

# The Role of the Human in the Procession and Return of the Cosmos from Plotinus to Eriugena.<sup>1</sup>

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The tradition of obedience to the Delphic γνῶθι σεαυτὸν takes various forms.<sup>2</sup> Certainly one of the most influential responses to this commandment is that of the Platonic Socrates. At *Alc.* I, 131B3 ff., Socrates and Alcibiades come to the conclusion that the soul is the 'self' of man, his essential reality.<sup>3</sup> Thus to obey the Delphic commandment to self-knowledge is to know the soul in its essence and its various relations.<sup>4</sup> From its beginning in Plotinus, Neoplatonic thought develops various responses to this, though each identifies what is characteristically human with reason.

Soul is understood to be the middle term between the sensible and the intelligible.<sup>5</sup> The human soul is unique among the animals in possessing a reasoning faculty as its characteristic mode of knowing; this puts special emphasis on the mediating character of human selfhood. The call to self-knowledge, thus the call for the human subject to know its forgotten origins and character,<sup>6</sup> is a call to the microcosm—the partial—to return to the macrocosm, the All. In the first two parts of this paper we shall examine the formulations of Plotinus and Porphyry (part I) and of Iamblichus and Proclus (part II) with respect to the median and mediating nature of the human self, in terms of its capacity for *anagogê* and *henosis*. Part III will examine the early reception and transformation of the Iamblichus-Proclus formulation in

1. This article is drawn from *Soul as Self and Mediator from Plotinus to Eriugena*, an MA thesis written for the Department of Classics, Dalhousie University.

2. See W. Hankey, "Knowing as we are Known," 23–48.

3. This notion is drawn principally from Gerard O'Daly, "Platonism Pagan and Christian," part I.

4. While the authorship of *Alc.* I is not indubitable, the text itself is thoroughly Platonic in character and its historical, philosophical and pedagogical influence undeniable.

5. See for instance *Enneads* 1.1, 3.1–3.3, 4.1 and elsewhere; Porphyry, *Sent.* 5; Iamblichus, *De anima* 7 etc.

6. See for instance *Enn.* 5.1.1 ff. For Plotinus' use of the language of microcosm, see 4.3.10.

the Dionysian *corpus* and its subsequent reception in Maximus Confessor, while in part IV we shall see that it is in the *Periphyseon* of Eriugena that an early and profound synthesis of the Plotino-Augustinian trajectory and the Iamblichio-Dionysian trajectory is to be found, with the result that in Eriugena the human soul or self is the agent of creation and thus central to the *exitus* and *reditus* of the cosmos.

Soul necessarily possesses attributes of both the sensible and the intelligible—it must not be simply a third term. It is at once unified and divided, universally present insofar as it is never comprehended in place yet divided in respect of bodies.<sup>7</sup> Thus self-knowledge acquires a universal character, while at the same time the particular character of human subjectivity itself is understood as increasingly indeterminate. Soul becomes those things it knows; in its capacity for all modes of knowing, the human soul is properly not anything at all. Yet it must become central to the procession and return of the cosmos, since all modes of knowing are available to it, thus all modes of being are conditioned by its epistemic activity.

In order to regain itself and its heritage, the human must develop all its faculties (*δυνάμεις*) in its ascent to intellection and beyond this to the experience of God. Thus soul must stand both within the sensible world and above it. The manner in which this ascent is understood differs widely—for Plotinus, the ascent is an interior anagogy, while for Iamblichus and Proclus and therefore for the Pseudo-Dionysius, the soul is more thoroughly descended; this view places greater emphasis on theurgic practice. Amongst the pagan thinkers dealt with in this paper, Proclus will produce the most succinct statement of this ambivalence in soul, separating the eternal existence of the soul from its temporal activity.<sup>8</sup> For Eriugena, these two approaches must come together—the Augustinian cast of his Latin philosophical background is reconciled with the Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus Confessor, among others of the Greek world, in the formulation of a radical new synthesis with equally radical results.<sup>9</sup> The human in Eriugena must stand both within and outside its own grasp, both immanent and transcendent in respect to itself and *natura*.

## I

Plotinus in the late treatise 1.1 [53] gives what amounts to his final word on the matter of the soul's embodiment, beginning with a call to self-knowledge.<sup>10</sup> The animate (*τὸ ζῶον*) is the result of the 'true man' (*ὁ ἄνθρωπος*

7. See *Sent.* 2 & 27.

8. See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, props.106 & 107.

9. On this, see for example David Puxley, "A Marvellous Unity," 1–16.

10. 1.1.1.1 ff. Ἡδουὰ καὶ λῦται ... τίνος ἄν εἶεν.

ὁ ἄληθής) of 1.1.7.21, whose source is in *nous* and hypostatic Soul.<sup>11</sup> The animate or embodied soul is the consequence of the discursivity of Soul; its knowing is “drawn out and in a sense separated” (ἀνελιγμένα καὶ οἶον κεχωρισμένα).<sup>12</sup> As is clear from 5.1 [10], the self-related acts of the three initial *hypostaseis* produce; Soul emanates psychic and aesthetic faculties, animating the body. These various faculties, however, inhere in their own unity or selfhood.

For Plotinus, the soul is “woven through” matter (διπλακεῖσα),<sup>13</sup> intimately present to it “like form not separate [from matter]”<sup>14</sup> or “like light.”<sup>15</sup> This statement of the unity of the ensouled body is almost immediately qualified such that on the one hand soul is separate insofar as it is τὸ χρώμενον, that which makes use of or steers the body (as κυβερνήτης at 1.1.3.22), but on the other hand it is τὸ δὲ μειγμένον ὀπωσοῦν, “somehow mixed [with the body] and on the same level (ὄν ἐν τάξει) as that which it uses.”<sup>16</sup> This last use of μίγνυμι, in the context of the previous discussion of the weaving as opposed to the mixing of body and soul, should be understood only to imply that the two are joined whether or not the conjunction submits itself readily to rigorous description. Nevertheless, it is clear that Plotinus maintains in an important sense the undescended character of the soul—an emanation of soul only is present to the body, thus the historical personality must be a phase of the soul’s activity, a moment in a prior whole.

This soul at least in its leading phase is a free agent, as Plotinus makes clear in the early treatise 3.1 [3]:

indeed Soul is another principle which we must introduce besides into reality, not only that of the All, but as well the soul of each one [of us] along with it, as being a principle of no small import, to weave all things, not coming itself from seeds as the rest, but being a cause initiating acts. Thus when it is without body [the soul] has the greatest authority over itself and is free and outside the causation of the cosmos; but when it has been brought into<sup>17</sup> the body it is no longer in all ways master, as it is ordered along with other things. Chance governs all the many things around it amongst which, having

11. See also the ἔνδον ἄνθρωπος of 1.1.10.15.

12. *Enn.* 1.1.8.8–9.

13. πλέκειν and cognates appear frequently in these passages; see 1.1.3.20 (διπλακεῖσα) & Armstrong’s note recalling the language of Timaeus 36E2. See also 1.1.4.14, 15, 16, 18. Throughout, διπλακεῖσα is opposed to μεμίχθαι; the latter implies an understanding of the conjoining of soul and body with a more Stoic and therefore material conception of the soul.

14. 1.1.3.20–21.

15. 1.1.4.16.

16. See 1.1.3.25. My translations here and elsewhere are indebted to Armstrong.

17. ἐνεχθείσα is difficult to render well, pointing to a setting up or exposing within; this accords with the sense of weaving and of light present in 1.1. As well, πλέκειν, seen at 3.1.8.8 is evidence of the early presence of this line of thought in Plotinus.

gone into their midst, it has fallen, so that at times it acts on account of these things, but at others, mastering itself it leads them where it wishes.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the soul as emanated to the body submits itself to an external necessity while remaining impassible in its higher rational and noetic faculties. Plotinus notes at 1.1.5–6, however, that the lower phase does not perceive save by means of the faculties it possesses which originate in its higher phase. Further, since “sense-perception is the reception of a form or indeed an affection of a body,”<sup>19</sup> it is possible to object that on this line of thinking the higher soul will be no longer impassible, since the sensations and affections of the body pass to it as subject. But Plotinus’ aim is different; in fact, when we perceive it is in terms of what is “already intelligible.”<sup>20</sup> He elaborates that “external sensation is the image of that of the soul, which is really more true and is a contemplation of forms alone unaffectedly (ἀπαθῶς).”<sup>21</sup> Thus Plotinus here distinguishes two modes in which the self operates constantly. The first is the rational or dianoetic which expresses the last moment of non-spatiotemporal unity. The second mode of perception is apposite to the consequence of Soul’s rational activity, which in accord with Plotinus’ vivid account of the movement of the multifariously, “restlessly active” (πολυπράγμονος) soul at 3.7 [45] 11.14 ff., is the sensible cosmos. Thus “time is the life of soul in movement from one sort of life to another;”<sup>22</sup> time and space, the distentions of Soul’s discursivity, rule the realm of discrete, alienated unities which characterize the world of sense-perception. This refers principally to Soul, but the human is itself soul and thus at once rationally and sensibly active; hence Plotinus’ description of the soul’s knowing as “drawn out and separated” at 1.1.8.8–9.

The relation of body to soul is roughly analogous to the relation of reason to intellect in the soul. *Psychê* is present to body as an emanation but separate from it in its own self-relation. *Nous* is doubly related to Soul. It is at once that *nous* present in soul as a *hexis*, and that *nous* “which transcends us.”<sup>23</sup> Thus our possession of the forms is twofold, in the “drawn out and separated” manner of rationality and “in *nous* all at once (ὁμοῦ τὰ πάντα).”<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, this possession is transitory in the embodied person; it is lost when the *zôon* is mastered by “a desire or a passion or an evil image [one not

18. 3.1.8.5–14.

19. 1.1.2.6–8.

20. 1.1.7.12.

21. 1.1.7.13–14.

22. 3.7.11.43–45.

23. 1.1.8.3.

24. 1.1.8.9.

submitted to the judgement of the rational faculty].”<sup>25</sup> It is the presence of rational deliberation in relation to the sensible cosmos which preserves the soul from *hamartia*. Plotinus affirms this in respect of the modes in which the human operates:

Reason when making judgements on sense-impressions (τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τύπων) is already contemplating forms and contemplating them by a kind of sympathy. For true reasoning is an activity of intellections and there is often similarity and community of external things and what is internal.<sup>26</sup>

The reasoning activity of the human forms the moment of similarity and community (ὁμοιότης καὶ κοινωνία) between the intelligible and sensible. Thus this mode of knowing is characteristically at once divided (in respect of sense) and united (in terms of form). *Dianoia* also includes within its own constitution the demand for a more united knowing and properly comes to know itself only at the highest moment of its own activity, *noësis*.

The call to self-knowledge voiced at the beginning of 1.1 discovers a selfhood which does not constantly exercise its freedom.<sup>27</sup> The self does not thus possess itself entirely at all times: “there must be apprehension [of it]. We do not always make use of all that we have, but only when we direct the middle [phase] either toward the higher principles or their opposites, or to whatever we are engaged in bringing from potency into act.”<sup>28</sup> Though capable of tending toward either the higher or lower, the soul’s freedom lies only in assimilating its highest faculties to *nous*; this is to return “outside the causation of the cosmos” from submission to alienation and externality and into the unity, stability and simultaneity (ὁμοῦ τὰ πάντα) of *nous*. Plotinus employs the images of Glaucus the sea-god followed by that of Heracles’ dual placement within and above Hades in *Odyssey* 11.601–2.<sup>29</sup> The soul, like Glaucus, must be freed from its accretions or encrustations (τὰ προστεθέντα)—those accidents of historical process which, as the shadow from a light, disappear with the withdrawal of that light—in a free turn to the intelligible world. Heracles, as Plotinus sees it, is noble yet active, not engaging in contemplation, and thus a part of him remains below in Hades, his virtues having been acquired without rational activity.<sup>30</sup>

25. 1.1.9.6–8.

26. 1.1.9.19–23.

27. 1.1.11.

28. 1.1.11.5–9.

29. 1.1.12.12 ff. and 32 ff. respectively.

30. The virtues of Heracles would correspond to those described at 1.1.10.12–14: αἱ δ’ ἀρεταὶ αἱ μὴ φρονήσει, ἔθεισι δὲ ἐγγινόμεναι καὶ ἀσκήσει, τοῦ κοινού.

Plotinus concludes, asserting that it is only in virtue of being soul that we are able to proceed at all—the discursive character of the treatise is an image of the movement of *dianoia* striving for the universality of *nous*.<sup>31</sup> Human selfhood is thus characterised by mediation; in the reasoning faculty is found the moment of community or resemblance between the sensible and the intelligible. This same self is thus also characterized by extremes, including both the aesthetic and noetic modes adjacent to its own proper rank. Yet ultimately the ascent must be made, for Soul is produced by *nous*' own self-related activity and as such can come to know itself only in a relation to what is prior to it; the human must transcend itself in order to know itself.

This view is echoed and elaborated in Porphyry. Porphyry's early interest in the *Chaldean Oracles* as divinely revealed and in theurgy (though he later comes to reject at least theurgy) provide some ground in which to understand the subtle differences between the two.<sup>32</sup> In the main, Porphyry will follow Plotinus' views as presented above yet he tends to make more absolute the distinctions present in the Plotinian analysis of the soul. This sense is particularly evident in the brief and propaedeutic *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, which begins by laying out the fundamental difference between the intelligible and the sensible in terms of the mode of their unity: "Every body is in place; none of those incorporeals which exist through themselves, or any such thing, are in place."<sup>33</sup> Further, this difference is overcome solely by the inclination (ῥοπή) or tendency toward them (*Sent.*3) which founds or produces a middle term (ἡ δεύτερα δύναμις) between them which is present to the body as the affect of the principle (*Sent.*3&4). The way to intelligible things is through Soul and the soul, and conversely the way for intelligible things to the material is through Soul and souls. This provides us with a basic ontological structure (the way to material things) in response to which an activity of return will be accomplished (the way to intelligible things).<sup>34</sup> Among animals only the human soul is capable of rising to the intelligible, being uniquely possessed of reason.

The argument of the *Sententiae* assumes the middle nature of Soul in both an implicit and explicit sense: "The soul is the middle [term] of the substance of the undivided and of the divided in bodies. Mind is only substance; bodies, only divided. But qualities and material forms are divided in respect of bod-

31. 1.1.13.

32. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, n.8 to pp.5–6 reminds us of the εἰς τὰ λουλιανῶν τοῦ Χαλδαίου. See also 8-9, & n.19 to p.8 for more.

33. *Sent.* 1. Cp. the *Quomodo Substantiae* of Boethius, l.25 ff. in the Loeb: *Quae incorporalia sunt, in loco non esse*.

34. See esp. *Sent.* 10–13.

ies.”<sup>35</sup> Soul is here understood in the sense of hypostasis, prior to individual souls whose governance is limited to a single body; but in the second and third sentences, the governance of individual souls is also understood to be as necessary to the procession of the intelligible to the material as that of Soul or even the World-soul.

The implicit sense of this assumption is demonstrated both by Porphyry’s repeated admonishments concerning how the incorporeal and the corporeal are understood and in the discussion of the soul’s presence in Hades.<sup>36</sup> There is in Porphyry as in his master Plotinus an intimate relationship between the ontological and the epistemological; the mode of knowing is apposite to the mode of being.

All things are in all things,<sup>37</sup> but in a manner proper to the substance of each thing. In *nous*, we understand noetically; in the soul, rationally (λογικῶς); in plants, seminally; in bodies, in images; and in that which transcends, both supra-noetically and superessentially.<sup>38</sup>

These reflections assume the soul as percipient subject engaging reality as both recipient and agent. Nevertheless, Porphyry’s sense of the procession of effects from their cause is less ambivalent than that of Plotinus. When taken together with Porphyry’s statements concerning the assimilation of Soul to *nous* in chapter 15, the Plotinian vision of Soul as remaining in some way—albeit not entirely—above with Intellect becomes apparent in Porphyry.

Porphyry clearly understands the diminution of the power of the soul in its turn toward the passions of the body as a moment of the procession of the *cosmos noëtos*, and envisions as well its departure from this state within this scheme; *apatheia* must characterise the moment of return.<sup>39</sup> This is laid out very clearly in terms of *exitus* and *reditus* at *Sent.* 11: “the incorporeal substances, descending by a diminution of power are divided and multiplied

35. Porphyry states this explicitly at *Sent.* 5: Ἡ μὲν ψυχὴ τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστῆς οὐσίας μέσον τί (ἔστιν)· ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἀμερίστος οὐσία μόνον· τὰ δὲ σώματα μερίστα μόνον. αἱ δὲ ποιότητες καὶ τὰ ἔνυλα εἶδη, περὶ τὰ σώματα μερίστα. See also the discussion of the αἴων at *Sent.* 44.

36. *Sent.* 29. The *Letter to Anebo* demonstrates Porphyry’s concern over the proper conception of the nature of the corporeal and incorporeal, albeit in the vocabulary of late Antique religion, which does not completely overlap with his philosophical vocabulary.

37. The Lamberz edition of 1975 has Πάντα μὲν ἐν πᾶσιν as opposed to Οὐκ ὁμοίως μὲν νοοῦμεν ἐν πᾶσιν in that of Creuzer and Moser. See n.87 below.

38. *Sent.* 10.

39. See esp. *Sent.* 7: Ψυχὴ καταδεῖται πρὸς τὸ σῶμα τῇ ἐπιστροφῇ τῇ πρὸς τὰ πάθη τὰ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ· καὶ λύεται δὲ πάλιν διὰ τῆς ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀπαθείας. This argument is expanded principally from 8–11, but is critical to the development of the *Sententiae* as a whole. See also the discussion of the political, cathartic and paradeigmatic virtues at *Sent.* 32.

into those things [existing] only for a moment; but ascending they are united and they return together by an abundance of power.”<sup>40</sup> Thus the soul is and contains a moment of this complete cosmic movement toward externalisation and articulation, and correspondingly must be and contain a moment in the return to unity.

Soul is thus lesser by nature than its priors, since it is clear that the second power produced by the inclination to what is inferior to intelligibles must be of a different nature and that it must form a middle term between the incorporeal and the corporeal.<sup>41</sup> There also appears here a much more rigorous or definite distinction in the ontological status of what is produced relative to its cause. Further, from the discussion of living intelligible things,<sup>42</sup> it is possible to observe a conception of the first hypostases different from that of Plotinus; that is, in Porphyry, we observe the transformation of what Wayne Hankey identifies as “Plotinus’s divine spiritual hierarchy” into the treble triad Being-Life-Mind.<sup>43</sup> It is important in this context to remember Pierre Hadot’s *caveat* concerning this structure extended from the anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides* which he ascribed to Porphyry: “chez Porphyre cette triade n’est pas une hiérarchie ‘verticale’ d’hypostases, comme le sera dans le néoplatonisme postérieure; elle correspond simplement à des actes ou à des genres au sens platonicien, les deux points hypostatiques étant l’Un et l’Intelligence, dans la hiérarchie ‘verticale.’”<sup>44</sup> Soul is subordinate to these and remains the third hypostasis; it is not comprehended directly within the divine triad of Being, Life and Mind. The middle term of Life (δύναμις or ζωή) has not yet been hypostasised, as Hadot explains will occur in later Neoplatonism.<sup>45</sup> It is by the defining characteristic of Soul’s mode of being, ratiocination, that Soul must be understood contributing to the unfolding or articulation of the One in Porphyry. This is proved in the discussion of the

40. *Sent.* 11. See also for instance Porphyry’s thoughts on the complete possession of *nous* by the soul in its noetic phase, *Sent.* 15.

41. See *Sent.* 13: Πᾶν τὸ γεννῶν τῆ οὐσίᾳ αὐτοῦ χεῖρον ἑαυτοῦ γεννᾷ . . . .

42. *Sent.* 22–24.

43. Hankey makes this point in relation to the differences between Plotinian and Augustinian selfhood in “Between Augustine and Descartes,” 74–76, but I believe that Porphyry represents an intermediate stage to which the observations of Dr. Hankey may be applied.

44. Hadot, “La métaphysique de Porphyre,” 160; the original ascription of the *Commentarium* by Hadot was made in “Fragments d’un Commentaire de Porphyre sur le Parménide,” and his subsequent comments depend on this identification, concerning which some doubt remains. This depends on the methodological principle that what is present in Augustine and not in Plotinus is received from or owed to Porphyry. See also Andrew Smith, *Porphyry’s Place*, 17.

45. This is partly dependent, as pointed out both by Wayne Hankey in “Knowing as We Are Known,” 41 and Hadot, “La métaphysique de Porphyre,” on the fact that the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* is indeed the work of Porphyry, but it is my contention that this doctrine may be found in the *Sententiae* as well, and follows from both the structural and textual interpretation of the *Sententiae*.

αἴων at *Sent.* 44; Porphyry understands this as the link between eternity and time, and indeed it is the activity of soul's deliberative and serial knowing of *nous* which itself produces the mutability and diversity of time.<sup>46</sup>

The sense of incommensurability and commensurability which has been observed in Porphyry—of the intelligible to the sensible or of “*l'Un lui-même*” and “*l'Un-qui-est (l'Intelligence)*” as in Hadot—evokes the double character of hypostatic activity seen in Plotinus. As Andrew Smith points out in his discussion of the Plotinian doctrine of the ‘double ἐνεργεία,’ the activity of any of the Hypostases, which is identical with its essence (οὐσία), has also an external or externalising aspect which is in its own right the internal or self-relating activity—and thus the essence—of its subordinate.<sup>47</sup> It is in the case of human souls, which alone among animals are capable of reason (thus intellection) and thus reversion upon their priors, that a free turn to the *logoi* in the soul is possible and thus allows for the reversion upon *nous* in which, as at *Sent.* 15, *nous* is possessed essentially whenever it is grasped. It becomes clear as well that the relation between the internal and external ἐνεργείαι of any hypostasis is best understood in terms of actuality and potentiality, the external activity giving rise to that which is actualised only in relation to the essence of its prior—in other words in relation to the internal activity of its prior.

This certainly accords with the second quotation from Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles, De civ. Dei* 19.23, wherein Hecate, responding to whether Christ was God, declares: “That indeed the immortal soul continues on after it leaves the body, you know; [that soul], however, which is cut off from wisdom wanders forever.”<sup>48</sup> It follows that the *tarda sapientia* of 9.8, by which the eschatological tone of wisdom's accession in the human is established can also be understood in Porphyry's interpretation of Hecate-Psyche's response,<sup>49</sup> that the soul which is *pius*, devout, in this case meaning not separated from wisdom, attains to immortality in contemplation of *nous*, while that of the lower man is doomed to wander and be reborn countless times. This oracular decree, transmitted as it is to either Julian the Chaldaean or the Theurgist by the World-Soul,<sup>50</sup> can certainly be seen to apply equally to the internal

46. See also the discussion of Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 401–09, esp. n.5 on p.402.

47. Smith, *Porphyry's Place*, 6–19. Smith's tracing of Plotinian texts in which this doctrine can be identified, specifically 6–13, is especially helpful.

48. *De civ. Dei* 19.23.56–58: “*Quoniam quidem immortalis anima post corpus [ut] incedit, nos; a sapientia autem abscesa semper errat.*”

49. I derive the appellation Hecate-Psyche from Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 6–7.

50. One of the two (or possibly both, although this is not held by Porphyry: See Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 5–6, n.8) recorded the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

distinction between the higher and the lower self, the latter being by its connection to the body denied the perfection of wisdom in this life.<sup>51</sup>

It is the possession of wisdom, in other words the life of the higher self, which is the saviour. There is no peculiar salvation for the historic self, as in Plotinus, but neither can there be permanent release for the soul before bodily death. Embodied life in Porphyry becomes once again the proving ground of the soul, whereas in Plotinus it seems simply an ontological necessity.<sup>52</sup> Thus the historical self of the human, though it must be involved to some degree in *henosis* along with the essential self, is not that which is intended for salvation; this comment applies equally to the non-philosophical as opposed to the philosophical, for whom salvation is thus specifically reserved. This last is one of the grounds on which Iamblichus will differ strongly in his views on theurgy and the descent of the soul.

## II

Plotinus' conclusions concerning Soul's embodiment and historical existence are unorthodox.<sup>53</sup> Iamblichus' extreme reticence with regards to the equivocal embodiment of soul in Plotinus arises from the problem of Plotinus' innovations, which for Iamblichus represent a break from traditional wisdom. What Iamblichus intends in both the *De mysteriis* and the *De anima* is the restatement of the wisdom of the ancients, already to be found in Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and in the *Chaldean Oracles*.<sup>54</sup> Iamblichus' position with respect to this wisdom manifests a conviction in the fundamental role of the gods of the 'old world' as the source of all wisdom and of the unifying and divinising rites of theurgy.<sup>55</sup> Enfolded the *gnosis* of the Hellenic philosophical tradition within the *henosis* which Iamblichus ascribes to the religious and theurgical tradition of the Chaldeans and Egyptians enables the argument of the *De mysteriis* to proceed on three levels, the philosophical, the theological and the theurgical.<sup>56</sup>

51. See *De civ. Dei* 10.29.

52. See also Smith, *Porphyry's Place*, ch.5.

53. See *Enn.* 4.8.8.1–4 and also Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 10.

54. That Iamblichus sees himself as restating and bringing to light (again) the true doctrines held by Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and the other 'ancients,' he makes clear time and again in the *De mysteriis* and the *De anima*; see for instance *De An.* §§ 7, 10, 37, 40–48, 50, 53; *De Myst.* 1.1.4.10–5.5 and n.9 (references for *De Myst.* are made in order of book, chapter, marginal enumeration and line number). A more complete list and discussion are to be found in *De An.* 12–14, and nn.31, 32, 33, 34. See also Dillon's remarks in the introduction to *In Platonis dialogos*, 26 & 32–33.

55. See Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 1–17.

56. *De Myst.* 1.2.7.3–5. This distinction is extended to the first principles, ethical concerns and any other manner of inquiry *De Myst.* 1.2.7.5–9.

Iamblichus' vision of the soul is best summarized in the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus, prop.211: "every soul descends entire." Iamblichus understands this complete descent as necessary in order to ensure the mediating nature of the human soul, its capacity for ascent and its activity as *sundesmos* of the created cosmos. The best summation of this position in Iamblichus' writings is preserved in *De anima* 7:

The doctrine opposed to [that of Plotinus and Porphyry] separates the soul, insofar as it comes about after *nous*, as it is a different existence, and that element of it which is in common with *nous* is understood as depending upon *nous*, but on the other hand it subsists independently by itself and it separates the soul from all the superior kinds of beings, and apportions to it as the particular definition of its essence either the middle term of the divided and the undivided and of corporeal and incorporeal beings,<sup>57</sup> or the whole number of universal reason-principles, or that which after the ideas is in the service of the work of creation, or that life which possesses life from itself, proceeding from the intelligible, or that, again, which proceeds from the kinds of real Being as a whole unto an inferior essence. To these doctrines Plato himself and Pythagoras and Aristotle and all the ancients whose names are praised for wisdom are perfectly attentive, if one should scientifically trace out their doctrines. I shall attempt to found the whole work in truth with regards to these opinions.<sup>58</sup>

The human soul consists in a tension between the intelligible and the sensible, the corporeal and the incorporeal, the immanent and the transcendent; neither Plotinus nor Porphyry would disagree with this. Yet here the human soul is its own essence, separate from all the higher kinds superior to it yet manifesting in its own mode everything which comes before. This tension is thus also expressed in terms of ascents and corresponding descents encompassed within the activity of theurgy which enacts the cosmic principles in divinely revealed rites. Also understood here is the Iamblichean law of mediation, in which any term is related to any other term by means of a median term uniting the two.<sup>59</sup>

The perfect purification and salvation of the soul, in keeping with Iamblichus' primary division of the *De mysteriis* into the philosophical, the theological and the theurgical, is understood not primarily as the 'pure thought'

57. Cp. *Sent.* 5: Ἡ μὲν ψυχὴ τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστῆς οὐσίας μέσον τί [ἔστιν]· ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἀμερίστος οὐσία μόνου· τὰ δὲ σώματα μερίστα μόνου· αἱ δὲ ποιότητες καὶ τὰ ἔνυλα εἶδη, περὶ τὰ σώματα μερίστα.

58. *De An.* 7.365.14–366.27.

59. For more on this law of mediation, the *lex divinitatis* of the Mediaeval period, see Hankey, "Secundum dionysium dicendum quod," 59–93. For more sources, see esp. nn.6 & 7, which give a thorough listing of the scholarship from 1981 forward; and nn.27–29, which provide a listing of the scholarship on the complex history of the Neoplatonisms which come together in the *Liber de causis* as read by Aquinas.

(ἡ ἔννοια) of the philosopher<sup>60</sup>—for the gods are properly ineffable—but as “the accomplishment, marvellously effected, of acts unspeakable and above all understanding, and the power of unutterable symbols understood only by the gods which establish theurgic union.”<sup>61</sup> The intellectual perfection of the human must be achieved within the context of a joint activity of gods and humans. Though certainly the motive force enabling theurgy is the divine, the human is not separate from the *cosmos* in which it moves toward union with what moves originally.

This union is not a primarily intellectual act, for this would locate the source of such union in the human. Iamblichus maintains a strict subordination of the contained (περιεχόμενον) to that which contains (περιέχον), or of wholes to parts; the gods by their own self-related activity make eternally available the divine symbols which enable the efficacy of theurgic rites.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, while knowledge (in this case, γνῶσις)<sup>63</sup> does not lead to union—and thus neither qualifies nor invalidates the efficacy of theurgic rites—it is a critical element of the human dimension of *henosis*; every faculty and disposition must be perfected, none ignored.<sup>64</sup> The human becomes an integral element in a cosmic pageant played out in many modes and accomplishing the self-alienation and articulation of the divine.

The acceptance of mystico-ritualistic acts is fundamental to a proper understanding of the new direction in Neoplatonism found in Iamblichus. There is a far more lowly evaluation of human capacity in Iamblichus than can be detected in Plotinus and Porphyry, his immediate predecessors.<sup>65</sup> The human must confront and recognise its nothingness (οὐδένεια) in the face of the orders of beings superior to it, specifically with reference to the gods.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the involvement of the soul with the body is natural; limited to one form,<sup>67</sup> as opposed to the much vaster responsibilities of the gods, the angelic beings, or the lower classes of daemons, heroes and archons,<sup>68</sup> the soul by

60. *De Myst.*, 2.11.96.11 ff.

61. *De Myst.* 2.11.96.13-97.2.

62. *De Myst.* 2.11.97.4–15. Cp. 3.20.149.33–150.2, wherein Iamblichus makes a similar argument on the grounds that only by having the benefit of divine theurgy can the human come to any capacity to participate in and be enlightened by the gods. See also *De Myst.* 5.2.200.13.

63. *De Myst.*, 2.11.98.1–11. That knowing universally implies a degree of otherness, see *De Myst.* 1.3.8.2-3. See also Emma Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis*, 19–31.

64. See Hans Feichtinger, “Οὐδένεια and *humilitas*,” 126.

65. See for instance, *El. Theol.* xx.

66. *De Myst.* 1.9.32.10–15; 1.15.47.13–14; 3.19.146.7–10 for instances. See also Feichtinger, “Οὐδένεια and *humilitas*,” 127, 131–32, 136 ff.

67. *De Myst.* 2.2.69.12–15.

68. See *De Myst.* 1.1.16–20, in which “Abbamon” lays out the differences between the kinds of incorporeality of the gods and of daemons, and the substantial connection of the gods and the visible gods, i.e. the stars and planets. 2.1 ff. lays out the principle differences of daemons,

itself is incapable of cognising or even approaching the mode of knowing of that which is and knows  $\delta\mu\omega\upsilon\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ .<sup>69</sup>

At play in Iamblichus in a radical new way are the notions of identity and otherness (or the Pythagorean  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$  and  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\nu$ ),<sup>70</sup> as well as those of mediation and accommodation; by this last must be understood the manner in which fundamental principles appear in every mode of being in a manner suited to that mode.<sup>71</sup> The conception of soul as a unique essence whose corporeal connection engenders certain powers or faculties (such as growth in plants, or sense-perception in animals) is exploded in favour of a soul divided into many kinds, the substance of which changes as soul is associated with different bodies and lives. In this case, the human soul becomes a distinct and unique kind of soul in which a truly median essence resides, making way for a double existence both in the world and transcending it.

Thus the soul must exist as a tension or paradox, and as such its very difference from all things is contrasted with an ability to make itself similar to them in knowing. Indeed, while the soul accommodates itself to all things, and in so doing becomes (and thus creates) them to some degree, nevertheless its essence remains psychic.<sup>72</sup> This conception of difference and unity in the soul is rooted in Iamblichus' understanding of participation:

In the first place, there would not have been such a thing as participation ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\omicron\chi\eta$ ), if the participating had not some alterity. And if it receives what is participated in as other and differing, it is surely this (the one that is other) that is in the terrestrial realms evil and disordered.<sup>73</sup>

This difference is primarily in terms of the participant and is not present to the participated. The emphasis placed on the alterity of the participant can have little importance within this *schema* except insofar as its difference is a moment of the communication of the One, the self-impartment of its own unity and interiority. Hence, we have an emphasis on the *acts* ( $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \epsilon\upsilon\rho\gamma\alpha$ ) of the spiritual life which lead beyond the point to which reason alone is capable of

heroes and souls, esp. 2.3.70.7–74.8, in which Iamblichus distinguishes the different classes by their essences, potentialities and activities, effectively translating the triad of Being-Life-Mind through the entirety of the 'superior kinds' ( $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \kappa\rho\epsilon\iota\tau\tau\omicron\nu\alpha\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta$ ).

69. *De Myst.* 1.15.47.3; 1.19.58.6. This reference to Anaxagoras, of which Plotinus also was fond, is an epithet for the intelligible world. See for instance *Enn.* 1.1.8.7–8.

70. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 26. See also A.C. Lloyd, "Procession and Division in Proclus," 18–45, esp. 18–23.

71. See for instance "Abbamon's" treatment of justice divine and human at *De Myst.* 4.4.186.5–187.2.

72. *De Myst.* 2.2.68.7–69.14; see also 2.2.69.1–15.

73. *De Myst.* 1.18.54.12–55.2.

guiding the human; indeed, there is no alliance with the ‘pre-eminent guiding principles’ without the activity of divinely-revealed theurgy.<sup>74</sup>

Differentiations of mode in Plotinus are affirmed here in terms of ontological stratifications. This is the very element in Iamblichus which one might call *scholasticising*, insofar as vocabulary remains within a tradition, while the meaning of such, or at least the usage, changes due to an expanding body of argumentation and a desire for explication, correction or expansion of original doctrines.<sup>75</sup>

Thus the ability to conform itself to that which it is not is characteristic of the human soul, expressing the relation of unity and difference in the psychic mode. This could be described as the ability to *come to know* a thing, in essence to engage in *anamnesis*, since the soul is to be a microcosm, containing all things in virtue of knowing them.<sup>76</sup> The profound ignorance of the soul treated by Plato in the *Meno* becomes curable only by a turn to the sensible world, in which the soul finds its *paideia* in the form of theurgic practices which harmonise it with those powers above whose knowledge and goodness are sure and constant, as opposed to its own. Thus the reason of the human subject is made a part of the journey to the goal which is promised by theurgy at the end of the soul’s labours: “drawn up into the greatest and angelic order ... this whole is perfected in an angelic soul and an unblemished life.”<sup>77</sup>

Proclus inherits the problematic of the tradition begun in the dissent of Iamblichus from his predecessors Plotinus and Porphyry. In the context of the Christianisation of the Hellenistic world, Proclus constitutes a late but singular moment in Platonic tradition, capable of both philosophical rigour and theurgic humility. Proclus continues the scholastic work of Iamblichus, laying out—at least in the *Elements of Theology*—in a systematic form the structure of the Platonism of his day. Proclus does follow Iamblichus to a great degree, and the systematisation which he effects in the *Elements of Theology* serves to elucidate some of the ambiguities in Iamblichean thought. As Pierre Hadot puts it:

Les Éléments de Théologie de Proclus montrent, par leur structure même, les ambitions de Proclus. Il veut faire pour la théologie ce qu’Euclide a fait pour les mathématiques, c’est-à-dire employer, pour l’exposer, une méthode de déduction rigoureusement synthétique.<sup>78</sup>

74. See *Ibid.*, 1.2.6.6–7, and also Emma Clarke, *Iamblichus’ De Mysteriis*, 22.

75. See Steel, *The Changing Self*, 31.

76. See Hankey, “Knowing as we are Known”, 23–48, esp. the six elements of the journey to self-knowledge which are found in the Mediaeval and later treatments of Augustine, but which can be useful to an understanding of the dynamic of self-knowledge in Iamblichus as one solution to the problems of knowledge in Plato’s *Meno*.

77. *De Myst.* 2.2.69.8, 9–10.

78. P. Hadot, “La théologie de Proclus,” 220.

For Proclus, remaining in a cause (μενόν), procession from it (προϊόν, πρόοδος) and reversion upon it (ἐπιστροφή) are the moments of the eternal dialectic of unity and difference, or limit and the unlimited.<sup>79</sup> In the *schema* which Proclus intends in the *Elements of Theology*, topics are dealt with in order of descending generality and goodness, thus the first propositions deal with the relation of the One and the Many, the most fundamental principles upon which all others depend. Everything posterior to the One is characterised by this relation, for “everything which participates the One is both one and not one.”<sup>80</sup> The alterity of the participant, long a feature of Platonism,<sup>81</sup> is explicitly expanded in Proclus to include that from which the participant (μετέχων) differs in the act of participation (μέθεξις): the unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτον) and the participated (μετεχωμένον).<sup>82</sup> These epithets are not static, but define roles which substances play in their various relations. They express the three moments of the relation of identity and difference which are translated through every order in the mode appropriate to that order:

For if the unparticipated in each series communicates of its own unique character to all those which are in the same series, it is clear that the most primary Being communicates to all [beings] simultaneously limit and infinitude, existing primally as the mixture of these; Life communicates the motion in it, (for Life is the first procession and movement from the steadfast hypostasis of being); and that *nous* communicates of knowledge (for the summit of all knowledge is in *nous*, and *nous* is the primal knower).<sup>83</sup>

Proclus draws out the interpenetrating relation contained in the relation of unparticipated, participated and participant. This necessitates the enhypostatisation of the participated term, in this case Life (which in other places is treated as unparticipated in terms of being the originative principle of the

79. For these terms, see for instance props. 28 & 29 ff. More importantly, see prop.35 for the doctrine that all things remain in, proceed from and revert upon their cause. For πρόοδος, see prop.102, p.92, l.9. A.C. Lloyd, *Procession and Division in Proclus*, 19–21, states that “... in effect Limit and the Unlimited behave like proxies for the One .... It is essential to bear in mind two points about the pair. They are to be found, in the mode appropriate to it of course, in every entity in the universe. Secondly they have a direct function in the dynamic interpretation, shared by all Neoplatonists, of every entity as remaining, proceeding and reverting.”

80. *El. Theol.* prop.2: Πάν τὸ μετέχων τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ καὶ οὐχ ἓν.

81. We have seen this in our discussion of Iamblichus directly, but this formed as well a more implicit feature of the discussion of Plotinus and Porphyry above.

82. These uses of μέτεχω, in both verbal and nominal forms, form an integral part of the argument of props. 97–112, which concern the relation of unparticipated terms to the two orders to which they give rise, the participated and the purely participant.

83. *El. Theol.* prop. 102, p.92, ll.5–12 (hereafter, proposition, page number, line number). See prop.159 in the case of gods/henads. My translations of Proclus are chiefly indebted to Dodds and Trouillard.

lives subsequent to it),<sup>84</sup> but more broadly will both draw Proclus toward and differentiate him from Iamblichus and Plotinus respectively. The interpenetration of the three moments of unparticipated, participated and participant is crucial to the understanding of the Procline *taxeis* or *seirai*, which function on the basis of this relation. Each moment exists both in itself and the others, but in the others according to the aspect dominant in each:

Since each term *is* either in its cause or as an existence or by participation;<sup>85</sup> and as the remaining two are in the first in relation to it as their cause; and in the mean term the first is present by participation and the third as being in its cause; and since in the third its two priors are present by participation, it follows that in Being, Life and Mind are pre-possessed, but are characterised by the fact of their substantiality and not as causes (since they are causes of other things) nor by the fact of their participation (for participation is from elsewhere, whence it takes its start), Life and Mind are there in the mode of Being, existential Life and existential Mind; and in Life, Being is present by participation, but Mind in its cause, but each one vitally (for this is the substantiality in this term); and in Mind both Life and Being are present by participation, and each one noetically (for the being of Mind is cognitive and its life cognition).<sup>86</sup>

This enneadic interpenetration, in which all things are in all things but in the mode appropriate to each one reminds us of Iamblichus but more particularly of Porphyry, *Sententiae* 10, which the title of prop.103 repeats almost verbatim.<sup>87</sup> This is certainly no innovation on the part of Proclus, but is an emphatic and clear statement of both the principle and its metaphysical applications. In a sense, Porphyry and Proclus might be favourably compared as disciples more moderate and methodical than their masters.

84. *El. Theol.* prop.99 (on the self-originating character of originative principles), 100 (that every series of principles is dependent upon an unoriginated and unparticipated first principle) and 101 (applying prop.100 to the general case of Being, Life and Mind.) This enhypostatisation is in contrast to Plotinus and Porphyry, as noted above with respect to the *caveat* of Hadot.

85. See *El. Theol.* prop.65, as noted by Dodds.

86. *El. Theol.* prop.103, 92, 17–29. See another instance of this in prop.176 for the case of Intelligences, and prop.197 in the case of souls.

87. The Lamberz (1975) edition of the *Sententiae* has Πάντα μὲν ἐν πᾶσιν as opposed to Οὐκ ὁμοίως μὲν νοοῦμεν ἐν πᾶσιν in that of Creuzer and Moser (1896). The latter underscores the general and causal system in Porphyry and places heavier emphasis on the role of mind, but perhaps ignores the reception of Anaxagoras' principle, which "in Neoplatonism became extraordinarily fruitful" as we are reminded by Carlos Steel, *The Changing Self*, 26. Dodds, in *El. Theol.* 254, notes that "the general principle ... that 'all things are in all things, but in each after its own fashion', is ascribed by Syrianus (in *Metaph.* 82.1 ff.) to 'the Pythagoreans', and by Iamblichus (*ap. Stob. Ecl.* 1.xlix.31 [866H]) to Numenius. Plot. applies it to the relations of intelligibles in general [as, he notes, at 5.8.4]; it is explicitly laid down by Porphyry (ὄφ. x), and from Iamblichus onwards is much resorted to." See also Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, I, 3, p.15, where the same formula is used to introduce the discussion of the soul's movement toward knowledge, and thus toward God. See also n.37 above.

This structure allows both the communication of the original or self-constituted character of any principle through a series, and the increasing particularisation and multiplicity of such in increasing remoteness from pure, incommensurable unity.<sup>88</sup> It is thus imperative to discern the structure of reversion as understood by Proclus, in order to correctly describe the role of the human in its own and the grander scheme of *μενόν, πρόδος, and ἐπιστροφή*.

Soul, as with the other levels of incorporeal being, is capable of self-reversion. This characteristic is the most important consequence of incorporeality, in other words of being a whole. Proclus presents this early in the *Elements of Theology*, beginning from the classification of movement (prop. 14) into three species: that which is unmoved (*τὸ ἀκίνητον*), self-moved (*τὸ αὐτοκίνητον*), or moved by another (*τὸ ἑτεροκίνητον*). These species conform to the general law of monad, mediating term and reverting term, and in virtue of the primal nature of motion as change, provide a clear correlation of change and difference. Principles which are eternally both distinct and co-implicative differ only in terms of self-constituted essences, while particulars are distinguished in terms of spatial, essential and accidental differences. The argument operates much as that of *Sent.* 1, stating that every body exists in virtue of extension and difference of place, whereas the incorporeal, being wholly present to itself possesses an identity without parts in which self-reversion is possible.<sup>89</sup>

Thus the individual soul, much as monadic Soul from which it is derived as a participating term, remains within itself, proceeds from itself and reverts upon itself and its priors;<sup>90</sup> this is accomplished through the most like terms, which transitively allow participation in superior and thus more remote terms.<sup>91</sup> This is especially evident in proposition 39, wherein Proclus argues that:

As a thing proceeds, thus does it revert, the measure of its reversion set out by the measure of its procession. Thus for some there is desire for simple being alone, being apt for participation of their causes; for others, this desire is vital, being a motion toward their superiors; for still others there is a cognitive desire, being an apprehension of the goodness of their causes.<sup>92</sup>

88. See for instance prop. 124, with relation to the gods, who thus form the most universal and powerful causality after the One.

89. *Sent.* 1: Πᾶν σῶμα ἐν τόπῳ· οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰ ασωμάτων, ἢ τι τοιοῦτον, ἐν τόπῳ.

90. See props. 30, 31 & 35; see also prop. 42, in which self-reversion is the necessary criterion of self-constitution.

91. See props. 36–39.

92. *El. Theol.* prop. 38, 42, 1–3.

Thus the modes of reversion are as complex and interpenetrating as the relations of procession—the same ground is covered in both processes, but is under a different mode or dominant aspect for each, either pluralising or unifying.<sup>93</sup> Soul is thus hypostasised by the activity in which it constitutes its own unique existence; thus to come to know the soul is to engage in rational self-reversion,<sup>94</sup> from which basis further reversion is possible by virtue of the continuous presence of the higher principles in the lower by participation or derivation, and the presence of the lower in the higher in the relation of cause and effect.

The Procline understanding of soul includes a triadic self which, true to the Iamblichean formulation as described by Steel, both proceeds from itself and reverts upon itself as a whole, simultaneously, while it remains steadfast.<sup>95</sup> The soul does possess an imperishable and simply stable nature in Proclus since it reverts upon itself in every aspect of its being, life and intellect,<sup>96</sup> but possesses also an activity which is measured in time.<sup>97</sup> In the case of particular (participant) souls, the descent is complete, as related in proposition 211.<sup>98</sup> What in Iamblichus was an enduring character of soul which remained in substantial change in Proclus becomes a distinction of essence and activity: the soul, while having a perpetual existence which ascends into true Being and descends into *genesis* infinite times (prop.206), is wholly present in its temporal activity, proceeding from itself as a whole yet remaining soul.<sup>99</sup>

93. See prop.38.

94. Proclus, like Iamblichus before him, believes that self-knowledge is not immediately available to the human, and must be obtained through a positive relation to the material world. That reversion upon priors also leads to an increasing interiorisation of the soul as it comes to know in a more purified or rarified and immaterial way what it knows in its relation to the material is also true. Wayne Hankey explores this in relation to various figures in his “Knowing as we are Known,” 23–48. For Proclus, see esp. 41–48.

95. See Steel, *The Changing Self*, 20, 65 and elsewhere.

96. *El. Theol.* props.43–47.

97. See props.50 & 191, the latter dealing more particularly with souls. Dodds’ commentary on prop.50 is instructive on this point: “As we shall see later (prop.191), the human soul combines an eternal essence with activity in time (a view suggested by *Legg.* X.904 A, and held also by Plotinus); the same is true of ἡ τοῦ παντός φύσις (*in Tim.* I.257.8, see *Enn.* II.i. and prop. 34 n.); and of time itself, which Plato and the *Chaldean Oracles* had called αἰώνιος (*in Tim.* III.26.2). The distinction reappears in ps.-Dion. (*Div. Nom.* 10.3) and Psellus (*de omnif. doct.* cap.80). It is, moreover, the source of the scholastic doctrine of the *aevum*, which is the mode of being of created intelligences and is intermediate between eternity and time: *aevum* comports change of thought and volition without change of substance.”

98. An important foreshadowing of this dictum occurs in prop.175, in which direct contact with an intelligence is forbidden to that which has only transitory possession or use of intellect, such as a descended soul.

99. This, as Dodds makes clear in his commentary on prop.211, *El. Theol.* 309–10, is in accord with two passages from Plato; *Timaeus* 43C ff., in which the circles of soul are jarred and disturbed by sense experience; and *Phaedrus* 248A, wherein the charioteer, the ruler or highest

Thus we come to a position which is strongly Iamblichean, but which at the same time embraces the notions of stability and imperishability in the “true man” so strongly emphasised in Plotinus and which receive much less weight in Iamblichus.

Proclus discloses the character of the motion of knowing in the soul in the *Platonic Theology*. Beginning in a retreat into its own unity in order to find every mode of being (and thus of knowing) within itself, soul finally moves “within itself, as it were into the innermost sanctuary of the soul, in that way the soul beholds with eyes closed<sup>100</sup> the lineage of the gods and the henads of beings. For all is in the soul under the psychic mode; this is why we are able to come to know all things, rousing the potencies in us and the images of the universe.”<sup>101</sup> This ascent into and beyond the self is made possible through the strengthening of the soul in philosophy and theurgic rites. What is clear is that the knowledge of the self implies the knowledge of the universe and its causes, the henads and intelligences, and ultimately of the One, so far as knowledge can be had of it in any mode.<sup>102</sup>

Thus soul for Proclus moves in the period of its processions and reversions. As the mean term between the sensible and the intelligible, it possesses characteristics of both; a movement which is temporal originating in an eternal, incorporeal nature capable of self-reversion and thus reversion upon its priors. Soul stands as effect to its causes (its logical priors), self-constituted in its own self-relation (possessing its own unique character) and as paradigmatic microcosm to all things posterior to it. In knowing all things the soul becomes a demiurgic participant in the creation of the cosmos—soul is that through which Being is articulated amongst bodies and human souls are the first moments of the reversion of the cosmos toward its source in the One.

### III

The Platonism of Proclus informs much of the Dionysian *corpus*. In developing a Christian understanding of these doctrines, however, Diony-

faculty of soul (*nous*) descends below the clouds in his chariot. Proclus interprets these passages as clear indication of the thought of the ‘divine Plato’ on the subject of the descent of the soul. This procession requires the assumption of many ὀχήματα, which are increasingly material as the soul descends from the stars to conjoin itself to a body, and are discarded successively as it ascends (props.207–10).

100. This follows Saffrey-Westerink both here and at I, 25, 110, line 10, *les yeux fermés*.

101. *Théologie Platonicienne* 1, 3, 15, l.21–16, l.18. See also Jean Trouillard, *L’Un et l’âme selon Proclus*, 27–67.

102. See Hankey, “‘Knowing as we are Known,’” 27 & 37. As Jean Trouillard puts it, *L’Un et l’âme selon Proclus*, 31: “De ce point de vue chaque âme est une universalité intégrale et active .... Ces idées sont inscrites dans la constitution de l’âme, qui enveloppe celle de l’univers. La démiurgie de l’âme dans le *Timée* signifie justement qu’elle porte le monde dans sa propre génération, de telle sorte que la *cosmogonie* soit intérieure à la *psychogonie*.”

sus departs from traditional Platonic and Neoplatonic views on the One. However, a great deal is preserved, especially in the language of theurgy and of the mediated procession and return of reality—albeit within the new terminological context of *hierarchia*.

*Hierarchia* replaces *taxis* in Dionysian terminology and as such is central to Dionysius' understanding of the place of the human in creation. The Ecclesiastical ("our") hierarchy is that in which the participation of the human is theurgically engaged in the work of return,<sup>103</sup> through progressive purifications, illuminations and perfections, each rank of the hierarchy performing one of these roles or standing in need of one of these functions from another rank. This work of return is accomplished by virtue of negative or *apophatic* theology, whereas *cataphatic* or affirmative theology belongs properly to the coming into being or articulation of God: "Thus, as the cause of all and as being beyond all things, it is fitting [for him to be] the Unnamed, and [to be called by] all the names of beings."<sup>104</sup> These two moments of theology exist in an intimate relation to each other.

Dionysius follows Proclus in his insistence on the triadic or mediated character of all things, evident in the structure of *hierarchia* and its triple operation of purification, illumination and perfection. Yet he exceeds Proclus in understanding God as "the One, the Unknown, the One Beyond Being, Goodness itself, the very thing which He is, I say the Triadic Unity, the same God, the same Goodness."<sup>105</sup> The One for Dionysius contains both Difference and Unity within itself at the highest level, as understood in the Trinitarian conception of God present in *Divine Names*. The threefold differentiation present in the Godhead reinforces on the one hand a Procline insistence on triadic structures as basic to all reality, and moreover exceeds Proclus's boundaries in locating a triad consubstantial with absolute unity, in another sense immanence with transcendence, within God himself. This also means that God's goodness is identical with his being, and so on, which indicates that to participate the divine light in the fashion Louth describes it<sup>106</sup> is in fact to derive a mediation of knowledge and of being and unity—although it is correct to claim that God is indeed the subsistence or ground of all being, and that none but he can provide this.<sup>107</sup> At every level anything which causes or is caused, participates or is participated, is in fact a participation of

103. See *EH* 1, 369D: Ὅτι μὲν ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεραρχία, παίδων ἱερῶν ἱερωτάτε, τῆς ἐνθεοῦ καὶ θείας ἐστὶ καὶ θεουργικῆς ἐπιστήμης, καὶ ἐνεργίας, καὶ τελειώσεως ....

104. *DN* 1.7, 596C: Οὕτως οὖν, τῇ πάντων αἰτία καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντα οὐσῃ, καὶ τὸ ἀνώνυμον ἐφαρμόσει, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄντων ὀνόματα ....

105. *DN* 1.5, 593B: ... τὸ ἔν, τὸ ἀγνωστόν, τὸ ὑπερούσιον, αὐτοάγαθον, ὅπερ ἐστὶ, τὴν τριαδικὴν ἐνάδα φυμὶ, τὴν ὁμόθεον, καὶ ὁμοάγαθον ....

106. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 39, 84–85.

107. See, for instance, *EH* 3, 429C.

God's self-diffusion into multiplicity, which the light of God both constitutes and draws into unity through the active participation in it of the creatures it illuminates.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, God in the *Mystical Theology* is beyond all assertion and denial of attributes, while at the same time all affirmation and denial is also made concerning Him from the basis of Scripture. This Christian Trinitarian conception of the One places it at a remove beyond even the *taxeis* of Proclus, such that only in the Incarnation of the Word can any approach to God be understood. Hence for inheritors of Dionysius such as Maximus Confessor, the Christological doctrine of the *corpus* must be of great importance.

The triadic nature of hierarchies, both the celestial and "our own" (which consists in sacraments, clergy and lay) reproduces in every hierarchy the moments of remaining, procession, and return so crucial to Procline logic.<sup>109</sup> The operation of "our hierarchy" is essentially in accord with prop. 103 of the *Elements of Theology*, insofar as each moment or division in it is appointed one of three moments, purification, illumination or perfection. However, in terms of Dionysius's argument of human mediation, the moment or work of return is the general context of the discussion. This is felt most powerfully in terms of the threefold hierarchical activities of purification, illumination and perfection.<sup>110</sup> There are three ranks in any hierarchy, e.g., seraphim, cherubim and thrones at CH7, 206A. For each member of each hierarchy these activities are present in varying degrees—one can be in need of perfection while being capable of mediating illumination to another. On the whole, in terms of the procession of God into being, in which the hierarchies play a role in terms of structural constituents of the real, e.g., each being is created in its place in the hierarchy according to the mode of knowing or capacity for divine light appropriate to it, the main function of hierarchy is the uplifting and unifying of its members in the procession or possession of divine light which comes to it.<sup>111</sup>

108. This may lead to a charge of regarding Proclus as concluding the reverse, that God is effective only at the level of the highest causes: this is not the case. What is said, is said simply as a means of elucidating a subtle and cryptically expressed Dionysian notion, which differs only slightly from that of Proclus.

109. See EH 5, 501A. There are many descriptions, both of sacramental acts and clerical activities which symbolise remaining, procession and return: see, e.g., for the censuring in the synaxis alone EH 3, 428D–429C. See also Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*.

110. See EH 5, 504A–509A. See also EH 5, 532A–533A. Note also that baptism supplies both purification and illumination as its primary functions in the sacramental hierarchy, 392A–404D.

111. See CH 1, 120B–121A.

In the sense that the known is co-ordinate to the mode of the knower,<sup>112</sup> and is constituted to some degree by or within the mode of the knower, Dionysius retains the Neoplatonic logic which he receives in a systematised form from Proclus. Each hierarchy in Dionysius constitutes its own emanation insofar as the mode in or by which it knows reveals an increasing difference from the objects of its knowledge and therefore an increasingly divided or darkened hermeneutic of knowledge. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the mode of knowing is symbolic of or manifests the noetic, a symbolism whose aim and end is to uplift the members of the hierarchy to more complete and incorporeal contemplations of the Divine Source, or Thearchy.<sup>113</sup>

Christ stands at the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>114</sup> Placed also within the transcendence of God, the Word also stands as that in and through which the created order has being. Thus the initial impartation of being and its return are drawn together into a mediator for human beings, who as their Creator enables and allows their return in founding “our hierarchy.” This places the human in a new relation both to the One and to creation: the human soul has an immediate, hyperessential contact with God in its essence and an immanent, tropological contact with the divine in Scripture and the theurgical operations of hierarchy. The character of the Incarnation is thus crucial to the understanding of Dionysian *hierarchia* and its efficacy for individual salvation in the desire to come to the closest possible likeness to God. The Incarnation is spoken of twice in terms which resemble the Chalcedonian definition: “it became one with us in our lowliness, losing nothing of its own real condition, suffering no change or loss. It allowed us, as those of equal birth, to enter into communion with it and to acquire a share of its own true beauty”<sup>115</sup>; “hence the tradition of the sacred symbols covers the divine ointment with the seraphim [i.e., the twelve folds of the cloth covering the ointment during consecration] even during the sanctification, and it does so to demonstrate that Christ remains forever unchanged even when fully and truly made one of us.”<sup>116</sup> Yet, the seeming *tertium quid* of the God-man of *Ep. 4, 1072C* casts enough doubt on the orthodoxy of the Dionysian *corpus* that the pseudo-apostolic texts would be taken up in terms of a correction or elaboration of orthodoxy by Maximus Confessor.

Maximus Confessor’s conception of the middle character of the human self or soul elaborates on the symbolic, manifesting character found in the Dionysian appropriation and reception of Iamblichus-Procline doctrines. Hierarchy

112. Cp. *Sent. 25*: τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον γινώσκεται ὅτι πᾶσα γνώσις τοῦ γνωστοῦ ὁμοίωσις.

113. A usual Dionysian epithet for God, see, e.g., *EH 5, 501B–C*.

114. *EH 3, 432B*.

115. *EH 3, 441A–C*.

116. *EH 4, 484A*.

is essential to the Maximian constitution of the cosmos. His conception of the human as cosmic mediator, however, expands on Dionysius' understanding of this role and draws the *apophatic* and *cataphatic* theologies into a deeper relation inside the self. Man's role as mediator is related directly to Christ's full possession of both divine and human natures in one *hypostasis*, bringing together the immanent and the transcendent in a mystical union.

Maximus' reception of Dionysius occurs within the context of the Monothelite controversy of the late sixth and seventh centuries. In 532 Severus of Antioch claimed Dionysius' support for Monothelitism; Maximus in attempting to demonstrate the orthodoxy of Dionysian thought in his reception of it and by way of *scholia* bring to light a theological anthropology in which man becomes the "workshop of the cosmos" of *Ambiguum* 41.

In *Amb.*41, Maximus describes man as created "last among beings ... as a certain natural bond (σύνδεσμος) mediating between the extremes of the whole through their own proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things which by their own natures have been separated from each other by a great interval."<sup>117</sup> This is the natural role from which man has been divided through the Fall. Maximus elucidates this statement immediately in his explanation of the requirement for man to take up again his mediatorial role: "In order that all things might be in union in relation to God as cause, [man] first begins from the division of itself; advancing through the intermediate [things] in order by rank and order reaches the end of its high ascent through all things for the sake of unity in God, in whom there is no division."<sup>118</sup> It is the role of man not only to mediate his own divisions, but those of the *cosmos* as well.

Maximus in the *Mystagogia* gives the most complete account of his conception of the mediating activity of the human self in the activity of the *synaxis*. That man naturally engages in the activity of mediation is clearly important: man's nature is not, in this case, sinful. Sin resides, for Maximus, in the *mode* (τρόπος) of the human being as opposed to its nature or *logos*. The human must act as *sundesmos*, bringing together all the divisions of the cosmos, which Maximus elaborates: 1) God and creation,<sup>119</sup> 2) intelligible and sensible substances ("visible and invisible," in Maximus' Pauline language),<sup>120</sup>

117. *Ambiguum ad Ioannem Cizicum* 41, PG 91, 1305BC. My translation is indebted to that of Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 157. See also *Amb.* 41, 1312A, where Maximus speaks of Christ as encompassing all creation in and through man.

118. *Amb.* 41, 1305C.

119. *Myst.* 1. See *Amb.* 41, 1304D–1305D, where Maximus speaks of the "uncreated nature" being in the first division separated from the "universal created nature." Note also that in *Amb.* 41 the fourth and fifth divisions are different, i.e., 4) paradise and the inhabited world, 5) division of the human into male and female. See also Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 155–62.

120. *Myst.* 2.

3) heaven and earth,<sup>121</sup> 4) man as body and soul,<sup>122</sup> and finally 5) the soul in its internal dividedness.<sup>123</sup> These are much the same divisions as occur in other works, such as *Amb.* 41—with the exception of the division of the human into male and female which is found in the latter. The lack of this division in the *Mystagogia* can be seen as indicating that this first division is overcome in some sense by the entry into the body of Christ, for as Maximus writes: “As the divine Apostle says, ‘in [Christ] there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither barbarian nor Scythian; neither slave nor free man, but He is all things also in all (of you).’”<sup>124</sup> Body and soul, the entire human being, must be present in the sacrament, since it is Maximus’s conviction that our embodied existence is not sinful in and of itself—it is, in fact, the *logos* or essential meaning of our existence to be rational animals, which includes both our activity as mediator and participation in the sensible world. The human being must experience a tropological change as opposed to a change in bare existence. All divisions must ultimately be overcome in man’s mediation: however, the true originality of Maximus is that these divisions are not destroyed, but transformed into distinctions within a full unity, in accordance with the differentiated unity of the two natures of Christ.

The five divisions correspond to modes of knowing: transcendent unity with God, more properly called unknowing; the intellection of the intelligible realities; knowledge concerning sensible realities, i.e., the sciences; sense-perception; and imagination. The interpretation of the liturgy, the Church, man and Scripture must be carried out in accordance with every mode of knowing. At each level the same principles hold true, but find expression appropriate to the mode of the consideration and of the one considering.<sup>125</sup> These relations apply to the letter and the meaning of Scripture, the intelligible and the sensible and the body to the church.

In the *Mystagogia*, Maximus deploys the images and elements of the *synaxis* in precise relations in order to demonstrate that each is a reflection or manifestation or actualisation of another term. Thus the nave stands as potency to the actuality of the sanctuary;<sup>126</sup> body as nave, soul as sanctuary

121. *Myst.* 3.

122. *Myst.* 4.

123. *Myst.* 5. Again, as *Amb.* 41 would have it, the soul is the “laboratory in which everything is concentrated.” See Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 157. See also *Amb.* 41, 1305B.

124. *Myst.* 1, 668A: Ἐν ᾧ, φησὶν ὁ θεὸς Ἄπόστολος, οὐκ ἔστιν ἄρρεν οὐδὲ θῆλυ, οὔτε Ἰουδαῖος οὔτε Ἕλληγ, οὔτε περιτομὴ οὔτε ἀκροβυστία, οὔτε βάρβαρος οὔτε Σκύθης· οὔτε δούλος, οὔτε ἐλεύθερος· ἀλλὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτός .... Cp. *Amb.* 41 1309AB, where the same passage is quoted, and Maximus refers to Christ as having done away first with the division of male and female.

125. See *El. Theol.* prop. 103.

126. *Myst.* 2, 668D ff.

and mind (in a further subordination) as altar within the sanctuary.<sup>127</sup> These relations apply to the letter and the meaning of Scripture, the intelligible and the sensible and the body to the church. What is stressed in each is that as the difference between the two is transcended in the assimilation of the lower to the higher, the whole is at work and differences are not destroyed but revealed as distinctions in a rich unity.

This understanding of Christ as having both divine and human natures in their fullness without change or confusion, brings the uncreated and created, the intelligible and the sensible into a reflective relation to each other in which each is an expression or fulfillment of the other; Christ is the centre of man, whose work is as *sundesmos* of the cosmos. The relation of higher to lower is preserved, but preserved in virtue of understanding the created *cosmos* as an *itinerarium* of the whole human being, body and soul toward God, as the fulfillment of humanity's cosmic purpose as intended for equality with the angels, i.e., as intended for the purpose of transcending and including the particularities and differences of created things and bringing them into a final, perfect unity as image and likeness of God. This movement is inexorable, as Christ is from eternity present in various incarnations: the Incarnation itself provides a fallen, weakened humanity the capacity to fulfill its purpose through entry into the body of Christ as the cosmic redeemer and foundation of the hierarchy in which all *mystagogiai* take place. Man moves from being created in the image of God to being in his likeness.

#### IV

Eriugena frames the cosmos from the outset of the *Periphyseon* in terms of the human as agent of creation or *officina omnium*.<sup>128</sup> What is able to be grasped by the mind (*animo percipi*) is and what exceeds its grasp (*intentionem eius*) is not. The whole comprising that which is and that which is not, is *natura* (φύσις).<sup>129</sup> Thus this whole is conditioned from the outset by the knower.

This whole is further divided in terms of creation into four species: *quae creat et non creatur*; *quae et creatur et creat*; *quae creatur et non creat*; *quae nec creat nec creatur*.<sup>130</sup> There is a direct identification in Eriugena of that

127. *Myst.* 4, 672B ff.

128. *Periphyseon* II 530D: *officina omnium iure nominatur*. Cp. 530B.

129. *Per.* I 441A: *Saepe mihi cogitanti diligentiusque quantum vires suppetunt inquirenti rerum omnium quae vel animo percipi possunt vel intentionem eius superant primam summamque divisionem esse in ea quae sunt et ea quae non sunt horum omnium generale vocabulum occurrit quod graece ΦΥΣΙΣ, latine vero natura vocitatur*. My translations are indebted to and in general follow those of Sheldon-Williams.

130. *Per.* I 441B: *quattuor species . . . , quarum prima est in eam quae creat et non creatur, secunda in eam quae et creatur et creat, tertia in eam quae creatur et non creat, quarta quae nec creat nec creatur*. It is interesting to note the alteration in the placement of active and passive verbs in

which can be thought and that which is. This leads to the conclusion, as the *alumnus* concludes at *Periphyseon* I, 442B, that “the first [division], as I think, is understood in the cause of all things which are and which are not [i.e., God].”<sup>131</sup> Thus, it is God which escapes the grasp of reason *per excellentiam suae naturae*,<sup>132</sup> and therefore constitutes what is properly non-being. It is, however, not God alone that escapes the rational faculty; the things that are not, “are not rightly understood except in God alone and matter and in the reasons and essences of all things which are established by Him.”<sup>133</sup> As the fourth division of *natura* God is understood as both first and final cause and escapes human comprehension.<sup>134</sup>

That through which God moves is characterised first by *creari*. The second division is identified with the intelligible and the third the sensible cosmos; these two are opposites understood in the sense of intelligible to sensible particular or cause to effect which “in [human nature] are joined to each other and from many things become one.”<sup>135</sup> Thus the human knows a sensible particular not in virtue of “what it is, but that it is;”<sup>136</sup> its essential nature, its *ratio primordialis* remains ineffable to intellectual activity. These reasons or causes are made available to human and angelic intellects in *theophany* (446B–D) or divine manifestation.

The human subject is revealed in an immediate relation to itself as both transcendent and immanent in that the initial divisions of being and non-being are founded within the human self in terms of what is knowable and what is not. Thus the human both is and transcends being, similar to God. This is in accordance with Augustine’s dictum in *De vera religione* that “between our mind, by which we understand the Father and the truth through which we understand Him, no creature is interposed.”<sup>137</sup> While his powers of rational investigation (*divisio* and *collectio*, or the cataphatic and the apophatic which correspond to the movements of *exitus* and *reditus*)<sup>138</sup> extend so far as to posit

this sentence, denoting the primary of each pair: for divisions 1 and 4, the emphasis is on creating, while in 2 and 3, the emphasis is on their having been created, creating playing a secondary role.

131. *Per.* I 442B: *cum prima ut arbitror in cause omnium quae sunt et quae non sunt intelligatur.*

132. *Per.* I 443A.

133. *Per.* I 443A–443B: *non nisi in solo deo materiaeque et in omnium rerum quae ab eo conditae sunt rationibus atque essentiis recte intelliguntur.* For the fourth division as also ineffable and in God alone, see *Periphyseon* II, 527A36–38.

134. *Per.* I 451D. See also II, 527A.

135. *Per.* II 530D: *in [humana natura] enim sibi invicem copulantur et de multis unum fiunt.* See also 531B.

136. *Per.* I 443B–443C.

137. *Per.* II 531B.

138. *Per.* II 526A.

the fundamental ontological division of nature into that which has being and that which exceeds it, man can speak only negatively or metaphorically concerning God<sup>139</sup> without a knowledge of the primordial causes themselves save as theophany. This also indicates that man, since he is created in the image and likeness of God,<sup>140</sup> is ineffable and beyond his own grasp. The double character of man as within and beyond his own grasp, in other words of existing within hierarchy as created and outside hierarchy as developing the divisions of *natura* from the basis of ratiocination, is a reflection of man's relation to God and points toward Eriugena's ultimate solution.

For Eriugena, the sense in which man is *creans* in his own self-knowing is reflected in the fact that man exists as *creatum*. Man in coming to know the cosmos comes to know it at once intelligibly and sensibly, just as for Eriugena the Garden of Eden is an intellectual paradise (862A).<sup>141</sup> Thus, since man is created in the image and likeness of God, it must be concluded that man is the subsistence of the divisions of *natura* and all those things present in it "in the image of the divine mind, in which the conception of the created universe is the immutable [and ineffable] substance of the universe itself."<sup>142</sup> Thus, the essence of man, eternally created in the Word, proceeds from transcendent non-being into being through its own rational process, performing the task of mediating the self-expression of God in *theophany*, the sensible which discloses itself to rational understanding.

Thus we can see that for Eriugena, man stands in a position prior to the whole of *natura*, while at the same time its beginning and end escape his rational grasp. If the procession into the causes is the self-expression of the divine, this is completed in the division of *natura*, which must therefore be the self-expression of the human: "[if] indeed that interior concept, which is within the human mind, constitutes the substance of those things of which it is the concept, it follows that the concept itself by which man knows himself, is considered as his substance."<sup>143</sup> In the end, man's self-knowledge obtains a dual character, according either to his transcendence in the unconfused unity of the Word, or according to his self-expression through reason, or the Fall.

The distinction between man as fallen and man as transcendent principle has been, as Harrington describes it, "reduced to a matter of perspective."<sup>144</sup>

139. See *Per.* I 459C. See also the discussion of superlative metaphors (ὑπερούσιος and the like) in which Eriugena's arguments concerning the Word's running through creation is reminiscent of the use of πλέκειν in Plotinus.

140. *Per.* II 531A: [*homo*] *ad imaginem et similitudinem dei factus est* ....

141. See also Ambrose's views as recorded at *Per.* IV 831B ff.

142. *Per.* IV 769A.

143. *Per.* IV 770A.

144. Harrington, "*Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*," 131.

The *nutritor* declares that man does not, on account of having an immortal essence in the divine mind and a transient, fallen self, have two natures: “I should not say [he has] two [natures], but one understood in two aspects. For in the one, human substance is perceived as established in the intellectual causes, and in the other through generation among their effects.”<sup>145</sup> This observation, as Harrington notes, is drawn from a passage in Augustine: “[the] definition of the human in the mind of God Augustine calls its primary substance, while the definition of the human as its self-knowledge Augustine calls its secondary substance.”<sup>146</sup> Thus the state in which man has no knowledge of himself is the state in which *natura* is drawn out and constituted in the act of his reason, and the state in which man exists according to his primary substance is that in which he is closest to God, existing within the divine mind, made like God in all but essence.

God and the creature are one, immanence and transcendence both preserved but intimately present to each other:

both the creature, subsisting, is in God, and God in a marvellous and ineffable manner creates Himself, manifesting Himself in creatures, the invisible making itself visible, and the incomprehensible comprehensible, and the secret revealed, and the unknown known . . . . Therefore, God from Himself receives the occasions of His own *theophanies*, that is, divine manifestations, since all things are from Him and through Him and in Him and for Him.<sup>147</sup>

And again:

it is not understood that one creature is made in the causes, another established in the effects, but one and the same is made in the eternal reasons, just as in a darkness of the wisdom most secret and removed from every intellect; and being subject to intellects in the processions of reasons into their effects as though manifested on a day of perfect knowledge.<sup>148</sup>

Thus as Christ unifies the divine and the human without confusion or alteration, man as the agent of theophany reveals both himself and the cosmos and retains their source. Man’s self-knowledge comes about in terms of the drawing out and drawing together of *natura*—man comes to transcend and understand his own nature and content through the investigation of *natura*. Eriugena takes up the Maximian analysis of the fivefold division of nature; and understood within the structure of the fourfold divisions of *natura*, these divisions must be states of the human mind. As the human subject engages in

145. *Per.* IV 771A.

146. Harrington, “*Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*,” 131.

147. *Per.* III 678C–679A.

148. *Per.* III, 692C–693B.

*collectio* (ἀναλυτική), the perspective attendant on increasingly simplified or *apophatic* conceptions, the human leads the divisions of *natura* to reunification within the subject itself, which at the day of judgement will lead to the general reversion of the divided human persons, and therefore *natura* itself, upon their principle, so that there remain only human beings, not sexually differentiated and multiplied intelligibly,<sup>149</sup> like the angels. The Neoplatonic themes of *exitus* and *reditus* are preserved, but there occurs an identification between human nature and the Word and a subordination of the former to the latter, in which it is eternally created. Harrington formulates this relationship lucidly: “Christ exists through himself, while human nature requires Christ to exist.”<sup>150</sup> Thus the self-expression or self-articulation and self-return of God requires the human as agent or workshop in order to complete the task of mediation of the divine transcendence and immanence.

#### CONCLUSION

In tracing the progress of the various conceptions of the human self in its role as mediator, both this role and the self are transformed through the correction, elaboration and expansion of doctrines within the activity of tradition. Each member of this study, by virtue of a critical relationship to his predecessors (and to his contemporaries, especially important in the case of Porphyry and Iamblichus), both expands and transforms the notion of the soul as middle principle between the intelligible and the sensible and the notion of the human subject as mediator. In this way we have defined the principal features of the progression from Plotinus to Eriugena, by way of Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, the Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus Confessor.

It is in the finite and discursive character of reason that the unique importance of the human subject is found. In the faculty and activity of ratiocination the human differs from all other things, including the One which contains it, moves it and is its end. Reason is the characteristic mode of knowing and being in the human; thus it encounters both the sensible and intelligible as the moment of their unity. The human comprehends and unites the extremes of the cosmos while preserving their difference. Moreover, the human is capable of more profound modes of knowing, in which the human transcends or is drawn up or together (*anagogê, analysis*) to know its causes. By virtue of knowing the causes, it knows their effects, including itself. The human is, then, both an agent of pluralisation and of unification.

149. *Periphyseon* II, 532C–D; see Harrington, “*Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*,” 133.

150. Harrington, “*Unusquisque in suo sensu abundet*,” 138.

In the latter members of this study, the philosophical (*gnosis*) is enfolded within the theurgical (*henosis*); this, on the basis of the thoroughly descended soul in Iamblichus and Proclus, requires a sacramental and scientific turn to the sensible world. The Delphic call to philosophy with which Socrates and Alcibiades began has accrued, along with the recognition of the profound inwardness of the human self, not only a cosmic or scientific aspect, but this aspect itself is contained within a spiritual, sacramental (theurgical) universe. The call to self-knowledge is a call to know the macrocosm and the microcosm, the extrinsic and the intrinsic, the divine and the human, ultimately the whole of Being contained within the ineffable priority and immanence of God. The call, in terms of the mediating nature of the human, is then also to be an agent in creating the universe which it knows.

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