

# The *Nous* of the Partial Soul in Proclus’ *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*

D. Gregory MacIsaac

COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY

## I. INITIAL STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: WHAT IS THE SOUL’S *NOUS*?

In this paper I will examine Proclus’ *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato* in order to shed light on his doctrine of the partial soul’s *nous*.<sup>1</sup> Proclus’ epistemology is in many ways the heart of his system. The human soul is a microcosm, and because each of its faculties corresponds to one or other order of the macrocosm, the soul’s knowledge of reality is primarily through self-knowledge.<sup>2</sup> We have, however, a paradoxical situation in Proclus on this point. On the one hand, he continually relates the doctrines he finds in the texts that he interprets to various psychic or noetic activities, and one sometimes gets the impression that he is more interested in how we grasp a feature of the cosmos than in that feature itself. On the other hand, his epistemological remarks are almost always in passing, and in the context of a discussion of some other point. This paradox is a source of frustration, to this interpreter at least, and leads one to wish dearly that Proclus’ commentaries on *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* had survived,<sup>3</sup> where presumably he explained his theory in a more orderly manner.

1. *Merikê psuché* is Proclus’ term for a human soul.

2. I am speaking here of the way in which Proclus says that it is through the soul’s own senses, discursive reason, *noêsis*, or its one that the soul grasps body, itself, *Nous* or the One (See *In Alc.* 245.6–248.4, quoted below). The soul is a microcosm in another way. Proclus’ overall doctrine of analogy dictates that all things exist in all things, but in a manner appropriate to each thing (*El. Th.* 103). Therefore, the most clear microcosm which the soul possesses is its own discursive *logoi*, which as its own content serve as the image through which it knows its causes and the paradigms through which it gives rise to its effects.

3. There may have been a *Sophist* commentary. See the introduction by Baltzly and Terrant, *In Timaeum*, vol.1, p.8. They refer us to A. Charles-Saget, “Lire Proclus, lecteur du Sophiste,” in *Études sur le Sophiste de Platon*, ed. P. Aubenque (Paris: Bibliopolis, 1991), 475–94, and the appendix by Christian Guérard, “Les citations du *Sophiste* dans les oeuvres de Proclus,” in the same volume (495–508).

One can of course find many passages that describe the various faculties of the soul, severally or in relation to each other. But because Proclus often doesn't lay them out in a systematic way, and because he often gives complementary accounts in different texts, the precise relation of one faculty to another can remain elusive. Proclus' account of the soul as essentially discursive has to date received a certain amount of attention. Its *dianoia*, the discursive activity of drawing out the *logoi* which constitute its essence, projecting thereby the various branches of philosophical science, has been the subject of various studies by myself and others.<sup>4</sup> But what has received less attention is the relation of the soul's *nous* or *noêsis* to this discursive activity. In fact, this relation is very hard to pin down.

Famously, Plotinus asserted that there was a part of the soul that never leaves *Nous* behind.<sup>5</sup> This undescended soul allowed him to explain how, even in our incarnate state, we are not completely cut off from the divine. When we flee the division of the senses and discursivity we are really attending to a part of us which has always remained there. This doctrine was subjected to criticism by his Neoplatonic successors, who argued that a part of the soul continually engaging in intellectual activity could in no way be consistent with the misery and ignorance consequent upon the soul's descent into becoming.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most succinct criticisms of Plotinus' doctrine is Proclus' own, in proposition 211 of his *Elements of Theology*. So whatever Proclus means by the soul's *nous*, it is not a part of soul which remains perpetually a part of *Nous* itself. However, he does seem to think that the soul, even when descended into becoming, has a *nous* and that this *nous* is perpetually active.<sup>7</sup> The texts which I have looked at to date that shed light on the soul's *nous* have been

4. See D.G. MacIsaac, "The Soul and Discursive Reason in the Philosophy of Proclus," unpublished PhD dissertation (Notre Dame); See also E. Gritti, *Proclo: Dialettica, Anima, Esegese* (Milano: Il Filarete, Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano, 2008), esp. 93–120. Gritti gives fairly extensive discussion of the *nous* of the partial soul. However, she stays within the register of treating it as the highest faculty of the soul. I will argue below that there is much more going on in Proclus' theory.

5. *Enn.* IV.8.8; V.1.10.

6. See Iamblichus at Proclus, *In Tim.* III.334; and see *El. Th.* 211, with Dodds' note.

7. *El. Th.* 211 is a good example of how it can be misleading to read passages from Proclus in isolation. Proclus' proofs in the *Elements* are very concise, and often do not make clear the particular manner in which important terms must be understood. Proof 211 gives one the impression that a soul descended into *genesis* cannot participate in *nous* in any way, or else impossible consequences will result. However, we know from earlier propositions that there are higher and lower sorts of participation (see prop.63 and 64). The key to understanding 211 is to see that Proclus means to rule out the possibility of a partial soul (*merikê psuchê*) remaining in the intelligible (*en tõi noêtôi*) and participating a partial *nous* immediately (*prosechôs*). But a partial soul can possess a *nous* in the lower manner, as an illumination (*ellampsis*), and this illumination is present even in the descended soul. This is the sort of possession we will see in the *In Alcibiadem*.

primarily passages from the *Elements of Theology*, the *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, and Euclid commentaries. However, I will argue in this paper that his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* actually comes close to a systematic account of the relation of the soul's *nous* to its discursive reason. As far as I am aware, no commentator has noticed the significance of Proclus' extended analogy within this dialogue, according to which Alcibiades plays the part of the soul and Socrates plays the part of the soul's *nous*.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. THE *COMMENTARY ON ALCIBIADES I* SHEDS LIGHT ON PROCLUS' CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL'S *NOUS*

Plato's *Alcibiades I* recounts Socrates' first approach to the young Alcibiades,<sup>9</sup> who has recently rejected the advances of his various suitors.<sup>10</sup> The dialogue discusses both epistemological and moral questions, tying them together through the relation of self-knowledge and the care of the soul.<sup>11</sup> Proclus' *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato* covers about a third of the dialogue.<sup>12</sup> Proclus discusses at length the divisions of the dialogue, Socrates' first approach to Alcibiades, the nature of love and providence, the relation between learning (*mathêsis*) and discovery (*heuresis*), the idea of double ignorance (*diplê agnoia*), knowledge as recollection, and the relation between the just and the advantageous.

8. This dialogue is often referred to in studies on Proclus, but has not received much detailed study in its own right. The most relevant studies are, J. Trouillard, "Convergence des définitions de l'âme chez Proclus," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 45 (1961): 3–20; P. Courcelle, "Le 'Connais-toi toi-même' chez les Néoplatoniciens grecs," in *Le Néoplatonisme: Actes du Colloque International organisé dans le cadre des Colloques Internationaux de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique à Royaumont du 9 au 13 juin 1969*, ed. P.M. Schuhl et P. Hadot (Paris, 1971), 15–62; J.C. Marler, "Proclus on causal reasoning: I Alcibiades and the doctrine of Anamnesis," *Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 1.2 (1993): 3–35; C. Steel, "Breathing Thought: Proclus on the innate knowledge of the soul," in *The perennial tradition of Neoplatonism*, ed. J. Cleary (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 293–309; D. Layne, "Refutation and double ignorance in Proclus," *Epoche: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 13.2 (2009): 347–62.

9. The authorship of the *Alcibiades I* is in dispute. However, Proclus and the other late Antique pagan neoplatonists took it to be genuine.

10. Proclus calls these the 'vulgar lovers' who sought to lead him into a life of dissipation and debauchery, using the distinction from *Symposium* 183d–e.

11. For the care of the soul see *Alcibiades I* 132c. and *In Alc.* 10.8.

12. There is a new printing which combines the critical edition by Westerink and the English translation by O'Neill on facing pages. *Proclus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, ed. L.G. Westerink (1962), trans. and comm. W. O'Neill (1965) (Wiltshire: Prometheus Trust, no year indicated). References to the *In Alcibiadem* in this paper will be to the Creuzer pagination, used by both Westerink and O'Neill. At times I have modified O'Neill's translations.

In the Neoplatonic curriculum the *Alcibiades I* was the first dialogue in the Platonic corpus to be read.<sup>13</sup> In his commentary, Proclus explains how the dialogue is both the perfect beginning to philosophical study, and how it contains the entire plan of the Platonic philosophy in seminal form.<sup>14</sup> Both of these characteristics follow from the main aim, or *skopos* of the dialogue, the fulfilment of the Delphic command to know thyself.<sup>15</sup>

Proclus outlines three ways of dividing the dialogue into parts.<sup>16</sup> The first way lies below discursive reason, paying attention only to the fact that the dialogue contains things such as exhortations and refutations, but ignoring the content. The second way corresponds to discursive reason,<sup>17</sup> and divides the dialogue into ten separate arguments. Proclus doesn't say that either of these schemes is wrong, just that neither attains to the highest and most perfect way of dividing it, which he attributes to "the philosopher Iamblichus."<sup>18</sup> This highest way of dividing the dialogue holds that each of the ten arguments can be ranged into one of three divisions: removal of the soul's ignorance, turning away from the material, and recollection of the soul's essence, and that individually and collectively all ten arguments contribute to the single aim of self-knowledge. Proclus doesn't say explicitly that this last way of dividing the dialogue corresponds to a noetic perspective, but it is reasonable to conclude that it does, given the character of the first two divisions and the manner in which this highest perspective makes the multiplicity in the dialogue issue from and lead back to a single purpose. This introductory discussion of the divisions and aim of the dialogue, in fact, foreshadows Proclus' account of the soul's *nous* which we will find in his commentary: the relation of the soul's *nous* to its lower powers is like the single *skopos* that underlies and gives coherence and unity to the three successive ways of dividing the dialogue.

In his commentary, Proclus gives a running analogical interpretation of the characters in the dialogue: the 'vulgar lovers' whose company Alcibiades has rejected, Alcibiades, and Socrates. The analogy is double. In the first way of reading the dialogue, the vulgar lovers hold the place of bad *daimones*, who seek to drag us down to the dispersion of the sensual and material, Alcibiades plays the part of a soul making use of a body, and Socrates is a good *daimôn* who seeks to lead Alcibiades' whole life upwards towards the higher realities.

13. A.J. Festugière, "L'ordre de lecture des dialogues de Platon aux Ve-VIe siècles," *Museum Helveticum* 26 (1969): 281–96.

14. *In Alc.* 11.1–18.10.

15. *In Alc.* 4.19–7.8.

16. *In Alc.* 11.18–14.23.

17. *In Alc.* 12.16–17: *epi to sullogistikon tou dialogou kai apodeiktikon.*

18. *In Alc.* 13.17.

In the second way of reading it, the vulgar lovers are the life of sense and imagination, Alcibiades is simply a soul, and Socrates is the *nous* of the soul.<sup>19</sup>

Proclus states explicitly that these two analogical ways of reading the text are complementary,<sup>20</sup> and so are meant to be read together. The significance of this doesn't seem to have been noticed before. On the surface, Proclus' analysis of the dialogue seems to move back and forth between a discussion of the literal level and a reading of Socrates as a good *daimôn*. However, if we realise that the analogies are complementary, then we can see that every literal detail which sheds light on the role of a good *daimôn* also sheds light on the soul's *nous*, and that therefore the entire commentary is an analysis of the soul's *nous*.

This reading remains closed to us if we do not pay attention to and take seriously Proclus' use of allegory and analogy in philosophical argument. We should pause at this point to ask why we should take such a method seriously. Proclus' analysis of Plato's texts can strike modern readers as very strange, and his reading of the *Alcibiades I* is no exception. Proclus can extract elaborate philosophical doctrines from passages which seem to us to be unimportant, often reading great significance into one or two words. However, Proclus is not simply engaging in wholesale falsification of his source material. Rather, his allegorical readings are very subtle and nuanced.

First of all, we must remember that he considers the Platonic texts to be divinely inspired.<sup>21</sup> By this he means that Plato was a soul whose intellect grasped the realities of the cosmos to a higher degree than most men's, and who therefore had great insight into the nature of things, insight which he shared in his dialogues, albeit in a veiled way. Therefore, Proclus thinks that an extremely close and attentive reading of the dialogues will help to turn our souls towards reality. This does not seem to me to be too far from the

19. For the idea of *daimones* exercising providence for lower souls, see *In Alc.* 31.19–34.10. For the first analogy, see *In Alc.* 37.16–42.4, and for the second see *In Alc.* 42.5–46.12. For Socrates as the soul's *nous* see *In Alc.* 43.8; 140.14–15. Note that at the end of the commentary, Proclus argues that man is primarily a soul, not a soul making use of a body (*In Alc.* 315.5–317.15). In his *Commentary on the Republic of Plato*, Proclus discusses the differing perfections of a soul and a soul making use of a body. See D.G. MacIsaac, "The Soul and the Virtues in Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic of Plato*," *Philosophie Antique* 9 (2009): 115–43.

20. *In Alc.* 45.13–14: "If one should combine both points of view, then think of Alcibiades as twofold, both as a soul simply and as a soul using a body." *In Alc.* 46.7–8: "The same person then is *daimôn* and intellect, intellect as attached to soul, but *daimôn* as attached to soul-in-man." Note that Proclus is stating here that the Socrates plays the role of both *daimôn* and *nous*, not that the *daimôn* of the soul and the *nous* of the soul are themselves the same, as is assumed by H. Tarrant, "Olympiodorus and Proclus on the Climax of the *Alcibiades*," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 1 (2007): 3–29, see p. 18.

21. See, for example, *Plat. Theol.* I.i.5.6–8; I.i.14.5–6; *De Mal.Subst.* 1.9–14.

attitude of many contemporary Platonic exegetes, despite the fact that they would replace 'divine' with 'really smart' in their description of the master. The difference seems to me to be a matter of degree. Proclus doesn't look for significance only in the 'philosophical core' of a dialogue, so to speak. He gives much more credit to Plato as an artist than we usually do, and so looks for meaning in details of plot and setting, and in Plato's choice of words. Because I think Plato is the great artist that Proclus assumes he is, I also think that Proclus is a much more sensitive reader of the dialogues than modern interpreters. Even if in the end we recognise that often Plato didn't say what Proclus thinks he said, because Proclus is really talking about a *development* of Plato which is supported by a passage in question, I think Proclus is ahead of most moderns in at least investigating the layer of dramatic and linguistic meaning which usually escapes us. Therefore his allegorical readings are valuable as an attempt to read Plato's works in a thorough manner.

Secondly, Proclus' general doctrine of analogy warrants a close examination of the actions and behavior of great men such as Socrates and Alcibiades. Put simply, if there are such realities as the One and *Nous*, and the cosmos is a self-articulating movement of power that produces more and more divided images of the highest realities, then Socrates as 'lover and teacher' is not a phenomenon that is simply unmoored and self-standing. Rather, his erotic and pedagogical activity is a psychic analogue of the higher realities which are present to him at all times. Therefore, if Proclus' philosophy holds that we can learn about the higher realities through the lower realities which are their image, than an allegorical and analogical reading of the dialogues is a valid exercise.

Finally, we must remember that a thousand years of philosophical reflection on the dialogues stands between Plato and Proclus. Proclus' elaborate Athenian Neoplatonism did not simply come out of nowhere; it is not a foreign imposition on the dialogues. I cannot emphasise this strongly enough, because it will seem counterintuitive to modern readers. The elaborate Neoplatonism of Proclus is not the only way in which one could develop Plato's own thought, but it is certainly a legitimate way, and it has the distinction of being the dominant way in which Plato was interpreted in Late Antiquity. Therefore, Proclus interprets each detail of a text from out of his total interpretation of all of Plato. When, for example, Proclus spends thirty six pages discussing the significance of the first few words of the *Alcibiades I*, "O son of Kleinias, I think that you wonder, etc." he is not drawing simply on the passage at hand. Rather, he is drawing on all of Plato's uses of *thaumazein* and *thaumasia*, where wonder is the beginning of philosophy and makes us turn away from the sensible world. Moreover, he is reading this passage in concert with everything else that he finds in the dialogues. In

short, the Neoplatonic elaboration of Plato begins with and is an attempt to systematise Plato's own gathering of experiential evidence about the sense-world, the Forms, the Good, and our relation to the cosmos. If on top of all this we follow Proclus in noticing Plato's extremely careful use of words, then it becomes much more plausible to read a passage like "You wonder," placed at the head of a dialogue about Socrates' first approach to Alcibiades, as signalling the *skopos* of the dialogue to be the beginning of philosophical reflection through self-knowledge.

With regard to our present topic, the soul's *nous*, I think Proclus has put his finger on something very important in the Platonic dialogues, namely the connection between Plato's hierarchy of ways of knowing and pedagogy. Plato speaks in many dialogues about the difference between sensation, opinion, and various ways of knowing,<sup>22</sup> and he also speaks about teaching and learning.<sup>23</sup> If it is legitimate to read Socrates as the consummate teacher, then an investigation of his dramatic portrayal as a teacher should be very useful for an investigation of such questions as whether or not the teacher must himself know, or how his questioning moves the soul of his interlocutor, or how the student moves from lower to higher perspectives. In this connection, the emphasis that the Neoplatonists put on the *Alcibiades I* makes a lot of sense, because it portrays Socrates teaching Alcibiades about the mechanics of teaching and learning, and about its aim which is self-knowledge and virtue. In Proclus' own system, this becomes a question about the relation between sensation, discursive reason, and *nous*, and the agency by which a soul can be turned from the lower to the higher. So if the drama of the *Alcibiades I* gives us insight into Plato's account of how our best teacher ministers to a young man like Alcibiades, it makes sense for Proclus to read into it how our *nous*, which is his interpretation of Socrates as our best teacher, ministers to our discursive and sensitive parts, which is his interpretation of Alcibiades. In other words, if Plato's text itself licenses an allegorical reading, it is legitimate for Proclus to read the allegory as referring to details of his development of Plato's philosophical position.

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCRATES AND ALCIBIADES

If we are to pay attention to Proclus' use of analogy, we need to look at the characteristics he attributes to Socrates and to Alcibiades. In the dialogue Socrates is the lover and the teacher of Alcibiades, and Alcibiades is therefore

22. The Divided Line in the *Republic* is the most famous passage, but the same ideas occur in, for example, the distinction between true opinion and knowledge in the *Meno*, and in the ascent from lower to higher cognitive perspectives in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*.

23. For example in the *Meno's* doctrine of Recollection, and the *Republic's* description of education of a turning of the eye of the soul.

the beloved and the student. Proclus gives an extended discussion of the characteristics of the divine lover, as opposed to the vulgar lover, and attributes all of the divine characteristics to Socrates. In his initial list, he says that the true lover is a cause for admiration in the beloved, watches over the beloved from his birth and does not leave him when the bloom of youth is gone, is always stable and the same, is somehow separated from him even when present to him, and is the beloved's first and only lover.<sup>24</sup> In what follows I will look at the literal aspects of Socrates' role as a lover and as a teacher, as well as at Alcibiades' role as a student, and then I will show how these aspects shed light on the soul and its *nous*.

### 3.1. *Socrates is Alcibiades' lover*

Proclus states that Socrates makes use of three sciences, the dialectic, the maieutic, and the erotic,<sup>25</sup> and that in various Platonic dialogues one of the three sciences is dominant. These sciences correspond to the triad *agathon*, *sophon*, *kalon*.<sup>26</sup> The idea is that *erôs* is needed for a man who is not yet at the level of wisdom, because he needs the attraction of beauty to turn him away from the lower and back towards his own self. Once he turns inwards, the maieutic spurs his soul to put forth its own knowledge, whereas dialectic can raise his soul even up to the good. *Alcibiades I* is an erotic dialogue because of the particular character of Alcibiades, who stands at the threshold of philosophy, but still stands in need of Socrates' refutations.<sup>27</sup> As his divine lover, Socrates' devotion to Alcibiades aims at inspiring in him a love of the intelligible beauty which Socrates himself loves.<sup>28</sup> This devotion to Alcibiades takes the following forms.

#### 3.1.1. *Socrates was always there*

Socrates is Alcibiades' most constant lover. He was his first lover, because he paid attention to him even before the vulgar lovers came on the scene and he remains now even after they have left.

As, too, the intellect is always active in our regard and ever bestows the light of intelligence, both before we incline to irrationality and when we live with the emotions and after these have been stilled by us, but we are not always conscious of it except when, freed from the many waves of temporal process, we anchor our lives amid some calm (for then intellect is revealed to us and as it were speaks to us, then what was formerly

24. *In Alc.* 34.11–37.15.

25. *In Alc.* 27.13–30.4.

26. *In Alc.* 50.22–53.14.

27. He gives *Theaetetus* as an example of a maieutic dialogue at *In Alc.* 28.4, and says that the *Parmenides* is a dialectical dialogue at *In Parm.* 645.9–647.24.

28. *In Alc.* 25.19–27.12.



silent and quietly present gives us a share of its utterance), so also the divine lover is both present to the beloved before the many lovers and with them and after them, but in silence and quiet and forethought alone.<sup>29</sup>

In this, Proclus tells us, Socrates imitates the power of the higher principles, which begins to act before and lasts longer than the power of lower principles.<sup>30</sup> We should notice here Proclus' application of a 'cosmic' philosophical principle to this dramatic situation. This is made possible, as I have stated above, by his overall principle of analogy.

### 3.1.2. *Socrates stood aloof*

Socrates refrained from speaking with Alcibiades while the vulgar lovers were still paying attention to him. Proclus says:

As the intellect does not always reveal itself to souls, but only when they have got rid of the "thronging mob that has grown upon them latterly" as a result of birth, as Timaeus<sup>31</sup> says, so also Socrates gives a share of his own intercourse to the youth precisely when, freed from the many lovers that have latterly surrounded him with their toils, he has leisure for philosophy and those who can lead him to it.<sup>32</sup>

Although Socrates' attention was constant, it did not issue in conversation before now, because of Alcibiades' inattention. There would have been no point in speaking to Alcibiades before he was ready to listen. If we look at these two characteristics together, we find a structure in which the operation of the higher power towards the lower is constant and unchanging, but is received or not received depending on the attention or inattention of the lower term. This structure is particularly important for our understanding of the soul's *nous*, as the quotation itself indicates, and as we will discuss it below.

### 3.1.3. *Socrates is Alcibiades' only lover*

Socrates is said to be Alcibiades' only lover. This is true not only when he loved Alcibiades before and after the attention of the vulgar lovers, but also while the vulgar lovers were present. Socrates stands on a higher level than Alcibiades, while the vulgar lovers are below him. They sought to drag him down to irrationality and matter, while Socrates' divine love seeks to lead him to reason and the life according to *nous*.<sup>33</sup> Therefore he holds the place of the single, transcendent good which exists in every grade of beings,

29. *In Alc.* 44.11–45.1.

30. *In Alc.* 38.11–39.2. Cf. *El. Th.* 56–57.

31. Westerink references *Tim.* 42c.

32. *In Alc.* 44.5–44.11.

33. *In Alc.* 61.2–3.

raising up to unification that which comes below it,<sup>34</sup> and for this reason he is Alcibiades' 'only' lover.

#### 3.1.4. *Socrates' imitation of Providence*

Proclus gives a discussion of providence (*pronoia*)<sup>35</sup> and connects this discussion to Socrates.<sup>36</sup> Providence works for the benefit of what lies below it, and "passes through all things, from the top to the bottom,"<sup>37</sup> giving all things a share of itself, while at the same time it remains transcendent and does not become mixed up with anything that it gives itself to. Proclus says about Socrates:

For the first relationship of man to man is to speak to him; so the failure to have even this communication with the object of his provision reveals him as completely transcendent and unrelated to his inferior. So at the same time he is both present to him and not present, he both loves and remains detached, observes him from all angles yet in no respect puts himself in the same class.<sup>38</sup>

Socrates exercised care even while Alcibiades was with the vulgar lovers, but without himself being defiled by their company.

#### 3.2 *Socrates is Alcibiades' teacher*

Socrates is not only Alcibiades' lover, he is his teacher. This role is not really distinct from his role as lover, but follows from it. The form which his providential care for Alcibiades takes is teaching, because it is through teaching that he can restore Alcibiades to his good. Socrates' teaching role has two distinct aspects: refutation of Alcibiades' ignorance, and actual instruction in the truth about reality. We will examine briefly Alcibiades' character as a student, and in the next section we will look at the broader structure of teaching and learning that Proclus outlines in the *Alcibiades I* commentary.

##### 3.2.1. *Characteristics of Alcibiades as a student*

Proclus describes Alcibiades as possessing a natural virtue which allowed him to master his passions, and resist the pull of the vulgar lovers.<sup>39</sup> However, he possesses all sorts of false opinions that he either picked up from other men,<sup>40</sup> or that he arrived at himself. Being unaware that these opinions are

34. *In Alc.* 49.12–50.22.

35. *In Alc.* 53.17–56.4.

36. *In Alc.* 60.1–5.

37. *In Alc.* 53.19.

38. *In Alc.* 55.1–6.

39. *In Alc.* 58.9–59.18.

40. See *In Alc.* 188.5.

false, he suffers under what Proclus calls double ignorance (*diplê agnoia*), namely the sort of ignorance of one's own ignorance that hinders inquiry.<sup>41</sup>

The cure for double ignorance is refutation. Once Socrates refutes Alcibiades' false opinions, he becomes aware of his own ignorance, and desires to come to know what he previously thought he knew. Alcibiades doesn't get very far in this dialogue, however. Socrates is not able to do much more than refute Alcibiades' false opinions, and display for him his ignorance, leading him to admit that he stands in need of self-knowledge. This is why Proclus thinks that the present dialogue is erotic, as I have said above: we see in it only the beginning of the activity of *nous* on a soul which has just turned away from the passions and is on the threshold of philosophy.

#### 4. THE STRUCTURE OF TEACHING (*DIDASKALIA*) AND LEARNING (*MATHËSIS*), AND INQUIRY (*ZËTËSIS*) AND DISCOVERY (*HEURESIS*)

Even though Alcibiades does not take this path in the dialogue, Proclus gives a more systematic discussion of how the soul which is under the providential care of its own *nous* would continue its upward journey. This comes through his discussion of teaching (*didaskalia*) and learning (*mathêsis*), and inquiry (*zêtêsis*) and discovery (*heuresis*). In brief, learning is taking on ideas through the influence of agents who lie outside the soul, and it has a lower and a higher form. The lower form of learning is simply accepting the false opinions of the vulgar lovers. However, because the vulgar lovers live the life of sensation and the passions, these faculties which lie below discursive reason are ultimately the source of such false opinions. Higher learning is brought about by the teaching coming from a source which stands higher than discursive reason, a good *daimôn* or the soul's *nous*.<sup>42</sup> Inquiry is brought about by the refutation of false opinion, because a soul lost in double ignorance would not think to inquire about the things that he (falsely) thinks he knows. Inquiry can lead to discovery, which lies between the lower and the higher learning, and it can lead also to a receptivity to the higher learning itself. Discovery lies between the two sorts of learning because it is the soul's self-related activity of knowing, by which it recollects the knowledge which is innate in its essence.<sup>43</sup>

41. In *Alc.* 188.16–191.4. *Diplê agnoia* does not seem to occur as a term in Plato. However, at *In Alc.* 189.1–3 Proclus quotes Diotima in the *Symposium* 204a. But where Plato's text has, "for what is especially difficult about being ignorant ... (*auto gar touto esti chalepon amathia*)," Proclus' text has, "For this is double ignorance ... (*auto gar touto estin hê diplê amathia*)."<sup>41</sup> See also *Alcibiades I* 117a; *Meno* 84a–c.

42. We will clarify this higher source in what follows.

43. See *In Alc.* 187.6–191.4; 228.7–20; 235.1–248.4.

We should notice that the distinction between learning and discovery is not a simple dichotomy between accepting ideas from outside and coming up with them oneself. Although in learning there is an external influence on the soul, this influence serves to direct the soul to one or another of its own faculties. In the case of the lower learning, the influence of the vulgar lovers leads a soul to take its own misunderstood notions about its sensations and passions as authoritative, while under the influence of the higher teacher the soul can attend to the noetic sources of its discursive knowledge which are always present within it. In what follows I will examine each element of this theory in light of the more general statements that Proclus makes in the commentary.

#### 4.1. Lower learning

Proclus' theory of the soul is that it is essentially self-moved, autokinetic. Its native discursive activity is a projection of the *logoi* which constitute its essence, the *probolê tôn oudsiôdôn logôn*.<sup>44</sup> When the soul ceases its autokinetic activity of projecting its own *logoi*, it takes on the *heterokinêsis*, the 'motion from without,' which is characteristic of the body and its passions.<sup>45</sup> Proclus says that such a passivity is a state of double ignorance: it is ignorant because it is no longer aware of its own ideas, and passively accepting the senses and passions as authoritative it is ignorant of its own error.<sup>46</sup>

The passivity of double ignorance comes from two related causes: the lower learning which is accepting opinions from other ignorant men, and the illusion of knowledge which comes from the soul's 'breathing thought.' Proclus doesn't discuss in detail the mechanics of accepting the opinions from other men,<sup>47</sup> but it is clear that he thinks it would consist of loving what the vulgar lovers love, and honouring what they honour, namely bodily pleasures and power.

If we look at his theory closely, however, we see that the source of double ignorance lies within the soul itself. So, for example, Proclus says that Alcibiades mistakenly thinks that he is happy because he is wealthy. The major premise is true—that self-sufficiency makes someone happy—because Alcibiades projects it from our common notions and from reason.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand

44. See D.G. MacIsaac, "The Soul and Discursive Reason in the Philosophy of Proclus."

45. *In Alc.* 225.12–15.

46. See the connection of *autokinêsis*, the soul's projection of its own *logoi*, and its reversion at *In Alc.* 15.10–13.

47. *In Alc.* 188.4–6: "when, however, it [learning] proceeds from those on the same level as ourselves, as, for instance, when men arouse our faculty of knowledge, it is inferior to discovery."

48. *In Alc.* 104.19–20: *apo tôn koinôn ennoion kai tou logou tautas proballontes.*

the minor premise is false—that money makes one self-sufficient—because it is brought in from the imagination, the senses, and the irrational passions.<sup>49</sup> Accepting opinions from other men can be assimilated to this second source of double ignorance, because one is spurred by other men into taking one's own passions as authoritative.

However, we should ask what it is about sensations and passions which beguile the soul, according to Proclus. Surprisingly, it turns out that the operation of our sensory faculty has a kinship with and operates in virtue of our possession of intelligible truth. It is the dim echo of the higher truth which gives lower, sensory forms their intelligibility and thereby makes them dangerous for the soul. Proclus says:

it is clear from this that the prime cause of conceit, delusion and deceit to souls is the body and matter and the fanciful illusion of forms (*hē peri autēn eidōlikē skiagraphia tōn eidōn*) in regard to the latter. We dash after them as if they were genuine, admire them as real and vaunt ourselves upon them as upon unalloyed examples of good, allowing ourselves to be deceived by them.<sup>50</sup>

In other words, there must be a faint echo of self-sufficiency in something like wealth if we are to pursue it as such, even though in reality it falls short of true self-sufficiency.

It is in this context that we should understand Proclus' theory of 'breathing thought', which has received some attention. While it is true that it shows that for Proclus the soul is essentially cognitive, and therefore displays his thorough Platonic rationalism,<sup>51</sup> Proclus introduces the theory precisely to explain how we can be deceived by our own innate possession of *logoi*:

the reason is that although souls descend to earth filled essentially with knowledge, yet as a result of birth, they contract forgetfulness; and by possessing the innate ideas (*tous logous*) of reality as it were pulsating within them, they have notions (*ennoias*) about them, but overcome by the draft of oblivion they are unable to articulate their own notions and reduce them to knowledge. Therefore they carry them around as it were swooning and scarcely breathing, *and for this reason they acquired twofold ignorance, under the impression that through such notions they possess knowledge*, but really in a state of ignorance on account of their forgetfulness; and hence comes deceit and the illusion of knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

And again:

49. *In Alc.* 104.20–21: *apo phantasias, apo aisthēseōs, apo tōn alogōn propherontai pathōn.*

50. *In Alc.* 108.9–13.

51. Cf. C. Steel, "Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul," in *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, ed. John J. Cleary (Leuven: Leuven U Press, 1997), 293–309.

52. *In Alc.* 189.4–12. Emphasis mine.

one must state that the knowledge of souls is twofold, one inarticulate and by mere notion (*kat' ennoian psilên*), the other articulate, scientific (*epistêmonikê*) and indubitable. "For," as he himself somewhere<sup>53</sup> observes, "it is as if we had learned everything in a dream, only to be unaware of this in our waking hours," possessing in our essential being (*kat' ousian*) the innate notions of things (*tous logous*) and as it were exhaling the scent of their knowledge, but not possessing them by actual realization (*kat' energeian de kai kata probolên*).<sup>54</sup>

At this point in the dialogue Socrates is asking Alcibiades if he has had a teacher who instructed him in the just and the unjust. Proclus' theory of double ignorance and breathing thought is introduced to explain Alcibiades' response, that he has not had a teacher but nevertheless thinks that he knows what is just and unjust. According to Proclus, Alcibiades is ignorant of justice because he has never consciously examined its *logos*, but it is precisely his unconscious possession of the *ennoia* or *logos* of justice in his soul that makes him think he knows what it is. Therefore the lower learning which produces double ignorance comes about when the soul takes as authoritative the manifestations of its own possession of the intelligibles that lie below discursive reason.<sup>55</sup> This is what it means to take on the passivity of body and the passions.

#### 4.2. Refutation

Proclus states that discovery (*heuresis*) lies between the lower and the higher sort of learning (*mathêsis*). The route to both discovery and the higher learning is inquiry (*zêtêsis*), but inquiry requires the removal of double ignorance. Therefore a soul such as Alcibiades stands in need of a teacher who will refute his false opinions, and thereby replace his double ignorance with simple ignorance, the realisation of his own ignorance.

But inquiry (*zêtêseis*) and instruction (*didaskaliai*) are of necessity chiefly concerned with simple ignorance. Neither those who know still seek the truth, since they have reached the limit of investigation by their knowledge, nor those who are in the grip of twofold ignorance.<sup>56</sup>

The role of the teacher's refutations is first to remove the source of *heterokinêsis*, so that the soul's native *autokinêsis* will 'kick in,' so to speak.

53. Westerink refers us to *Statesman* 277d.

54. *In Alc.* 191.10–192.4.

55. Note that this is different from saying that double ignorance is caused by the intelligible itself, because Proclus would say that the higher cannot be a cause of bad things for the lower.

56. *In Alc.* 188.16–189.1.

For the soul is essentially self moved, but through association with the body has in some way become liable to motion from without: as it has bestowed on the body the ultimate image of self motion, so also, on account of its relationship thereto, it has received in turn an appearance of motion from without. So on account of its faculty of self movement the soul is resourceful, inventive and productive of notions of knowledge; but on account of the imprint of motion from without it sometimes requires stimulation from external agencies, since the more perfect souls are more inventive, while the less perfect stand in greater need of help from without.<sup>57</sup>

This ‘stimulation from external agencies,’ although coming from without, is a removal of barriers rather than an imposition of ideas. Therefore, it is able to restore the soul’s self-motion:

As the gods both purify and benefit us through the medium of our own persons, and in general move us as beings who are self moved, so also Socrates has devised a method of disproof whereby the person who is refuted will seem to be his own refuter and the subject of elicitation (*ho maiomenos*) operates upon himself.<sup>58</sup>

Once the soul has been refuted, and becomes aware of its own ignorance, of itself it will seek to inquire about the things it does not know. This inquiry leads first to discovery, which is the soul’s natural autokinetic activity, or a reversion upon self, and can lead to the higher learning, which is a reversion upon *nous*.

#### 4.3. *Discovery*

Discovery is the soul’s autokinetic projection of its own ideas.

But the soul of man, which possesses innate in itself every notion (*logous*), and has preconceived all knowledge, but is prevented by birth from the contemplation of what it possesses, requires both learning and discovery, in order that through learning it may stimulate its intellectual perceptions of itself (*tas heautês noêseis*), and through discovery may find itself and the fullness of the notions innate therein.<sup>59</sup>

This aspect of Proclus’ theory has received the most attention, by myself and by others, so I will not travel well-trodden ground here. In brief, it is in Proclus’ discussion of discovery that we find some of the richest passages in his corpus about the projection of the soul’s *logoi*: the distinction between breathing thought and conscious projection<sup>60</sup> and that the *ousia* of the soul is a fullness of *logoi*.<sup>61</sup>

57. *In Alc.* 225.12–20.

58. *In Alc.* 241.14–18.

59. *In Alc.* 187.14–18.

60. *In Alc.* 191.5–192.12.

61. *In Alc.* 250.18–251.1.

Proclus' point that the soul is not a *tabula rasa*, but that it is always inscribed and that the writer is inside it,<sup>62</sup> is particularly interesting for our investigation. It is obviously connected to the unconscious possession of our *logoi* which is operative in the theory of breathing thought and in Proclus' theory of sensation. I will come back to it later when examining the soul's *nous*, and argue that the underlying cognitive activity of the soul is due to the influence on it of its own *nous*.

Although discovery is the soul's own motion, Proclus still discusses it in terms of the questioning activity of Socrates. His questions aim to refute false opinion, but also to elicit the soul's own ideas from itself. He makes the point that the questioner does not answer his own questions, but rather his role is to make the respondent answer his questions correctly, "just as the cause of life to the body is not moved with same movement as the body."<sup>63</sup> Proclus thinks that even the soul's own autokinetic discovery is carried out with the help of a higher power: "The reason is that man's soul is yoked to a body and lives a common life with the body: it is obstructed thereby and requires outside powers to arouse it. The imperfect intellect is guided by the perfect."<sup>64</sup> This cooperation of the soul's own rational activity with some higher agency that sets it in motion draws together more closely than we might have thought 'discovery' and the 'higher learning' which is the final part of this structure of teaching and learning, inquiry and discovery.

#### 4.4. Higher learning

Proclus says that the soul can engage in three different sorts of reversions: upon the inferior, upon itself, and upon the higher principle. Reversion upon what is superior is "through its own life and natural activity,"<sup>65</sup> and can be understood in a way as an extension of self-reversion. Through refutation, Socrates ends Alcibiades' reversion upon the inferior. He then leads him to the self-knowledge which comes through a reversion upon himself. But once he looks inside, Alcibiades finds that there is a higher principle present to his soul.

Socrates observes at the end of the dialogue, that the man who has reverted to and become a spectator of himself will thereby also behold all the divine, and through reversion to himself like some step leading upwards will be translated to the vantage-point of the divine and so turn towards the elevation of himself to the superior principle.<sup>66</sup>

The distinction between self-reversion and reversion upon the higher seems to be less in the mechanic of introspection, and more in the particular

62. *In Alc.* 277.17–18; 281.1–8.

63. *In Alc.* 286.8–9.

64. *In Alc.* 235.8–11.

65. *In Alc.* 20.1–21.7. Cf. *El. Th.* 139.

66. *In Alc.* 20.13–21.2.



things which the soul contemplates once it looks inside.

There are many objects of knowledge whose highest causes and principles we must necessarily have received; and in addition to these, matters beyond the essence of the soul require a guide for us to contemplate them, since we spontaneously possess impulses to enquire after them.<sup>67</sup>

Because at this point the soul is being lead to discover things which, properly speaking, come from above it, Proclus calls this learning (*mathêsis*), and says it is brought about by teaching (*didaskalia*).<sup>68</sup> This teacher of what lies above the soul somehow lies within the soul.

The phrase “consulting some instructor (*phoîtôn eis didaskalou*)” indicates the turning of those who are to be perfected towards the person who is going to perfect them. The soul does not resemble the body, by receiving influences only from without (*paschon exôthen monon*), but also arouses (*egeirei*) itself towards what is perfect and approaches (*prosagei*) what is able to give it completion.<sup>69</sup>

The main dichotomy in this passage is between passivity and activity, but we can read into it the parallel dichotomy between outside and inside. The soul rouses itself, turning away from the outside towards the perfecting agency which lies inside. This perfecting agency is the soul’s *nous*. We will see in what follows how Proclus thinks the soul’s *nous* is an active principle that is the presence to the soul of a power which lies above it.

##### 5. THE PARTIAL SOUL’S *NOUS* AS AN *ELLAMPSIS*

Up to this point I have mostly avoided an examination of the places where Proclus speaks about the soul’s *nous* directly, in order to allow the passages about Socrates and Alcibiades to stand on their own. At this point, however, we should draw them together with what Proclus says about the soul’s *nous*.

Proclus thinks that the soul’s *nous* is an irradiation or illumination, an *ellampsis*, from a higher *nous*.<sup>70</sup>

For scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*) is not the highest of the forms of knowing, but rather the intellect (*nous*) that precedes it—I do not mean the intellect that transcends (*exêirêmenon*) the soul, but the actual irradiation (*êllampsin*) therefrom that reaches the soul.<sup>71</sup>

67. *In Alc.* 235.15–236.1. I agree with O’Neill over Westerink in his reconstruction of this passage.

68. *In Alc.* 228.18–20.

69. *In Alc.* 230.2–5.

70. He also states generally that knowledge (*epistêmê*) is an *ellampsis* of *Nous*, while concordance is an *ellampsis* of the One: *In Alc.* 274.21–22.

71. See *In Alc.* 246.18–247.2.

An *ellampsis* is a lower sort of presence of the participated term to the participant, in the triad Unparticipated/Participated/Participant. The unparticipated term is what a thing is in itself, without reference to anything lower which shares in it. The participated term is the thing itself, considered as giving of itself to lower things. The participant is the lower reality to which the participated term is present. However, there are degrees of participation. The direct and immediate participant possesses the participated term in a primary manner. Lower participants, however, possess the participated term as an illumination (*ellampsis*).<sup>72</sup>

What it means for the soul's *nous* to be *ellampsis* can be found in Proclus' comparison of the triads of love and intellect. He says about love that it

subsists primarily among the gods, secondarily among the *daimones*, and among partial souls (*tais psuchais tais merikais*) according to a sort of third procession from the principle: among the gods in a manner beyond essence (for the whole class of gods is such), among the *daimones* essentially and among souls by irradiation (*kat' ellampsin*).<sup>73</sup>

By 'gods' here Proclus is referring to various *noes* in the order of *Nous*.<sup>74</sup> Love among the gods has no reference to what participates it. Its primary participants are the *daimones*, which are a rank within the order of souls.<sup>75</sup> Love in partial souls, which is what human beings are, is only an illumination of the love that the *daimones* possess.

Proclus immediately draws together this hierarchy of love in the gods, *daimones* and partial souls with *Nous*.

This triple rank (*triplè taxis*) is like the threefold function of Intellect. For the unparticipated intellect, transcending all the particular classes, differs from the participated, in which the souls of the gods share as being superior and different again is the intellect which derives from the latter [the participated] and comes to be in souls (*tais psuchais eggignomenos*), indeed is the perfection of souls themselves.<sup>76</sup>

Again here we have two grades of participants: the souls of the gods and the lower souls in which the secondary intellect 'comes to be' (*eggignomenos*). In the *Elements* Proclus distinguishes three grades of soul.<sup>77</sup> The first two participate a partial *nous* directly: divine souls, and souls which are not divine but

72. See *El. Th.* 63, 64, 184 and 202.

73. *In Alc.* 65.11–15.

74. Proclus has just said that love begins with the intelligible *Nous*, referring to the first of the three parts of *Nous*: intelligible, intelligible/intellectual, and intellectual (*noëton, noëton/ noëron, noëron*).

75. For *daimones* as souls see *In Alc.* 68.4–6.

76. *In Alc.* 65.15–19.

77. *El. Th.* 184.

enjoy perpetual intellection. This second class is the class of *daimones*.<sup>78</sup> The members of the final class, the human or ‘partial’ souls, do not participate a partial *nous* directly, and so enjoy only intermittent intellection. Therefore the third type of intellection in this passage, which ‘comes to be’ in souls is what partial souls possess.

This comparison of the erotic and intellectual triads can be a bit confusing, but it will allow us to draw together both of Socrates’ allegorical roles, as the soul’s *daimôn* and as its *nous*. The erotic triad contained a) the gods, b) *daimones*, and c) partial souls, while the intellectual contained a) unparticipated intellect, b) divine souls, and c) lower souls. We should note that the first term of both triads belongs on the order of *nous*, while the middle term of both is a higher type of soul. Both middle terms, divine souls<sup>79</sup> and *daimones* are primary participants. In the erotic triad the middle term is the class of *daimones* because of their overriding character as erotic. Divine souls, on the other hand, are more intellectual. This erotic role of the *daimôn* is connected, as I mentioned above, with the providential care which it exercises over the whole life of the soul making use of a body, i.e. the man who has not yet attained wisdom because of his entanglement with the body and the senses.<sup>80</sup> The lower or partial souls, human souls, that hold the third term, possess both love and *nous* as an *ellampsis*.<sup>81</sup>

We must then take love among the gods as analogous to the unparticipated intellect, since it transcends all that possess it (*katochôn*) and are illuminated (*ellampomenôn*) by it: love among *daimones* as analogous to the participated [i.e. like that in the souls of the gods], for this is essential and self-complete like the participated intellect and immediately ruling over souls: and clearly the third kind of love, which subsists in souls by irradiation, as analogous to the intellect as a state of mind (*toî de katha hexin nôî*).<sup>82</sup>

We will use this parallelism of the cosmic function of intellect and love to read the dual Socratic analogy accurately.

We should note that here as elsewhere Proclus uses triadic structures to describe hierarchies that contain more than three terms, and the ambiguity of how he refers to the parts of his universe often makes it quite difficult to see how his various triadic structures relate to each other. Here, with regard

78. See Dodds’ note to proposition 184.

79. Note that the divine souls are not the ‘gods’ from the first triad.

80. See *In Alc.* 63.12–13 for the connection between love and the daimonic, and see *In Alc.* 77.7–78.6 for the necessity of daimonic providence for incarnate souls.

81. Note that the *ellampsis* of *nous* which the soul possesses is not its discursivity itself. That discursivity is what the soul is on its own terms, and is what Proclus refers to in the *Elements* as the secondary existence in Soul of the ideas in *Nous* (*El. Th.* 194) The *ellampsis* of *nous* that the soul possesses, instead, is a sort of active presence to the soul of what lies above it.

82. *In Alc.* 65.20–66.6. See also *In Alc.* 30.17 for love as an *ellampsis*.

to participation, Proclus really has four terms in play: i) the unparticipated; ii) the participated; iii) the primary and constant participant; iv) the secondary and intermittent participant. For *nous* this would be: i) the monad of *Nous* itself; ii) a partial *nous*; iii) a divine soul or a *daimôn*; and iv) a partial soul. We can see that in one sense there is still a triadic structure here, because terms iii and iv are both participants. However, even within iii Proclus distinguishes between a higher and a lower primary participant in *nous*.<sup>83</sup>

The distinction between iii) primary and iv) secondary participation is related to the distinction between constant and intermittent participation. In the *Elements* Proclus suggests this very strongly by placing propositions about these two causal distinctions one after the other.<sup>84</sup> The connection between them is that the primary participant is in a way assimilated to the participated term. Proclus says that the participated terms in such cases “make the participants belong to them.” An *ellampsis*, on the other hand, cannot exist without some substrate (*hupokeimenon*), and so comes to belong to the participant. So the participated *nous* that the gods and *daimones* possess makes them the most noetic that souls can be.<sup>85</sup> It is participated by them essentially (*kat’ousian*), so that the activity (*energeia*) that springs from their essence is perpetually noetic.<sup>86</sup> Secondary participation, on the other hand, is not *kat’ousian*, and therefore the activity that springs from a partial soul’s *ousia* is not necessarily noetic. Hence partial souls are able to go from intellection to ‘unintellection’, to use Dodd’s phrase.<sup>87</sup> Another way of thinking about this is that an *ellampsis* is the presence to the participants of something that is higher than it, for which reason it can be possessed or not possessed from time to time by the participant.<sup>88</sup>

At this point, a diagram might be helpful:<sup>89</sup>

83. The divine soul participates a *nous* which is itself a primary participant in a henad, while the daimonic soul does not. See *El. Th.* 181–84.

84. *El. Th.* 63: “Every unparticipated term gives rise to two orders of participated terms, the one in contingent participants, the other in things which participate at all times and in virtue of their nature.” *El. Th.* 64: “Every original monad gives rise to two series, one consisting of substances complete in themselves, and one of *ellampseis* which have their substantiality in something other than themselves.”

85. See *El. Th.* 64.

86. *El. Th.* 175, 202.

87. *El. Th.* 202.

88. Note that the intermittent character of secondary participation means that all participants above the partial soul must be primary participants, because soul is the first thing whose activity is marked by time.

89. I have included some terms that do not lie within the parameters of the column heads. These are marked with square brackets.

Schema of Participation	Classification of souls from <i>El. Th.</i> 184.	The various members of the comparative triads	Detailed catalogue of the various types of souls (from Dodds' note to prop. 184)	Triad of <i>nous</i>	Triad of <i>erôs</i>	Overriding character
Unparticipated	[Monad of <i>Nous</i> ]	'The gods'	[n/a]	Un-participated <i>nous</i>	Un-participated <i>erôs</i>	[n/a]
Participated	[partial <i>nous</i> , present to lower things]	[n/a]	[n/a]	Participated <i>nous</i>	Participated <i>erôs</i>	[n/a]
Participant	Divine Souls	Divine Souls	Unparticipated Soul	Direct participant of a divine <i>nous</i> , i.e. one which participates a henad	Direct participant of <i>erôs</i>	Intellectual
			World Soul			
			Souls of the seven planets and the fixed stars			
			The gods below the moon			
	Souls which are not divine, but exercise perpetual intelligence	Daimonic Souls	Angels	Direct participant of a <i>nous</i> that does not participate a henad	Direct participant of <i>erôs</i>	Erotic
			<i>Daimones</i> proper			
		Heroes				
	Souls which change from intelligence to unintelligence	Partial Souls	Human souls	Participant of an <i>ellampsis</i> of <i>nous</i>	Participant of an <i>ellampsis</i> of <i>erôs</i>	[n/a]

5.1. *Socrates as the soul's nous*

Our discussion so far has really only situated the soul's *nous* as an *ellampsis* within Proclus' participatory gridwork. The particular value of the description of Socrates as lover and teacher of Alcibiades in the *Commentary on the Alcibiades I* is that it allows us to understand this idea of an *ellampsis* with more precision than we find in the *Elements*.

In discussing Socrates as the analogue of our guardian *daimôn*, Proclus denies both that this *daimôn* is a partial intellect (*merikos nous*)<sup>90</sup> and that it is our rational soul itself (*logikê psuchê*),<sup>91</sup> the former being too high and the latter too low. Reading the two analogies at the same time, Proclus states that a soul making use of a body stands in need of a guardian *daimôn*, just as the soul stands in need of *nous*.<sup>92</sup> We can therefore place the two analogies side by side in the following manner:<sup>93</sup>

90. *In Alc.* 76.17–19. Note that while the *daimôn* is not itself a *merikos nous*, it is a primary participant of a *merikos nous*.

91. *In Alc.* 73.9–10.

92. *In Alc.* 77.7–9.

93. *In Alc.* 42.5–46.12.

Literal level	Analogy 1	Analogy 2
Socrates	Good <i>daimôn</i>	Partial soul's <i>nous</i>
Alcibiades	Partial soul + Body	Partial soul proper
Vulgar lovers	Bad <i>daimôn</i>	Partial soul's senses and passions

The question to be asked here is where the idea of an *ellampsis* fits into this analogy. If the partial soul's *nous* is analogous to the good *daimôn*, it should not simply be an *ellampsis*. We saw above that in the erotic triad, love in the *daimones* was analogous to the essentially participated intellect, not to the *ellampsis* of intellect.

I think what is going on here is that Proclus' use of the term 'the *nous* of the soul' to refer to Socrates in the second analogy is a bit misleading.<sup>94</sup> He does not think of Socrates as analogous to the *ellampsis* of *nous* that reaches the soul and belongs to it. Rather, if the two analogies are to be taken together, Socrates is the soul's *nous* as the source of such an *ellampsis*. We must remember that any noetic illumination which the soul possesses has to come ultimately from some *nous* which is properly a *nous*, wherever that *nous* is itself resident.<sup>95</sup> Therefore I propose that we expand our understanding of the analogies in the following manner:

Literal level	Analogy 1	Analogy 2	Participation
Socrates	Good <i>daimôn</i>	'Partial soul's <i>nous</i> ' (transcendent partial <i>nous</i> )	Transcends the participant
Socrates' attention towards Alcibiades	Providential care towards the man as a whole	Partial soul's <i>nous</i> ( <i>Ellampsis</i> of <i>nous</i> )	Intermittently possessed by the participant
Alcibiades	Partial soul + Body	Partial soul proper	The participant
Vulgar lovers	Bad <i>daimôn</i>	Partial soul's senses and passions	n/a

94. *In Alc.* 43.7–9: "Socrates, as being an inspired lover and elevated to the intelligible beauty itself, has established himself as corresponding to the intellect of the soul (*tôi nôi tês psuchês*)." See also *In Alc.* 140.10–17.

95. See *El.Th.* 204. The partial soul's intellection is through the *nous* participated by a daimonic or divine soul.

With this structure in mind, we can understand much better the way in which Proclus reads the *Alcibiades I*. In particular this will allow us to see Proclus' very subtle reading of why the partial soul can possess *nous* intermittently. On the literal, as well as on both allegorical levels, the source of the *ellampsis* is always present and active, which means that the *ellampsis* (attention, care, or *nous* as the *ellampsis*) is also always present. But because the *ellampsis* is not part of the essence of the participant, that participant can attend to it or not. The light metaphor implicit in *ellampsis* is helpful here. The *nous* which shines on the partial soul is ever active, and so the light which shines on it is ever present. But the partial soul does not always turn to the light to receive it fully.<sup>96</sup>

#### 6. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTIAL SOUL'S *NOUS* DRAWN FROM SOCRATES

At this point we will return to the characteristics attributed to Socrates as a lover and as a teacher that we examined above, in order to flesh out Proclus' understanding of the partial soul's *nous*.

##### 6.1. *Socrates is Alcibiades' lover*

In general the characteristic of Socrates as a lover indicates Proclus' conception of the active relation of the higher powers towards us. If the *ellampsis* of *nous* which we possess has a source, it must be the *nous* of some higher soul, a divine soul or a *daimôn*, who is active towards us. This active ministration is due to love. Proclus gives an elaborate description of the entire series of love, beginning with the gods in *Nous*. He then describes the inspiration of love in the *aggeloi*, *daimones*, and *heroes*, who "accompany the gods in their ascent to the intelligible beauty."<sup>97</sup> Love even inspires particularly noble partial souls to minister to their inferiors:

Furthermore, men's souls receive a share of such inspiration, through intimacy with the god<sup>98</sup> are moved with regard to the beautiful, and descend to the region of coming-to-be for the benefit of less perfect souls and out of forethought for those in need of salvation. For the gods and their followers "abiding in their own characters"<sup>99</sup> benefit and turn back to themselves all that is secondary, and men's souls descending and laying hold of becoming imitate the providence of the gods, which has the form of goodness.<sup>100</sup>

96. Cf. Proclus' discussion of the self-motion which the body possesses. *Autokinêsis* exists primarily and essentially in the soul. But the soul gives to the body a secondary type of self-motion, which Proclus describes as an appearance or image (*indalma*) of self-motion (*In Alc.* 225.12–15). Although the soul is essentially self-moved, the body's self motion is intermittent, and exists only when it is receptive of the influence of soul.

97. *In Alc.* 32.5–6. Note that "*daimôn*" refers to these three types of souls: *aggeloi*, *daimones* proper, and *heroes*.

98. Proclus at this point is referring to the trains of the gods in Plato's *Phaedrus*.

99. *Timaeus* 42e.

100. *In Alc.* 32.9–16.

The aim of this erotic ministrations is union with the intelligible:

Now the souls that are possessed by love and share in the inspiration therefrom, using apparent beauty with vehicle undefiled, are turned towards intelligible beauty and set that end to their activity; “kindling a light”<sup>101</sup> for less perfect souls they elevate these also to the divine and dance with them about the one source of all beauty.<sup>102</sup>

The *Alcibiades I* is an erotic dialogue because in it Socrates plays the literal role of one of these souls who has descended into *genesis* in order to turn souls like Alcibiades back to the intelligible. However, Proclus also says that Socrates makes use of the maieutic and dialectical sciences in an erotic manner.<sup>103</sup> So if we turn this around, we see that the erotic function leads into the other two. The erotic ministrations of Socrates, and so of any *daimôn* or god whose *nous* is turned towards us, have as their aim to make us receptive of the intelligible light, to awaken our own noetic activity.

#### 6.1.1. Socrates was always there

The characteristic of Socrates’ attention to Alcibiades both before, during, and after the attention of the vulgar lovers indicates the constant shining of *nous* upon the soul.

As, too, the intellect is always active in our regard and ever bestows the light of intelligence (*to tês noêseôs phôs*), both before we incline to irrationality and when we live with the emotions and after these have been stilled by us, but we are not always conscious of it except when, freed from the many waves of temporal process, we anchor our lives amid some calm (for then intellect is revealed to us and as it were speaks to us, then what was formerly silent and quietly present gives us a share of its utterance), so also the divine lover is both present to the beloved before the many lovers and with them and after them, but in silence and quiet and forethought alone.<sup>104</sup>

It is always active, whether we are aware of it or not. This is an application of propositions 56 and 57 of the *Elements*.<sup>105</sup> The corollary to 57 is particularly relevant:

101. Westerink references *Timaeus* 39b.

102. *In Alc.* 33.11–16.

103. *In Alc.* 28.8–10.

104. *In Alc.* 44.11–45.2.

105. *El. Th.* 56: “All that is produced by secondary beings is in a greater measure produced from those prior and more determinative principles from which the secondary were themselves derived.” *El. Th.* 57: “Every cause both operates prior to its consequent and gives rise to a greater number of posterior terms.”



From this it is apparent that what Soul causes is caused also by Intelligence, but not all that Intelligence causes is caused by Soul: Intelligence operates prior to Soul; and what Soul bestows on secondary existences Intelligence bestows in a greater measure; and at a level where Soul is no longer operative Intelligence irradiates (*ellampeî*) with its own gifts things on which Soul has not bestowed itself—for even the inanimate participates Intelligence, or the creative activity of Intelligence, in so far as it participates Form.<sup>106</sup>

If the activity of *Nous* extends even beyond soul, its illumination should be felt even more strongly within the entirety of soul itself. This is important because the temptation is to think of the partial soul's *nous* as something which it attains only at the end of its effort of discursive reason, as the height of its thinking activity. Proclus certainly does refer to the soul's *nous* in this manner.<sup>107</sup> But I think this conception of the partial soul's *nous* as only at its height reports only what happens when the soul conforms its entire attention and activity to the intellectual light which is already always there.

In other words, I think the *ellampsis* of *nous* that shines on the soul is active at all times, and even cooperates in the activity of discursive reason. Proclus holds that the soul's essence (*ousia*) is a fullness of *logoi*. Why is the soul like this? Without positing an actual partial *nous* within the *ousia* of the partial soul, such as would be present in a divine or daimonic soul, it seems that the partial soul's *ousia* is an image of *nous* in virtue of the *nous* which shines on it. A passage from the Euclid commentary makes this explicit:

There is left only the conclusion that soul draws her concepts both from herself and from *nous* (*para nous*), and that she is herself the company of the Forms (*plêrōma tōn eidōn*), which receive their constitution from the intellectual paradigms (*apo men tōn noerōn paradeigmatōn huphistamenōn*), but come forward into being in virtue of themselves (*autogonōs*). The soul therefore was never a writing-tablet bare of *logoi*;<sup>108</sup> she is a tablet that has always been inscribed and is always writing itself and being written on by *nous*. For the soul is *nous* by unfolding itself according to the *nous* that is before it and it becomes an image and exterior expression (*eikōn ekeinou kai tupos exō*) of it. So if *nous* is all things intellectually (*noerōs*) the soul is all things psychically; if *nous* is all things as a paradigm, soul is its image; if *nous* is all things drawn together, soul is all things divided.<sup>109</sup>

The metaphor here is writing rather than shining, but I think the point is the same: the soul is essentially cognitive because of the *nous* which precedes

106. *El. Tb.* 57.

107. See *In Alc.* 245.6–248.4. See also *In Tim.* I.246.19–247.21 and D.G. MacIsaac, “Noësis, dialectique et mathématiques dans le Commentaire aux *Éléments* d’Euclide de Proclus,” in *Études sur le Commentaire de Proclus au premier livre des Éléments d’Euclide*, ed. A. Lernould (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Septentrion, 2010), 125–38.

108. See *De An.* 430a1–2.

109. *In Eucl.* 16.4–16.

it, and which “is always active in our regard and ever bestows the light of intelligence (*to tês noêseôs phôs*).”<sup>110</sup>

If this is the case, then the psychic phenomena which Proclus accounts for by the unconscious possession of *logoi* are also due to this intellectual light which always shines on the soul. Proclus uses the same ‘unwritten tablet’ metaphor from Aristotle to describe how we always have an unconscious possession of *logoi*:

their souls project the *logoi* from themselves (*proballousin aph’ hautôn hai psuchai tous logous*) and are only in need of someone to awaken them, and are not unwritten tablets which receive their impression from outside. Rather, they have always been written on, and he who writes is inside the soul. But they are not all able to know what is written, nor indeed to know at all that they have been written on, because their eye has become clouded by the forgetfulness of the world of becoming and the passions which rush into the souls like revelers, due to this forgetfulness.<sup>111</sup>

This passage is very similar to his discussion of our breathing thought or cognitive heartbeat.<sup>112</sup> If we connect this with the idea from the corollary of proposition 57 of the *Elements* that any participation of Form is due to the causal power of *Nous*, then it is plausible to say that Proclus thinks that the unconscious cognitive activity which allows us to sense the world in a coherent manner, but which can also deceive us into thinking we know what we do not know, is due to the *ellampsis* of *nous* which is present to our souls. He says as much in referring to the divine source of the ideas which are the source of Alcibiades’ error: “regarding the essential (*kat’ ousian*) knowledge that is immanent within us, and which is instilled by the gods (*apo theôn endedotai*), [Alcibiades] thinks he has an accurate knowledge even of what is just.”<sup>113</sup> Proclus gives us further reason to think this picture is accurate when he says that the *ellampsis* of love extends down even to tyrannical natures,<sup>114</sup> and when he says that Socrates’ own *daimôn* literally speaks to him by exerting influence not only on his rational soul, but on his ‘soul body,’ his pneumatic vehicle, including his imagination and his senses.<sup>115</sup>

So in terms of the metaphor of illumination, the constant attention of Socrates to Alcibiades according to Proclus shows that the soul is always illuminated by *nous*. The source of intellectual light is constant, so the light should always be there to be received. This light makes possible the psychic

110. *In Alc.* 44.11–12.

111. *In Alc.* 281.1–8.

112. See *In Alc.* 189.4–12; 191.10–192.4.

113. *In Alc.* 242.12–14.

114. *In Alc.* 34.11–17.

115. *In Alc.* 79.15–80.18.

functions that depend on the intellectual light for their operation, but which can operate even without the soul's own fully rational activity, extending down even to sensation.

### 6.1.2. *Socrates stood aloof*

The idea that Socrates stood aloof from Alcibiades is the counterpart of Socrates' constant presence. His attention to Alcibiades does not issue in speech until he has put aside the vulgar lovers.

As the intellect does not always reveal itself to souls, but only when they have got rid of the "thronging mob that has grown upon them latterly" as a result of birth, as Timaeus<sup>116</sup> says, so also Socrates gives a share of his own intercourse to the youth precisely when, freed from the many lovers that have latterly surrounded him with their toils, he has leisure for philosophy and those who can lead him to it.<sup>117</sup>

With regard to the partial soul's *nous*, this indicates that although the noetic illumination is constantly present, it does not issue in consciously cognitive activity until we turn to it. Once we do this, however, it is the touchstone of and provides the ultimate fulfillment of our rational activity.

Further, on this point, it should also be observed that souls have the enjoyment of *nous*<sup>118</sup> only when they turn towards it (*pros auton epistraphôsi*), receive the light therefrom (*to ekeithen phôs*), and unite their own activity with it; but we receive the care of the (guardian) spirit as regards our whole existence and way of life, in all the decisions of fate and the provisions of universal providence.<sup>119</sup>

It is constantly active, but if we are unaware of that activity, this failure is due to our own inattention.

### 6.1.3. *Socrates is Alcibiades' only lover*

Socrates' as Alcibiades' only lover, who seeks to lead him upwards while the vulgar lovers seek to lead him down, indicates that the *ellampsis of nous*

116. Westerink references *Tim.* 42c.

117. *In Alc.* 44.5–44.11.

118. This phrase "have the enjoyment of *nous*" could be thought to argue against my main point. If this sentence meant that souls only received the light of *nous* when they turned towards it, it would imply that when not turned towards it no light from *nous* reaches them. However, *apolauô* means to have the enjoyment of a thing or to have the benefit of a thing. I think the connotation is that, although the intellectual light is always shining on them, it is only when they turn to it and receive it that they get its full benefit. The benefit in question here would be the conscious noetic activity of the soul. Proclus means to contrast this active reception of explicitly cognitive benefits with the more comprehensive benefits afforded us by our guardian *daimôn*, benefits which reach us even without our explicit cooperation.

119. *In Alc.* 76.22–77.4.

that the partial soul possesses is the presence to it of a singular principle which lies above it and seeks to lead it up to itself, insofar as that is possible. Proclus says, “such is divine love, elevating, beneficent, bestowing perfection, cause of *nous* and of the life according to *nous*.”<sup>120</sup> In light of this account of Socrates, Proclus’ extended discussion of the *nous* of the soul in the *Timaeus* commentary becomes more comprehensible.

For now we have assumed this much, that the entirety of the partial *nous* is immediately (*prosechô*s) participated by other souls than ours, the daimonic souls, but it shines out towards our souls (*ellampeî de eis tas hêmeteras*) whenever we return towards it, and perfects the *logos* in us by making it intellectual (*ton en hêmin logon noeron apotelesômen*). And just as in the *Phaedrus*,<sup>121</sup> [Plato] calls this the steersman of the soul, and says that only it knows being, and says that with it the soul feeds on *nous* and *epistêmê*, so here too *noêsis* is before the soul, and that is truly *noêsis*, and it is participated by the soul, whenever its *logos* should be actualised in an intellectual manner (*hotan ho logos energêi noerôs*).<sup>122</sup>

Here the immediate participation of the partial *nous* by the *daimones* is clear, as well as the *ellampsis* of *nous* that partial souls possess. Further, the idea of the *logos* of the soul working in concert with the illumination of *nous* removes the seemingly contradictory character of the following passage.

When *logos* intelligises (*noêi*) eternal being, insofar as it is *logos* it is active by passing from one thing to another (*metabatikô*s), insofar as it is intelligising (*noôn*) [it is active] with simplicity (*meta haplotêtos*). It intelligises each thing as at once simple, but it does not [intelligise] all things at once. It [intelligises] by passing from some things to other things, intelligising all that it intelligises while passing as one and simple.<sup>123</sup>

Is the *logos* of the partial soul *nous* or not? Does it possess *noêsis* or not? It becomes a lot easier to imagine how the partial soul can become like *nous* if the entire foundation of its cognitive life is already an illumination of *nous* itself. A little further in his discussion, Proclus implies this:

For whenever the soul should stand off from all imagination, opinion, and multiple and indeterminate knowledge, and should run up towards its own partlessness, according to which it is rooted in the partial *nous*, and in running up joins its own *energeia* to the *noêsis* of the partial *nous*, then in fact it does intelligise eternal being in concert with the partial *nous*, even though its *energeia* is both one and double, and sameness and division exist in its intelligising. At that time the *noêsis* of the soul takes place ‘at once’ to a greater degree (*athroôtera ginetai*) and it becomes closer to the eternal things, so that it grasps the intelligible object together at once with *Nous*, and acts as a smaller light does with a larger light, as the *logos* in us runs in under the *noêsis* of *Nous*, and the

120. *In Alc.* 61.2–5. See also *In Alc.* 49.13–50.21.

121. *Phaedrus* 247c–d.

122. *In Tim.* I.245.22–31.

123. *In Tim.* I.246.5–9.

intelligible object comes to be comprehended by *noësis* with *logos*. [*Timaeus* 28a.] For our *logos* in concert with *noësis* grasps (*hairei*) the intelligible, while the *noësis* of *Nous* always both *is* and *sees* the intelligible, and our *logos* is joined to *Nous* whenever this *logos* becomes 'noiform' (*nooeidês*).<sup>124</sup>

The soul which mounts on high is running up to its own partlessness, which implies that this noetic partlessness was already present. It was only covered over by the soul's attention to its lower activities. The *ellampsis* of *nous* that the soul possesses is a "smaller light" that acts in concert with the partial *nous* as a "larger light," and indeed which comes from that larger light.

#### 6.1.4. Socrates' imitation of Providence

Socrates' imitation of providence reinforces all of the previous ideas. Proclus says of providence generally:

the more accurate accounts say that there are two principal elements in divine and daimonic providence towards the secondary beings: (1) that it passes through all things from the top to the bottom, leaving nothing, not even the least, without a share in itself, and (2) it neither admits into itself any thing it controls nor is infected with its character nor is confused therewith.<sup>125</sup>

Like providence, the illumination of *nous* runs through all of the levels of the soul, from the top right down to the bottom. But this does not hinder its source, the partial *nous* that shines upon it, from remaining in itself, unmixed with what it shines upon.

#### 6.2. Socrates is Alcibiades' teacher

At this point I think Proclus' conception of the partial soul's *nous* is fairly clear. I will not repeat here my discussion of teaching and learning, and inquiry and discovery. I will only point out that that Proclus assimilates Socrates' questioning activity to the activity of the gods towards partial souls:

As the gods both purify and benefit us through the medium of our own persons, and in general move us as beings who are self moved, so also Socrates has devised a method of disproof whereby the person who is refuted will seem to be his own refuter and the subject of elicitation (*ho maiomenos*) operates upon himself.<sup>126</sup>

This suggests strongly that according to Proclus it is through the illumination of *nous* present to our soul that the gods move us such that we regain our own intellectual self-movement. It is here that the literal and the allegorical

124. In *Tim.* 1.247.10–25.

125. In *Alc.* 53.17–54.3.

126. In *Alc.* 241.14–18.

levels of Proclus' interpretation start to converge. Socrates is the teacher of Alcibiades, but he does not transfer knowledge from his soul to his student's soul. Instead, he asks questions. If Alcibiades is refuted, it is only because he sees the error of his current opinions. If he is educated, it is only because he starts to glimpse the intellectual illumination in his soul. In other words, as much as Socrates plays the part of teacher, the more genuine teacher of Alcibiades is the partial *nous* that illuminates his soul, and whose illumination is the foundation of his entire cognitive life.

#### 7. RELATION OF THIS ACCOUNT TO OTHER THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT THE PARTIAL SOUL'S NOETIC ILLUMINATION

I want briefly to relate this account of the partial soul's *nous* to a few other things we know about the the soul's knowing activity that have formed the subject of my recent studies.

First, in the Euclid commentary, Proclus puts forward a theory of mathematical first principles which is directly relevant to this account of the soul's illumination. There, the geometer, while not engaging in the full projection of his soul's *logoi* which belongs to the dialectician, engages in a sort of minimal projection of his first principles. His grasp of things like the definition of a point, a line, or a circle is akin to our unconscious comprehension of such things as breathing thought, but rises a bit above it. Such things are 'self-evident' because of their relative simplicity, and so are easy to grasp, and can so serve as the beginning points of the projection of the various discursive sciences. The dialectician, however, will examine these beginning points themselves, in order to trace them back analogically to *nous*. The present study, I think, shows that it is the illumination of *nous* present to the soul that supplies the simple and self-evident starting points of the discursive sciences. If I am right that this illumination is active throughout the whole soul, then it would make sense for the discursive sciences to begin from it. They begin from an immediate grasp of simple, self-evident principles.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, their entire discursus aims at explicating those principles, so that the simple noetic beginning points of the particular sciences also serve as their end points.

127. See in this regard, Proclus' statement that the major premise of an argument is projected from our common notions (*In Alc.* 104–05), that he learned the definition of the circle at some point, but not its common notion (*In Alc.* 191–92), that *nous* bestows principles to men of knowledge (*In Alc.* 288), that proofs from more general principles and common notions are better than their opposite (*In Alc.* 298). I outlined this aspect of the Euclid commentary in "Mathematical *koinai ennoiai* and Proclus' relation of mathematics to the cosmos," a talk delivered at the John Cleary Memorial conference on philosophy and mathematics, Dublin, 28–29 May 2010.

Second, as we have seen above, Proclus speaks of the *noësis* of the soul as a light shining in conjunction with a higher light, and of the summit of the soul's discursive activity as taking on a sort of unity and simplicity, while still remaining transitional (*metabatikos*). The soul never attains the atemporal all-at-once view of all the Forms that belongs to *Nous*.<sup>128</sup> Instead, it moves from Form to Form, but at its height it is able to see all that it sees with a single vision. This account allows us to understand Proclus' doctrine of dialectic as the one, highest, unhypothetical science, as he articulates it in the *Euclid*, *Timaeus*, and *Parmenides* commentaries.

Finally, the idea of the partial soul's *nous* as *ellampsis* should be connected with Proclus' theory of divine names in his *Cratylus* commentary.<sup>129</sup> There, the names of the gods as they are divulged to human souls by the higher powers are a great help to the soul's comprehension of the intelligible. Given that the soul, even at its highest and most noetic, still comprehends the Forms in *Nous* as distinct from each other, moving from each one comprehended as a unity to another comprehended as a unity, the fact that we have been given the names of the gods means that we have an accurate 'map,' so to speak, of the divine terrain. The way that Proclus discusses the various etymologies in his *Cratylus* commentary makes this clear. If we are to comprehend Apollo, for example, we should know that he is the god of medicine, divination, archery, and music. The way in which Proclus takes in earnest Plato's derivation of all these functions from the single divine name *Apollôn* is a parallel to how he thinks the unity and simplicity of our *nous* serves as a launching point for our discursive knowledge. And importantly, he considers the entire Platonic corpus to be divinely inspired. This is what allows him to use it as a sure guide to the intelligible, and it is what allows him to 'expand' upon Plato's text. Like the names Apollo and Poseidon, Plato's dialogues contain much hidden content waiting to be unfolded by the discursive interpreter.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In summary, I think from Proclus' *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* we can draw the following conclusions about Proclus' theory of the soul's *nous*. *Nous* itself is the source of the primary determinations of Being and the primary intelligibles, because in *Nous* itself they are the same. The power of *Nous* extends down to the partial soul and beyond it. However, the partial soul has only a secondary participation in a partial *nous*, unlike the primary

128. Contrary to Plotinus' famous description of the 'easy life' in *Nous*, which it is implied the soul can sometimes enjoy (*Enn.*V.8.4).

129. See D.G. MacIsaac, "The divine Plato, the divine Derrida: Philosophy as textual exegesis," in *From Philo to Corbin: Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions*, ed. T. Kirby, R. Acar, and B. Bas (forthcoming).

participation enjoyed by the gods and *daimones*. The partial soul's participation is an *ellampsis*, an illumination, and as such it exercises a perpetual noetic influence on the partial soul, but one to which it does not always consciously attend.

This illumination comes from the activity of a partial *nous*, and the illumination itself is an active power which supplies both determination and intelligibility to the partial soul. At its lowest, I think, the *ellampsis* of *nous* which the soul possesses supplies the basic determinations of sensory qualities, as well as their 'sensible intelligibility' (if I may use that term). It allows us to navigate the sensory world coherently even if we are not engaging in philosophy. It can also be a source of error and deception for the soul. The partial soul's possession of the ideas of things without a full rational investigation of these ideas can fool it into thinking it knows what it does not, and so produce double ignorance in the soul.

At its highest level, the soul's noetic illumination draws our discursive activity to its summit. It falls short of the atemporal totality of *Nous* itself, but it does allow us to know what we know in as simple and unified a way as is possible for us. It gives us the 'map,' as it were, of the intelligible world, so that we may aim our discursive investigations of it in the proper direction, and bring them round to a simple grasp of each Form.

In the middle range, I think the soul's *nous* supplies the beginning points for the discursive sciences. My idea, taking up the metaphor of light explicit in the term *ellampsis*, is that the soul's *nous* is a light that itself is the object seen. It shines from the top of the soul down to the bottom, providing the basic distinctions of being which serve as the springboard for and ultimate object of the soul's discursive knowing.

From this we can see the import of Proclus' criticism of Plotinus' undescended soul. Proclus' theory of the soul's *nous* as an *ellampsis* allows him to say that there is a continual noetic activity present to the soul, and therefore that the soul which has descended into becoming is not forever trapped there. There is no abrupt break between *Nous* and the partial soul according to Proclus, so he can agree with Plotinus in holding that once it turns inwards it can find the intelligible. But his theory allows him to distinguish between the soul and *Nous* more clearly than Plotinus does. The soul's *nous* is an illumination to which it does not always attend consciously. It is the foundation of the soul's entire cognitive activity, but this does not mean that a part of the soul is perpetually in enjoyment of the fullness of *Nous* which Plotinus' theory implies. However, when the soul does attend to its own *nous*, it then has open to it the knowledge of the divine Forms which is its fulfilment.