

# *Phantasia* between Soul and Body in Proclus' Euclid Commentary

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Proclus discusses imagination (*phantasia*) in the second prologue to his Euclid commentary. In his discussion, he describes *phantasia* in terms which make it seem like a passive screen, onto which geometrical figures are projected. However, he also speaks of *phantasia* in this text in terms which make it seem active, as if it were the projector rather than the screen receiving projections. In this paper I will clarify Proclus' doctrine of *phantasia* in the Euclid commentary, by situating it within his more general theory of discursive reason (*dianoia*).

## I

At the beginning of the second prologue to the Euclid commentary,<sup>1</sup> Proclus raises a question about the ontological status of geometrical matter (*tên geometrikên hulên*),<sup>2</sup> which leads him to a discussion of *phantasia* as a projection of geometrical *logoi*.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, if the figures which geometers speak about are sensible, and therefore are wedded to sensible mat-

<sup>1</sup> The first prologue is about mathematics in general. The second is about geometry.

<sup>2</sup> Glenn R. Morrow unfortunately translates *tên geometrikên hulên* as "the subject-matter of geometry." See Proclus, *A commentary on the first book of Euclid's Elements*, trans. G.R. Morrow (1970; reprint, with a foreword by Ian Mueller, Princeton, 1992) 39. Subsequent references to the Euclid Commentary will be in the text, and will refer to the pagination of the Freidlin edition: *Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum Commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig, 1873).

<sup>3</sup> For a brief discussion of geometry as the Soul's projection of the *logoi* which constitute its *ousia* (*probolê tôn ousidiôn logôn*) in the Euclid commentary, see Dominic J. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived* (Oxford, 1989) 167–69. See also I. Mueller, "Mathematics and Philosophy in Proclus' Commentary on Book I of Euclid's Elements," in *Proclus lecteur et interprète des anciens: Actes du Colloque internationale du C.N.R.S., Paris 2-4 oct. 1985*, ed. J. Pépin et H.-D. Saffrey (Paris, 1987) 305–18. Mueller recognizes Proclus' "projectionist" philosophy of geometry (see 316–17). However, he does not point out that it is an application of his wider doctrine of the projection of the soul's *logoi*. For a full study of the projection of *logoi* in Proclus, see my "The Soul and Discursive Reason in the Philosophy of Proclus" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2001).

ter, then it seems that they could not lead us to the contemplation of the intelligibles by making us used to thinking the immaterial. Moreover, we do not find among sensibles the perfect angles, straight lines, or points without breadth which we do find in the objects of geometry. As well, how could geometrical conclusions be irrefutable if the figures about which they speak are in the ever-changing matter of sense-objects (49.04 ff.)? However, if it were the case that the underlying in geometry was outside of matter (*exô tês hulês esti ta hupokeimena têt geometriai*), pure and separate from sensible objects, other problems arise. In this second case, geometrical objects would have neither parts, nor body, nor magnitude.

For *logoi* have present to them magnitude, bulk, and extension in general in virtue of the matter which is their receptacle (*tôn hulên hupodochên*), a receptacle which receives the indivisible in a divided manner, the unextended through extension, and the motionless as moving. (49.27–50.02)

The consequence of this would be that the normal operations of the geometer become impossible, because it is impossible to perform bisections, make comparisons of size, and speak of contact between figures which have no magnitude, extension, or bulk. Thus it must be the case that geometrical matter (*hulê*) is divisible, but not sensible.

Proclus' solution to this dilemma is to distinguish between two types of underlying matter (*hupokeimenên hulên*):

for matter likewise is twofold, as Aristotle says somewhere: the matter of things tied to sensation and the matter of imagined objects (*tôn phantastôn*)—and we shall admit that the corresponding universal is of two kinds: the one sensible, because it is participated by sensible things, and the other imaginary (*phantastôn*), because it has its existence in the multiplicity of imagination (*phantasia*). (51.15–17)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Morrow notes at this point that he does not follow Friedlein's punctuation, but rather follows Barocius and Schönberger in understanding *hôs pou kai Aristotelês phêsi* to go with the previous clause rather than the following *dirton einai to kutholou*. I follow Morrow in this. He also notes that Aristotle distinguishes (*Met.* 1036a9–12) between *hulê aisthêtê* and *hulê noêtê* rather than between *hulê aisthêtê* and *hulê tôn phantastôn*. However, Morrow thinks that Proclus is justified in this modification, because at *De Anima* 433a10 Aristotle assumes that *phantasia* is a form of *noêsis*. Whether or not this is a justifiable reading of Aristotle in general, it is certainly justified for Proclus. See, for example *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1903–1906) I.243.27–248.06. He is comfortable in using terms in a very fluid manner, even if he thinks that the ontological realities which he names are precisely delineated. For example, he uses both the terms *eidos* and *logos* to refer to the contents of the Soul's *ousia*, even though he distinguishes clearly between the primary existence of the *eidê* in *Nous*, and their secondary existence as the Soul's *ousia*. Here it would be natural for Proclus to think of Aristotle's contrast between the sensible and the intelligible as a contrast between the

*Phantasia* has in it a universal<sup>5</sup> which is different from the universal in sense-objects. But it is also different from the universal in *dianoia*.<sup>6</sup> And this universal in *phantasia* finds itself in a matter which is likewise in between the matter of sense and the immateriality of *dianoia*.<sup>7</sup> *Phantasia* is able to have in it figures which have extension and are divisible, "through its formative motion, and the fact that it has its existence with and in the body" (51.21–22). Thus the mathematical objects in *phantasia* are able to admit of divisions and comparisons, and differences of magnitude, because they do have extension in matter. But the matter in which they have their extension is not the matter of sensibles, with its imperfection and ever-changing nature.

In the Euclid commentary Proclus thinks that *phantasia* is in between *dianoia* and sensation.<sup>8</sup> This is why Aristotle called it passive *nous* (*noun*

sensible and the *phantaston*. Indeed, in a passage just following he mentions Aristotle's phrase *noun pathêricon*, and says that *phantasia* is called "*nous*" because of its kinship with the highest sort of knowledge, and "passive" because of its kinship with the lowest. This name manifests its intermediate character.

<sup>5</sup> Proclus uses the term *to katholou* here, but he could have used the term *logos*.

<sup>6</sup> Proclus has already said that mathematical objects are also dianoetic objects. Again we run into Proclus' fluid terminology. Because of their relative multiplicity, geometrical objects are classed below non-mathematical dianoetic objects, and below the objects of arithmetic. So one may think of them as the lowest sort of dianoetic object, as Proclus does when talking about mathematics in general. On the other hand, one may distinguish them from dianoetic objects, because of the extension of their underlying matter, as Proclus does here.

<sup>7</sup> At this point Proclus brings up his three-fold distinction between the universal (a) before the many particulars, (b) in the many particulars, and (c) as posterior to and arising from the many particulars. He mentions this distinction, and then remarks that for each of these universals there is a difference in the underlying matter. Proclus then goes on to the passage quoted above, where he says there is a difference in the matter of *aisthêta* and *phantasta*. Morrow's translation gives one the impression that this latter distinction should be mapped onto two of the three terms mentioned above: the universal before the many, in the many, and posterior to the many. However, the phrase *kai ta metechonta auta ditta themenoi* should be read as: "and we must also posit the universal which is participated [i.e., the universal in the many] itself as double." So what Proclus is doing is subdividing the middle term of the three-fold initial division. This fits with his other writings, where the universal before the many is unparticipated, the universal in the many is the participated moment—participated here either by sensible or imaginary matter—and the universal after the many is the "later-born" universal produced by Aristotelian abstraction. See *Procli Commentarium in Platonis Parmenidem in Prodi Opera Inedita*, ed. V. Cousin (Paris, 1864) 892.20 ff.

<sup>8</sup> The status of *phantasia* in Proclus in general is a controversial issue. H. Blumenthal is of the opinion that in Proclus' early works, especially the *In Timaeum doxa* is thought of as the main faculty between sensation and *dianoia*. This place is gradually usurped by *phantasia*, so that in the late *In Euclidem doxa* is mentioned only marginally, and *phantasia* has become the main faculty occupying this middle position. See H.J. Blumenthal, "Plutarch's exposition of the *De Anima* and the psychology of Proclus," in *De Jamblique à Proclus* (Genève, 1975) 123–47. This may be the case. Our interest in *phantasia*, however, is in its particular role in the *In Euclidem*. For Proclus on *phantasia* see A. Charles, "L'imagination, miroir de l'âme selon Proclus,"

*pathêrîkon*), according to Proclus.<sup>9</sup> As he often does, Proclus analyses this name into its elements, and states that Aristotle called *phantasia* passive *nous* in order to show both its kinship with the higher, *nous*, and the lower, the passivity of sensation. Being in-between, it is both the same as and different from its upper and lower neighbours. It is similar to *dianoia* as its upper neighbour because it projects what it knows out of the centre which is itself, rather than receiving its *logoi* passively from outside. It is similar to *aisthêsis* because the *logoi* which it projects reside in a matter which introduces extension into them, which is not the case for the *logoi* in *dianoia*.

By contrast *phantasia*, occupying a position in the centre, in the middle of these types of knowing, is awakened by itself and projects (*prohallaî*) its object of knowledge (*to gnôston*), but because it is not outside the body, it leads its objects out of the undivided centre of its life into division, extension, and figure. For this reason everything that it thinks is a figure (*tu pos*) or a shape of its thought. It thinks the circle as extended, and although this circle is free of external matter, it possesses an intelligible matter (*noêtên hulên*) provided by *phantasia* itself. This is why there is more than one circle in *phantasia*, as there is more than one circle in the sense world; for with extension there appear also differences in size and number among circles and triangles. (52.20–53.05)

All of the circles in *phantasia* are identical in that they are all instances of the same *logos* (*pantas homoiouis allêlois kath' hena logon hypostantus*) (53.07–08), i.e., they are all circles. But they will differ in their size from each other, due to the extension afforded by intelligible matter.

## II

*Phantasia* is situated between *dianoia* and *aisthêsis*. However, Proclus also sets up a parallel between *dianoia* and Nature (*phusis*) on the one hand, and *phantasia* and sense objects on the other (53.18 ff.). Prior to the universal in sense objects is the universal in *phusis*, and prior to the universal in *phantasia* is the universal in *dianoia*. The structure of the sensible world is afforded to it through the mathematical principles which it receives through Nature, standing under the Soul of the Cosmos, or World Soul. Thus the World Soul, through the medium of Nature, puts forth the undivided mathematical *logoi* which it possesses and produces body. Our partial souls, however,

in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971) 241–48; H.J. Blumenthal, "Neoplatonic Interpretations of Aristotle on *Phantasia*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 31 (1977): 242–57; E. Moutsopoulos, *Les structures de l'imaginaire dans la philosophie de Proclus* (Paris, 1985); and S. Breton, *Philosophie et mathématique chez Proclus, suivi de: Principes philosophiques des mathématiques, par N. Hartmann, traduit de l'allemand par Geneviève de Pestouan* (Paris, 1969) 112–23.

<sup>9</sup> *De Anima* 430a24. At this point Aristotle is not referring to *phantasia*, but to the two types of *nous*, one which becomes all things and one which makes all things. Morrow refers us as well to *Ju Tim.* I.244.20 and III.158.9.

being only little sisters of the World Soul, do not produce the *logoi* which structure body when we project mathematical *logoi*. Rather, we project these *logoi* into the matter produced by *phantasia*. In this account, the World Soul does not possess *phantasia*, because *phantasia* in partial souls is what takes the place of sensible *logoi*.

I think Proclus' account here suffers from an internal conflict produced by the difference between the World Soul and the partial soul. In his general account of the structure of the Soul as it is found in the *In Euclidem*, *phantasia* lies between *dianoia* and sense, and is not a parallel to the sensible *logoi*. This should hold for all souls, because all souls share the same structure. Most of his discussion of *phantasia* at the beginning of the second prologue to the Euclid commentary stays with this account of *phantasia* as in-between. However, at 53.18ff. Proclus seems to remember that he is speaking of *phantasia* in a geometrical context, and that it would be strange to think of the World Soul as performing bisections, and other such operations which the geometer performs. Hence he seems to replace *phantasia* in the World Soul with the *logoi* which structure body. After this one mention of *phusis*, however, both *phusis* and sensation seem to be forgotten, and Proclus returns to an account in which we find only *dianoia* and *phantasia*. One presumes that in this account sensation has resumed its place below *phantasia*.

### III

Proclus' general account of discursive reason (*dianoia*), is that it is a projection of the *logoi* which constitute the essence (*ousia*) of the soul (*probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn*). The Soul is a fullness (*plêrôma*) of these *logoi*, and *dianoia* is the activity by which the Soul draws out its implicit content, through a reversion (*epistrophê*) upon itself and upon *Nous*. In this projection, the Soul makes its unified *ousiôdeis logoi* to be multiple, as it draws forth out of itself the multiplicity of the sciences (*epistêmai*), and in this case, as it draws forth out of itself the *logoi* which constitute geometrical figures.

Indeed, the account which Proclus gives of *phantasia* in the Euclid commentary contains some of the most explicit descriptions of the *probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn* in the Procline corpus:

For *dianoia* possesses the *logoi* but, not being powerful enough to see them when they are wrapped up, unfolds and exposes them and presents them to *phantasia* sitting in the vestibule. (54.27–55.02)

Thus thinking (*noêsis*) [in geometry] makes use of *phantasia*, and the syntheses and divisions of its figures are imaginary (*phantastai*). Its knowing (*gnôsis*) is a journey (*hodos*) towards the dianoetic being (*dianoêtiken ousian*), but it has not yet reached it, because *dianoia* is looking towards the outside, and although investigating what is outside by means of what it has within, and making use of projections of *logoi* (*probolais logôn*), it



is from itself moving to what lies outside. But if it should ever be able to roll up its extensions and figures and view their plurality as a unity without figure, then in turning back to itself it would view quite differently the partless, unextended, and essential (*ousiôdeis*) geometrical *logoi* of which it is the fullness (*plêrôma*). (55.06–18)

The Form itself (*to geeidos auto*) is without motion, ungenerated, indivisible and free of all underlying matter. But whatever exists secretly (*kruphiôs*) in it is brought to *phantasia* separately and dividedly. That which projects is *dianoia*; that from which it is projected is the dianoetic Form (*dianoêton eidos*); that in which what is projected exists is this thing called 'passive nous' (*pathêrikos houtos kaloumenos nous*) that unfolds itself [circling] around the true *Nous*, divides out itself from the undividedness of pure intellection (*aknai phnious noêseôs*), shapes itself according to the shapeless Forms (*eidê*) and becomes all things, all that *dianoia* and the partless *logos* in us is. (56.11–22)

All of the elements of Proclus' general account of the *probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn* are present. *Dianoia* is thought of as a unified fullness of *logoi*, which produces out of itself the divided projections which are its own thoughts. These thoughts produce the divided sciences, which have as their aim to lead the soul back towards its unified centre, and to pass from these to the higher unity which is *Nous*. However, this account differs from Proclus' general account in one small way. The account of *dianoia* in the Euclid commentary seems to present *dianoia* as a unified *plêrôma*, which is subsequently unfolded by *phantasia*. In his more general account, it is the *ousia* of the soul which is the *plêrôma tôn ousiôdôn logôn*, and this *plêrôma* is unfolded by the soul's *dianoia*. We have here an example of the relativity of Proclus' descriptions. The *probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn* is moving at this point from one level of multiplicity, the temporal, to another level, the spatial. From the lower perspective, *dianoia*'s projection of the soul's *logoi* into temporal multiplicity appears as a dianoetic unity, even though in itself it does not appear so. Further, Proclus goes back and forth between a description of *dianoia* as the projector and that which is projected. Proclus says both that it is *phantasia* which projects geometrical *logoi* and that it is *dianoia* which projects them into *phantasia* (52.20–53.05; 56.11–22).

#### IV

There is another important difference between this account in the Euclid commentary and Proclus' main account of the *probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn*, however, and it has to do with the passivity of *phantasia* as a receptacle for the projected geometrical *logoi*. At 56.14–15, Morrow translates *diastatôs kai meristôs eis phantasian proagetai* as "produced distinctly and individually on the screen of imagination." Morrow supplies the term 'screen,' where the Greek has only "in imagination." In his forward to the 1992 edition of Morrow's translation, Ian Mueller writes:

[Imagination in Neoplatonism] serves as a kind of depository for sensations and thus provides the basis for an account of empirical knowledge. But more importantly, particularly in Proclus' Euclid commentary, it serves as a kind of movie screen on which *dianoia* projects images for mathematical reflection. (xx)

The other accounts which we have of the *probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn* do not include this element of passivity in the projection. Rather, the usual description is of a spontaneous throwing forth of the *ousiôdeis logoi* into a multiplicity which is the soul's *energeia*. Both Morrow and Mueller regard *phantasia* in the Euclid commentary as a completely passive receptacle.

This characterization of *phantasia* as a passive projection screen is accurate in a certain sense, but is also misleading. While there seems to be a sort of ambiguous passivity in *phantasia* in this commentary, it is also clear that *phantasia* is an active principle. The evidence for a passive characterisation of *phantasia* seems initially strong. Mueller points us to a passage in which Proclus refers to *phantasia* as a sort of mirror:

It is reasonable, then, that he [Euclid] should define this particular surface [the plane], and go on to construct all of his figures upon it. For this reason also he gives his work the subtitle "plane geometry." And so one must understand the plane as like something projected (*probeblêmenon*), and lying before our eyes, and *dianoia* as writing everything upon it, with *phantasia* as it were resembling a plane mirror, and the *logoi* in *dianoia* sending down impressions of themselves to it. (120.25–121.07)

In this passage, *phantasia* does seem to be simply a screen on which *dianoia* projects *logoi*, and hence a mere passivity. However, the context of this passage is Euclid's definition of the plane. Proclus says that it is reasonable for Euclid to have chosen one of the two sorts of simple surfaces, the plane surface as opposed to the spherical surface, as the subject in which he will study the figures and their properties. The reason for this is that it is more easily done on a plane than on a sphere, because there are certain figures which cannot be represented on a sphere, such as a straight line or a rectilinear angle. For this reason we should think of *phantasia* as a plane projected in front of us, and of *dianoia* as writing everything on it, so that *phantasia* is like a plane mirror to which *dianoia* sends reflexions of itself. Clearly here the emphasis is on the fact that a plane mirror is flat instead of curved, rather than on its reflectivity and passivity, because a flat surface is the most useful and basic for geometrical demonstrations.

Further, the most explicit passage in which *phantasia* is called 'passive' is the phrase at 56.16–18 "*to de en hōi to proballomenon pathêtikos houtos kaloumenos nous*." I have translated this above as "that in which what is projected exists is this thing called 'passive nous'." This is an obvious reference back to 52.03–04 where Proclus refers to someone (Aristotle) who referred

to *phantasia* as "passive *nous*." But the phrase that Proclus uses at 52.03–04 is "*noun pathêricon tis autên proseipein ouk ôknêsen*," which literally means "someone did not shrink from calling [*phantasia*] passive *nous*." The phrase 'did not shrink from' indicates that Proclus thinks that this appellation is a bit strange. Indeed, he goes on to ask how anything could be *nous* and passive at the same time. The solution is that this name points towards the upper neighbour of *phantasia*, which is a sort of *nous*, and towards the lower neighbour, which is passive. We cannot draw the conclusion here, then, that *phantasia* itself is passive at all. Further, we cannot draw this conclusion from the use of the phrase at 56.16–18, because it is a clear reference back to 52.03–04. Finally, there are clear indications that *phantasia* is as much activity as passivity. The strongest indication of this is at 52.22, "[*phantasia*] is awakened by itself and projects (*proballêi*) its object of knowledge (*anegeiretai men aph' heautês kai proballêi to gnôston*)."<sup>10</sup> So while a case might be made for the passivity of *phantasia* because it is that in which the *logoi* which *dianoia* projects exist, it is more likely itself an activity, itself a projection of mathematical *logoi*. It is possible that Proclus' thoughts here are ambiguous, because *phantasia* holds this middle place between the activity of *dianoia*'s active projection, and the passivity of *aisthêsis*. Perhaps *phantasia*'s projection is both active and passive, active in the sense that all projection is *energeia*, and passive in the sense that the *logoi* once projected seem to be their own receptacle, i.e., they are themselves both the 'mirror' of imagination and what is seen in the mirror.

## V

Be all this as it may, what is missed in the account of *phantasia* as a mere passive screen is that the sort of *probolê tôn ousiôdôn logôn* which *phantasia* performs is a projection of explicitly spatial *logoi*.<sup>10</sup> The *logoi* in question are lines, angles, and figures. *Phantasia* is the moment of the unfolding of the cosmos where space, as interval (*diastasis*), emerges, just as *dianoia* in general is the moment where time emerges. The Soul is the first principle to exist in time, because it is unable to view all of the *logoi* which it possesses in its *ousia* in one simple act. Its dianoetic movement from one *logos* to the next is described metaphorically as a circling around the *nous* in which it participates:

<sup>10</sup> S. Breton proposes that imagination creates spatial things, and as such the imagination of a partial soul creates its *ochêma*, or vehicle. See S. Breton, *Philosophie et mathématique chez Proclus, suivi de Principes philosophiques des mathématiques*, par N. Hartmann, traduit de l'allemand par Geneviève de Pestouan (Paris, 1969) 122–23. A. Charles argues convincingly against this point, and agrees with us in the role of *phantasia* as providing the paradigm of material spatiality, and not of producing spatial things. See A. Charles, "L'imagination, miroir de l'âme selon Proclus," in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971) 241–48.



a viewing of the *nous* which is its centre from the various points on the circumference of a circle. Thus the particular sort of multiplicity which is an inability for the instantaneous unity with the totality of *logoi* constituting its essence generates the motion of the Soul, which is measured by Time.<sup>11</sup>

With mathematical projection, spatiality begins to emerge. It is proper to think of the Procline hierarchy of principles in terms of their most basic characteristic: their relative unity and multiplicity, or their proximity or distance from the One. The One is simple. The henads are likewise simple, yet there are more than one of them. *Nous* has an inner multiplicity, yet each element of that multiplicity is able to be present to each other element. Soul is an inner multiplicity in which each element is not able to be present to all other elements at once. The activity of Soul is a serial activity in which its contents are consciously present, but one at a time. It is this division or multiplicity which is measured by Time. Body has descended to a level of multiplicity in which none of its elements are able to be present to any other of its elements at all, i.e., the parts of bodies cannot occupy the same position.<sup>12</sup> We call this spatiality. The object of *phantasia* holds an interesting place between the Soul, as temporal but non-spatial, and Body.<sup>13</sup> Geometrical figures may be thought to occupy the same space, and so two adjacent figures may make use of the same line as a boundary, such that the line is simultaneously an element of both figures. However, the shapes of the figures themselves cannot be violated. The two opposite sides of a square, for example, can never be thought of as occupying the same position while the figure retains its identity. This inability of elements of one figure to leave their place and be present to the other elements of the same figure is the key characteristic of the sort of multiplicity which is spatial multiplicity. Hence in *phantasia* we see the emergence of ideal space. The spatiality of body is merely an intensification of this sort of multiplicity, because the inability to be mutually present which holds for the parts of a given figure now holds between different bodies.

In this conception, matter has undergone an important transformation. The normal conception of matter as the potentiality for Form holds that

<sup>11</sup> For Proclus the monad of Time is the particular *nous* in which Soul participates. It is not produced by the Soul's motion, because it is that which measures the Soul's motion, in Aristotle's formulation.

<sup>12</sup> See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology, a revised text with translation, introduction and commentary* by E.R. Dodds, 2nd edition with addenda et corrigenda (Oxford, 1963) prop. 15, where all that is capable of self-reversion must be incorporeal.

<sup>13</sup> Strictly speaking, *phantasia* is an activity of the Soul, so this statement is not completely accurate. However, it is accurate in the sense that it is temporality which most properly characterizes Soul, and the emergence of space in geometrical procession marks the transitional aspect of this lowest sort of projection.

matter and Form are separate principles, such that matter is a sort of passive receptacle for the order imposed by immaterial Form.<sup>14</sup> Here, however, matter is not so much a passive receptacle for Form, but has become a concomitant characteristic of a certain sort of low-level Form. Extension, which seems to be the cardinal character of material things, results from the declension of Form itself, rather than being supplied by an external principle. Another way to think of this is that the passive potentiality of matter has been subsumed under the active potentiality of Form, in Proclus.<sup>15</sup> For this reason "intelligible matter" (53.01) is not a contradiction. Geometrical *logoi* are in intelligible matter because they are a sort of Form or *logos* which have extension, or interval. It is for this reason that *phantasia* is ambiguous, in that it seems to be both activity and passivity. *Phantasia* projects geometrical *logoi*, which because of their extension are in matter, but this matter is itself a product of the activity of geometrical projection. So on the one hand *phantasia*, as that in which extended geometrical *logoi* exist, is a sort of passivity. But on the other hand, this extension which receives geometrical *logoi* is a product of *phantasia*'s own projection, and is thus the issue of an activity.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the sort of spatiality which emerges in *phantasia* is not the spatiality of Body, but rather is a cause or paradigm of the spatiality of Body. According to Proclus' doctrine of mean terms, between that which possess the perfection and precision of the unextended, and that which is extended but admits of all sorts of imprecision, is that which is both extended and precise; between *dianoia* and *aisthēsis* is *phantasia*. Geometrical figures, which are extended but precise, are the paradigms, and hence the causes of the imprecise order in Body. In Proclus' account of the seven main portions of the Soul, given in the *Timaeus* commentary, he holds that in its division into portions, the Soul's *ousia* possesses the principles of the remaining, procession, and return of both two and three dimensional being.<sup>17</sup> These portions of the Soul's *ousia* are not themselves the proximate causes of Body because they are not themselves two or three dimensional. They are rather the principles in which two and three dimensional being exist, as in their cause. They are portions of the *ousia* of the Soul which proceed outward into the *dunamis* and *energeia* of the Soul. *Phantasia* is between the Soul's *ousia* and

<sup>14</sup> This holds if one subscribes to a strong hylomorphism, like Aristotle, as well as if one thinks that the unity of matter and form is less strong.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Plotinus' striking claim that even matter is a sort of ultimate Form, at *Enneads*, trans. A.H. Armstrong, 7 vols. (London and Cambridge, 1966–1986) V.8.7.23.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *In Tim.* II.24.31–25.23. Proclus seems to think as well that physical *logoi* put forth their powers into matter as a sort of 'exhalation.'

<sup>17</sup> *In Tim.* II.205.24–30.

Body, because unlike the *ousia* of the Soul, which is the cause of two and three-dimensionality, it actually is ideal two and three-dimensionality, without the imperfection of Body.<sup>18</sup> It is with and in Body, yet the sort of matter in which it projects its ideas is intelligible matter. Intelligible matter in this sense is a peculiarly Neoplatonic invention: i.e., an entity which must exist because of other principles, such as the doctrine of mean terms, but which seems at first blush to be an oxymoron. And its being with and in Body is likely parallel to the way in which the boundaries of a solid are with and in it, without themselves being three-dimensional.

## VI

In this paper we began with the question of the status of geometrical matter. This matter was seen to be a sort of in-between. According to Proclus, it shares extension with body, and immateriality with *dianoia*. We saw that Proclus' account of *phantasia* in the Euclid commentary is an example of his wider theory of *dianoia*, as a projection of the soul's essential *logoi*. In light of this, we examined the case made for a completely passive account of *phantasia*. We discovered that *phantasia* is as much an active principle of the projection of geometrical *logoi*, as it is a passive receptacle for its own projections. Finally, we pointed out that whereas for Proclus *dianoia* in general is a projection whose multiplicity is measured by Time, with the projection of ideal space by *phantasia* the soul's activity has reached the next greater level of multiplicity in the stepwise declension of the Procline universe.

## ABSTRACT

In his commentary on Euclid's *Elements*, imagination (*phantasia*) is a type of discursive reason (*dianoia*) in which the Soul's *logoi* are projected into spatial multiplicity, rather than simply temporal multiplicity. *Phantasia* is both an active principle of projection, and the passive receptacle which receives its own projections. As such, *phantasia* provides an intelligible matter for its geometrical figures. This matter is itself geometrical extension.

<sup>18</sup> Proclus does not allow us to pin him down here, but it is likely that he thought of *phantasia* as a sort of *energeia* of the Soul. The *energeia* is that which projects the *ousiôdeis logoi*, as *phantasia* projects geometrical *logoi*; the Soul's *energeia* is its self-motion, as *phantasia* has a "formative motion (*morphôtiken kinésin*).” See *In Eucl.* 51.21.