPRETIVE DIRECTION IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

LANGUAGE: English

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 111–125

KEYWORDS: *Techne*, Polis, Plato's *Republic*, Thrasymachus.

ABSTRACT: I argue that the strict account of *techne* agreed to by Socrates and Thrasymachus in *Republic I* provides a useful framework for addressing a central question of the dialogue as a whole: how philosophy might belong to the polis. This view depends upon three positions: 1) that Plato invites us to interpret the relationship between *techne* and polis outside the terms of the city-soul analogy, 2) that the strict account contributes to a compelling description of vocational work, and 3) that this description determines what Socrates means by a true polis, and thus frames the problem of philosophy's political inclusion.

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THE IDEAS OF PROCLUS DIADOCHUS AND THEIR RELEVANCE

TO MODERN CULTURE

LANGUAGE: Russian

ISSUE: ΣΧΟΛΗ 8.1 (2014) 126–135

KEYWORDS: Athens, Neoplatonism, Proclus, contemporary philosophy, ideology, human existence, culture.

ABSTRACT: The paper defends the thesis that Proclus Diadochus' ideas are still relevant in modern culture. It appears that the ideas of Neoplatonism as a whole and these of Proclus' in particular matter at least in some aspects of modern culture (or 'sets of ideals and norms'), such as the foundations of politics, the basic characteristics of philosophy and the fundamental aspects of understanding of the human existence. In the sphere of politics, one can note the ideas useful for creating of the non-totalitarian forms of ideology. In contemporary philosophy (esp. the phenomenological line of investigations) the Neoplatonic studies can be interpreted as one of the bases (or 'sources') of understanding of rational knowledge. The ideals of material harmony (true beauty) are essential for understanding of the human existence.

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## ΣΧΟΛΗ (Schole)

ФИЛОСОФСКОЕ АНТИКОВЕДЕНИЕ И КЛАССИЧЕСКАЯ ТРАДИЦИЯ

2014. Том 8. Выпуск 1

ТРАДИЦИЯ ПЛАТОНИЗМА

Научное редактирование Е. В. Афонасина

Новосибирск: Ред.-изд. центр Новосиб. гос. ун-та, 2014. 145 с., илл.

ISSN 1995-4328 (Print) ISSN 1995-4336 (Online)

Первый выпуск восьмого тома журнала приурочен к сравнительно недавно прошедшему 1600-летию со дня рождения одного из величайших платоников поздней античности Прокла (7/8 февраля 412, Византий – 17 апреля 485, Афины) и, наряду со специальными работами об афинской школе платонизма, включает в себя ряд статей, посвященных традиции платонизма от сократического метода в *Государстве* до оценки значения неоплатонизма в современной философии. Особое внимание уделено платоническому учению о красоте, метафизике Дамаския, учению о времени и вечности от Плотина и Боэция до Эйнштейна и, наконец, платоническим истокам учения о предопределении в иудейской философии эллинистического периода.

Выпуск включает материалы, подготовленные специально для участников семинара по истории античной науки, который прошел в Сибирском научном центре в мае 2013 г. при поддержке Института «Открытое общество».

Журнал индексируется The Philosopher's Index и SCOPUS и доступен в электронном виде на собственной странице [www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/](http://www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/), а также в составе следующих электронных библиотек: [www.elibrary.ru](http://www.elibrary.ru) (Научная электронная библиотека) и [www.cceol.com](http://www.cceol.com) (Central and Eastern European Online Library).

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## ΣΧΟΛΗ (Schole)

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

2014. Volume 8. Issue 1

THE PLATONIC TRADITION

Edited by Eugene V. Afonasin

Novosibirsk: State University Press, 2014. 145 p., with illustrations

ISSN 1995-4328 (Print) ISSN 1995-4336 (Online)

The first issue of the eighth volume of the journal is dedicated to the Platonic Tradition and, especially, the great Platonist Proclus (February 7/8, 412 – April 17, 485). It contains an illustrated study of the Athenian school of Platonism and a series of articles, dedicated to various aspects of Platonism from Socratic method in the *Republic* and the concept of beauty in the *Timaeus* to Damascius' metaphysics, time and eternity in Plotinus and Boethius and the platonic origins of the idea of predestination in Hellenistic Jewish philosophy.

These texts are prepared for the participants of the international school “ΤΕΧΝΗ. Theoretical Foundations of Arts, Sciences and Technology in the Greco-Roman World” (May 2013, Siberian Scientific Centre) organized by the “Centre for Ancient philosophy and the classical tradition” and sponsored by the “Open Society” Institute (Budapest).

The journal is abstracted / indexed in The Philosopher's Index and SCOPUS and available on-line at the following addresses: [www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/](http://www.nsu.ru/classics/schole/) (journal's home page) and [www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com) (Central and Eastern European Online Library).

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