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THE VIRTUES AND 'BECOMING LIKE GOD': ALCINOUS TO PROCLUS

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1. Introduction: the problem of the twofold *telos*

RECENT work in virtue ethics owes much to the moral philosophy of Aristotle and that of the Hellenistic schools. It cannot be said to be similarly indebted to Platonic moral philosophy. Doubtless this is partly because Plato's dialogue form does not lend itself to the construction of a 'Platonic virtue theory' in quite the same way that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* lends itself to the project of constructing an Aristotelian theory of virtue. But it is not just a matter of the form of Plato's writings. Later Platonists such as Alcinous, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus sought to extract what they took to be Plato's eudaimonist moral philosophy from the dialogues and present it in formats not utterly dissimilar to that of Aristotle's treatises. I do not propose to address the question of whether the expositions of these later Platonists misrepresent Plato's moral philosophy—or, indeed, whether he had a moral philosophy to misrepresent. Instead, this paper addresses an objection that Platonic moral philosophy of this sort *could not* provide us with much valuable insight because the Platonist conception of the goal of living is not only implausible but also deeply ambiguous. Let us consider the charge levelled against the moral philosophy of Plato as it was developed by these Platonists.

For eudaimonist moral theories, the first and most important

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This paper had its origins in a collaborative research project that is producing a translation of Proclus' *Timaean* commentary. The other translators involved in this project are Harold Tarrant, David Runia, Michael Share, and Rick Benitez. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council. I have benefited from the comments of my collaborators, as well as those of R. M. van den Berg and the Editor of this journal. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 'Virtue Ethics, Old and New' conference at Christchurch, New Zealand, May 2002.

question is that of the *telos*. The later Platonists locate Plato's answer to this question in *Theaet.* 176 B 1–2 and *Tim.* 90 A 2–D 8. Both Middle Platonists and the Neoplatonists assert that the goal of living is *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν*—assimilation to god in so far as this is possible.¹ Now, it may seem odd that *human* happiness should be supposed to consist in becoming like something that is not at all human. This worry is at least partly answered because Platonists think that in becoming just, courageous, self-controlled, and wise we become like god. But even allowing for this, it may none the less seem that becoming like god involves a flight from the troubles of our world—at least if we think of god as something beyond our world. In a sense, this is right. And this is also to be expected, since this otherworldliness is surely part of what Socrates seems to be suggesting in the *Theaetetus* passage. To put it in Julia Annas's terminology, the formula 'assimilation to god' seems to include both an *ethical* ideal of unalloyed moral goodness and also a *spiritual* ideal of disengagement from the world. Annas also rightly raises the possibility that these two ideals pull in opposite directions. As she puts it:

If becoming like God is living in accordance with your reason, then it need imply no more than a very ordinary, indeed traditional practice of virtue, understood as rational activity . . . But if becoming like God is actually a flight from the mix of good and evil in our world, then God is being thought of rather differently, as something perfectly good outside

¹ *Theaet.* 176 B 1–2 is incorporated directly into Iambl. *Protr.* 76. 10 Pistelli. Olympiodorus' *Phaedo* commentary (1. 2. 6 Westerink) identifies assimilation to god with philosophy itself (cf. his *Meteorologica* commentary, 144. 19 Stüve). Hermias' *Phaedrus* commentary (101. 13–21 Couvreur) treats this identification as an obvious matter. Simplicius claims in his commentary on Epictetus' *Enchiridion* (67. 10 Dübner; cf. English translation in C. Brittain and T. Brennan, *Simplicius: On Epictetus Handbook* 1–26 (London, 2002)) that there is no greater good for those beings that depend upon god than becoming like him.

Though 'assimilation to god' was widely believed to be the Platonic specification of the *telos*, this aspect of Plato's thought has received relatively little attention in contemporary work on Plato. I shall concentrate on J. Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New [PE]* (Ithaca, NY, 1999). See also D. Sedley, "Becoming like God" in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle', in T. Calvo and L. Brisson (eds.), *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin, 1997), 327–39; Sedley's 'The Ideal of Godlikeness', in G. Fine (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Plato: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul* (Oxford, 1999), 309–28 is drawn from his 1997 paper. See also D. Russell, 'Virtue as "Likeness to God" in Plato and Seneca', forthcoming in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. I have also benefited from an earlier draft of the paper by John M. Armstrong that appears in this volume.

human experience and not to be characterized in human terms, but which nonetheless it makes sense for humans to try to emulate.²

In what follows I set out some of the background for thinking about virtues and happiness in Neoplatonic philosophy. I think that Annas is right to suppose that the tension between the ethical and spiritual ideals implicit in the 'assimilation to god' formula is present and problematic in Plotinus. However, I shall go on to argue that there are features of Proclus' treatment of the notion of assimilation to god that resolve some of this tension.³ I shall not have much to say about the *means* by which Proclus thought we achieved assimilation to god.⁴ Rather, I shall be concerned with the question of what assimilation to god must *consist in* given Proclus' views. I argue that his concept of humans and gods is sufficiently different from that of Plotinus to effect some amelioration of the tension that Annas locates in the Platonic *telos*.

² Annas, *PE* 64.

³ I use the following abbreviations to refer to the works of Proclus:

- In Tim.* *Procli in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehls (3 vols.; Leipzig, 1903–6).
In Remp. *Procli in Platonis Rem publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll (2 vols.; Leipzig, 1899–1901).
In Parm. *Procli commentarius in Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. V. Cousin (Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita, 3; Paris, 1864; repr. Hildesheim, 1961).
In Alc. *Proclus Diadochus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Amsterdam, 1954).
ET *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1963).
Plat. Theol. *Proclus: Théologie platonicienne*, ed. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (6 vols.; Paris, 1968).

⁴ R. M. van den Berg has recently argued that Proclus supposed theurgy and the life of ritual accomplished the aim of assimilation to god better than anything else. See R. van den Berg, "Becoming like God" according to Proclus' Interpretations of the *Timaeus*, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the *Chaldaean Oracles* ['BLG'], in R. W. Sharples and A. D. R. Sheppard (eds.), *Ancient Approaches to Plato's Timaeus* (London, 2003), 189–202. At *In Tim.* iii. 300. 13–20 Proclus claims that the 'teletic life' does more than anything else, including philosophy, to remove 'defilements' that cling to the soul as a result of entering into generation. Van den Berg argues that the teletic life is best understood in the context of Chaldean ritual practices and the Eleusinian mysteries. I agree with him that, for Proclus, becoming like god requires the removal of the soul's defilements. But I disagree that this is all that assimilation to god requires. Thus, even if Proclus supposed that the best means for purifying the soul is essentially ritualistic, it does not follow that all means for assimilating ourselves to god involve theurgy or ritual. Moreover, we can also ask what being like god consists in, regardless of how this happens.

2. Background to Plotinus

Alcinous' discussion of the goal of living in chapter 28 of *Didaskalikos* is used by Annas to set the stage for the discussion of the virtues and becoming like god in Plotinus.⁵ Having identified the *telos* with assimilation to god, Alcinous notes that sometimes Plato asserts that happiness consists in becoming just (*Rep.* 613 A 4–B 1) and that being just is itself a way of being assimilated to god. But he also claims that being assimilated to god consists in possessing the virtues generally (*Phaedo* 82 A 10–B 3). According to Alcinous, Plato sometimes puts the point about likeness to god in terms of following god (*Laws* 715 E 7–B 8), but this is in effect the same as being like god (*Phdr.* 248 A 1–2). But Alcinous also makes an important qualification about which god we become like. When we become like god, we become like the god in the heavens—not the one beyond the heavens who does not possess the virtues through being superior to them.

This qualification exposes a tension between the spiritual and ethical aims. Surely there are some virtues that it is simply inappropriate to connect with god. It would seem odd to suggest that god is temperate or just, if this involves god returning deposits or overcoming bad appetites (cf. Arist. *NE* 10. 8, 1178^b7–22). So either (a) god is simply beyond these virtues and assimilation to god must take some other form than possessing the moral virtues; or (b) god possesses the virtues in a way other than the way in which we possess them; or (c) perhaps we can multiply gods and suppose that some have the virtues as we know them, while others do not.

Alcinous' answer takes the last path and in doing so leaves open many questions. If our goal is assimilation to the divine in general, then what will this consist in since some divinities are beyond human virtues? If our goal is not to become like the highest god, then what is our relation with this god? Alcinous' brief summary of the relation between the virtues and happiness or assimilation to god does not tell us.

⁵ Annas, *PE* 63–6.

3. Plotinus

Plotinus confronts problems about the moral virtues and assimilation to god in *Enneads* 4. 2. His solution to the problem is like his solution to the general problem of the relation between paradigm and participant in Platonism. We do not become like god in the way in which the house that a builder constructs becomes like the one that stands next door. Unlike two houses, we and god belong to very different orders of being. Rather, we become like god in the way that a house may be said to be like its plan. There is something in the plan that *corresponds* to the door into the back garden, though what is in the plan is not itself a door. Thus, we can become like god through possessing the virtues even though god does not have the virtues in the same sense in which we have them.

However, Plotinus does not rest content with this general solution to the question. He also distinguishes two different levels of virtue—the civic and the purificatory. The civic virtues are those explained in book 4 of *Republic* and they relate to the internal constitution of the entire soul, including the irrational parts of spirit and appetite. These virtues, however, do not make us like god (1. 2. 3. 8–11). We are made better by having these virtues since they impose order and measure on our appetites and abolish false opinion. Civic virtue is a trace (*tychos*) of the order and measure in the intelligible realm and we participate in the Good by possessing such virtue. Apparently, however, Plotinus thinks that it is unsuitable for there to be anything at all among the divine that corresponds to those appetitive or spirited parts of the human soul which are properly ordered by the civic virtues. This is very likely connected with Plotinus' complex attitude towards the question of whether these irrational parts of the soul are immortal.⁶ If the irrational parts of the soul are mortal, then perhaps there could not even be a correlate to them at the level of the most proximate divinity—the hypostasis of Soul.

Plotinus' account of the purificatory virtues (1. 2. 3. 10–21) has the text of *Phaedo* 69 A 6–C 2 as its point of origin. These virtues concern the relation of the rational soul to the body. They do not involve relations between the tripartite soul described in the *Re-*

⁶ Cf. Plot. 4. 7. 14; 4. 9. 3. 23–9; 6. 4. 16. 40–8; 4. 3. 27. 1–3; 4. 4. 29; 4. 5. 7. 49–62; 1. 1. 12.

public. The purificatory virtues enable us to separate our souls from our bodies so that the soul does not share the body's experiences or its opinions. These factors constitute purificatory self-control and wisdom respectively. When our souls do not fear departing from the body, this is purificatory courage. The unopposed rule of reason and intellect is justice. Plotinus adds:

One would not be wrong in calling this state of the soul likeness to god, in which its activity is intellectual and it is free from bodily affections [*apathēs*]. (1. 2. 3. 10–21, trans. Armstrong)

While the civic virtues secure only *metriopatheia*, the purificatory ones secure *apatheia*. This sort of assimilation to god in itself is perhaps no bar to realizing an ethical ideal. The Stoic sage is similarly impassive in the process of achieving *homologia* with nature. But Plotinus is pretty clear that the person who has achieved assimilation to god through the purificatory virtues will have no use for the civic ones. For example, if one no longer experiences the appetites that result from being embodied, will one have sexual relations in a way that manifests *sōphrosunē* (1. 2. 7. 13–19)? Plotinus says that the purified person will leave behind the life of the good man and live the life of the gods, since it is to the gods, and not to good men, that we wish to assimilate ourselves.

He will leave that [sc. the life of civic virtue] behind, and choose another, the life of the gods: for it is to them, not to good men, that we are to be made like. (1. 2. 7. 26–7, trans. Armstrong)

Plotinus' position on the relation between the human virtues and the divine virtues nicely illustrates the tension that Annas identifies in later Platonism between assimilation to god as an ethical ideal and as a spiritual ideal. Commenting on Plotinus' startling verdict on the value of the civic virtues in 1. 2. 7, Annas writes:

Once it [the unworldly strand in Plato's ethics] is taken into account, the two can be reconciled as Plotinus does it, by locating them on different levels of the climb to virtue. But this will not solve the problem that they compete for precedence; and Plotinus's own solution which puts the civic virtues at a lower level and regards the life of true virtue as one lived on a higher plane lacks resonance as an *ethical* ideal, however much it may strike a chord as an account of certain types of religious life.⁷

The unworldly strand in Platonic ethics threatens to disengage

⁷ Annas, *PE* 70. Annas here follows J. M. Dillon, 'An Ethic for the Late Antique

the Platonic philosopher from the political, social, and distinctively *human* context in which the moral virtues operate. Is this an essential feature of Neoplatonic ethics? In what follows I shall argue that it is not. Despite his reputation for having metaphysical views that are 'out of this world', the Athenian Neoplatonist Proclus does much to put human beings in general and ethics in particular back into the world. In a sense, he humanizes the divine to which we are assimilated and finds a place for what we traditionally regard as virtuous action in the process of being assimilated to god.

4. Interlude: Porphyry and Iamblichus

It is not possible to tell the story of Proclus' innovations in this area without filling in some of the intervening background—albeit very briefly. Both Porphyry and Iamblichus add to the developing account of the ways in which we may be assimilated to god.

Porphyry's contribution consists in a systematization of Plotinus' distinction between civic and purificatory virtues. Porphyry turns Plotinus' rather diffuse discussion of the virtues into a *fourfold* distinction among the levels of virtues. He uses the idea of reversion upon various objects by different entities to classify the various grades of virtue (*Sent.* 32).

- (1) *Civic virtues*. These consist in moderation of the passions and performance of duties (*kathēkonta*). Their aim is association with others. They are the four cardinal virtues defined in

Sage', in L. P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1996), 315–35. Dillon summarizes Plotinus' attitude towards the civic virtues and their exercise by suggesting that the Plotinian sage would indeed help a little old lady across the street—but expresses doubt as to whether the sage who has his head so far above the sensible would *notice* that she needs help. Certainly, if we take Plotinus at his word, the sage does not fulfil his goal of becoming like god by doing so, however much he may become like a good person.

This otherworldly portrait of Plotinus' ethics, however, may be subject to challenge. Perhaps a more sensitive reading of Plotinus, like the one I offer of Proclus, could absolve him of the charges laid at his door by Annas and Dillon. I do not undertake that task here since I wish to use their understanding of Plotinus as a foil for my presentation of Proclus' account of becoming like god. For a first start towards this project, see A. Smith, 'The Significance of Practical Ethics for Plotinus', in J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism: Essays in Honour of John Dillon* (Aldershot, 1999), 227–36. However, Smith himself admits exactly the duality in the Platonic *telos* that Annas and Dillon identify. More recently, see D. J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2003).

terms of relations between the parts of the soul as in the *Republic*.

- (2) *Purificatory virtues*. These consist in detachment from things here below. Their aim is to eliminate the passions and to raise the soul to Being. As in Plotinus, 1. 2. 3. 13–17, they are defined in the spirit of *Phaedo* 69 A 6–C 2.
- (3) *Theoretic virtues* (*Sent.* 27. 2–28. 5). These virtues are manifested in the activity of the soul in relation to the content of intellect (cf. Plot. 1. 2. 6. 24–7). At this level, both *sophia* and *phronēsis* consist in the contemplation of intellect. Justice consists in the *oikeiopraxia* [of each of the parts of the soul?] in following intellect and directing activity towards intellect. Self-control is reversion upon intellect. Courage is detachment from passions through which the soul becomes like the passionless object of its attention.
- (4) *Paradigmatic virtues* reside in the intellect and are superior to the virtues of the soul (*Sent.* 28. 6–29. 8; cf. Plot. 1. 2. 7. 1–6). These are the models of which the virtues of the soul are likenesses. At this level, *phronēsis* is *epistēmē*; *sophia* is intellect in the act of knowing; self-control is [intellect?] being in relation to itself; doing what is just is the appropriate function; courage is sameness and [intellect's] remaining in itself and pure through a superabundance of power.⁸

John Dillon argues that Porphyry has here introduced a new element to Plotinus' treatment of the virtues—he is not merely expressing clearly what Plotinus expressed badly.⁹ In the passage where Porphyry locates the paradigmatic virtues, Plotinus is actually making the point that at the level of Forms or Intellect, Justice and Courage are not *qualities* of the Intellect. As Forms, they are parts of the essence of Intellect, but they are not *predicated* of it. This is the point of Plotinus' odd remark that 'a virtue is [the virtue] of something [else], but each Form itself is [only] about itself, not

⁸ *Sent.* 32. 63–70: Τέταρτον δὲ εἶδος ἀρετῶν τὸ τῶν παραδειγματικῶν, αἵπερ ἦσαν ἐν τῷ νόῳ, κρείττους οὖσαι τῶν ψυχικῶν καὶ τούτων παραδείγματα, ὧν αἱ τῆς ψυχῆς ἦσαν ὁμοιώματα· νοῦς μὲν ἐν ᾧ ἅμα τὰ ὡσπερ παραδείγματα, ἐπιστήμη δὲ ἡ νόησις, σοφία δὲ γνώσκων ὁ νοῦς, τὸ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡ σωφροσύνη, τὸ δὲ οἰκεῖον ἔργον ἡ οἰκειοπραγία, ἡ δὲ ἀνδρεία ἡ ταυτότης καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένειν καθαρὸν διὰ δυνάμεως περιουσίαν. My summary proposes to depart from the text of Lamberz by reading φρόνησις where it has νόησις and δικαιοπραγία for οἰκειοπραγία.

⁹ J. M. Dillon, 'Plotinus, Philo and Origen on the Grades of Virtue', in H.-D. Blum and F. Mann (eds.), *Platonismus und Christentum* (Münster, 1983), 92–105.

something else'.¹⁰ But Porphyry's exposition achieves exactly the opposite of the intended effect. While Plotinus was insisting that the virtues are not *in* Intellect or the realm of Forms *as virtues*—that is, they are not *hexeis* of any being in the intelligible realm—Porphyry's paradigmatic virtues are precisely this. The paradigmatic virtues are the virtues of the Intellect. Similar remarks apply to Porphyry's theoretic virtues. These are virtues of the soul, but virtues that it exhibits *in relation to* the Intellect. As such, they contrast with the cathartic virtues which the soul exhibits in its relation—or rather its lack of relation—to the body.

Whatever the merits of Porphyry's discussion of the virtues as an exegesis of Plotinus' view, it certainly sets the stage for subsequent Neoplatonic discussions of this topic. His division into different grades differentiated by the subjects in which the virtues are found perfectly anticipates the axiom of the Athenian school: *each thing is in everything in a manner appropriate to the subject*. So the virtues exist in different modes or manners at all the levels of reality.

This multiplication of the grades of virtues reaches its climax in Iamblichus' work *On Virtues* (ap. Damasc. *In Phd.* 1, §§ 138–51). Iamblichus goes back to the Middle Platonists to include two lower grades of virtue as well as a grade of virtue higher than Porphyry's paradigmatic virtues. The latter are the notorious 'hieratic' or priestly virtues.¹¹ It is not necessary to go into detail about Iamblichus' account of the virtues except to highlight three points. First, Damascius reports that all the virtues at the various levels at which they are manifested

reveal their constant universal character in a way peculiar to each level: thus the character of courage is unwavering firmness with respect to the inferior, of temperance the turning away from the inferior, of justice an activity that is proper to the subject and truly belonging to it, and of

¹⁰ It is little wonder that Porphyry is confused. Plotinus' point is hardly transparent: 1. 2. 6. 18–19 *Τῶς γὰρ ἡ ἀρετῆ· αὐτὸ δὲ ἕκαστον αὐτοῦ, οὐχὶ δὲ ἄλλου τῶς*.

¹¹ The existence and place of the hieratic virtues in Iamblichus' scheme is symptomatic of his disagreement with Porphyry on the role of theurgy or religious magic. Though Porphyry introduced the *Chaldean Oracles* into the Neoplatonic canon, he seems to have had reservations about the role that the ritual practices associated with the *Oracles* could have in unifying the soul with the divine (Aug. *CD* 10. 9=Porph. *Regr.* fr. 2 Bidez). Iamblichus, however, defends the efficacy of theurgy in purifying the soul and uniting it with the divine (*Myst.* i. 12). See A. D. R. Sheppard, 'Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy', *Classical Quarterly*, NS 32 (1982), 212–24, and G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, 1995).

prudence the ability to choose the good and reject the bad. (Damasc. *In Phd.* 1, § 149, trans. Westerink)

So, there is a kind of unity amid the diversity. This holds out the promise that if there is some unity in the various grades of virtue, then perhaps there is also some sort of unity among the different ends—*metriopatheia*, *apatheia*—that they promote.¹² Secondly, Damascius reports that the virtues so understood are said to be necessary even for those who are going to live a life of contemplation (*In Phd.* 1, § 149). Of course, he does not tell us whether they are necessary as a preliminary step—something that Plotinus would doubtless agree with—or whether the exercise of the civic virtues continues to be an important part of the Neoplatonic sage's well-being. Finally, Damascius tells us that, contrary to the Peripatetics, these virtues also belong to the gods (§ 150). This is initially startling, but when one considers the very generic notion of, say, temperance that is manifested in all the various gradations of this virtue, it becomes less so. The gods can exhibit temperance, not by suppressing bad appetites, but by 'turning away from the inferior'.

These themes are developed in more detail in the following section on Proclus. I do not wish to speculate on how much Proclus' view on the virtues owes to Iamblichus. I think that the evidence in the case of Iamblichus is probably too thin to say much with confidence, so I shall concentrate on the texts of Proclus well aware of the fact that it is at least *possible* that these owe some of their content to Iamblichus' ideas.

5. General considerations about becoming like god in Proclus

I first want to canvass several general considerations concerning assimilation to the divine in Proclus. In the next section I shall turn to some specific considerations about assimilation to the divine, visible cosmos in Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary.

¹² In the case of Iamblichus, it appears that this promise is not exactly fulfilled. In his defence of theurgic virtues against Porphyry in *On the Mysteries*, Iamblichus seems to suppose that this final class of virtues enables a form of life that utterly transcends the human one. He claims that this method of salvation secures a different life and a different form of activity for the soul. When this happens the soul of the person transformed by theurgy is rightly not thought of as human at all (*Myst.* i. 12. 17–26).

(a) *The individuality of the gods we become like*

One contrast between Plotinus and Proclus on assimilation to god is that Plotinus is not particularly concerned to distinguish among the various gods to which one might be assimilated. Plotinus thinks of assimilation to god in terms of experience of *nous*. I think that the tendency to withdraw from the world of human affairs in the pursuit of this goal, or as a result of its achievement, has to do with the fact that for Plotinus *nous* is an utterly impersonal entity.

Proclus, however, is concerned to locate the Olympians within the expanded framework of hypostases within his theory. The henads which form the bridge between the transcendent One and Being—the first of the levels within what Plotinus regards as the more or less uniform hypostasis of Intellect introduced by Iamblichus and Proclus—are identified with these gods. These gods, unlike the One, are such that things can participate in them (*ET*, prop. 116). As a result, they show up in various guises throughout the various levels of being in Proclus' ontology. Moreover, each god is associated with a particular aspect of divine providence (*ET*, prop. 125). The effect is to create several divine vertical series which connect even inanimate objects at the lowest levels of reality to specific gods (*In Tim.* i. 36. 7–10).

Proclus connects these vertical series of divinities with the text of *Phdr.* 246 E 4–247 C 2, where winged souls tour the realm above the heavens under the leadership of a particular god. The identity of one's leading god also determines the kind of person that the beloved becomes as a result of the affair and the nature of one's love, since Plato says that the lover makes the beloved in the image of the god they followed (252 C 2–253 C 1). Proclus brings these aspects of the *Phaedrus* to bear on his exposition of the meaning of *Tim.* 48 D 8–E 1, where Plato has the Demiurge sow the souls of humans into the stars. Proclus claims that the form and character that our souls have results from the nature of our leading gods (*In Tim.* iii. 262. 6–14). Our leading gods have different powers and play different roles in the administration of providence. If my soul extends in the series from Helios, then I should choose a life that accords with the powers of Helios—say one devoted to medicine or priesthood (*In Tim.* iii. 279. 14–19). But I will not be assimilated to god if I attempt a life inappropriate to my series, or attempt one appropriate to my series but engage in it badly.

Thus, assimilation to our leading gods provides something like an understanding of our cosmic station and its duties. In contrast to Plotinus' picture of assimilation to an impersonal One or Intellect, assimilation in Proclus involves being like *a particular kind of god*. Our becoming like him or her involves us taking up a particular kind of role at our level within reality. The effect of this is that assimilation to god need not take one 'out of this world', but rather provides an impetus for a specific sort of engagement within the world.

(b) *Different accounts of who we are and 'where' we are*

Two features of Plotinus' thought which help explain his attitude to the practice of the civic virtues are his views on the undescended soul and the status of the irrational soul. According to Plotinus, there is a part of ourselves—indeed, our true selves—that does not descend and remains in the intelligible (4. 8. 8. 1–11).¹³ One way in which we are assimilated to god is by becoming aware of this aspect of ourselves. It is unification with the Intellect with which one's higher self is always in contact that Plotinus himself describes as 'waking up out of my body' (4. 8. 1). Moreover, at least at some points in his career, Plotinus thought that only this undescended soul was impassive.

The undescended soul is very different from the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul. Plotinus regards these as 'accretions of generation' and they are not immortal in the same way in which the 'pure soul' is.¹⁴ Thus, there will be no essential place for the civic virtues that concern these parts of the soul in the life of the person who lives at the level of his true self. For Plotinus, the civic virtues can only be involved in our return to our home above at the very beginning of our journey back to the real self above.

Proclus rejects Plotinus' notion of an undescended soul (*ET*, prop. 211; *In Alc.* 227. 2–7). No part of us remains in contact with any hypostasis higher than Soul. We can come to know the various

¹³ The literature on Plotinus on the undescended intellect and the history of this doctrine in later Platonism is large. For an overview, see H. J. Blumenthal, 'The Psychology of Plotinus and Later Platonism', in J. Cleary (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism* (Leuven, 1997), 269–90.

¹⁴ Cf. 4. 7. 14. 9–13. In the light of this passage, it seems plausible that Proclus has Plotinus in mind when he says that those of the 'school of Porphyry' think that the irrational soul and its *pneumatic* vehicle are only immortal in the sense that its parts are scattered, not destroyed. Cf. Procl. *In Tim.* iii. 234. 17–33.

levels within Intellect and the henads only by means of their *logoi* or images within our souls.¹⁵ Thus likeness to god cannot consist solely in recovering our awareness of a facet of ourselves that has never left the realm of Intellect. The perfection of our natures which is effected through becoming virtuous is a perfection of an *essentially psychic* nature. Proclus should therefore reject the view that the civic virtues are ever left behind.

(c) *Civic virtues in our gods*

Let us consider further the civic virtues and the irrational parts of the soul. Proclus' views on sensation, appetite, and the passions are related to the views he shares with Iamblichus on vehicles of the soul.¹⁶ All souls have vehicles—this is true of the souls of the celestial gods identified with the heavenly bodies in *Timaeus* and called by Proclus the 'encosmic gods'. Even the World Soul has a vehicle according to Proclus—it is space (*In Remp.* ii. 196. 22–30). This kind of body is called luminous (*ἀγροειδής*) and is immaterial, impassive, and immortal.¹⁷ Our souls also have such a body and it is connate (*συνφυσή*) with them. But we have additional vehicles that envelop our souls as they 'enter' or become associated with the realm of becoming. The next layer is the pneumatic or spiritual vehicle. With this vehicle, we get the capacities that are distinctive of the irrational soul—sensation, passion, and appetite. Finally, we have the 'oyster body' which is our mortal frame. This is made by the junior gods of *Tim.* 41 D 1.

Proclus follows his teacher Syrianus in assigning the highest gradations of the irrational kind of life to the first, luminous vehicle of the soul.¹⁸ This means that even the encosmic gods are souls that have *something* corresponding to the capacities for sensation,

¹⁵ Cf. *In Parm.* 948. 12–38 and C. Steel, 'Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul', in J. Cleary (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism* (Leuven, 1997), 293–309.

¹⁶ Cf. *In Tim.* iii. 236. 31–238. 26. The literature on the vehicle of the soul in Neoplatonism is now fairly extensive. For Proclus in particular, see E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1963), appendix II, and H. J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of De Anima* (London, 1996).

¹⁷ 'Immaterial body' is not an oxymoron for Proclus. It means that these bodies lack prime matter and thus can interpenetrate one another and material bodies (*In Remp.* ii. 162. 24–8). Cf. R. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and their Sequel* (London, 1988), 106–19.

¹⁸ Cf. *In Tim.* iii. 236. 32 *τὰς μὲν ἀκρότητας τῆς ἀλόγου ζωῆς*.

appetite, and the passions that we find in human souls. I say 'corresponding to' since Proclus calls these the 'highest gradations'—they are, in effect, something like the blueprint for our irrational souls. And this is to be expected, since every phenomenon among the lower orders of reality has a paradigm of sorts among the higher levels of reality. The highest forms of the irrational life and the luminous vehicles give the celestial gods no difficulties at all. Their relation to their bodies is therefore very different from our relation to our bodies.

Recall Proclus' rejection of Plotinus' undescended soul still in contact with the hypostasis of Intellect. This means that the encosmic gods are really our most proximate gods. Any other divinities at higher levels of reality, we know only through the mediation of the *logoi* within us. But we can now see that there is something in these encosmic gods which is somewhat like the irrational parts of our soul. So assimilation to the gods most proximate to us cannot simply ignore the civic virtues—part of our becoming like them is ordering our irrational nature so that it gives us as little trouble as the highest forms of irrational life give them.

We can go further than this. Remember that Plotinus is at pains to deny that the virtues are present in the Intellect as virtues of some subject. Instead, the virtues are there as objects of understanding. This view is not entirely accepted by the later Platonic tradition, including Proclus. In Damascius' commentary on the *Phaedo* he not only insists that the virtues are gods—a view consonant with Plotinus' treatment of them as intelligibles—but asks at what level virtues are first manifested (*ἀναφαίνονται*, *In Phd.* § 151. 1). He answers this question on the basis of the *Chaldean Oracles*. The intelligible source of souls and the source of virtues are one and the same—the goddess Rhea-Hecate (cf. *Chaldean Oracles* 51. 12 Majercik).¹⁹ Proclus concurs with this judgement (*In Tim.* i. 208. 20–1) and places this goddess within the intellectual level of *Nous*. The idea that virtue and soul have the same source in the hypostasis about the Soul emerges in Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary as the claim that the Demiurge makes the cosmos ensouled and virtuous

¹⁹ On this subject see van den Berg, 'BLG', 193–6. See also L. Brisson, 'La place des Oracles chaldaïques dans la Théologie platonicienne', in A. P. Segonds and C. Steel (eds.), *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne* (Louvain, 2000), 109–162, and id., 'Plato's *Timaeus* and the *Chaldean Oracles*', in G. Reydams-Schils (ed.), *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon* (Notre Dame, 2003), 111–51.

simultaneously.²⁰ The passage goes on to confirm that the various divine souls have different versions or gradations of these virtues.

Returning to the level of reality prior to Soul, what could it possibly mean to place something analogous to being virtuous among the intelligibles? Proclus thinks of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* as having its highest form in the same general vicinity of the intelligible realm as Rhea-Hecate.²¹ Damascius suggests that the nature of virtue is to impose order on chaos, so it is appropriate that virtue has its origins in the same place as the origins of creation. Indeed, the Demiurge weaves together Being, Sameness, and Difference in the constitution of the soul (*Tim.* 35 A 1–7) and these three kinds are analogous to the three parts of the soul.²² So, very roughly, the virtues manifested at the level of intellect are like the logico-causal source of the timeless and continuous constitution of the soul from its three ingredient kinds: being, sameness, and difference. They are manifested—and not merely existent as objects of definition—because they have a particular kind of effect at lower levels of reality. So even when we ascend by the mediation of the *logoi* within us to the levels of reality above that of Soul, we still find that entities like the civic virtues are there among the intellectual gods.

This confirms what was previously noted in the discussion of Iamblichus' *On Virtues*. First, the gods possess virtues. Second, all the various virtues manifested at the different levels of being share some common features with the virtues in us. This suggests a further way in which we do not leave behind the civic virtues in the process of being assimilated to god. To the extent that these virtues are higher forms of the very ones that Platonists associate with right action within the world of human affairs, there is no flight from this world in our return to the divine.

²⁰ *In Tim.* ii. 111. 3–8: '[I]n filling the world with soul, Plato also gives it virtue straight away. For its participation in soul and its being filled with virtue are accomplished at the same time by dint of a natural connection. On account of this [we may infer] that the single cause of virtue has been arranged alongside the source of the soul, and its procession has been yoked together with the procession of soul.'

²¹ *Plat. Theol.* v. 9. 18–24. The Demiurge is identified with the third of the three fathers in the paternal triad of unparticipated Intellect. Strangely enough, Rhea-Hecate is actually the second of these three fathers: *Plat. Theol.* v. 36. 8–37. 21.

²² Presumably it is Being that reverts upon its cause, as reason does in the soul. It is Sameness that reverts upon itself, rather like the somewhat self-absorbed *thumos* who is concerned with honour and winning in *Republic*. Finally, appetite must be like Difference, which is a principle of plurality and so of descent to lower levels. Cf. Damascius' *Phaedo* commentary, § 151. 8–11.

6. Becoming like god in the *Timaeus* commentary(a) *Why concentrate on Timaeus?*

We moderns do not tend to think of the *Timaeus* as a dialogue on ethics. But the identification of the goal of living with assimilation to god and the remarks in *Tim.* 90 A 2–D 8 mean that, for later Platonists, this dialogue is about becoming like the visible, blessed god that is the cosmos (*Tim.* 34 B 1).

The ethical character of the dialogue becomes clear from the way that Proclus begins his *Timaeus* commentary. As is customary, he starts by discussing the subject matter of the dialogue and the manner in which it is discussed (*In Tim.* i. 1. 4–7. 17). The dialogue concerns the whole of nature and it pursues this goal through a variety of methods: in *images* (as in the story of Atlantis), and in *paradigms* (like the paradigm of the All-Perfect Living Thing); in *wholes* (as in the account of the entirety of the elements); and in *parts* (as in the account of individual parts of creation). One of the parts of nature studied is the human being (*In Tim.* i. 5. 7–13). This is something that we study not merely in order to understand the whole of which humans are a part, but because we wish to be happy.

Plato gave an indication that he had kept an eye on this too, when he says openly near the end, that whoever would obtain his share of well-being (*eudaimonia*) ‘must liken that which tries to apprehend to what it is apprehending’. For the totality is always in a state of well-being, and our part too will be well-off when likened to the universe . . . [W]henver the earthly human being is assimilated to the universe, he will also be imitating his own paradigm in the appropriate fashion, becoming orderly through his likeness to the world-order, and well-off through his being modelled on a god who enjoys well-being. (*In Tim.* i. 5. 23–30; 6. 3–6, trans. Tarrant)

The god who enjoys well-being or happiness is, in this context, the entire cosmos.

So how do we become like this created, visible god? One way is by *understanding* it, for if ‘like is known by like’,²³ then we become like the cosmos when we understand it. And this thought is consonant with the general Neoplatonist principle that things are perfected

²³ An Empedoclean slogan endorsed and interpreted by Proclus, *In Tim.* ii. 298. 27.

through reversion upon their causes. But how specifically might we come to resemble the cosmos through knowing it? Resemblance is, of course, ubiquitous, so if we want to become like the visible god in respect of enjoying well-being, we should become like it in respect of those features that make it a blessed and happy god. So what makes the cosmos a blessed and happy god?

(b) *Why the cosmos is a god*

In Plato’s *Timaeus*, it seems that the main reason why the cosmos is a god is because it is the creation of the Demiurge who is good and who therefore makes all things to be as good as possible. Proclus, however, distils from Plato’s remarks on the body and soul of the world ten ‘gifts of the Demiurge’. Each gift contributes to the optimally good character of the cosmos and grounds its claim to be a god. These gifts are catalogued at the opening of book 3 of his commentary:

Beginning from the body, he first grants to it to be perceptible according to the extreme terms of sense perception [viz. sight and touch] (31 B). Next—what is more perfect than this—he grants to it a bond which binds together the bodies in it through proportion (31 C). In the third place, he makes it a whole constituted of the whole of the elements (32 C). Fourth, he makes it a sphere in order that it should be most similar to itself in respect of form (33 B). Then fifth, he shows that all things that it undergoes it undergoes by itself (33 C). Sixth, he provides it with a motion fitting to intellect (34 A). Seventh, he animates this through divine soul (34 B). In the eighth place he imparts to it revolution in time (36 B–37 A). Ninth, he establishes the sanctuaries of the gods in it which create together ‘the perfect year’ (39 D 5). In the tenth place, he makes it all complete by producing all the animals in the likeness of the fourfold idea [of Animal Itself]. (*In Tim.* ii. 5. 17–31)

Some of these Demiurgic gifts contribute more towards the divinity of the cosmos than others. In particular, the fact that the cosmos is furnished with soul and intellect makes it a god (i. 292. 4–9). None the less, each of them is a gift that is fitting for a visible god.

The significance of each of these aspects of the cosmos for our ethical development is not always made explicit by Proclus. I shall explore just two of the clearer examples where the ethical implications are drawn out.

(c) *Cosmic self-sufficiency: the fifth gift of the Demiurge*

In *Tim.* 34 B 6–9, Plato claims that the cosmos is able to keep company with itself and be a friend to itself through its own excellence (*δι' ἀρετήν*). In his commentary on this passage Proclus makes much of the cosmos's self-sufficiency in this respect.

. . . but 'through its own excellence' as Plato says, for the person who possesses excellence alone among the particular animals is able to keep company with himself and be content with himself. All those who are bad, however, shrink back from themselves and their own presence when they look into their own depravity. Having been terrified by what is within,²⁴ they pursue the company of others since they are unable to look into themselves. But the virtuous person, when he sees the fine things within himself, is delighted and gladdened. Giving birth to fine thoughts within himself, he clings fondly to his own presence, for it is in our nature to be assimilated to what is fine and noble, but to shun depravity and what is shameful.²⁵ Now then, if the cosmos possesses a virtue that is appropriate to it among its intellectual and psychic essence and in the perfection of its life, then when it looks upon itself, it loves itself and is its own company and is self-sufficient. (*In Tim.* ii. 110. 16–25)

This passage considered in isolation seems to take us back to the worry that we had before about assimilation to the divine as a spiritual rather than an ethical goal. It may be all well and good for the cosmos to be self-absorbed and its own best friend this way. It is the only one of its kind and it would be incompatible with its being blessed if it were lonely on this account. But surely if *we* become like the cosmos in this respect, dwelling on the fine things within ourselves and ignoring what goes on around us, this is precisely the sort of 'flight from this world' that Dillon and Annas find objectionable in the Neoplatonic *telos* of assimilation to god.

But Proclus is not telling us to reject the world or friendship and turn inward upon ourselves. Rather, he is pointing out that the cosmos *has no need* of anyone other than itself, while people who lack virtue do. They need the company of others because what is within themselves is repellent to them and they seek distraction in the company of others. But it does not follow from the claim that the virtuous person who resembles the cosmos *needs* no friends that

²⁴ Reading τὰ ἐντός for τὰ ἐκτός.

²⁵ The language of this passage strongly echoes *Sym.* 192 A and 205 E. See also *Plot.* 1. 6. 5.

he will *have* none. He may have them, in spite of the fact that he does not need them.²⁶

Proclus specifically addresses a potential objection about the self-sufficiency of the cosmos. The self-sufficiency of the cosmos in no way divorces (*ἀπέσπασται*) the cosmos from its maker (*In Tim.* ii. 90. 3–8). Quite the opposite: its self-sufficiency unifies the cosmos with the Demiurge by making it similar to him in this respect.

Our self-sufficiency no more divorces us from the association with other good people than the cosmos's goodness divorces it from its creator. Even though other virtuous agents are not our creators in the way that the Demiurge is the creator of the universe, we will none the less be unified with them through our mutual resemblance to our common creator.²⁷ We will doubtless *not* be unified with those who are morally vicious and will flee from them as we would flee from all other evils of the sensible world. But this need not imply a flight from *all* aspects of the sensible world and certainly not from what is good in it.

That the self-sufficiency of those who become like the self-sufficient cosmos is no bar to morally significant social interaction is further confirmed in Proclus' *First Alcibiades* commentary. The initial statements by Socrates in that dialogue provide Proclus with an opportunity to consider the nature and influence of *erōs* and the distinction between real and vulgar lovers. The genuine lover is distinguished from the vulgar lover along several dimensions, but the first of these concerns the *autarkeia* of the real lover. The inferior sort of lover *needs* the beloved, while the genuine lover is self-sufficient and filled with power. This self-sufficiency, however, does not prevent him from communicating the particular goods of his own soul to the soul of the beloved (*In Alc.* 35. 8–11).²⁸

It seems to me that Proclus' position has a great deal in common with the Stoic notion that all the wise form one community—a cosmo-polis defined in opposition to vice and foolishness (D.L.

²⁶ Cf. *In Alc.* 108. 22.

²⁷ Proclus claims that friendship is possible only among those who are good. Both friendship and the good have come from the One and from a single cause (*In Alc.* 108. 28–30).

²⁸ The compatibility of friendship with the self-sufficiency of the virtuous person is further confirmed by Marinus' *Life of Proclus*. Marinus' work is no mere biography, but is rather a work of Neoplatonic applied ethics in which he shows how Proclus' possession and exercise of all the virtues made his life a happy one. See Marinus' remarks on Proclus' friendship with Archiadas, the grandson of Proclus' teacher, Plutarch (*Life*, ch. 17).

7. 32). The self-sufficiency of the Neoplatonic sage who resembles the visible god of the cosmos no more sets him apart from the world of human affairs than does the self-sufficiency of the Stoic sage.²⁹

(d) *Cosmic drama and fate: a consequence of the seventh gift*

Many of the Demiurge's gifts to the cosmos make it unified. In doing so, they assimilate it to god.³⁰ One of the most significant ways in which the cosmos is unified is through knowing itself since Proclus accepts, as did Plotinus, the idea that the knowing agent and known thing are one in the act of knowing. In particular, it is in virtue of the world's soul knowing itself that it knows both its causes and the sensibles which are within it (*In Tim.* ii. 296. 11–18).

The world soul's activity of knowing itself is intimately related to its activity of ordering the cosmos. Proclus expresses this idea by talking about its gnostic and kinetic *energeiai* (*In Tim.* ii. 279. 19). He correlates these knowing and motive powers of the world's soul with the circles of the Same and the Different that make it up. As a result of the world soul's motive power it enacts the drama of the world's history.

For since the universe is one living thing, it exhibits sympathy with itself with the result that all the things that have come to be are parts of the life of the universe just like a single drama. It is as if some tragic poet has created a drama in which, after the divine interventions, heroic parts, and other characters (have been introduced),³¹ he assigned to those players who were willing responsibility for the words of the heroes or some other role. The poet himself, though, encompasses in a single cause all of the things that are said. It is necessary to conceive that this is how it is with the world soul. (*In Tim.* ii. 305. 7–15)

We, of course, are among the would-be players in the cosmic

²⁹ You might think that this is cold comfort if you think that Stoic moral philosophy dictates a kind of aloofness from human emotions that is incompatible with genuine engagement in the moral affairs of the world. My limited aim is merely to show that Proclus' Neoplatonic ethics is no worse on the question of 'otherworldliness' than Stoicism.

³⁰ '[E]ach thing, even the lowest grade of being you could mention becomes god by participating in unity according to its rank. For if God and One are the same since there is nothing greater than God and nothing greater than the One, then to be unified is the same as to be deified. Just as, if the Sun and God were the same, to be illuminated would be the same as to be deified' (*In Parm.* 641. 7–12, trans. Morrow–Dillon).

³¹ Reading *ἐντάξας* in the lacuna at ii. 305. 12, with Kroll.

drama of the world soul. To pursue the implications of assimilating ourselves to the cosmos in this respect, let us turn to Proclus' discussion of *Tim.* 41 E 2–42 D 2, where the Demiurge announces to individual souls the laws of fate. Proclus' discussion of fate and its relation to providence is complex and this is not the time to enter into all of its details.³² What is relevant for our purposes is that the lives of human souls are determined by several factors. First, there is the question of which encosmic divinity one's soul is allotted to—recall the way in which Proclus uses the myth of the *Phaedrus* to articulate the idea of one's own leading god with a corresponding set of divine gifts like prophecy or music. Second, there are the particular choices that souls make. Third, there is fate itself. The laws of fate, which may be thought of as the laws of nature that promote the good of the entire cosmos, are inscribed in every soul—both those of the encosmic gods and within our own. We are able to participate in the administration of divine providence together with the leading gods by virtue of the fact that the laws of fate are within our souls (*In Tim.* iii. 274. 31–275. 11). We can follow the lead of our cosmic gods, and perform our part by choosing right actions. Alternatively, we may choose to sin. But if we do so, then the script has provisions for this too: through our own choices, we assign ourselves a life of a certain sort (iii. 275. 11–15). Far from being passive and withdrawing from the world of affairs, our part in the cosmic drama may mean that assimilation to our leading god requires us to play a political or military role.

But one might wonder how being assimilated to god in this sense is supposed to make us *happy*. Those who fail to revert upon their divine causes—and in particular on their own leading god—and instead revert upon the body, are said to be vanquished by the mortal form of life. They become the slaves of fate and the universe *uses* them as irrational instruments (*In Tim.* iii. 277. 16–20). A person's body is symbolic of self-assertion, particularity, and ultimately of conflict. To revert upon the body is to see yourself principally as your body. Since this body is demarcated and a single part of the cosmos, to see yourself in this way is to demarcate yourself and your interests from the totality of creation. Regarding yourself as thus

³² Roughly, fate is the means by which providence is worked out in detail. This accords with Proclus' use of the improvisation that might take place within the script and minimal stage directions of the drama. For the view that fate is a lower level than providence, see Apul. *Dog. Plat.* 1. 12; Plot. 3. 3. 5. 15–17; and Procl. *Prov.* 2. 3. 8–13.

bounded, you experience the world as one that *impinges* upon you and *constrains* you—it is the life of affect and undergoing. To revert upon one's causes, however, is to see oneself primarily as a thing not different in kind from the life that the entire cosmos possesses, for the world owes its life to soul. To return to the analogy of theatre that Proclus uses above, if we imagine ourselves to be the *characters* we are assigned to play in the cosmic drama, then we may imagine that bad things happen to us. We may be bitter that 'we' are small and unimportant or that 'we' meet with many misfortunes and die early on in the second act. But if we think of ourselves as the *players* who portray these characters and think instead what our performance in our role contributes to the success of the play, then we should not be bitter.

As with self-sufficiency, a comparison with Stoic moral philosophy is apt. It turns out that only the wise person who makes his choices conform to the course of nature and the law of fate is actually free. Those who fail to do so are slaves. I imagine that Stoic *homologia* with Nature consists in a similar identification of oneself and one's will with the chain of causes and effects that is fate or Zeus. But it is important to note that nothing in this picture suggests that we should seek to disengage from the drama enacted within the cosmos. The Neoplatonic sage, like the Stoic one, is impassive with respect to outcomes, but nothing that Proclus has to say in the section on the laws of fate suggests that he advocates a withdrawal from public life in the pursuit of an otherworldly ideal.

It may help to reinforce the point that I am making here by contrasting Proclus' use of the image of theatrical performance with Plotinus' use of the same familiar trope in the first of his two treatises on providence.

We should be spectators of murders, and all deaths, and takings and sackings of cities, as if they were on the stages of theatres, all changes of scenery and costume and acted wailings and weepings. For really here in the events of our life it is not the soul within but the outside shadow of man which cries and moans and carries on in every sort of way on a stage which is the whole earth . . . Doings like these belong to a man who knows how to live only the lower and external life and is not aware that he is playing in his tears, even when they are serious tears. (3. 2. 15. 44–53, trans. Armstrong)

To the extent that this passage expresses a commitment to the impassivity of the soul, Proclus would agree: things in the realm

of generation can only affect the soul through the soul's mistaken identification with its sensible image.³³ But it seems to me that by identifying the person with only the 'higher part', Plotinus belittles the role that virtuous souls may play in the administration of divine providence. By contrast, Proclus thinks that becoming like our leading god requires that we play our parts seriously and well.

7. Conclusion

It would be foolish to deny that Proclus' moral philosophy is otherworldly in many ways. Like any good Platonist, he thinks that Truth, Being, and Goodness go together; that they come in degrees; and that the intelligible world manifests them to a greater degree than the sensible world. None the less, I have argued that when we consider the various levels at which divinity manifests itself in Proclus' metaphysics, much of the tension between an ethical and a spiritual version of the goal of living is eased. Proclus' theory of the human soul makes it far less 'out of this world' than does that of Plotinus. Moreover, his application of the Athenian dictum that 'all things are in all in a manner appropriate to the subject' implies that the highest form of Plotinus' civic virtues is manifested even in the intelligible realm. The upshot of this is that assimilation to the gods takes on a much more human form than it does in Plotinus.

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³³ Proclus provides a nice metaphor to help us understand the impassivity of the soul in *In Tim.* iii. 330. 9–24. We are to imagine a person seeing his reflection in a rushing river. Seeing the way in which the moving waters distort his image, he may falsely imagine that his face is actually being deformed in this way. This thought, in turn, might actually cause him distress. So too, what happens to our bodies does not really alter our souls. It is through identification with our bodies that we ourselves bring about distress in our souls.

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