

# Proclus on the Myth of Er<sup>1</sup>

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The penultimate (XVIth)<sup>2</sup> and the longest of the essays that comprise Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* is his disquisition on the Myth of Er, and it is one of the most interesting. The difficulty which all later Platonists had with the Myth of Er, and which Proclus fully shares, is that when Plato composed the myth, the question of determinism, in the strong form in which it was propounded by the Stoics, and Chrysippus in particular, had not yet become the problem that it would later become. Plato is certainly conscious that there is a certain tension between fate, or necessity, and free will, but he does not see any difficulty in assuming that virtue will triumph over all obstacles, if pursued with the requisite degree of conscious vigour. The famous speech of Lachesis, relayed by the Prophet to the souls (*Rep.* X 617d8-e5), encapsulates the whole problem: the souls are required to choose a life, or, more accurately, mode of life,<sup>3</sup> which will be irrevocably assigned to them – here we appear to have chance, which governs the order of lots, interwoven with necessity, which decrees the irrevocable consequences of the choice – but then virtue knows no master (ἀρετῇ δὲ ἀδέσποτον), and one is exhorted to honour it, if one wishes to come through one's future life advantageously. The awkward circumstance that, owing to the requirement to drink the waters of Lethe, one will retain no memory of this exhortation once one has embarked upon the future life, is simply ignored. We may assume, perhaps, that it is retained in the subconscious.

This is one source of difficulty for later Platonists, valiantly though they strove to overcome it. There was another one, however, equally serious, and this time self-inflicted. Plato had set out to compose a myth, with all the incidental detail and even whimsicality that that involved for him. Later Platonists,

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1. This essay began life as a contribution to a seminar on the Myth of Er organized by Prof. James Wilberding in the University of Bochum in Feb., 2012. I am grateful for productive discussion with the audience on that occasion.

2. The last essay is a sort of Appendix, on the objections of Aristotle in Book II of his *Politics* to Plato's *Republic*.

3. The precise meaning of *bios* here is a troublesome question, on which Proclus has quite a lot to say.

or at least those of whom we have any knowledge,<sup>4</sup> persisted in treating his myth as an allegory. The importance of this change of perspective is, of course, that every detail of the story has now to be invested with symbolic significance: in allegory, there must be one-to-one correspondence between details of the allegory and the reality that is being allegorized. For instance, to take a few examples from the central section of the myth with which I propose particularly to concern myself, the following questions must be asked: Why are the Fates dressed in white? Why do they have garlands on their heads? Why are they seated on thrones? What is the significance of their hands? – and then, concerning the Prophet, why is he described as ‘a certain prophet’, rather than, presumably, ‘the prophet’? Why does he mount upon a platform – what is the platform?

I think that we would be content to assume that Plato is providing these details merely for literary reasons, for the sake of verisimilitude, but this is not a tolerable option for a later Platonist. For him, the divine Plato, like Aristotle’s Nature, does nothing casually, or in vain (*matên*), and certainly not for literary purposes. There must be a hidden significance behind every detail that is provided, and careful analysis can uncover what it is.

Let us see how Proclus addresses this question, at the beginning of the essay ( II 97,10 – 98,1 Kroll):

Well now, as regards the theme (*prothesis*, sc. of the Myth), I do not think, for a start, that it requires much discussion on our part, as Socrates himself relates it clearly to his theory of justice in general, and the rewards from the Gods which for that person who, by reason of his virtue in general and his justice in particular, has imposed order on his internal constitution, along with, in contrast to these rewards, the punishments which must necessarily be undergone by him who has introduced into his soul the contrary disposition, that of injustice.

Now in truth for this purpose quite a small selection of the details of the myth would have sufficed, such as Socrates relates concerning the destinies allotted to those in Hades, when he dwells on the mouth that roars (615e1-2), or the sensational adventures

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4. Proclus himself produces an impressive list of previous commentators on the Myth at the outset of his own exposition (96, 11-14): Albinus, Gaius, Maximus of Nicaea, Harpocration, Euclides – καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν Πορφύριος, all, except the last and most distinguished, ‘Middle Platonists’, in modern terminology. However, in the course of his essay, we also hear of interpretations by Amelius (II 275, 30) and Theodorus of Asine (II 110, 17; 255, 9; 310, 5), who belong to the post-Plotinian period.

of Ardiaeus (615e6-616a8), or the rewards accorded to those who lived holy lives (615a3-5). But what is the significance for us in the myth of the circuits of the heavenly bodies<sup>5</sup> and the lordship of Necessity,<sup>6</sup> the three Fates (617b9-c9), the lots and the types of life (617d2-618b7), and the multifarious distinctions between descents of souls, into animals and rational beings, both unmixed and mixed?<sup>7</sup> For all these parts of the myth must in fact compose one single harmonious whole (*mia harmonia*), or Socrates will have strung them together to no purpose (*matên*) – a suggestion than which nothing could be more absurd!

For Proclus, then, there can be no place for the casual or superfluous detail. He continues (98, 1 – 17):

May one not suggest, then, that since, throughout this whole work, it is with a view to the analysis of justice that Socrates has conducted his discourse on the best constitution, and that it is also in view of justice that he has conducted an examination of the various political regimes experienced by souls in the realm of becoming, since it was proposed also, correspondingly, to survey in this myth the fates awaiting souls outside the body, he did not wish to confine himself to describing the recompenses attached to their various destinies, but to instruct us also about the whole celestial constitution – which is the model for the best state, as indeed Socrates has remarked earlier (IX 592b2 ff.), where he says that this state exists in the heavens, even if it has no existence among men – and also everything that happens to souls in the sublunary realm, their transferrals, their choices of lives, their exchanges of one life for another, all things from which also the various corporeal constitutions arise, distinguished as they are in accordance with various irrational forms of life. So the subject-matter (*skopos*) as a whole, having taken its point of departure from the discourses on justice, here too concerns the constitution of the cosmos as a whole, and this constitution Plato allows us to view under the guise of myth, <thus revealing> the order both of the celestial bodies and of the realm below the moon.

Proclus here, most interestingly, picks up on what would seem to a modern reader a somewhat throw-away remark of Socrates back at the end of Book IX, where he responds to Glaucon's suggestion that nothing like his ideal constitution can be found anywhere on earth, that perhaps a model of it is laid up in the heavens (ἐν

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5. Presumably a reference to the description of the Spindle of Necessity, its various whorls (*sphondyloi*), and the Sirens seated upon each, 616b7-617b9.

6. This presumably a reference to the spindle turning in the lap of Necessity, 617b5-6.

7. This will presumably cover the passage 618b7-620d5,

οὐρανῶ ἰσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται).<sup>8</sup> Basing himself on this, Proclus seeks to establish a strict parallelism between the Myth of Er and the whole previous course of the dialogue. He sees the rest of the dialogue as exploring the nature of Justice both by proposing an ideal state and by conducting a survey of various inferior forms of constitution and life, while the myth itself not only provides a survey of various types of posthumous fate for souls of different types, but reveals a heavenly constitution, which is an archetype for the ideal state, even if it never be realised on earth (98, 18 – 99, 10):

Throughout the work, to be sure, there is revealed to us clearly the relation of justice to injustice, but this is true to a greater degree from the study of the constitution of the cosmos. There, after all, the gods are in truth the guardians (*phylakes*) and regulators of the cosmic laws which Necessity and her daughters have established for the universe; while the daemons who preside over souls and are the interpreters of the laws of Fate have the rank of auxiliaries (*epikouroi*) – the former determining for souls, before their birth, the ordinance of their lots, the latter directing their lives during their sojourn in the realm of generation. Finally, the “souls who live a day,” as the Prophet terms them (617d6), fulfilling the role of serfs (*thêtes*), analogously to the serfs are subject to the most detailed<sup>9</sup> providential arrangements of the higher powers – <these souls> of whom the Gods (*Or. Chald.* 48) say that, while they circulate in the realm of generation, they ‘act as servitors’ (*thêteuein*), but that, “if they serve without bending the neck”, they leave the realm of generation and ascend from this realm to that, becoming the model for those citizens who, leaving the class of serfs, are promoted to the level of auxiliaries or guardians, “when their essence is enriched with a certain proportion of gold” (*hypokhrysoi*, III 415c3): even as, conversely, the souls which used to administer the whole cosmos in company with the Gods while they still had their wings fall back down from on high into the rank of servitors because of neutralising their life-force (τήν ἑαυτῶν ἀδρανῆ ποιήσασαι ζωήν) and relaxing the tension of their heavenly progress (cf. *Phdr.* 246c).

It is notable that Proclus should here adduce the myth of the *Phaedrus*, since it might seem to us that the process of the souls’ fall in the two myths is rather different, but for him the two accounts can only be complementary, and he no doubt developed this theme in his (lost) monograph *On the Palinode in the Phaedrus*, which he

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8. If this remark is pressed, after all, the result is that we are faced with postulating a Platonic Form of State, and one moreover that no existing state comes near exemplifying, in the way that physical particulars should ‘imitate’ their Forms. This is a conclusion that most modern commentators would shrink from.

9. This presumably being the sense of *eskhatai* in this context.

has occasion to refer to in this essay on a number of occasions (II 309, 20; 312, 3; 339, 15). The main lesson that he wants to convey is that the myth, as well as constituting an effective exhortation to justice, presents us with an intelligible paradigm of the ideal state; and every detail of the narrative can be pressed for further information on the structure of this paradigm.

What I would like to do in what follows is, first, to explore some of the details of that, and in the process seeking the answers to some of the questions that I listed earlier; and secondly, to address the main issue behind the myth, the problem of the relation between free will and determinism.

Let us turn, then, to the figures of the Three Fates, the discussion of whom arises from the lemma 617b8-d2, beginning at p. 239. 19 Kroll. The lemma reads as follows, in Robin Waterfield's translation (with some emendations):

Three other female figures were also sitting, each on a throne, evenly spaced around the spindle. They were the Fates, the daughters of Necessity, robed in white, with garlands on their heads; they were Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos, accompanying the Sirens' song, with Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, and Atropos of the future. Clotho, from time to time, laid her right hand on the outer circle of the spindle and helped to turn it; Atropos did the same with her left hand to the inner circles; and Lachesis alternately helped the outer circle and the inner circles on their way with one hand after the other.

The Sirens Proclus has just explained (237, 27ff.) as 'divine souls' presiding over each of the eight circles of the Spindle. He now identifies the Fates as a triad of divinities superior to these, 'both connected with them and not connected' (this he sees as the significance of the description of Clotho and the others helping to turn the spindle 'from time to time' (*dialeipousan khronon*, 617c8), which in turn signifies that they are supracosmic-encosmic deities (οἷος ὑπερκόσμιος τε ἅμα καὶ ἐγκόσμιος οὖσα referring to Clotho). Above them, in turn, is Necessity herself, her more complete transcendence indicated by the fact that she does not use her hands to turn the spindle; it merely lies in her lap (617b5; p. 240, 6-7). The hands with which the Fates assist in turning the spindle serve to indicate their comparatively 'hands-on' relation to the universe. On the other hand, though, they sit still on their thrones while turning the spindle; the Sirens are each perched on one of the circles of the spindle, so they turn with it, and thus constitute the immanent aspect of the causal chain of Fate.

Proclus sums up the scenario as he sees it at 240, 14-19:

And so the whole cosmos is under the control of Fate (*moiraios*), the less authoritative movements being dependent on the more authoritative,<sup>10</sup> and these latter depending on the Fates. In their turn, the Fates move in accordance with the will of their mother, and everything that she provides to the universe by her very being, they provide by their activity.

So the Fates, through their direction of these motions, direct, he says (240, 19ff.), all things in the cosmos, and accord to each thing what is proper to it, to (human) souls and animals and plants, and weave together for each thing its fated portion. That is the significance of the shuttle, the spindle and the thread (here one needs to know one's weaving technique!):

One can observe in this way how the chain of causality (*heirmos*) proceeds from above to the ultimate particularities. What is in everyday parlance called a shuttle signifies the cause, contained within the Fates, of the life which the Fates introduce into the universe from that life of theirs; while the spindle that receives the thread from the shuttle is the life that has been introduced into the universe; and the thread represents the chain connecting the life that remains and the life that proceeds.

Now all this – and there is much more of it – one may regard as very silly indeed, but it can also be viewed, I would suggest, as a triumph of allegorical exegesis. Proclus is applying to the data of the text what has been termed<sup>11</sup> his 'principle of plenitude,' or 'law of continuity,' which requires that between every transcendent principle and the immanent principle below it, there should be postulated an intermediate entity which is both transcendent and immanent. In this case, that role is filled by the triad of Fates, mediating as they do between the transcendent monad, their mother Anangke, and the Sirens, the divine souls as immanent administrators of the cosmos.

Proclus' exegetical ingenuity continues to be on show in the

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10. What is the distinction here being made between *akyroteroi* and *kyriôterai kinêseis*? I am by no means clear about this, but I would suggest that the lowest level of 'movements' would be individual events of little or no significance, such as, say, a leaf falling off a tree, but which are all part of some larger pattern, say, the coming of autumn. All are ultimately fated, however.

11. E.g. by E.R. Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology*, p. 216, commenting on *ET* prop. 28. The principle is well enunciated by Proclus at *De Prov.* IV 20: "The processions of real beings, far more even than the positions of physical bodies in space, leave no vacuum, but everywhere there are mean terms between extremities, which provide for them a mutual linkage." Cf. also *PT* III 2, p. 6, 2ff. S-W.)

pages that follow, as he discusses, first the question of how the gods, as immaterial, timeless and non-extended entities, are susceptible of being perceived by a human individual, in this case Er (241, 9 – 243, 27);<sup>12</sup> then, the order of seniority of the three Fates, and specifically the question whether Lachesis is to be regarded as the lowest or the highest of them (243, 28-245, 2).<sup>13</sup> Then we turn to certain details of the description of the Fates:

*Why are they called daughters of Necessity?*

Simply because she is the monad of which they are the dependent triad.

*Why are they clothed in white?*

Because they live an intellectual (*noera*) existence, and luminosity and brightness, symbolized by the white garments, are connected with that.

*Why do they wear headbands (stemma)?*

To signify that at their highest level they are united to the intelligible level of reality.<sup>14</sup>

*Why do they sit on thrones, and equally spaced in a circle (πέποιξ δ' ἴσους, 617b9)?*

This is to indicate their absolute stability (as opposed to the Sirens), and their externality to the spindle.

Proclus goes on to discuss many more details of the text, all of which are of interest, but they are not my primary concern on the present occasion.<sup>15</sup> What I wish to focus on for the remainder of this paper is rather his treatment of the philosophical issue that arises from the myth, and more profoundly still from Proclus' own treatment of it, namely, what is the relation between fate or determinism, as represented by the providential intervention in the cosmos of Necessity, her daughters the Fates, and the Sirens, and free will, *to eph' hêmin*, which Plato seems to wish to assure us is still intact, and not nullified by these forces.

Proclus turns to address this question at 257, 26 and continues

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12. The higher powers have the capacity to project themselves onto our *phantasia* in a mode perceptible to it — the *Chaldaean Oracles* Fr. 56 — being quoted in support of this.

13. He adduces evidence in favour of both possibilities, but settles, not unexpectedly, for her being the highest.

14. Proclus adduces here the analogy that the higher classes of priests are permitted to wear a sort of turban, the *strophion*, to signify their superiority (247, 6-9).

15. They are given a comprehensive discussion by Dirk Cürsgen (2002), pp. 275-95.

until 264, 30.<sup>16</sup> He begins by laying down two principles,<sup>17</sup> as follows:

- (1) Free will (*to eph' hêmin*), as the Stoics maintain, is not an empty term, but is a fact – particularly in the case of disembodied souls, which are not subject to bodily constraints, but also (by implication) in that of embodied ones.
- (2) The revolutions of the heavens have a commanding influence on all mortal affairs, by reason of cosmic sympathy.

How are these to be reconciled? In view of all that has been said in the preceding pages, it must be admitted that these two principles have the appearance of being accorded rather unequal weight. The endorsement of free will, in particular, is less than a ringing one, appealing as it does merely to the Stoic position that Nature has given us an intuition of the ability to choose freely, and Nature does nothing in vain. Even then, it is specified that this is more applicable to disembodied souls than to embodied ones.

Proclus takes the elaboration of the second principle first, perhaps because he feels that the case for the first is harder to make, and thus wishes to place more emphasis on it, feeling that it needs all the help it can get.

At any rate, we begin with the second. We accept, says Proclus, that the world is a single living being, animated by one soul. We must therefore accept that there is *sympatheia* between its parts, even as there is between the parts of an individual body:

If that is so, and if, of the parts of the world, some have more power, others less, as is the case in every mortal body, it is clear, I presume, that the forces (*dynameis*) of the more powerful parts necessarily act on the less powerful ones, and that the movements issuing from these forces should be the cause, for the less powerful parts, of their movements also. If that is the case, and if the eternal beings (sc. the heavenly bodies) are more powerful than the mortal, and those that move in an orderly fashion more powerful than those in disorderly motion, then certainly the motions proceeding from those are transmitted to these latter, and these take their lead from the former: that is to say, within the world, mortal beings take their lead from immortal ones(258, 30-259, 9).

This in turn leads him to conclude that all such factors as length or shortness of life, and better or worse dispositions (*diatheseis*), having an effect on the quality of life, derive from the motions

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16. This is all well discussed by Cürsgen, op. cit. pp. 309-22.

17. These are presented by way of introduction to his discussion of the distribution of the lots and the choice of lives, which follows.



of the heavenly bodies. This is a pretty strong assertion of astral determinism, at least in so far as it concerns our bodily dispositions and our lower souls. And yet on the other hand we have this uncompromising statement from Lachesis, as relayed by the Prophet: "Virtue owns no master." What is to be done with that?

His discussion of the first principle follows, from 259, 23 onwards. As we have seen, he makes much of the Stoic argument, itself based on an Aristotelian principle, that 'Nature does nothing in vain' (ἡ φύσις οὐδέν μάτην ποιεῖ), and so the fact that we are conscious of exercising deliberation freely (we are *bouleutikoi*, 259, 25) means that this power of deliberation has not been bestowed on us 'in vain', as it would have been if in fact nothing were 'in our power' (*eph' hêmin*). Furthermore, the practice of apportioning praise and blame will be without point, as there will be no such thing as good or bad behaviour, but all actions will be morally neutral (*adiaphora*), if nothing is in our power. But in fact we do apportion praise and blame, so there must be something in our power.

The fact that Proclus resorts to these essentially Stoic arguments for free will, at least as a subjective phenomenon, is a good indication of where his mind is at. In his attempt to reconcile the two principles (261, 3–264, 30), he makes it plain that astral determinism, as far as he is concerned, prevails over free will. If individual free will, he argues, had the precedence, then we would have the strange result that the whole would be subordinate to (*hepetai*) the parts; but the whole should not be subordinate to the part, rather the part to the whole. So it follows that the celestial revolutions (*hê periphora tou pantos*) take precedence over our free will.

But does this, he goes on to wonder (262, 4–264, 30), involve one sole type of life (*bios*) for each soul; or are all to be made available to all souls, without any distinction between them; or is there to be a principle of selection, with various *bioi* being assigned to various types of soul?

What Proclus is leading up to here is a question that interests him greatly: is the distribution of the lots really as random as it might seem? After all, the text (617e6) simply says that the Prophet 'cast the lots at everyone' (ῥίψαι ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς κλήρους), which would seem to imply complete randomness; but Proclus feels that this cannot be so.

As regards the distribution of *bioi*, he feels that, if there were

only one type of life offered to each soul, there would be no scope for freedom of choice (*prohairesis*),<sup>18</sup> while a complete free-for-all, he suggests, would result in everyone scrambling for tyrannies and other positions of power. What must then be the case is that we are each presented with a limited range of *bioi*, presumably based on our performance in our previous life.

I must, however, at this point confess that I am not at all sure what Proclus has in mind here. He wants to propose that different *bioi* are assigned to different types of soul (263, 5ff.):

The remaining possibility, if one type of life is not offered to all, nor all types to all, is that there should be just certain types of life proposed to souls, and that they should be different for different souls. For one would not, I presume, propose the same types, even if certain types were proposed to all. For there would be no difference between saying that, and that all should be proposed to all. It must be the case, after all, that, if dispositions of souls are different, their powers of action should be unequal, that they should be at all events distributed to dissimilar souls according to a principle of justice.

He then goes on to quote with approval Plato's commendation of 'geometrical equality' at *Laws* VI 757B as 'the judgement of Zeus, which allots unequal shares to those of unequal capacity. But here, one might feel, Proclus is surely fussing too much in his desire to have every aspect of this assignment of lives rationally structured. There is really no problem, in Plato's narrative, about the lots being assigned quite randomly, as it is emphasised that there are quite enough models of lives to go round; even if one is assigned the last number in the lottery, there is still a perfectly adequate choice. If anything, Plato is concerned with emphasising the essential *equality* of the lottery process. But Proclus plainly feels that that is no way to run a universe (263, 17-21):

The lot is the sum-total of types of life which the universe proposes to each individual by virtue of its revolutions, and each type of life forms part of what is included in the lot, being one particular form of life, which each soul must live in the realm of generation to the accompaniment of what is assigned to it from the universe.

He now adduces, in a way that I find quite baffling, the Judgement of Paris (263, 21-264,1):

It is as if, for example, there were proposed to an individual three types of life: the royal, the erotic, and the warlike, even as, so the

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18. Presumably because all the parameters of one's life would be fixed, without scope for self-improvement — or, conversely, for degenerating.

myths tell us, one goddess, Hera, proposed to Alexander the royal model, another, Aphrodite, the erotic, and yet another, Athena, the virile and warlike. Let us assume that there should be added also for each individual, when he becomes a king, or a lover, or a warrior, all the sorts of accidental features that may accrue from the universe, such as wealth or poverty, disease or health, vicissitudes or stability of fortune, and all such things. This sum of three types of life, taking them all together, constitutes just one lot, and similarly if there are four or even more; each form of living (*zôê*) is a type of life (*bios*). Once the soul has chosen this type of life, it must become either kingly or erotic or warlike.

But what on earth, one might ask, does the Judgement of Paris have to do with the case? After all, Paris was presented with an explicit choice of lives, and he took the erotic option, which was a pretty specific one.<sup>19</sup> No such choice seems to be associated with the distribution of the lots. Well, I presume, as Proclus sees it, the Prophet, or rather his mistress, Lachesis, has somehow included in the lot a restricted number of types of life which the candidate has qualified for by his or her previous life, and the candidate's choice is then effectively bounded by that. What Proclus goes on to say (264, 2ff.), at any rate, is that "the choice is made from among those types of life which were included in the lot, not from other types, since the universe has excluded any irregular movement (*astatos phora*), and has directed the choice for each soul towards the limited number of types of life of which it is worthy." The universe then, it would seem, adds further particulars when once the soul has made its choice, including such details as which set of parents one will be born to, and this Proclus identifies as a 'second lot' (264, 7-17):

The lot is thus double, one prior to the choice, the other posterior; the one being the totality of the types of life, of which each type is a part, the other being the totality of the accidental features which the cosmos assigns as direct consequences of this or that type of life. Each of these two lots derives from the universe, but the soul's choice intervenes between the two, and thus one preserves on the one hand the autonomous movement of a free will, while one preserves on the other hand the regulations of justice, which assigns to souls the recompense which is due to them, not only for the choices which they have made, but also for the choices that they will make. The universe, in fact, both anticipates and follows upon the choices;

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19. It all depends whether, when Aphrodite offers him 'the most beautiful woman in the world for his wife', she tells him before or after he has made his choice that the lady concerned, Helen, is already the wife of Menelaus of Sparta. I am not sure how specific the myth is about that!

and so all is filled with good order (*eunomia*), both as regards what proposes, what chooses, what makes attributions, and what receives those attributions.

So there we have it. Free will, and therefore the field of operation of virtue, is not completely eliminated, but it is very much hedged about with qualifications derived from previous lives and astral determinism. And yet Proclus cannot disregard the dictum 'Virtue owns no master', to which indeed he devotes a special discussion a little further on (275, 20-277, 7). There he asserts firmly that any mode of life, however unpromising, leaves room for improvement through the honouring of virtue, despite whatever constraints are imposed from cosmic forces.

By way of conclusion, I thought that I would try to work out the ramifications of the choice of lives according to Proclus' scenario in my own case—the reader can do the same for him/herself, if so desired! My initial *klêros* presumably included a limited choice of lives, conditioned by how I had behaved the last time around. I suspect that they may have included a literary and a political option, as well as possibly a legal or diplomatic or civil service one. But in the event I would seem to have chosen an academic *bios*, and so I was then assigned a professorial father, and a mother, who while not academic herself, did respect the academic life, and a reasonably comfortable life-style (the second *klêros*).<sup>20</sup> Within this life there were many opportunities for the practice of virtue, and for the opposite: one could, I suppose, have committed plagiarism; or one could have had an affair with a graduate student; or one could have taken to drink. I have avoided such pitfalls as these so far, but I could have no doubt exercised virtue to a greater degree than I have. At any rate, that is within the range of what is 'up to me'. I did not have much choice about my basic *diathesis*, but I was able to develop it in various ways. And that, as Proclus sees it, is the extent of one's freedom, consistent with preserving *eunomia* in the cosmos.

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20. For the record, of two other male siblings, one became a Benedictine monk (and ultimately an abbot), the other a lawyer; of two female siblings, neither adopted a career, but one married a lawyer, the other a professor.

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