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## HYPERNOETIC COGNITION AND THE SCOPE OF THEURGY IN PROCLUS

TUOMO LANKILA

### Introduction

The discussion on Proclus' attitude to theurgy has in the best of cases, noted, but failed to give proper consideration to his view on theurgy's "upper limit" which he puts forth in the *Commentary on Plato's Cratylus*.<sup>1</sup> The current notion of ubiquitous theurgy in Proclus equates a supposed "higher theurgy" with the soul's hypernoetic activity through "the flower of the intellect".<sup>2</sup> However, Proclus de-

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<sup>1</sup> Fundamental passages are *In Crat.* 71 and 113. Anne Sheppard was first in Proclean scholarship to give serious thoughts to these passages in her very influential article, A. Sheppard, "Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy", *CQ* 32 (1982) 212–24. However, she does not hold them anomalous in terms of the established interpretation of two theurgies. On the contrary, Sheppard considers them to support her move from the two-theurgy model into a model of three theurgies in Proclus. The activity of the flower of the intellect is, for Sheppard, the third mode of theurgy. The argument is based on an interpretation of the doctrine of enthusiasm of Proclus' teacher Syrianus, which has come down to us in Hermias' commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* where neither "the flower of the intellect" nor "theurgy" is explicitly mentioned. Sheppard systematically equates Hermias' telestic and erotic madness with theurgy. The problem of the scope of theurgy is not commented on in the notes of recent translations of Proclus' commentary (F. Romano, *Proclo. Lezioni sul "Cratilo" di Platone*, Roma 1989; J. M. Alvarez – A. Gabilondo – J. M. Garcia, *Proclus. Lecturas del Crátulo de Platón*, Madrid 1999; B. Duvick, *Proclus. On Plato Cratylus*. London 2007). R. Sorabji's collection of the texts includes *In Crat.* 71 and *In Crat.* 113, but unfortunately only in part so that as the "the flower of the intellect" does not yet come into focus, R. Sorabji (ed.), *The philosophy of the commentators, 200–600 AD*, I, London 2004, 385–6. R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Commentary on the Cratylus in Context*, Leiden 2008 touches upon the issue by mentioning the first passage, but not the latter.

<sup>2</sup> Varied solutions have been proposed for locating theurgy in Proclus' soteriological program. According to E. R. Dodds (*Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, Oxford [1933, 1963] and "Theurgy. Appendix II" in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Los Angeles 1951, 283–311) the

nies just this association in *In Cratylum*. Other evidence that is available does not contradict the position taken in this work. A comprehensive and close reading of Proclus shows that for him the soul's hypernoetic activity begins only after the activity of theurgy has already concluded.

### **Proclus' concept of hypernoetic cognition**

In order to clarify how Proclus relates hypernoetic cognition to theurgy, let us begin by trying to briefly describe the nature of this highest mode of cognition accessible to the human soul. I use the word cognition here as a generic term comprehending all modes of knowing, which Neoplatonism supposes that the human soul contains, including paradoxical superignorance, which concern the divine beyond (above) being and its lower counterpart, dim guesswork regarding the matter beyond (below) forms.<sup>3</sup> A basic tenet of the whole Neoplatonic tradition

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concept of the soul's ascent in Proclus is thoroughly theurgical, and for Dodds theurgical meant the same as occult and magic. Hans Lewy saw (H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*. Nouvelle édition, Paris 1978 [orig. Cairo 1956, but Lewy's contribution was actually already written before 1945]) theurgy and philosophy as two different methods aiming at the same goal. For L. J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus. The Final Phase of Ancient Thought*, New York 1949, the theurgy is present in the Proclean project but in two different forms, as a ritual-magical "lower" theurgy and a "higher" theurgy which operates with non-ritualistic symbols. According to A. C. Lloyd "unification with the unparticipated One, is beyond the scope of intellectual virtue and accomplished by theurgy", A. C. Lloyd, "Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism", in A. H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge 1967, 312. Jean Trouillard thought that the theology of negations call forth theurgy as a mediating element between contemplation and mystical union (Trouillard's intervention in the discussion in O. Reverdin (ed.), *De Jamblique a Proclus* [Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique XXI], Genève 1975, 101). According to Anne Sheppard (1982, note above) besides ritualistic practice, Proclus has two different kinds of non-ritualistic theurgies, the first of which reaches to the noeric realm and the second achieves unity with the One. Carine Van Lieferinge (*La théurgie. Des Oracles Chaldaïques à Proclus*, Liège 1998) adopts Sheppard's opinion with some qualifications. Robert M. van den Berg declares his allegiance, with minor reservations, to Sheppard's three-theurgy model (*Proclus' Hymns*, Leiden 2001) and it seems that his dedicated reading of the *Commentary on Cratylus* (2008, note above) does not modify that position. Sara Rappe (S. Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism. Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*, Cambridge 2000, chapter 8) offers the most theurgic reading of Neoplatonism: for her even the magnum opus of Proclus, the *Platonic Theology*, is essentially a theurgic text.

<sup>3</sup> For Proclus the One and the matter are related with dissimilar similarity (κατὰ τὴν ἀνόμοιον ὁμοιότητα) as both of them are infinite, unknown and formless, but matter is non-beign as a

is correspondence between the levels of reality and the faculties of the soul. The genuine modes of knowledge recognized by Neoplatonic epistemology are intellectual intuition (νοῦς), discursive reason (διάνοια, λόγος), opinion (δόξα) and sensation (αἴσθησις).<sup>4</sup> Proclus sees discursive reason as a better part of the normal cognitive state of the human soul and that is why the human being is defined

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worse way (κατὰ τὸ χειρόν) in the mode of privation (κατὰ τὴν στέρησιν), the One is non-being as a better way (κατὰ τὸ κρείττον), by pre-eminence (ὑπεροχή) as non-being, which is a necessary ground for the existence of beings; see *In Alc.* 189,15–18; *In Parm.* 1075,33–1076,14.

<sup>4</sup> Hermias sketched concisely the Neoplatonic view on the hierarchy of the soul's cognitive faculties in *In Phaedr.* 19,4: πέντε εἰσὶν αἱ γνωστικαὶ δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς νοῦς, διάνοια, δόξα, φαντασία καὶ αἴσθησις· τούτων μέσον ἢ δόξα·. Proclus brings forth the same epistemological view in many varied formulations; for example *Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaica* 2,1, where the "soul's depth" is analyzed as constituted by three levels ("Ψυχῆς βάθος" τὰς τριπλᾶς αὐτῆς γνωστικὰς δυνάμεις φησί, νοεράς, διανοητικὰς, δοξαστικὰς). He does not always stick to exactly the same terminology and the varied distinctions between and within the levels depend on different exegetical needs in his reading of Plato. Thus, for instance, he introduces the discursive level in *Inst. Theol.* prop. 123 between δόξα and νόησις as ἐπιστήμη and διάνοια, *In Tim.* III 54,14 he uses for it the terms διάνοια and λόγος, stressing with the first for its synthetic, concept-building or reflexive, aspect and with the latter the calculating aspect. The apprehension of the object of knowledge is modalized so that the gods and the hypernoetic cognition peculiar to them knows the object "in a unitary way" (ἡνωμένως), intellect "totally" (ὀλικῶς), discursive reason "universally" (καθολικῶς), the imagination "figuratively" (μορφωτικῶς) and sensation "passively" (παθητικῶς). *In Tim.* I 352,18. Thus we can analyze different modes as a chain of pairs, where terms stand not as contraries, but within the relation of more perfect and imperfect (ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ὁ λόγος μετὰ τὴν νόησιν ὡς ἐλάττων νοῦς, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἡ δόξα πρὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ὡς λογικὴ αἴσθησις, *In Tim.* I 251,15–16, and also as triadic structures where the third term is a kind of shadow of the first, as in the relationship of intellect, discursive reason and the imagination, where the last one is called "schematic intellect" and analogously like bronze to gold, *In Crat.* 129,7 (Pasquali 25). Proclus treatise of *In Alc.* 135,21–136,10 is particularly important for understanding the psychological underpinnings of his epistemology because here he is trying to build a synthesis of two Platonic sources inspiring a Neoplatonist theorizing about the soul; Plato's view on the different "states" of the soul as distinct cognitive modes (*Rep.* 511e) and his classical three-part model. Proclus also deals with the issue explicitly in a series of dedicated treatises in *In Remp.* (I 213,8–235,22) including an especially interesting passage (235, 12–16) on the faculties as copies of each others (imagination as a copy of intellect, etc). *In Alc.* Proclus reads these Platonic items through familiar Neoplatonic cyclic schema of unfolding causality (μονή-πρόοδος-ἐπιστροφή) here giving to the intellect the role of the remaining, as opinion and imagination (this time he calls their area by which the soul goes downwards towards the world of becoming "imagination and soul's indetermined movement" (διὰ φαντασίας καὶ ἀορίστου τινὸς κινήσεως) represent here a moment of procession, and discursive thinking a moment of return, converting the soul again towards intelligible.

as rational.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, in everyday life we are mostly acting on the basis of lower part, unfounded belief or the opinative faculty aided by sense perception. If the One beyond being is somehow to be apprehended, then the soul must have in itself a trace of this ultimate ground of reality as a oneness of its own essence, and thanks to its presence the soul is able to rise above (ὑπέρ) the simple and universal intuitions of the intellect (νοῦς).<sup>6</sup> To Plotinus this hypernoetic device of soul was "loving intellect", a higher aspect or state of intellect,<sup>7</sup> but later Neoplatonists

<sup>5</sup> Being rational, the discursive soul is the existential property of a human being *qua* human, as "oneness" is for a god, *In Parm.* 1069,8–12: Ὡς γὰρ ὁ κυρίως ἄνθρωπος κατὰ ψυχὴν, οὕτως ὁ κυρίως θεὸς κατὰ τὸ ἓν· ἐκάτερον γὰρ κυριώτατον τῶν συμπληρούντων ἐκάτερον· κατὰ δὲ τὸ κυριώτατον ἕκαστον ὑφέστηκε τῶν πάντων. In his exegesis of Plato's first Alcibiades Proclus interprets the soul or human self αὐτὸ a Platonic tripartite soul (ἡ τριμερὴς τῆς ψυχῆς), but the soul in itself (αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό) as a rational soul (ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ). Each individual human is a unique singular soul (Platonic αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό ἕκαστον, Proclus' τὸ ἄτομον) living in or using a human body. See fragment 11 *In Alc.*, A. Ph. Segonds, *Proclus. Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon II*, Paris 1986, 374–5 and Segonds' note 460.

<sup>6</sup> Introducing the issue of hypernoesis in the *Platonic Theology* (I ch. 3), Proclus argues that all of the reality is also in the human mind "in psychic mode" (16,16–18: Πάντα γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ψυχικῶς καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὰ πάντα γινώσκουν πεφύκαμεν, ἀνεγείροντες τὰς ἐν ἡμῖν δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας τῶν ὄλων) and there should also be a faculty or a part of the soul corresponding to the One and Ineffable (15,15–21: Λείπεται οὖν, εἴπερ ἐστὶ καὶ ὁπωσοῦν τὸ θεῖον γνωστόν, τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς ὑπάρξει καταληπτόν ὑπάρχειν καὶ διὰ ταύτης γνωρίζεσθαι καθ' ὅσον δυνατόν. Τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ πανταχοῦ φαμέν τὰ ὅμοια γινώσκεσθαι· τῇ μὲν αἰσθήσει δηλαδὴ τὸ αἰσθητόν, τῇ δὲ δόξῃ τὸ δοξαστόν, τῇ δὲ διανοίᾳ τὸ διανοητόν, τῷ δὲ νῷ τὸ νοητόν, ὥστε καὶ τῷ ἐνὶ τὸ ἐνικώτατον καὶ τῷ ἀρρήτῳ τὸ ἄρρητον). This passage could even be read in the sense that "the One" and "the Ineffable" are separate concepts and thus the psychic devices connected to them also could be separated. In the *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* he definitely posits two hyperintellective faculties. In separating the One and the Ineffable and the psychic faculties in contact with them, in these places Proclus anticipates Damascius.

<sup>7</sup> The fundamental passage for Plotinus' view is *Enn.* 6,7,35 on the witless, loving intellect, intoxicated by nectar (19–27): Καὶ τὸν νοῦν τοίνυν τὴν μὲν ἔχειν δύναμιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν, ἣ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ βλέπει, τὴν δὲ, ἣ τὰ ἐπέκεινα αὐτοῦ ἐπιβολῇ τινι καὶ παραδοχῇ, καθ' ἣν καὶ πρότερον ἑώρα μόνον καὶ ὄρων ὑστερον καὶ νοῦν ἔσχε καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ. Καὶ ἔστιν ἐκείνη μὲν ἡ θεὰ νοῦ ἔμφορος, αὕτη δὲ νοῦς ἐρῶν, ὅταν ἄφρων γένηται μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος· τότε ἐρῶν γίνεται ἀπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ· καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ μεθύειν βέλτιον ἢ σεμνοτέρῳ εἶναι τοιαύτης μέθης. Plotinus' explanation of the soul's highest state is based on the *similia similibus* theory: Οὐδὲ ψυχὴ τοίνυν, ὅτι μὴδὲ ζῆ ἐκεῖνο, ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ τὸ ζῆν. Οὐδὲ νοῦς, ὅτι μὴδὲ νοεῖ· ὁμοιοῦσθαι γὰρ δεῖ. Νοεῖ δὲ οὐδ' ἐκεῖνο, ὅτι οὐδὲ νοεῖ. For a detailed exposition of the Plotinian theory of the two states of the Intellects and this passage especially see, for example, P. Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*, Paris 1997, 93–7, J. Bussanich, *The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus*, Leiden 1988, 172–200.

conceived of it rather as a special faculty of the soul.<sup>8</sup>

To such a faculty Proclus refers with names such as "the one of the soul" (τὸ ἓν τῆς ψυχῆς), "the flower of our essence" (ἄνθος τῆς οὐσίας ἐμῶν), "the flower of the intellect" (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ), "the flower of the soul" (ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς), or (νόθος νοῦς) "spurious (bastard) intellect".<sup>9</sup> The last one is introduced in an intriguing passage of the *Commentary on the Timaeus*, and I take it as an example here, because it illustrates well the doctrine of hypernoetic knowledge and is inspired by a perhaps surprising Platonic context using terms less familiar than the usual flower metaphors.<sup>10</sup> Proclus analyses firstly legitimate modes of knowledge as two opposite pairs; the higher one constituted by intellection and discursive reason and the lower by opinion and sensation, and then continues:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A good recent review of the doctrinal history of this topic is J. Dillon, "The One of the Soul and the 'Flower of the Intellect'. Models of Hyper-intellection in Later Neoplatonism", in J. Dillon – M.-É. Zovko (eds.) *Platonism and Forms of Intelligence*, Berlin 2008, 247–57.

<sup>9</sup> The relevant passages are *In Alc.* 245,6–248, 24, *De Prov.* 4,171,2, *De Prov.* 32,2, *De Prov.* 140, *In Crat.* 47, *In Crat.* 113, *In Parm.* 957,40–958, *In Parm.* 1046,2–1047,31, *In Parm.* 1071,19–1072,18, *In Parm.* 1080,36–1081,11, *In Parm.* 1082,6–10, *In Tim.* I 472,12 (schol.), *In Tim.* III 14,6, *Theol. Plat.* I 15,17–21, *Theol. Plat.* I 66,26–67,8, *Eclogae* 4,209,7–211,15.

<sup>10</sup> David Runia and Michael Share discuss this passage briefly in three pertinent notes in their recent translation of it, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, ed. and trans. by D. T. Runia – M. Share, Cambridge 2008, 103. To the best of my knowledge Thomas Whittaker is the only modern scholar who has noticed the equivalence between "bastard intelligence" and "flower of the intellect", T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*, Cambridge 1961 (reprint of 1918), 271. In his footnote he points out an unknown Byzantine as a predecessor for himself: "The scholiast has an admiring note: τίς οὐκ ἄν σε θαυμάσειε καὶ χάριτας μεγάλας ἐς ἀεὶ μεμνήσεται, φίλε Πρόκλε. νοῦν νόθον λέγει τὸ ἓν καὶ οἶον ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς", 257–8 (n. 2). Jean-Marc Narbonne quotes Proclus' passage pointing out Proclus' source in Plato's concept of *χώρα* apprehend by bastard reason and calling Proclus' text "à vrai dire magnifique", J-M. Narbonne, "Le savoir d'un-delà du savoir chez Plotin", in T. Kobusch – M. Erler (eds.), *Metaphysik und Religion. Zur Signatur des Spätantiken Denkens* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 160), Leipzig 2002, 481.

<sup>11</sup> *In Tim.* I 257,30–258,8: ὡσπερ δὴ καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄνω δύο τὸ χεῖρον λαβόν, οἶον τὸν λόγον, καὶ ποιήσας αὐτὸν νόθον λόγον, τῶν δὲ κάτω τὴν αἴσθησιν καὶ ποιήσας αὐτὴν αἴσθησιν ἀναίσθητον ἔξεις, πῶς οἶεται γινώσκεσθαι τὴν ὕλην ὁ Πλάτων, νόθῳ λόγῳ καὶ αἰσθήσει ἀναίσθητῳ. καὶ ἀνάλογον ἐφ' ἐκατέρων τὸ κρεῖττον λαβόν καὶ ποιήσας νόθον κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἔξεις πῶς τὸ ἓν γνωστόν· νῶ γὰρ νόθῳ καὶ δόξῃ νόθῃ, διὸ καὶ οὐχ ἀπλοῦν κυρίως καὶ οὐκ ἀπ' αἰτίας γνωστόν· νόθῳ δ' οὖν, διότι κρεῖττόνως καθ' ἐκάτερον· δόξα γὰρ οὐκ ἀπ' αἰτίας γινώσκει, καὶ ἐκεῖνο οὐκ ἀπ' αἰτίας γνωστόν, ἀλλὰ τῷ μὴ ἔχειν αἰτίαν· καὶ νοῦς τὸ ἀπλοῦν γινώσκει, νόθος δὲ νοῦς ἐκεῖνο, διότι κρεῖττόνως τοῦ νοεῖν. τὸ οὖν κρεῖσσον νόθον ἐστὶν ὡς πρὸς τὸν νοῦν, ὡς καὶ ἐκεῖνο τοῦ ἀπλοῦν εἶναι κρεῖσσον, οἶον τὸ τῷ νῶ τῷ ὄντι νοητὸν καὶ ᾧ ὁ νοῦς ὁμόγνητος, ἀλλ' οὐ νόθος. ἐκεῖνο οὖν νοεῖ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ μὴ νῶ, τοῦτο



As you pick from the pair above the less valued thing, which is the logos, and make it a bastard logos (unauthentic logos) and from the pair below senseperception and make it a sensation which is not perceptible, we will see how Plato believes the matter to be known, that is by a bastard logos and an imperceptible perception. And now you can take in an analogous manner the better parts of the pairs and make bastards according to the better and you will see how the One is knowable. It will be known by bastard intellect and bastard opinion, since it (the One) will not be known as something primarily simple and knowable from a cause. It is known in a bastard way because it is superior to both. The opinative faculty does not know from a cause and that [the One] is not knowable from a cause. The intellect knows the simple but this intellect is bastard because it knows the way better than intellection. So the bastard is better than the intellect, because that object of knowledge is better than simple being, which is the intelligible object for the real intellect and to which object the intellect proper is a member of the same family, but the bastard is not. The intellect thinks that (object) by that which is its non-intellect that is the one in it as far it (intellect) is (also) god.

The opposition of the illegitimate mode of knowledge to the authentic is an issue already dealt by the Presocratics. For them the issue was opposition between knowledge acquired from sense perception and knowledge gained through reasoning.<sup>12</sup> Plato, however, did not connect dark knowledge to sense-perception but to the way of apprehending something which lies behind it. In *Timaeus* (52b) he argues that there also exists, besides the level of reality which reason contemplates and the other one which is perceptible by the senses, third level: "and a third Kind is an ever-existing Place (τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεί), which admits not of destruction, and provides room for all things that have birth, itself being apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning with the aid of non-sensation (ἀντὸ δὲ μετ' ἀναισθησίας ἀπτόν λογισμῶ τινι νόθῳ), barely an object of belief." (tr. W. R. M. Lamb)

Plotinus (*Enn.* 2,4,10) replaces the Platonic place (χώρα) by matter (ύλη) in his interpretation of this passage. Using the *similia similibus* principle as an explanation of the relationship between the cognitive powers and the object of cognition, Plotinus posits that only indeterminateness itself in the soul could ap-

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δὲ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔν, καθὸ καὶ ἔστι θεός. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>12</sup> Gregory Vlastos, for example, reconstructs Democritus' view "... when knowledge is nothing more than the cumulative sequence of such external impacts – and in that sense the child of chance - then it is 'bastard knowledge'. Only when fathered upon our senses by the soul's inherent power to move itself in the 'subtler' inquiry of reason, is it 'genuine knowledge'", G. Vlastos, "Ethics and Physics in Democritus", *The Philosophical Review* 55:1 (1946) 57.

prehend matter.<sup>13</sup> In his exegesis Proclus, applying the Neoplatonic principle of mean terms, divides the area characterized by Plato's opposition between intelligible and genesis, realms apprehended by reason and opinion, into four different levels, which are being (intelligible), being-becoming, becoming-being and becoming. Each of them is apprehended by the respective faculty among the authentic modes of cognition.

The correspondence between a special type of cognition and its object could be interpreted in Neoplatonic epistemology from two different angles, resulting in views which may be called the "modality and reification" approaches. The first one considers that the agents' quality determines the quality of the content of each type of knowledge. Thus different types of knowledge are modalized views on the same object. This view is possibly dominant in Plotinus and always present in the Later Neoplatonism as well. However, there is an alternative, more reified reading, according to which every type of knowledge in effect has or constitutes a specific object appropriate to it. This leads to a conclusion that opinion, discursive thinking, and intellection do not differ according to their perfection but have dissimilar objects in the strictest sense because of this object's level in the ontological hierarchy.<sup>14</sup> Most often Proclus seems to apply the modal principle, but he too has passages leaning towards a reification point of view.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Enn.* 2,4,10,1–11: "How can I conceive matter without quantity? How do you conceive it without quality? What could be such an intuitive thought, a concept of understanding or apprehension? It is the indetermination itself. Since similar apprehends similar, the indeterminate knows the indeterminate. A definition could be determined around this indeterminate, but the way lies through indefiniteness. Since all knowledge is attained by reason and thought, here reason tells us about matter, but desiring to be intellection it is not intellection, but more non-intellection. Rather, it forms about matter a phantasm, an illegitimate representation which comes from the other and is not from what is true, an image composed with some other principle. Perhaps this is why Plato says that Matter is apprehended by bastard reasoning", (Stephen MacKenna's translation modified).

<sup>14</sup> Damascius transforms this tendency of Neoplatonic epistemology into an explicit theory. *De Princ.* II 149,13–17: Τὸ δὲ οὖν ἢ γνῶσις; ἄρα περιουγασμὸς καὶ οἶον προπομπεία φωτὸς ἐν τῷ γνωστικῷ τοῦ γνωστοῦ; καὶ γὰρ ἢ αἴσθησις κατὰ τὸ αἴσθημα, καὶ ἢ φαντασία κατὰ τὸν τύπον ὑφίσταται, καὶ ἢ δόξασις καὶ ἢ διανόησις ἢ μὲν κατὰ τὸ διανόημα, ἢ δὲ κατὰ τὸ δόξασμα: καθόλου τοίνυν ἢ γνῶσις κατὰ τὸ <γνώσμα>, εἰ οἶόν τε φάναι. See Cosmin Andron's enlightening article, "Damascius on Knowledge and its Object", *Rhizai. A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 1 (2004) 107–24. I think that Andron is right, at least when it comes to Damascius that he "seems to understand all the faculties of the mind in an analogous manner to sense perception. The difference between the different faculties would be due to the nature of the object, i.e. its place in the ontological hierarchy", 109.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, *In Eucl.* 10–11, where instead of perception and opinion, he speaks about

The genuine modes from senseperception to intellection are all dealing the procession of Being (which is a matter of ontology) and have in this a common object which is radically different from the area of the One (dealt with theoretically by henology and henadology) for its abundant power and the realm of matter for its total privation (which is reflected only by the mind's dim conjectures about quasi-existence). Proclus renders Plato's formulation of "bastard reasoning with the aid of non-sensation" as "by bastard logos and imperceptible perception" (νόθῳ λόγῳ καὶ αἰσθήσει ἀναισθήτῳ). This, for Proclus, is the lower bastard mode, composed of the lowest terms of the two pairs of the authentic modes. It has the same function as "bastard reasoning" has in Plato and Plotinus; that is, apprehending matter outside of forms. Proclus innovation is the higher of the spurious modes, "bastard intellection and bastard opinion" (νόθος νοῦς καὶ δόξα νόθη). This is the faculty for apprehending the One.

Instead of Plato's three levels Proclus posits six-levels in his exegesis.<sup>16</sup> Or are there even more? There are some grounds to argue rather for an eight-level model. "And" in the expression like "bastard intellection and bastard opinion" could also be interpreted to referring to two different things. If we have four levels in the area of definiteness, why not also in the area of indeterminateness? In his other and later works Proclus certainly also makes distinctions between the levels of the soul's faculties which apprehend henads and the One. That is why I see Proclus' νόθος νοῦς as an incipient form of his later concept of "the flower of the intellect". It should be noted that in the last phrases of the quoted passage Proclus describes only νόθος νοῦς. We can with confidence see in it "the flower of the intellect" because Proclus' words are almost the same as those used in the *Parmenides Commentary*: "For its part where it (the intellect) is not in itself intellect, the intellect is god, and for its part which is not god, it is intellect in the god in it. The divine intellect, which is whole, is intellective essence, which has its own summit and unity and knows itself as far as it is intellective, but being inebriated on nectar, as someone says, it generates the totality of cognition in so far as it is the flower of intellect and a super-essential henad".<sup>17</sup> The other one, if it really is a separate faculty, νόθη δόξα, is not characterized more closely here, but

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conjecture and faith.

<sup>16</sup> See also *In Parm.* 644,4–645,6–8.

<sup>17</sup> *In Parm.* 1047,16–24: Τῷ οὖν ἑαυτοῦ μὴ νῶ θεός ἐστιν ὁ νοῦς· καὶ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ μὴ θεῷ νοῦς ἐστιν ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ θεός· καὶ ὁ θεῖος νοῦς, τὸ ὅλον, οὐσία νοερὰ μετὰ τῆς οἰκείας ἀκρότητος καὶ τῆς οἰκείας ἐστὶν ἐνότητος, ἑαυτὴν μὲν γινώσκουσα καθόσον νοερὰ, μεθύουσα δὲ, ὡς τίς φησι, τῷ νέκταρι, καὶ ὅλην γεννῶσα τὴν γνῶσιν, καθόσον ἐστὶν ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ καὶ ὑπερούσιος ἑνάς.

it could represent the supreme "flower of the whole soul" known in other works by Proclus.

When Proclus discusses on the flower of the intellect he is still using terms like thinking, albeit thinking above intellection. Bastard opinion fits well with the context when expressions of thinking and seeing are left behind for the metaphors linked to lower sensations and especially for the haptic images. The image of matter as an inverted One emerges naturally from his famous rule or law of causation, which says that primordial causes have more effects and constitute levels of realities out of the sight of the secondary causes. In the same way the most elementary modes of cognition cover a larger area of reality than the more developed modes. The intellect is simple and knows the causes of real being, while opinion is inherently plural and does not know the causes. But the merits which the intellect has at the level of knowledge concerning Being are faults at the superessential level. On the other hand, the demerits of the opinion concerning Being mirror the excellence which the divine, "henadic" level has in its relation to the intelligible. As the flower of the intellect or bastard intellect reaches the highest summit of the Being and the henads in it with a kind of supra-intellectual intellection, the flower of the whole soul "touches" the One and conceives by this touch an ineffable notion of the ultimate ground of reality.

### **Proclus' concept of theurgy**

A Neoplatonist philosopher knows that at the level of the universal and divine Intellect absolute identity prevails with the intelligizing subject and content of its thought. But human thought has no immediate access to the eternal forms contained in the Intellect; it keeps only preconceptual innate images of them and has to express them through the temporal and consecutive labor of discursive reason. As far as philosophy is related to the divine it cannot disregard mythology and theurgy. Both of them could offer to the human soul an enlarged field of vision, without, however, replacing reason. Their symbolic operations resonate rather with the imagination.<sup>18</sup>

Proclus also uses the term theurgy in plural, for instance in *In Crat.* 176,11, but this concerns different modes of worship, and thus it is not relevant for the

<sup>18</sup> For Proclus' views on imagination, see especially *In Eucl.* 52,20–53,1. The best study known to me is J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris 1982, 44–51. See also, among others, E. A. Moutsopoulos, *Les structures de l'imaginaire dans la philosophie de Proclus*, Paris 1985; Rappe (n. 2) 131–2.

theory of scales in the soul's ascent. In all Proclus mentions theurgy 51 times in his writings. Considering the evidence as a whole, one has to conclude that in his usage theurgy stands for a generic term of cultic practice where communicating with the gods is realized through divinely given symbols.<sup>19</sup> Such a view is also shared in the writings of the persons who could be counted as belonging within Proclus' sphere of influence. One of these is Dionysius the Areopagite,<sup>20</sup> and another such author is John Lydus, who calls even Julius Caesar a theurge wanting to find an adequate rendition for the Greek audience of the meaning of the sacred title of *pontifex maximus*.<sup>21</sup> "Divine works", used in Pseudo-Dionysian studies, would be an apt translation and Trouillard's "un symbolisme opératoire destinée à éveiller la présence divine" an appropriate definition.<sup>22</sup>

Proclus' statement in the *Platonic Theology* may be a good starting point for more a detailed inquiry. The context of the passage is Proclus' treatment of the formation of the divine names. "Our science of theology" produces each name as an image, like a statue of a god. Proclus introduces theurgy for the sake of comparison:

<sup>19</sup> The relevant passages where Proclus speaks explicitly about theurgy are the following: *Eclogae*, fr. 3, *In Alc.* 52,5–53,10; 92,4–15; 150,9–13, *In Crat.* sections 52, 71, 113, 122, 174, 176, 179, *In Eucl.* 136,28–139,1, *In Remp.* I 37,3–22; I 39,10–20; I 91,18–92,9; I 128,4–23; I 151,24–152,12; II 123,9–124,8; II 143,22–28 (in the context of the mystical doctrine of the sign of Helios in the soul), II 154,11–155,15; II 220,10–24; II 241,19–243,22 (divine epiphany), *In Tim.* I 214,2–4; I 274,9–18; I 317,17–318,20; II 254,26–257,8; III 25,18–26,15; III 27,3–15; III 40,17–41,3; III 42,30–43,15; III 63,19–26; III 80,5–21; III 124,20–125,4; III 131,30–132,4; III 157,22–158,3; *Theol. Plat.* I 112,1–113,10 (the famous *locus classicus*), I 124,21–125,2; IV 30,18–19 (theurgic burial), IV 101,1–15 (in the context of harmony between theurgists and Plato). These passages deal with such diverse topics as divine oracles and epiphanies and Chaldean theurgists' opinions on theology, cosmology, astronomy etc., but the only place where hypernoetic cognition and theurgy are brought to discussion at the same time is *In Crat.* 113, which testifies to Proclus' opinion that "the flower of the intellect" functions beyond the area of theurgical activity.

<sup>20</sup> With 47 mentions he is the second most theurgical writer after Proclus in ancient literature. For examples of the Christian use of the word theurgy, meaning both their own and pagan "sacraments", see John of Damascus (*Homilia in transfigurationem salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi*, 18–21) and Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam* 932,45–53.

<sup>21</sup> John Lydus, *De mensibus* 102,7: ὁ τοίνυν Καῖσαρ οὐ τύχη μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱερωσύνη κοσμούμενος – καὶ γὰρ πόνטיפεξ ἦν, οἶονεὶ γεφυραῖος ἀρχιερεὺς ἢ θεουργός.

<sup>22</sup> J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'Ame selon Proclus*, Paris 1972, 175.

As theurgy through certain symbols invokes the generous kindness of the gods to illuminate divine statues produced artificially by humans, at the same way the intellectual science of divine things also reveals the hidden essence of the gods with distinctions and combinations of sounds.<sup>23</sup>

Theology "reveals", it is interested in language and its goal is to express the divine essence in scientific concepts. Theurgy "invokes"; it acts symbolically, and its goal is to bring out divine illumination. A passage from the *Commentary on the Cratylus* could be read as a direct continuation of this. We get to know that theurgy does not work only with concrete things like statues but also with language and especially divine names. Imitating divine symbols, "theurgy too produces them through uttered, though inarticulate, expressions".<sup>24</sup> Thus, theurgy's is not the same thing that, for instance, telestic art, consecration of divine images, but telestic art— at least, in its highest, or genuine forms, functions "theurgically". And the difference between (scientific) theology and theurgy is not that the former is concerned with language, and the latter not, but that theology relates to signification, theurgy to experience beyond discourse.<sup>25</sup>

Theurgy as a practice is inherently unintelligible. Its task is to represent and invoke divine illumination with varied material figures functioning as ineffable

<sup>23</sup> *Theol. Plat.* I 124,25–125,2: καὶ ὡσπερ ἡ θεουργία διὰ δὴ τινῶν συμβόλων εἰς τὴν τῶν τεχνητῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἔλλαμψιν προκαλεῖται τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἄφθονον ἀγαθότητα, κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ καὶ ἡ νοερὰ τῶν θείων ἐπιστήμη συνθέσσει καὶ διαιρέσει τῶν ἡχῶν ἐκφαίνει τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην οὐσίαν τῶν θεῶν.

<sup>24</sup> *In Crat.* 71,65–68: τοιαῦτα δ' ἐστὶν τὰ καλούμενα σύμβολα τῶν θεῶν μονοειδῆ μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὑψηλοτέροις ὄντα διακόσμοις, πολυειδῆ δ' ἐν τοῖς καταδεεστέροις· ἃ καὶ ἡ θεουργία μιμουμένη δι' ἐκφωνήσεων μὲν, ἀδιαρθρῶ των δέ, αὐτὰ προφέρεται.

<sup>25</sup> The passages of the *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary on the Cratylus* discussed above are in the focus of van den Berg's critique of Rappe in his discussion of the status of the theory of divine names in Proclus and Rappe's claim that the *Platonic Theology* is a theurgic text: van den Berg (n. 1) 144 n 26. I think that Rappe comes out with elegance from the blind alley of "deformation theory". Rappe does not try to reconcile Proclus' rationalist and religious side with the sophisticated theories of "higher theurgy", but instead in her interpretation theurgy seems to absorb philosophy in Proclus. Thus she comes very close to the position of Dodds; however, this does not lead her to a negative assessment of Proclus, because her task is to study the interpretative and textual strategies of the Later Neoplatonism in the light of deep knowledge of modern philosophy and literary theories, and not to estimate to what extent Proclus, soaked with "magic", deviates from the Plotinian path. Stimulating and innovative as Rappe's interpretations are, her exegesis is nevertheless defective regarding our topic as she ignores Proclus' discussion of the limit of theurgy.

symbols of the gods.<sup>26</sup> These symbols are opaque to the human mind; they do their work, as such, by themselves. They are not a matter for explanation, they are for use. The intellectual science of theology, on the other hand, strives to be as intelligible as possible. It works with dialectic, using combinations and division. Thus the highest part of philosophy functions as a parallel to theurgy, revealing the secret essence of the gods.

Theurgy is a quasi-synonym for the hieratic art, rather overlapping than identical. Theurgy is surely not a plain synonym of initiation or mantic, but these could be seen as parts of common art and in this way specific theurgies. The Later Neoplatonism also applies its concept of serialized totality to hierarchies of beings, as well as to articulation of the arts and sciences. Telestic could be identical to theurgy and a part of it in the sense that theurgy is the root of the series precontaining its more or less familiar derivatives.<sup>27</sup> In the same way as mathematicians always apply some branch of mathematics, the practitioners in different branches of the hieratic arts apply different theurgies related to distinct gods, mysteries, ethnic and other traditions etc. Proclus shows that dialectics is the capstone and the unifying bond between the mathematical sciences,<sup>28</sup> while a similar capstone and bond in the varied hieratic arts is the doctrine of operative divine signs.

Proclus gives the appellation of theurgists only to such people in whom an understanding of these symbols is most fully incarnated by the grace of divine revelation. Although the Neoplatonists themselves performed theurgical acts and they recognized as valid many species of hieratic art in different religious contexts, with the term "theurges" Proclus himself seems always to refer only to

<sup>26</sup> *In Eucl.* 138,10–15: ... ἡ θεουργία τὰς ιδιότητας ἀποτυπουμένη τοῖς τῶν θεῶν ἀγάλμασιν ἄλλα ἄλλοις περιβάλλει σχήματα.

<sup>27</sup> Dominic O'Meara explains the problem of the parts of political philosophy in a treatise by an unknown author of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in similar way: "Both authors (Pseudo-Dionysius and the anonymous writer under consideration) express a fundamental theory of Neoplatonic metaphysics, the theory of series of terms in which the first member of the series precontains and produces the other members of the series. This type of series, dubbed a 'P-series' by A. C. Lloyd, is to be found, for example, in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (prop. 18–9), cf. Lloyd 1990, 76–8. In the case of the anonymous dialogue, this means that kingship or kingly science is both a part of, and identical to, political philosophy: it is a part of political philosophy, because there are other parts, such as military science; it *is* political philosophy, because it precontains, as the highest part and source of all political knowledge, the other parts.", D. O'Meara, "The Justinianic Dialogue: *On Political Science* and its Neoplatonic Sources", in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, Oxford 2002, 54.

<sup>28</sup> *In Eucl.* 42,11 (θριγγλὸν τῶν μαθημάτων, from *Rep.* 534e), 43,22 (τὸν σύνδεσμον τῶν μαθημάτων).

the Chaldeans, who, at the time of Marcus (Aurelius), received revelation from the gods in the form of famous the Oracles.<sup>29</sup> When Proclus tells us something about specific Chaldean matters beyond quoting the *Chaldean Oracles* as direct utterances of the gods, he most often deals with the theological opinions of the original theurgists and rarely about rituals. Perhaps the only specific Chaldean practice mentioned by him is the famous theurgic burial, which seems to imitate the Platonic myth of *Phaedrus*.<sup>30</sup>

The original Chaldean theurgists were not primarily "founders" of some new phenomenon, which was "integrated into" Neoplatonism as an "irrational element". Their teaching has a strong appeal to Neoplatonist for three reasons. First, they offered for the use of philosophers already reading Plato theologically a body of theological truths, revealed by the gods themselves in historical time and not in some distant past. Second they coined an apt neologism for describing the practical side of religion as divine works (θεουργία) in opposition to discourse on things divine (θεολογία). And third, what seems to impress the Neoplatonists most in the theoretical legacy of the original Chaldean theurgy is their doctrine according to which authentic religious activity is mediated by the operating divine symbols (συνθήματα, σύμβολα) found in all levels of reality. The capability to find, know, and use these mystical signs is the characteristic of a real theurge, a master of the hieratic art.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *In Crat.* 122,4: καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ Μάρκου γενομένοις θεουργοῖς οἱ θεοὶ καὶ νοητὰς καὶ νοερὰς τάξεις ἐκφαίνοντες, ὀνόματα τῶν θείων διακόσμων ἐξαγγελτικὰ τῆς ιδιότητος αὐτῶν παραδεδώκασιν, also *In Remp.* II 123,12–13 καὶ ὅσα τοῖς ἐπὶ Μάρκου θεουργοῖς ἐκδέδοται πίστιν ἐναργῆ πορίζει τοῦ λόγου. The historicity of this revelation may have had strong value for Proclus, not least as a counterweight for the comparable claims of Christians.

<sup>30</sup> *Theol. Plat.* IV 30,1: Ἐν τῇ μυστικωτάτῃ τῶν τελετῶν, κελεύουν οἱ θεουργοὶ θάπτειν τὸ σῶμα πλὴν τῆς κεφαλῆς. This could imitate the charioteer's head which rises temporarily to the vision of the supercelestial place in *Phaedrus* and also has a connection to the curious idea of the human as an "inverted" and "celestial plant" whose head is rooted in the intelligible (see Festugière's translation of the final part of *In Tim.* which has survived in Arabic, A. J. Festugière, *Proclus. Commentaire sur le Timée* V, Paris 1968, 244) as henads are rooted in the One like trees (*In Parm.* 1050,12). Both images would strengthen the Neoplatonist fondness for "flower" terminology.

<sup>31</sup> Σύμβολον could even mean scientific concepts for Proclus at times, but it is very often used in a mystical and religious context. Σύνθημα rarely appears outside this context. Its mystical uses originate from the *Chaldean Oracles* and it was introduced into Neoplatonism as a technical term by Iamblichus. Its usage is also common among other representatives of the Later Neoplatonism (Damascius, Dionysius Areopagite), but none uses it as profusely as Proclus (117 times). Proclus' use of the terms for symbolic relations forms a continuum moving from the most transparent term, image (eikon), to, the more opaque synthema through symbol.



Hyperintellection has common ground with theurgy in the sense that it too is based on the working of the *συνθήματα*. As the soul contains in its *νοεροὶ λόγοι* (reason-principles) images of the noetic forms (*νοερὰ εἶδη*) which are paradigms for the divine Demiurge for its action,<sup>32</sup> it also contains divine symbols (*θεῖοι συμβόλοι*) participating in all divine signs (*πάντων μὲν μετέχει τῶν συνθημάτων*) which are derived from the One and the divine henads ("unities", the highest superessential and hypernoetic gods).<sup>33</sup> For Proclus such devices of the soul as "the flower of the intellect" and "the flower of the whole soul" etc., how many of them are, and however they are termed, are also divine symbols.<sup>34</sup>

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*Eikōn* (image or copy) functions on the basis of similarity, it is a more or less immediate representative of its archetype (paradigm), to which it refers. Thus the domain of an image is that of a rational understanding of different levels of ontological forms. A symbol is not an arbitrary and conventional signifier for Proclus, but, rather a means rendering an invisible content visible in an enigmatic way, revealing by veiling, at times with an outward appearance exactly opposite to the meaning of what is signified. The appropriate domain for a symbol is mythology. *Synthema* is totally beyond human understanding; it is the derived presence of supraessential, supraintellectual, henadic and godlike things. For a theory of symbolism in Proclus see J. Dillon, "Image, Symbol and Analogy: Three Basic Concepts of the Neoplatonic Allegorical Exegesis", in J. M. Dillon, *Golden Chain. Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity*, London 1991, 247–63; J. A. Coulter, *The Literary Microcosm. Theories of the interpretation of the Later Neoplatonism*, Leiden 1976; J. Trouillard, "Le symbolisme chez Proclus", *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 7 (1981) 287–308; L. Cardullo, *Il Linguaggio del Simbolo in Proclo. Analisi filosofico-semantiche dei termini symbolon/eikōn/synthēma nel Commentario alla Repubblica*, Catania 1985.

<sup>32</sup> *Dianoia* expresses discursively in its concepts these *logoi*, which it knows as projections from the soul's intellectual essence. For Proclus' theory of discursive reason see, D. Gregory MacIsaac, *The Soul and discursive reason in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Notre Dame 2001.

<sup>33</sup> See *Eclogae*, fr. 5. É. des Places in his edition of the fragments, as an appendix to the *Oracles chaldaïques*, Paris 1971, 206–12, has *ιερωὶν λόγων* (fr. 5,15), Jahn has adopted an alternative reading of the manuscripts, which Sheppard also follows (note 1 above) reading with *νοεροὶ λόγοι*. This is more in accordance with Proclus' expected use and with the *εἰκόνες μὲν τῶν νοερωῶν οὐσιῶν* a little later.

<sup>34</sup> *In Remp.* I, p. 177,18–23: Proclus calls the equivalent of the "flower of the intellect" an ineffable symbol of the gods' unitary hypostasis in the soul: *συνάπτεται τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ζῆ τὴν ἐκείνοις συγγενεστάτην καὶ δι' ὁμοιότητος ἄκρας ἠνωμένην ζωὴν, οὐχ ἑαυτῆς οὐσαν, ἀλλ' ἐκείνων, ὑπερ δραμοῦσα μὲν τὸν ἑαυτῆς νοῦν, ἀνεγείρασα δὲ τὸ ἄρρητον σύνθημα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἐνιαίας ὑποστάσεως καὶ συνάψασα τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον, τῷ ἐκεῖ φωτὶ τὸ ἑαυτῆς φῶς, τῷ ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν πᾶσαν καὶ ζωὴν ἐνὶ τὸ ἐνοειδέστατον τὴν τῆς οἰκείας οὐσίας τε καὶ ζωῆς. Similarly *Theol. Plat.* II 56,5–57,3 (below) and *In Tim.* I 210,11–14: *πάντ' οὖν καὶ μένει καὶ ἐπιστρέφει πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, ταύτην λαβόντα παρ' αὐτῶν τὴν δύναμιν καὶ διττὰ συνθήματα κατ' οὐσίαν ὑποδεξάμενα, τὰ μὲν ὅπως ἂν ἐκεῖ μένη, τὰ δὲ ὅπως ἂν**

They represent in the human psychic structure the illumination from the highest gods. This is how he comes to his peculiar late Neoplatonic answer to the question of what the soul ultimately is: "We are images of the intellectual essences and statues of unknowable signs" (καὶ ἐσμὲν εἰκόνες μὲν τῶν νοερῶν οὐσιῶν, ἀγάλματα τὰ δὲ τῶν ἀγνώστων συνθημάτων).<sup>35</sup>

Ineffable signs constitute a network of reciprocal sympathy pervading the whole cosmos. At all levels entities try to identify with the highest signs present in them. This means deification as far as it is possible for entities at each level. For instance, according to Proclus, sunflower has been stamped with the symbol of the sun and belongs to a divine series which leads up to Helios as a cosmic god. A plant's conversion towards the sun and its imitation of the sun by its physical shape is for Proclus philosophically speaking an instance of metaphysical conversion, but it is also an act of worship at the vegetal level.<sup>36</sup> Proclus thinks that not only demons and angels, but even the Intellect itself and the highest gods, are pursuing contact with the first uncaused cause, renouncing their own nature in their desire to be identical with the sign of the primordial thing. In their ascent they abandon their own characteristic properties which define them as distinct beings and thus not-one (in the sense of existence different to the One itself) and they reach their purest unity in themselves, that which in their nature is a trace of supreme non-being (the one in them). We find one of the Proclus' most impressive formulations of this view in the second part of the *Platonic Theology*:<sup>37</sup>

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ἐπιστρέφη προελθόντα, where the symbol of return corresponds to "the flower of the intellect" and the symbol of remaining to "the flower of the whole soul".

<sup>35</sup> *Eclogae* (= *Chald. Phil.*) fr. 5,7–8.

<sup>36</sup> See especially Πρόκλου περὶ τῆς καθ' Ἑλληνας ἱερατικῆς τέχνης., ed. J. Bidez, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs*, vol. 6, Brussels 1928, 148–51.

<sup>37</sup> *Theol. Plat.* II 56,5–57,3: Καὶ οὐ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν μόνον καθαρεύειν προσήκει τῶν ἑαυτῆς συστοίχων ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἐνώσει καὶ κοινωνίᾳ πᾶν τὸ ἑαυτῆς πλήθος ἔξω καταλείπουσαν, καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξιν τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀνεγείρουσαν μύσασαν, φησί, προσάγειν αὐτὴν τῷ πάντων βασιλεῖ καὶ μετέχειν τοῦ φωτός, ὡς αὐτῇ θεμιτόν· ἀλλὰ καὶ νοῦς πρὸ ἡμῶν καὶ πάντα τὰ θεῖα ταῖς ἀκροτάταις ἐνώσεσιν ἑαυτῶν καὶ τοῖς ὑπερουσίοις πυρσοῖς καὶ ταῖς ὑπάρξεσι ταῖς πρώταις ἦνονται τῷ πρώτῳ καὶ μετέχουσιν ἀεὶ τῆς ἐκεῖθεν πληρώσεως· οὐχ ἦπερ οὖν εἰσιν, ἀλλ' ἦ τῶν ἑαυτοῖς συγγενῶν ἐξήρηται, πρὸς τὴν μίαν ἀρχὴν συννεύουσι. Πᾶσι γὰρ ἐνέσπειρεν ὁ τῶν ὅλων αἴτιος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ παντελοῦς ὑπεροχῆς συνθήματα, καὶ διὰ τούτων περὶ ἑαυτὸν ἴδρυσε τὰ πάντα, καὶ πάρεστιν ἀρρήτως πᾶσιν ἀφ' ὅλων ἐξηρημένος. Ἐκαστον οὖν εἰς τὸ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φύσεως ἄρρητον εἰσδυόμενον εὐρίσκει τὸ σύμβολον τοῦ πάντων Πατρός· καὶ σέβεται πάντα κατὰ φύσιν ἐκεῖνον, καὶ διὰ τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μυστικοῦ συνθήματος ἐνίζεται τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν ἀποδυόμενα, καὶ μόνον εἶναι τὸ ἐκεῖνου σύνθημα σπεύδοντα καὶ μόνου μετέχειν ἐκεῖνου, πόθῳ τῆς

"And not only should the human soul purify itself from things appropriate to its own level in the union and community with the first principle leaving out all its multiplicity and awakening its true existence, with "closed eyes" as it is said, and to approach the "king of all things" and to participate in its light, as far as that it is allowed, but also, before us, the intellect and all divine in their highest unions and supraessential flames, join with the first principle and participate eternally in the plenitude therefrom. Thus, they unite with the unique first principle, not through what they are, but on the contrary, through that which transcends their own nature. In effect, the cause of the universe "has sown in all things" signs of its absolute superiority, and through them established around itself all things and is present in all in an ineffable way, though its is transcendent to all. Thus each entity returning into itself finds from its own nature the symbol of the Father of all things and everything worships him according to its own nature, and unites with him through appropriate mystical signs, stripping its own nature and wanting only to be one with its own sign and participate in that with the desire of unknown nature and the source of good. And having finally raised itself to this original cause, each thing becomes calm and free from the pains of childbirth and love, which all things naturally have for unknowable, ineffable, imparticipable and overabundant goodness."<sup>38</sup>

Thus we also see a form of theurgy, the drive towards unity using physical motion, shapes, and figures, at levels lower than the human, and on the other hand a form of unification as a result of purification and hypernoesis at the superhuman levels too.

That hyperintellection and theurgy are both related to the doctrine of mystical signs has, of course, been an important justification for modern interpretations which assume the existence of the the higher, non-ritualistic theurgy in Proclus. As the awakening of the hyperintellective faculties of the soul is the highest point of the soul's ascent toward the divine, so their activity is undeniably the ultimate anagogic or mystagogic stage described in his theory. But theurgy does not enter here.<sup>39</sup> Proclus himself never calls the activity of the hypernoetic faculties a form

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ἀγνώστου φύσεως καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ πηγῆς· καὶ μέχρι ταύτης ἀναδραμόντα τῆς αἰτίας ἐν γαλήνῃ γίνεται καὶ τῶν ὀδίνων λήγει καὶ τοῦ ἔρωτος, ὃν ἔχει τὰ πάντα κατὰ φύσιν, τῆς ἀγνώστου καὶ ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀμεθέκτου καὶ ὑπερπλήρους ἀγαθότητος.

<sup>38</sup> Similarly, as Proclus describes the highest possible identification with the One's sign in the soul as a state of peace and quiet, Plotinus depicts the ultimate result of his vision, *Enn.* 6,9,11,21–25: Τὸ δὲ ἴσως ἦν οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἕκστασις καὶ ἄπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔφεσις πρὸς ἀφήν καὶ στάσις καὶ περινόησις πρὸς ἐφαρμογήν, εἶπερ τις τὸ ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ θεάσεται.

<sup>39</sup> Concluding her 1982 article (note 1 above) Sheppard says "Proclus still thinks of the final

of theurgy. Theurgical worship of the gods is, for him, a recommended, surely loved, and probably even necessary bit of the salvific path as a living experience of authentic religion, but it does not awaken the hypernoetic faculties. These are triggered by contemplation exhausting itself in negative theology.

### The problem of the primacy of theurgy

Whether theurgy or philosophy is more important to Proclus' soteriology is an issue closely tied to the question of the plurality of theurgies, but cannot be exhaustively dealt with in this contribution.<sup>40</sup> Let us, however, note that an interpretation which gives primacy to theurgy is generally built on three repeatedly quoted *loci classici* from Damascius, Iamblichus, and Proclus. Damascius' statement<sup>41</sup> is used in order to demonstrate the Iamblichean turn in Neoplatonism, Iamblichus' *passus* is used to crystallize the meaning of this turn, and Proclus' passage to prove that Proclus is in full agreement with Iamblichus.

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union as a 'Plotinian' mystical experience, not as some magically induced trance. He describes it as a kind of theurgy because its theoretical basis is of the same kind as the theoretical basis of theurgy: the 'one in the soul' is a σύμβολον, of the transcendent One", 224. With this we come to the crux of the question: Proclus never describes the awakening of the one in the soul as a kind of theurgy. To suppose that he is implying so in other places is hardly defensible if he explicitly denies this, as he does, in *In Cratylum*. The most important Plotinian passages on assumed mystical experiences are *Enn.* 5,8,22–23; 6,9,4,24–30; 6,5,4,18; 6,7,40,2; 6,9,9,47–58. The first two are also evidence of the Plotinian roots of Proclus' theory of "the flower of the intellect".

<sup>40</sup> The thesis of the primacy of theurgy seems to get apparent support from the fact that the Athenian school held the theurgical virtues to be the highest, Marinus *Vita Procli*, ch. 26–33. On the other hand, Proclus often presents a complete path of the ascent without a word about theurgy, for example in *Theol. Plat.* I 14,5–17,7 and II 61,19–64–65,26. Both passages concern the question of the grounds of theological knowledge and they relativize even the idea of the Plotinian style mystical ecstasy as an ultimate interest of the Later Neoplatonism, because Proclus, admitting the entheistic vision of the One as a supreme experience of the human soul, emphasizes its transitoriness and puts a focus on redescent, which offers to discursive reason notions to cope with the things that are seen to reveal the properties of the divine classes as far as this is possible in scientific theology.

<sup>41</sup> Damascius in L. G. Westerink, *The Greek commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, vol. 2, Amsterdam 1977, section 172, 1–4: "Ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες.

Two considerations should be taken into account of reading Damascius' testimony which relativize its message. First, recent studies have convincingly argued that Plotinus was not totally without interest in ritualistic forms of religion.<sup>42</sup> Second, Damascius' statement should also be interpreted in its proper context. No doubt the Iamblichean turn marks a major reorientation in the doctrinal history of Neoplatonism. It could also be explained with the changing environment of the Neoplatonist schools. Plotinus could ignore Christianity, which was surely known to him, but the Later Neoplatonism was engaged in an active struggle for the defense of traditional religion and naturally placed a greater emphasis on things hieratic. What Damascius is doing is to have recourse to a familiar rhetorical device in doctrinal dispute, presenting himself as the vindicator of the right balance.<sup>43</sup> Thus he introduces tension in his predecessors' views and demonstrates how his own version of Neoplatonism transcends them and is, of course, in full accord with Plato.

A famous passage of Iamblichus<sup>44</sup> has often been read through the lenses

<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, Z. Mazur, "Unio Magica: Part II Plotinus, Theurgy, and the Question of Ritual", *Dionysius* 22 (2004) 29–55.

<sup>43</sup> Damascius continues immediately: ὁ δὲ Πλάτων τὰς ἐκατέρωθεν συνηγορίας ἐννοήσας πολλὰς οὐσας εἰς μίαν αὐτὰς συνήγαγεν ἀλήθειαν, τὸν φιλόσοφον 'Βάκχον' ὀνομάζων· καὶ γὰρ ὁ χωρίσας ἑαυτὸν τῆς γενέσεως εἰ τεθείη μέσος εἰς ταῦτ' ἄξει τῷ ἑτέρῳ τὸν ἕτερον. πλὴν δῆλός ἐστιν ὅμως τῷ Βάκχῳ σεμνύνων τὸν φιλόσοφον, ὡς θεῶ τὸν νοῦν ἢ τῷ ἀπορρήτῳ φωτὶ τὸ ῥητόν. The simile of Plato as a Bacchic philosopher is used by Proclus to eulogize the whole Neoplatonic tradition from Plotinus to Syrianus, *Theol. Plat.* I, 6,24–7,9.

<sup>44</sup> *De myst.* 2,11,96,11–97,19: Ἐστω μὲν γὰρ ἡ ἄγνοια καὶ ἀπάτη πλημμέλεια καὶ ἀσέβεια, οὐ μὴν διὰ τοῦτο ψευδῆ ποιεῖ καὶ τὰ οἰκείως τοῖς θεοῖς προσφερόμενα καὶ τὰ θεῖα ἔργα, οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεουργοὺς· ἐπεὶ τί ἐκώλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἔχειν τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς; νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔχει τό γε ἀληθὲς οὕτως· ἀλλ' ἢ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἢ τε τῶν νοουμένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνον συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δύνამεις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσην. Διόπερ οὐδὲ τῷ νοεῖν αὐτὰ ἐνεργοῦμεν· ἔσται γὰρ οὕτω νοερὰ αὐτῶν ἢ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἐνδιδομένη· τὸ δ' οὐδέτερόν ἐστιν ἀληθές. Καὶ γὰρ μὴ νοούντων ἡμῶν αὐτὰ τὰ συνθήματα ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν δρᾷ τὸ οἰκείον ἔργον, καὶ ἢ τῶν θεῶν, πρὸς οὓς ἀνήκει ταῦτα, ἄρρητος δύναμις αὐτῇ ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐπιγιγνώσκει τὰς οἰκειὰς εἰκόνας, ἀλλ' οὐ τῷ διεγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔχει φύσιν τὰ περιέχοντα ὑπὸ τῶν περιεχομένων οὐδὲ τὰ τέλεια ὑπὸ τῶν ἀτελῶν οὐδ' ὑπὸ τῶν μερῶν τὰ ὅλα ἀνακινεῖσθαι. Ὅθεν δὴ οὐδ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων νοήσεων προηγουμένως τὰ θεῖα αἴτια προκαλεῖται εἰς ἐνέργειαν· ἀλλὰ ταύτας μὲν καὶ τὰς ὅλας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρίστας διαθέσεις καὶ τὴν περὶ ἡμᾶς καθαρότητα ὡς συναίτια ἄττα προὑποκεῖσθαι χρή, τὰ δ' ὡς κυρίως ἐγείροντα τὴν θεῖαν βούλησιν αὐτὰ τὰ θεῖα ἐστὶ συνθήματα· καὶ οὕτω τὰ τῶν θεῶν αὐτὰ ὑφ' ἑαυτῶν ἀνακινεῖται, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς τῶν ὑποδεεστέρων ἐνδεχόμενά τινα εἰς ἑαυτὰ ἀρχὴν τῆς οἰκειᾶς ἐνεργείας.

of degeneration theory; that is, arguing for an interpretation in which the Later Neoplatonism, tainted by magic and occultism, deforms the pure philosophical heritage of Plotinus.<sup>45</sup> This view has been contested with the results of the revival of interest in Iamblichus from the early 70's (and which has not been exhausted ever since then) and deformation theory is definitely not in fashion in Neoplatonic studies nowadays, even if it still haunts more general reflections on the history of Greek philosophy.

In order to draw a more nuanced picture of the relationship between Iamblichus and Proclus' view on theurgy, Proclus' treatise on the harmony between Chaldean and Plato's teachings (*Theol. Plat.* IV 27,6-31,16) is important. Proclus seems to echo<sup>46</sup> the structure and vocabulary of this famous Iamblichean *locus classicus*. Iamblichus says that we have:

theurgic unity, which is not accomplished by thinking, but using divine signs together with the best and purest states of soul, and then the divine will give from itself the desired unity.

Proclus replaces Iamblichean theurgic unity by initiation, saying that it

is not accomplished by thinking and reasoning, but the silence beyond and higher of all modes of cognition given by faith, which establish us and the universal soul into the ineffable and unknown class of the gods.

I think that we have too much parallelism between these statements not to assume that Proclus is, on the one hand, expressing his basic agreement with Iamblichus and, on the other hand trying to be more precise than him. Iamblichus' intention in the context of the controversy with Porphyry is to shed light on the question of what is really happening in the cultic intercourse between humans and gods. Proclus wants to support Iamblichus' position and at the same time relate it to the theological findings of the post-Iamblichean Athenian school. Both emphasize that what is happening will not happen by thinking, Proclus' formulation being

<sup>45</sup> E. R. Dodds' verdict is a classic piece of "deformation theory": "With that the whole basis of the Plotinian intellectual mysticism is rejected, and the door stands open to all those superstitions of the lower culture which Plotinus had condemned in that noble apology for Hellenism, the treatise *Against the Gnostics*", "Introduction" in his *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford 1933, xx.

<sup>46</sup> *Theol. Plat.* IV 31,10–16: Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νοήσεως οὐδὲ διὰ κρίσεως ὅλως ἢ μύησις, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἐνιαίας καὶ πάσης γνωστικῆς ἐνεργείας κρείττονος σιγῆς, ἣν ἡ πίστις ἐνδίδωσιν, ἐν τῷ ἀρρήτῳ καὶ ἀγνώστῳ <γένει> τῶν θεῶν ἰδρύουσα τὰς τε ὅλας ψυχὰς καὶ τὰς ἡμετέρας.

more pedantic as he would like to underline that we are really not transcending only discursive thinking but also intellectual intuition. Acting agents are general divine signs in Iamblichus, for Proclus the most uniform silence above all forms of knowing, formulations which mean for him divine signs at the highest level of the human psychic structure, the one in the soul in its double manifestations of the flower of the intellect and flower of the whole soul. The soul's purest and best states could, of course, be embryonic modes of the same concept already found in Iamblichus. Proclus' replacement of the Iamblichean "theurgic unity" by initiation and specifying the final state as the soul's entering into contact with the specific divine class means that he will emphasize that there could never be unity with the soul and the One in the sense of identification. Proclus also speaks about faith and we know that for him this means, in the theory of the classes of gods, the same as contact (συναφή) and unity (ἔνωσις).<sup>47</sup> An important point is that when Proclus is speaking about the soul's changing states in the ascent he is also telling us something about the properties and levels of the divine hierarchy.

I will not go here in any detailed exegesis of Proclus' much discussed *locus classicus*<sup>48</sup> in the first part of the *Platonic Theology*, which surely still remains worthy of a dedicated study.<sup>49</sup> Given the limits and aims of this contribution, it is

<sup>47</sup> *Theol. Plat.* I, 112,1–3. In Proclus' treatise on prayer (*In Tim.*), συναφή and unity ἔνωσις are introduced as the highest level accessible by the soul – mediated by approach (ἐμπέλαισις). I think that Werner Beierwaltes is right in relating the moment of συναφή to "the flower of intellect" interpreted here as a σύνθημα of the return (ἐπιστροφή) to the One, W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, Frankfurt 1965, 318, which implies for me that ἔνωσις corresponds with the "the flower of the whole soul", the trace of the One in the soul and as such σύνθημα of remaining (μονή).

<sup>48</sup> *Theol. Plat.* I 112,24–113,10: "Ἴν' οὖν συνελόντες εἵπωμεν, τρία μὲν ἐστὶ τὰ πληρωτικὰ ταῦτα τῶν θείων, διὰ πάντων χωροῦντα τῶν κρειττόνων γενῶν, ἀγαθότης, σοφία, κάλλος· τρία δὲ αὖ καὶ τῶν πληρουμένων συναγωγὰ, δευτέρα μὲν ἐκείνων, διήκοντα δὲ εἰς πάσας τὰς θείας διακοσμήσεις, πίστις καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἔρωσ. Σφύζεται δὲ πάντα διὰ τούτων καὶ συνάπτεται ταῖς πρωτουργοῖς αἰτίαις, τὰ μὲν διὰ τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μανίας, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῆς θείας φιλοσοφίας, τὰ δὲ διὰ τῆς θεουργικῆς δυνάμεως, ἡ κρείττων ἐστὶν ἀπάσης ἀνθρωπίνης σωφροσύνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης, συλλαβοῦσα τὰ τε τῆς μαντικῆς ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰς τῆς τελεσιουργικῆς καθαρτικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ τῆς ἐνθέου κατακωχῆς ἐνεργήματα.

<sup>49</sup> Philippe Hoffmann offers an excellent treatment of this Proclean issue and its later history in his "La triade chaldaïque ἔρωσ, ἀλήθεια, πίστις: De Proclus a Simplicius", in A. Ph Segonds – C. Steel (eds.), *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne*, Paris 2000, 469–89. Another recent promising attempt at an in-depth exegesis of this Proclean *locus* is C. Tornau, "Der Eros und das Gute bei Plotin und Proklos", in M. Perkams – R. M. Piccione (eds.) *Proklos. Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik*, Leiden 2006, 201–29. It should be noted that similar concept of

enough to say that this text undeniably brings the chain formed by the good, faith and theurgic power into the first place. The superiority of theurgic power to human wisdom could be understood in such a way that a thing where the divine is immediately present has, quite naturally for any kind of religious thought, a higher rank than a thing which has to go through the soul's channels and the limited capacities of the human mind. In the same way a person in whom theurgic virtue is incarnated could be considered holy and thus more noble than a practitioner of the purely theoretical virtues. This text is often quoted in isolation but immediately after it Proclus says that he will return to the theme later at a better time and more appropriate place.<sup>50</sup> This promise refers precisely to the above-mentioned treatise on the agreement of Plato and Chaldean theurgists in the fourth part of the *Platonic Theology*. This treatment hardly counts as evidence for the primacy of theurgy but accords with the interpretation where theurgy and philosophy are two paths leading towards the same goal, the first one, external, going through the divine signs offered by nature and the whole cosmos, and the second one, internal, conducting its way through psychic circuitry. Touching the henads and the One by hyperintellection is the consummation of both.

### The evidence of the *Commentary on the Cratylus*

In his *Commentary on the Cratylus* Proclus defines the location of theurgy in the ascent of the soul more clearly and exactly than anywhere else in his writings. Proclus mentions a class of gods which is the first to be named and continues:<sup>51</sup>

"... and before that every class is in silence and secret and could be known only by intellection, and for that reason all telestics acting theurgically ascends to this class and because of this Orpheus also says that this class is the first to be named by the other gods."

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metarational faith, which is seen as testifying mainly to the influence of the *Chaldean Oracles* on the Later Neoplatonism, is to be found in Plotinus, *Enn.* 5,3,17,28–32, as Hoffman points out, 469.

<sup>50</sup> *Theol. Plat.* I 113,12: Περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων τάχ' ἂν καὶ εἰσαῦθις ἐγκαίροτερον διέλθοιμεν.

<sup>51</sup> *In Crat.* 71,98–101 (33 Pasquali): τὰ δὲ πρὸ αὐτῆς σιγώμενα πάντα καὶ κρύφια νοήσει μόνον γνωστὰ ἦν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ τελεστική πᾶσα μέχρι ταύτης ἄνεισι τῆς τάξεως ἐνεργοῦσα θεουργικῶς, ἐπεὶ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς πρώτην ταύτην ὀνόματι φησιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων καλεῖσθαι θεῶν·



Proclus regards the mode of telestic activity (consecration, initiation) as being theurgic which is to be understood as an activity based on working with signs and symbols. The border which telestics cannot cross is the ultimate limit of the area of the articulation of revealed divine names. These names as symbols are ritualistic utterances; we do not need to take account of their sense, because meanings belong to the area of intellective activity, not of theurgic. A third and very interesting point is that Proclus, who was in the not-so-distant past, often seen as a supporter of irrationalism and superstition, says here that "thinking" goes over a border which theurgy cannot pass. Νόησις is normally a term for intuitive thought for Proclus. Thus it could mean here contemplation or its culmination, when the intellectual summit transcends itself, that is, the activity of the flower of the intellect.<sup>52</sup> But it is not excluded that it represents here discursive thinking in the process of redescending, in a *post festum* mode of descent, when reason tries using analogies to conceive of hypernoetic realities which it has seen during the ascent and having undergone the experience of entheastic union.<sup>53</sup> Whatever is the role of noesis here, this passage gives clear evidence that for Proclus the ultimate experience of contact with the One does not equate with theurgy.

The passage just considered perhaps still leaves for debate as to whether we have found the ultimate limit of theurgy in Proclus' system or if there is even higher theurgy in addition to operating by revealed names. This question seems to be resolved beyond any doubt in a subsequent passage from the same commentary.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Compare this to Proclus' discussion in the *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary of the Chaldean Oracles* on "silence" and "unity beyond silence", which are two moments of the hypernoetic cognition and characterized as faculties of the soul in its different "flowers".

<sup>53</sup> On the moments of ascent and redescent after the experience of unity see, for instance, *Theol. Plat.* I 15,1–16,6. Perhaps the mystical experience as such is not the prevalent topic for Neoplatonists in their philosophizing? If Plotinus' interest lies in the Intellect, for Proclus the issue of redescending is particularly important, because it is ground for the purpose that is dearest to him, that is, the development of scientific theology as a theory of the classes of the gods.

<sup>54</sup> *In Crat.* 113,1–25 (Pasquali 65): τὸν οὖν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον, ἐφ' ὃν καὶ ὁ Οὐρανὸς ἀνατείνει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ νοερὰν ζώην, οἱ μὲν ἀρρήτοις χαρακτηρίζουσι συμβόλοις, οἱ δὲ καὶ ὀνομάσαντες ἄγνωστον ἀπέλιπον, μήτ' εἶδος αὐτοῦ μήτε σχῆμα καὶ μορφήν εἰπεῖν ἐξισχύσαντες· ἀνωτέρω δ' ἔτι καὶ τούτου προελθόντες τὸ πέρασ τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν μόνον ὀνόματι δηλῶσαι δεδύνηνται, τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα δι' ἀναλογίας μόνης, ἄρρητα ὄντα καὶ ἄληπτα, σημαίνουσιν· ἐπεὶ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς νοητοῖς τῶν θεῶν μόνος ὁ θεὸς οὗτος, ὁ συγκλείων τὸν πατρικὸν διάκοσμον, εἶναι λέγεται παρὰ τοῖς σοφοῖς ὀνομαστός, καὶ ἡ θεουργία μέχρι ταύτης ἄνεισι τῆς τάξεως. ἐπεὶ τοίνυν τὰ πρὸ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ τοιαύτην

The supracelestial place towards which Ouranos also extends its own intellectual life is characterized by others with ineffable symbols but others, calling it unknowable, leave it as such as they are incapable of saying its form, schema or figure. But going to still higher upper realms from here, they have been capable of designating by name only the lowest limit of the intelligible gods, but things beyond they designate only by analogy because these are ineffable and incomprehensible. Thus among the intelligible gods only this god, who is closing the fatherly order, is said to be nameable by men of wisdom and the theurgy ascends up to this class. Since the things before Ouranos have got a superiority of the uniform hypostasis such that they are at the same time speakable and ineffable, pronounceable or unpronounceable, knowable and unknowable for their familiarity with the One, reasonably Socrates, acting with good sense, suspends discussion of these since it is totally impossible to comprehend by names the mode of existence of these things and some kind of admirable activity is required to distinguish what is completely speakable and ineffable in existence or power in these things. That is why Socrates makes memory responsible; this is not because he would not believe in myths which put some most primordial causes beyond Ouranos or that he would consider these unworthy of mentioning (on the contrary, in the *Phaedrus* he celebrates the supracelestial place), but because it is impossible to remember or know the most primary beings by imagination, opinion or discursive reason. Our condition permits us to join them by the flower of the intellect and by the mode of existence of our essence. And through these we get a sensation of their unknown nature.

This passage shows that according to Proclus theurgy rises to a certain divine class, obviously to the last term of the intelligible triad (the supracelestial place being the first subtriad of the noetic-noeric triad<sup>55</sup>) and the hypernoetic devices

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ἔλαχεν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἐνοειδοῦς ὑποστάσεως, ὡς τὰ μὲν εἶναι ῥητὰ τε ἅμα καὶ ἄρρητα καὶ φθεγκτὰ καὶ ἀφθεγκτὰ καὶ γνωστὰ καὶ ἄγνωστα διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἐν συγγένειαν, εἰκότως ὁ Σωκράτης ἐπέχει τὸν περὶ ἐκείνων λόγον, ὡς καὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐ πάντη καταδράττεσθαι τῆς ὑπάρξεως αὐτῶν δυναμένων, καὶ ὅλως τοῦ διακρίνεσθαι τῆς ἐκείνων ὑπάρξεως ἢ δυνάμεως τό τε ῥητὸν καὶ τὸ ἄρρητον θαυμαστῆς τινος δεομένου πραγματείας. αἰτιᾶται γοῦν τὴν μνήμην, οὐ τοῖς μύθοις ἀπιστῶν τοῖς ἐπέκεινα τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ τιθεμένοις τινὰς πρεσβυτέρας αἰτίας καὶ οὐδὲν μνήμης ἀξίους αὐτοὺς νομίζων (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν Φαίδρῳ τὸν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον ἀνυμνεῖ), ἀλλ' ὅτι μνημονευτὰ καὶ διὰ φαντασίας ἢ δόξης ἢ διανοίας γνωστὰ τὰ πρότιστα τῶν ὄντων οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο· τῷ γὰρ ἄνθει τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῇ ὑπάρξει τῆς οὐσίας ἡμῶν αὐτοῖς συνάπτεσθαι πεφύκαμεν. καὶ τῆς ἀγνώστου φύσεως αὐτῶν αἴσθησιν δι' ἐκείνων λαμβάνομεν.

<sup>55</sup> This is definitely the view of the mature Proclus of the *Platonic Theology*. Other works may reflect a stage where he has not yet developed his final theory of the noetic-noeric triad or, more probably, that his scope of exposition does not need to deal with the "transitory" and "linking"

begin their activity only after this point. In his *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* Proclus explicitly posits two different devices of hyperintellection. His mentions in the other works, referred to above, point to the same division and it is also introduced here if we see "the flower of the Intellect" and "the mode of existence of our essence" as two different faculties. I think that the latter is the same as "the flower of the whole soul" in the fragments of the Proclean commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles* and "bastard opinion" in the *Commentary on the Timaeus*. It is fascinating to note that Proclus here characterizes as "sensation" what these loftiest faculties of the soul finally give. This, of course, is not the same as sense perception, but perception on the hypernoetic level. With this we came back to the idea of mirroring the highest with the lowest, forcefully expressed in the passage of *In Tim* considered at the beginning of this contribution.

## Conclusion

To the best of my knowledge Proclus does not speak explicitly anywhere about the "higher theurgy" or describe the activity of the supra-intellectual flowers as theurgy. On the contrary we have seen that he *expressis verbis* says just the opposite and this happens, furthermore, in the sole place where he himself explicitly raises the question about the relationship between theurgy and hypernoetic cognition. In examining ancient ideas, we should not abandon a clear-cut distinction already made by an author under study and impose on him a more rough-grained concept, which is what including hypernoesis in the sphere of theurgy means. Hypernoetic activity transcends theurgy as much as discursive thinking and intellection proper. Proclus draws a very clear dividing line separating the heights reached by both theurgy and philosophy and the hypernoetic state of the soul, which he describes as admirable, silent contemplation of the divine henads in the noetic summit referring to the One beyond.

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triads (such a triad at the lower level of the classes of the gods is the hypercosmic-encosmic triad).