

Damascius and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

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Introduction¹

The mention of Pseudo-Dionysius in contemporary Neoplatonism scholarship often connotes connections to Proclus—which, indeed, are more than certain.² Less often considered, however, is the connection to Damascius, and more so in connection with Damascius’ metaphysics. Granted, there has been growing interest in the relation between Ps.-Dionysius and Damascius, particularly in connection with the pseudonymous author’s connection to the Platonist Academy in Athens. One provocative thesis put forward by the likes of Carlo Maria Mazzucchi and others is that the Ps.-Dionysius is, in fact, Damascius himself—with the further thesis that he was attempting a “crypto-pagan” project, preserving a pagan Neoplatonist framework through Christian language.³ Those like Ernesto Mainoldi, Gioacchino Curiello, and others have decisively shown the weakness of the identity hypothesis, and more so the so-called “crypto-pagan” thesis.⁴ Yet that there is a

¹ This paper is dedicated to the memory of Wayne Hankey, whom I met in March 2018 in Nova Scotia, as I was fresh off defending my PhD thesis on Proclus and Damascius. Wayne pushed me to work on the influence of Damascius in Pseudo-Dionysius, although I barely touched the latter in my dissertation—though I have long been interested in Dionysius’ reception and transformation of Damascius and previous Platonists. Wayne’s influence on this question has lingered in my mind over the years, and having been given the opportunity to work on the topic, I feel it is no less than fortuitous and timely that this paper should come to be. With that in mind, besides belated, heartfelt gratitude to Wayne, I wish to thank Gheorghe Paşcalău for his very generous invitation to contribute a piece on Pseudo-Dionysius for this volume, as well as his immense help in revising this paper. I also wish to thank Evan King, Jan Opsomer, Gerd Van Riel, and Peter Adamson (from previous conversations in the olden days of my doctoral work) for their generous support and feedback in developing this paper. Finally I wish to thank the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (FWO), within the framework of the project, “Substance and the Sensible World between Pagan Platonism and Early Byzantine Christians” (grant ref. 3H210442), for their generous support in the preparation of this article.

² Among multiple publications on the topic, see Henri-Dominique Saffrey: *New Objective Links Between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus*, in: *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. by Dominic O’Meara, Norfolk 1982, pp. 64–74; István Perczel: *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology: A Preliminary Study*, in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, ed. by Alain-Philippe Segonds and Carlos Steel, Leuven 2000, pp. 491–530; and Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi: *The Transfiguration of Proclus’ Legacy: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Late Neoplatonic School of Athens*, in *Proclus and His Legacy*, ed. by Danielle Layne and David Butorac, Berlin 2017, pp. 199–217. See also (as I will regularly reference them below) Sarah Wear and John Dillon: *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition*, Aldershot, Burlington: 2007; and Timothy Riggs: *Erôs, the Son, and the Gods as Metaphysical Principles in Proclus and Dionysius*, in: *Dionysius* 28 (2010), pp. 97–130; and T. Riggs: *How to Speak of the Trinity: Henadology, Dionysius and Modern Commentary*, in: *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (1/2) (2011), pp. 70–82.

³ See Carlo Maria Mazzucchi: *Damascio, autore del Corpus Dionysiacum, e il dialogo Peri Politikès Epistemès*, in: *Aevum* 80 (2006), pp. 299–334; and Tuomo Lankila: *A Crypto-Pagan Reading of the Figure of Hierotheus and the “Dormition” Passage in the Corpus Areopagiticum*, in: *In Proclus and His Legacy*, ed. by Danielle Layne and David D. Butorac, Berlin 2017, pp. 175–182.

⁴ See Gioacchino Curiello: *Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius: An Impossible Identification*, in: *Dionysius* 31 (2013), pp. 101–116; and Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi: *Dietro “Dionigi l’Areopagita”: La genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysiacum*, Rome 2018, pp. 108–113.

connection between the two figures, at least on some level, still cannot be refuted: as Mainoldi affirms,⁵ the figure of “Dionysius” still uses the language of the Athenian Academy, even if he uses the terms of the Academy within a decisively different universe—i.e. a Trinitarian Christian universe. And all the more, the parallels in terms and language, and even metaphysics, remain between Dionysius⁶ and Damascius.

In this respect, Salvatore Lilla’s analysis remains the most insightful analysis between the two authors, particularly in singling out textual lines of influence from Damascius over that of Proclus and other Neoplatonists.⁷ Lilla points out a number of particular areas of convergence and divergence between the two authors:⁸

1. the influence of the One-All (ἐν πάντα) from Damascius’ framework in Dionysius;
2. Dionysius’ first principle in comparison with the Damascius’ first principle, *viz.* the Ineffable, and the *via negativa*;
3. the influence of Damascius’ notion of the first intelligible triad on Dionysius’ Trinitarianism;⁹ and,
4. Dionysius’ critique of Damascius’ denial that union and distinction are “real properties” (*propriétés réelles*) of the first principle.

On a number of these points Lilla’s claims are quite right. For instance, Lilla correctly notes the close textual parallels of *De divinis nominibus* V.9 with various passages on the One from Damascius’ *De Principiis* (esp. vol. 1 in Westerink-Combès’ edition) that describe it as “encompassing/comprehending” or “having encompassed” (περιληπτική, προείληφεν), and “having

⁵ Among other passages, see Mainoldi: *Dietro “Dionigi l’Areopagita”*, pp. 411, 420, 434. One of Mainoldi’s more intriguing claims is the *Corpus Dionysiacum* is really the result of multiple authors’ revisions, going back to a student of Proclus and Damascius, roughly between the period of 485–543 AD (479–481). In this he places himself between those who emphasize a strong continuity between pagan Neoplatonism and a “Christianization” of that Neoplatonism (e.g. Eric Perl, Stephen Gersh, et al.) and those who emphasize a strong break between pagan Neoplatonists and Dionysius (e.g. Alexander Golitzin).

⁶ Here onward I refer to the Pseudo-Dionysius simply as “Dionysius”.

⁷ See esp. Salvatore Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius*, in: *Denys l’Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident: Actes du Colloque International, Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1994*, ed. by Ysabel De Andia, Paris 1997, p. 135, n. 100, who references scholars like Ronald F. Hathaway: *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius: A Study in the Form and Meaning of the Pseudo-Dionysian Writings*, The Hague 1969, pp. 18–19, who note certain parallel terms in Damascius, which, however, are also found in Proclus in other previous Neoplatonists. Not discussed in Lilla’s article is Rosemary Griffith: *Neo-Platonism and Christianity: Pseudo-Dionysius and Damascius*, in: *Studia Patristica XXIX*, ed. by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Leuven 1997, pp. 238–243, who argues for the parallel between Ps.-Dionysius and Damascius in terms of “obscurity” and “pomposity” of style (pp. 240–241), while noting certain parallels in concepts, such as speaking of the first principle as silence, darkness, and transcending reason (pp. 241–243). As far as I see, Griffith makes similar mistakes to Hathaway, which Lilla more carefully points out, insofar as the points equally point to Proclus (if not other Platonists). In effect Lilla covers the same ground and more conclusively demonstrates the parallels, as we will shortly see.

⁸ Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite*, p. 135.

⁹ Ana Kiria: *Damaskios’ triadische Theorie des Einen im Hinblick auf ihre Divergenz gegenüber Iamblichos’ und Proklos’ Prinzipientheorien*, in *Phasis* 25 (2022), pp. 4–48, although not discussing the connection with Ps.-Dionysius, draws out a number of very distinct parallels in Damascius’ description of the inner-triad of the One-All, All-One, and Unified to the Christian triad of Trinitarian persons (*viz.* the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). In this piece I effectively try to show Ps.-Dionysius as making explicit the Trinitarian intuitions from Damascius’ framework that she points out.

anticipated” (προληπτική, προείληφεν) all things (πάντα) within itself.¹⁰ Although Lilla restricts himself to the textual parallels, the comparison is even clearer when juxtaposing Dionysius’ language for the first cause with other Neoplatonists prior to Damascius. Proclus, for instance, adamantly denies that the One can be referred to in terms like these, since it is entirely unparticipated: as such, it is without any relation to all things, and cannot be said to “encompass” or “anticipate” the effects that come after it. Instead Proclus refers to the henads below the One as “anticipating” (προειλήφασιν) the beings which they directly produce:¹¹ in this sense the One causes all beings, however in a mediated sense, *viz.* through the henads.

This broader background of the change between Proclus and Damascius makes Dionysius’ language more noteworthy, and we should attempt to understand Dionysius’ use of Damascius—effectively the thesis that this chapter will investigate. For with Damascius we see a radical turn toward a positive notion of the One’s causality, insofar as the One is now described as the cause of all things in a direct way, in contrast to Proclus and other previous Neoplatonists. In one way this marks a return to Plotinus’ description of the One as similarly “containing” all things, although in perhaps a more affirmative way than even Plotinus admits.¹²

The comparison to Dionysius becomes apt when seen in this light. Various scholars over the last few decades have noted Dionysius’ “collapse” of the first and second hypothesis of Plato’s *Parmenides* in his description of God,¹³ with the first hypothesis representing all the negations that apply to the One and the second representing the positive assertions that apply to the second principle, Intellect, or the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. As with other early Christian views on God,

¹⁰ Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite*, pp. 136–141. Among other passages that Lilla cites, see esp. Ps.-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* I.5, 116,1–2 (πάντων μὲν οὐσα περιληπτική και προληπτική και συλληπτική), 117,14–15 (και αὐτὴ ἐστὶ πρὸ πάντων και τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῇ συνέστηκεν); IV.7, 151,2–3 (τῆς ἐν ἐνὶ τὰ ὅλα συνειληφυσίας αἰτίας); V.9, 188,17–18, 189,2–5 (see below, p. 45), and XIII.3, 228,6–7 (πάντα γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ ἐν ἐνοειδῶς προείληφέν τε και περιείληφεν) and 228,10–11 (ἐν ἧ πάντα ἐνικῶς συνήκται και ὑπερήνωνται και πρόεστιν ὑπερουσίως). For Damascius, among other passages cited, see *princ.* I, 3,10–12 (see below, p. [[7]]), 4,8–9 (ἐκεῖνο γὰρ τῷ ἐν εἶναι πάντα ἐστὶ τὸν ἀπλοῦστατον τρόπον), 4,11–12 (και τῆς ἀπλουστάτης παντότητος και τῆς πάντα καταπιούσης ἀπλότητος, οἷα ἢ τοῦ ἐνός), 7,18–20 (τὸ ἐν ἡμεῖς ἐννοοῦμεν ... εἰς τὸ ἀπλοῦστατον και περιεκτικώτατον), 11,3–5 (... ἐπινοοῦμεν ὡς ἀπλοῦστατον και περιεκτικώτατον και οὐχὶ μόνον ἐν ... ἀλλ’ ὡς πάντα ἐν και πρὸ πάντων ἐν), and so on.

¹¹ Cf. Proclus, *inst. theol.* 118, esp. lines 4–11.

¹² See e.g. Plotinus, *enn.* V.3,15,24–33, where Plotinus speaks of the One as possessing all things (πάντα) beforehand (πρότερον), but not in their actuality (ἐνέργεια) as a plurality, but as the “power of all things” (δύναμις πάντων). At the same time, compare with other passages like *enn.* VI.9,2,44–47, denying absolutely that the One can be πάντα in any sense: “The One then will not be all things, for so it would no longer be one; and it cannot be Intellect, for in this way it would be all things since Intellect is all things; and it cannot be Being (τὸ ὄν); for Being is all things.” (οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ τὸ ἐν τὰ πάντα ἔσται, οὕτω γὰρ οὐκέτι ἐν εἶη· οὐδὲ νοῦς, και γὰρ ἂν οὕτως εἶη τὰ πάντα τοῦ νοῦ τὰ πάντα ὄντος· οὐδὲ τὸ ὄν· τὸ γὰρ ὄν τὰ πάντα.) As we will see, this is also a contrast to Damascius, who rather positively affirms the One as the cause of τὰ πάντα, and thus is called τὰ πάντα. See Cristina D’Ancona Costa: *Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers on the Causality of the First Principle*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. by Lloyd P. Gerson, Cambridge 1996, pp. 370–374, who shows well Plotinus’ model of causality for the One following on his characterization of the Forms and Intellect in producing particulars, namely as formless and undetermined in relation to particulars (and particular Forms) as formed and determined.

¹³ Among others, see Eugenio Corsini: *Il trattato De divinis nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide*, Turin 1962, pp. 42–44; Stephen Gersh: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*. Leiden 1978, pp. 153–167; and (discussed more below) Wear and Dillon: *Dionysius the Areopagite*, pp. 15–17.

Dionysius emphasizes the dual aspects of transcendence (= first hypothesis) and creativity (= second hypothesis) for God. However, as Timothy Riggs has argued, Ps.-Dionysius does not mark a fundamental change from Proclus' framework, but rather a refinement: i.e. he does not so much "collapse" the hypotheses as rather adapt Proclus' framework for the henads to God, or more specifically the Trinitarian persons. As I hope to show below, this adaptation is also seen in the case of Damascius' One, which both strengthens Riggs' thesis and grounds Lilla's textual claims within the broader view of Damascius' framework.

This chapter will build on Lilla's foundational paper by setting the Pseudo-Dionysius' understanding of God's nature and causality against Damascius' transformed framework for the One. It is only with this background that we can better understand how Dionysius uses and responds to Damascius—and, in turn, how we can better understand Dionysius' description of divine causality. In this respect Lilla's reading requires some refinement, especially in his points 3 and 4, where, so I will argue, Dionysius comes closer to Damascius than Lilla recognizes: for Damascius also appeals to religious revelation, as Dionysius himself does in Lilla's citation in point 4, as giving us real knowledge of the realm of the first principle where reason, by itself, is unable. This, among other points, will be addressed by a reconsideration of Damascius' framework: it is with an adequate grasp of Damascius that we can then make a better estimation of Damascius' afterlife in a key Christian philosophical and theological figure who held widespread influence across the Christian and Islamic world.¹⁴

From Proclus to Damascius: The One as First Cause

Understanding Damascius' One necessitates understanding the previous notions of the One to which he is responding. In looking at Damascius, one's analysis can be easily eclipsed by his argument for the Ineffable as more the first principle than the One—and indeed the Ineffable is

¹⁴ Beyond Ps.-Dionysius' well-known reception in the Byzantine world through John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor, in the Latin Christian world one finds Ps.-Dionysius' influence mediated mainly through Eriugena (among others, see Gersh: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*; and Wayne Hankey and Lloyd Gerson: *John Scotus Eriugena*, in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Lloyd P. Gerson, Cambridge 2010, vol. 2, pp. 829–842); and in the Arabic/Islamic world, one sees parallels of Ps.-Dionysius' framework in the anonymous Arabic text, *Kitāb al-Īdāh fī l-ḥayr al-maḥḍ li-Aristūṭālīs* (or in its Latin title, the *Liber de causis*), a modified paraphrase of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, which in turn widely influenced the Islamic Arabic world: see Cristina D'Ancona Costa: *La doctrine néoplatonicienne de l'être entre l'antiquité tardive et la moyen âge. Le Liber de causis par rapport à ses sources*, in: *Recherches sur le Liber de causis*, Paris 1995, pp. 147–152, and Cristina D'Ancona: *Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology for Being in Arabic Translation*, in: *Studia Graeco-Arabica* 1 (2011), p. 43, who argues for Ps.-Dionysius' direct influence in the text. It should also be noted, one sees a loose parallel to Damascius in Ibn Ḥazm of Córdoba (994–1064 CE), who attacks the ascription of "cause" to God, and argues that God transcends the attribute of "cause" as purely ineffable: on this see Peter Adamson: *Philosophical Theology*, in: *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. by Sabine Schmidtke, Oxford 2016, pp. 302–303; and Jonathan Greig: *The First Principle in Late Neoplatonism*, Leiden 2021, pp. 17–18; whether or not Damascius exercised direct, textual influence on Ibn Ḥazm is uncertain. For other analyses and arguments of Damascius' influence (direct or indirect) in other Islamic authors, see Michael Chase: *Damascius and al-Nazzām on the Atomic Leap*, in: *Mnemosyne* 72 (2019), pp. 585–620; Daniel De Smit: *La quiétude de l'intellect: néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Hamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, Leuven 1995, esp. pp. 74–75, 79, 98–99, and 142; and Daniel De Smit's contribution in this volume (*Damascius et les prémisses philosophiques du tawḥīd ismaélien*), pp. [[xxx]].

finally significant for Damascius' understanding of the One.¹⁵ But it will be important to see first how Damascius' discussion is a response to the problem of the One's causality: for, insofar as all previous Neoplatonists maintain the One's status as the first principle, they emphasize its transcendent character to the extent that it cannot be said to pre-contain its effect in the way other, lower kinds of causes anticipate their effects.¹⁶

Proclus' One as Beyond All Things

This comes out, for instance, in Proposition 5 of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, which establishes that all plurality is posterior to the One (πάν πλῆθος δευτερόν ἐστι τοῦ ἐνός). When Proclus initially concludes with the One's priority over plurality at line 20,¹⁷ in lines 21–23 he raises the possibility that the One is “unity by subsistence (ὑπαρξίς)”, yet “not-one by participation (μεθέξις)”, insofar as plurality participates it: in this case, the One would be pluralized (πεπληθυσμένον) since it unifies plurality.¹⁸ In this sense, Proclus recognizes that the principle which directly causes its effect—i.e. a “One” which unifies its product—is itself characterized by the effect's nature. It is this causal premise that leads Proclus to conclude that the One-itself (τὸ αὐτόεν) must transcend both this hypothetical “One” and the plurality which is unified. From this, Proclus asserts that the One must be entirely unparticipated.¹⁹

One can see this conceptual framework at work when Proclus critiques Iamblichus' conception of the One in the *Parmenides Commentary*. Although he does not explicitly name Iamblichus, Proclus mentions the position of unnamed “others” who maintain that the One

[...] has in some way the causes of all these things in an unutterable and inconceivable way, in the most unitary way, and unknowable to us but knowable to itself. And the hidden causes of wholes are in it as paradigms of paradigms, the first whole-itself before wholes, not being in need of parts: for the whole before parts is in need of the parts in some way, and this being the very thing Plato confutes, while the whole before wholes is in no way in need of parts.²⁰

¹⁵ I discuss this in Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 219–307, esp. pp. 291–297. See also Gheorghe Pașcalău: *Die “unartikulierbaren Begriffe” des neuplatonikers Damaskios*, Berlin 2018; and Marilena Vlad: *Damascius et l'ineffable: récit de l'impossible discours*, Paris 2019.

¹⁶ The rest of this section summarizes my argument in Greig: *The First Principle*, esp. the final two chapters in pp. 154–307.

¹⁷ Proclus, *inst. th.* 5,18–20: “If, then, it is one, as unity in itself, and [if] it will in no way be participated by plurality, plurality will be entirely posterior to the One, as participating unity, and not being participated by the One”. (εἰ μὲν οὖν τὸ ἐν, τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἐν ὄν, μηδαμῆ μετέχει πλῆθους, ἔσται τὸ πλῆθος πάντη τοῦ ἐνός ὑστερον, μετέχον μὲν τοῦ ἐνός, οὐ μετεχόμενον δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐνός.)

¹⁸ Proclus, *inst. th.* 5,21–23: εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐν μετέχει πλῆθους, κατὰ μὲν τὴν ὑπαρξιν ὡς ἐν ὑφεστός, κατὰ δὲ τὴν μέθεξιν οὐχ ἓν, πεπληθυσμένον ἔσται τὸ ἐν, ὡσπερ τὸ πλῆθος ἡνωμένον διὰ τὸ ἐν.

¹⁹ See the end of the proposition in Proclus, *inst. th.* 5,33–35; see also 116 and 123 (esp. lines 3–4).

²⁰ Proclus, *in Plat. Parm.* 1107,9–16: ἔχει πως τὰς τούτων αἰτίας ἀπάντων ἀφράστως καὶ ἀνεπινοήτως καὶ τὸν ἐνικώτατον τρόπον καὶ ἡμῖν μὲν ἀγνώστως, ἑαυτῷ δὲ γνωστῶς· καὶ ἔστι τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ κρύφια τῶν ὄλων αἴτια παραδείγματα παραδειγμάτων, καὶ τὸ πρῶτον αὐτοῖον πρὸ ὄλων, οὐ δεηθὲν μερῶν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρὸ τῶν μερῶν ὄλον δεῖσθαι πως τῶν μερῶν καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι ὅπερ ἀνεῖλεν ὁ Πλάτων· τὸ δὲ ὄλον πρὸ τῶν ὄλων οὐδὲν δεῖσθαι μερῶν. (This and all subsequent translations my own unless otherwise noted.)

In this case, Proclus' "other commentators" (i.e. Iamblichus)²¹ maintain that this version of the One escapes the entanglement with plurality implied in the notion of a "whole before parts" (ὅλον πρὸ τῶν μερῶν), even if the latter is not pluralized in the way a whole of parts (ὅλον ἐκ τῶν μερῶν) is. In one way this is similar to Proclus' solution in Prop. 5 by placing the One-itself an extra step above the "one" which unifies plurality. Yet, as we can see in Proclus' response, the problem of implicit plurality remains even if the One is conceived as a "whole before wholes" (ὅλον πρὸ τῶν ὅλων), since "we would inadvertently double the beings: for there will be the beings themselves and their causes subsisting in the One, and in the case of these we would enquire how, being many, they become unified (ἡνωται)".²² In effect this repeats the problem of Prop. 5's conditional "One" which is one καθ' ὑπαρξιν but not-one κατὰ μεθέξιν: that which unifies must ultimately be "one" in a strict sense, and beyond any predication of what is "not-one", whether plurality or, as it turns out, all things (πάντα). Indeed Proclus makes this explicit shortly after he draws out the absurdity of positing a hidden plurality in the One: either one posits a higher, similar "One" that unifies the hidden plurality of the subsequent "One", and repeats *ad infinitum*, or "we will preserve it as One in the proper sense and remove all things (πάντα) from it".²³ For Proclus the message is clear: there can be no predication of πάντα in any sense, even by causality, to the One.

If we step back briefly and compare Proclus' account with Ps.-Dionysius, the contrast could not be clearer. In texts like *De divinis nominibus* V.8 and 10, Ps.-Dionysius predicates all things of God altogether (ἅμα), while simultaneously asserting that God "does not belong to all things" as "entirely relation, entirely form, and without shape".²⁴ Lilla and others recognize correctly that this is one of several instances where Ps.-Dionysius implicitly applies the negations of Plato's *Parmenides*' first hypothesis, as well as the positive assertions of the *Parmenides*' second hypothesis, equally to God as the first cause.²⁵ By contrast, Proclus restricts the first cause to the first hypothesis' negations, as entirely beyond the affirmations implied in the second hypothesis that point to the domain of Being and Intellect. At the same time, it is worth noting that Proclus also places the henads in the second hypothesis, and not the first hypothesis: as unity καθ' ὑπαρξιν, the henads are the same nature as the One-itself, such that the first hypothesis' negations that apply to the One *a fortiori* apply to each of them.²⁶ On the other hand, as the causes of their respective, distinct kinds and orders of beings, the positive assertions that pertain to each kind of Being *a fortiori* are predicated of the respective henad or henads by their causality (κατ' αἰτίαν). It

²¹ See John Dillon: *Porphyry and Iamblichus in Proclus: Commentary on the Parmenides*, in: *Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies*, ed. by John Duffy and John Peradotto, Buffalo 1988, pp. 21–48 (esp. pp. 31–32), and Steel's apparatus for this passage, which indicate Iamblichus as the target. But see also Cristina D'Ancona: *Primo principio e mondo intelligibile nella metafisica di Proclo—problemi e soluzioni*, in: *Elenchos* 12 (1991), pp. 285–287, who argues the target is rather Porphyry (and ultimately Plotinus). Cf. Greig: *The First Principle*, p. 65, n. 138.

²² Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 1108,4–6: οὕτω λάθοιμεν ἂν διπλασιάσαντες τὰ ὄντα· αὐτὰ τε γὰρ ἔσται καὶ τὰ αἴτια αὐτῶν τὰ ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ ὑπάρχοντα, καὶ περὶ τούτων ζητήσομεν πῶς πολλὰ ὄντα ἡνωται.

²³ Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 1108,7–8: κυρίως ἐν αὐτὸ φυλάττοντες πάντα ἀφαιρήσομεν. Cf. Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 223–224 and p. 176 (esp. n. 63).

²⁴ Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* V.8, 187,12–14: διὸ καὶ πάντα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἅμα κατηγορεῖται, καὶ οὐδὲν ἔστι τῶν πάντων, πάνσχημος, πανείδεος, ἄμορφος. See also *de div. nom.* V.10, 189,12–14): καὶ ἔστῶς καὶ κινούμενος καὶ οὔτε ἔστῶς οὔτε κινούμενος οὔτε ἀρχὴν ἔχων ἢ μέσον ἢ τελευτὴν οὔτε ἐν τινὶ τῶν ὄντων οὐδέ τι τῶν ὄντων ὢν.

²⁵ Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, p. 119, esp. n. 11. Cf. n. 13, above.

²⁶ See n. 58 below.

is this latter reasoning that leads Proclus to reject Iamblichus' placement of the gods (i.e. implicitly the henads)²⁷ in the first hypothesis, since they positively anticipate the specific kinds of Being, and instead places them in the second hypothesis.²⁸ As we will eventually see elaborated, it is clear that Ps.-Dionysius partially returns to this Iamblichean formulation that blurs the lines between the first and second hypothesis, albeit in the case of the one God rather than plurality of gods (or henads). This blurring is not unique, however, but finds precedent in Damascius.

Damascius' One as Beyond All Things and as All Things

We should next turn to Damascius on the One, where there is, in fact, a blurring of the distinction between the first and second hypotheses, and with good reason. Damascius' framing of the question of the first principle's relation to all things (τὰ πάντα) in the first *aporia* in *De principiis*²⁹ implicitly raises the question of the relation between the first and second hypothesis. One of the outcomes of Damascius' *aporia*, as has been well noted, is that one cannot positively assert whether the first principle "transcends" all things or is something "belonging to" or "together with" all things (and *vice versa*): one is initially left in silence with both horns of the difficulty cancelling the other out. Why there is indeed a difficulty, especially coming from Proclus, becomes clearer shortly after the initial *aporia* when Damascius in *De Principiis* I, 2.21–3.12, describes how all things (τὰ πάντα) are perceived, beginning with pure plurality and ending with the One.³⁰ Damascius' formulation for the One in this scheme is noteworthy in departing from Proclus' language by asserting that it is itself τὰ πάντα:

[...] the One is not something among the many things (τὰ πολλά): for if it even were, it would be something completing the many, as each of the others [also complete the many]. But as many as are the many things according to a certain division (κατὰ τινα μερισμόν), that One is also so many things before division, in the mode of the entirely partless. For the One is not like a minimum, as Speusippus seemed to say, but "One" as absorbing all things. By its simplicity it has resolved all things, and it has made all things one (ἓν). Wherefore all things are from it, so that it is itself "all things" before all things.³¹

²⁷ Whether Iamblichus holds to a fully-developed doctrine of henads, in line with Proclus and Syrianus, has been disputed in the scholarship: on this see, John Dillon: *Iamblichus and Henads Again*, in: *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. by H. J. Blumenthal and Gillian Clark, London 1993, pp. 48–54; Dominic O'Meara: *Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, New York 1989, pp. 138–140, 205; and more recently, Svetlana Mesyats: *Iamblichus' Exegesis of Parmenides' Hypotheses and His Doctrine of Divine Henads*, in: *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism*, ed. by Eugene Afonasin, John Dillon, and John F. Finamore, Leiden 2012, pp. 151–75 (cf. Greig: *The First Principle*, p. 64, n. 133).

²⁸ See Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 1054,31–1055,2 and 1061,25–1064,10. Cf. John Dillon: *Porphyrus and Iamblichus in Proclus: Commentary on the Parmenides*, in: *Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies*, ed. by John Duffy and John Peradotto, Buffalo 1988, pp. 21–48; and Sarah Wear: *The Teachings of Syrianus on Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides*, Leiden 2011, pp. 234–241.

²⁹ Damascius, *princ.* I, 1,4–2,20.

³⁰ Damascius, *princ.* I, 2,21–3,12.

³¹ Damascius, *princ.* I, 3,4–12: ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐν οὐ τῶν πολλῶν τί ἐστίν· ἢ γὰρ ἂν καὶ συνεπλήρου τὰ πολλά, καθάπερ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον· ἀλλ' ὅσαπέρ ἐστὶ τὰ πολλά κατὰ δὴ τινα μερισμόν, τοσαῦτα καὶ τὸ ἐν ἐκεῖνο πρὸ τοῦ μερισμοῦ κατὰ τὸ πάντη ἀμερές. οὐ γὰρ ἐν ὡς ἐλάχιστον, καθάπερ ὁ Σπεύσιππος ἔδοξε λέγειν, ἀλλ' ἐν ὡς πάντα καταπίον· τῇ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ ἀπλότητι πάντα συνανέλυσεν, καὶ ἐν τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν. διὸ καὶ πάντα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι πάντα καὶ αὐτὸ πρὸ τῶν πάντων.

On the one hand, Damascius' language bears similarities to Proclus' and other Neoplatonists' descriptions for the One: it is entirely without parts (*ἀμερές*), beyond or before division (*πρὸ τοῦ μερισμοῦ*) which characterizes plurality, and is totally simple in contrast to the monad and the plurality which comes after it. On the other hand, Damascius' conclusion is striking: since all things come from the One, it must consequently be "itself 'all things' before all things" (*πάντα αὐτὸ πρὸ τῶν πάντων*). What is noteworthy in Damascius' description, unlike Proclus', is how he considers the One as the origin and, thus, the cause of *τὰ πάντα*, which fits the language Proclus uses for the henads: just as each henad is identified with the effect that it produces by its causality (*κατ' αἰτίαν*), Damascius makes the further move to say that the One must *also* be its effect, i.e. *τὰ πάντα*, by causality (*κατ' αἰτίαν*).

Yet Damascius is not unaware of Proclus' challenge hearkening back to Iamblichus, especially if *τὰ πάντα* is nothing but plurality, as we saw above. Later in *De principiis* I, 92.16–21, Damascius raises an *aporia* about *τὰ πάντα* being predicated of the One: if *τὰ πάντα* is plurality, or multitude (*πολλά*), the One cannot be *τὰ πάντα*.³² Yet as he goes on, Damascius denies that *τὰ πάντα*—that is, the distinct causes of *τὰ πάντα*—are to be placed in the One: in this sense, *τὰ πάντα* cannot be predicated of the One,³³ ultimately agreeing with Proclus' critique of Iamblichus. Yet Damascius goes further than Proclus to recognize that there is still *some* sense in which *τὰ πάντα* is predicated of the One: i.e. as "all things dissolved (*ἀναχυθέντων*) into the simplicity of the One and no longer having the meaning, 'all things'".³⁴ Damascius thus refines in what way the One is "all things" (*τὰ πάντα*): as "dissolving" the plurality characteristic of *τὰ πάντα*, such that the term, "all things"/*τὰ πάντα*, no longer has its proper account in the One—i.e. in terms of the plurality that characterizes it in its own domain outside the One. Instead, Damascius conceives of the One as more perfectly encapsulating *τὰ πάντα* in itself than *τὰ πάντα* as a product of the One: in other words, the unity of the One expresses more perfectly *τὰ πάντα* than *τὰ πάντα* itself, insofar as the latter lacks the absolute unity characterizing the One.³⁵ In this way, Damascius radically changes how the One is to be understood: instead of remaining entirely uncoordinated and transcendent in relation to its effects, as for Proclus, the One is inherently related to what it produces when understood in causal terms—partly reflecting the transformation in his understanding of causality in general. This becomes part of Damascius' argument for an entirely ineffable principle (*viz.* the Ineffable, *τὸ ἄρρητον/ἀπόρητον*) over the One, which has no causal relation to all things/*τὰ πάντα*, which preserves the One's role as the first cause of *τὰ πάντα* in a positive sense, while safeguarding the first principle's transcendence by distinguishing the Ineffable from the One. Though Damascius' notion of the Ineffable has been a highlight for scholarship, it is his notion of the One that is perhaps of greater import in his transformation of Proclus' metaphysics.

³² Damascius, *princ.* I, 92.16–21.

³³ Damascius, *princ.* I, 93.13–15: "For indeed we do not put the causes of all things in the One, such that it would thereby be all things, according to the entirety of causes". (*καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ αἰτίας τῶν πάντων ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποτίθεμεν, ἵνα ταύτη γοῦν εἴη πάντα, κατὰ τὴν παντότητα τῶν αἰτίων.*)

³⁴ Damascius, *princ.* I, 93.20–21: *ἀλλ' ὡς εἰς τὴν ἀπλότητα αὐτοῦ πάντων ἀναχυθέντων καὶ οὐκέτι πάντων εἶναι βουλομένων.*

³⁵ Damascius, *princ.* I, 94.9–12: "In this way we say that all things are one (*ἐν*), and that the One is all things—and yet more, that it is all things according to unity (*κατὰ τὸ ἐν*). And all things are not entirely 'one', but that One is entirely 'all things'". (*καὶ οὕτως ἐν τὰ πάντα λέγομεν, καὶ τὸ ἐν πάντα καὶ ἔτι πλέον, ὅτι κατὰ τὸ ἐν τὰ πάντα· καὶ τὰ μὲν πάντα οὐ πάντως ἐν, τὸ δὲ ἐν ἐκεῖνο πάντως τὰ πάντα.*)

One corollary of Damascius' transformation is that it changes how the One is related to the intermediate principles which produce Being: as Gerd Van Riel quips, Damascius discovers different metaphysical levels within the One.³⁶ Late Neoplatonists, from Iamblichus to Proclus, posit two principles, namely the Limit and Unlimited, which come after the One as the direct causes of the principle, Being-itself, and all subsequent beings. For late Neoplatonists (including Damascius), Being is characterized by the combination of the properties of limit (πέρας) and unlimited (ἄπειρον), which are equated with unity and plurality or power, respectively: the principles of Limit-itself and Unlimited-itself are then responsible for their respective aspects in Being-itself, mediated to all lower beings.³⁷ One difficulty in Proclus' formulation for the Limit and Unlimited is their relation to the One and the henads, especially the latter, where the henads are also causes of Being, albeit of the different kinds and classes of beings. In *Platonic Theology* III.8–9, Proclus calls the Limit and Unlimited henads, yet this raises more questions than answers when asking how they relate to the other henads: are they a discrete pair of henads that come before the other henads, or are they to be understood as “aspects” of all henads, or are they rather aspects of Being? In any case, Proclus' presentation of the Limit-Unlimited pair, together with the henads, has been a recurring question.³⁸

In certain ways, Damascius' framework is an implicit response to the difficulties raised by Proclus' own. Towards the end of the section on the One in the *De principiis*, Damascius raises a series of aporetic questions on procession from the One, touching on how the Limit and Unlimited come to be after the One. For Damascius, the One's unity is such that any notion of distinction or differentiation cannot obtain in it. To talk about an entity's distinction from the One would imply that the One, in turn, is conditioned by distinction: in literal terms, there can be no distinction between the One and what proceeds from the One. On the one hand, one is led to a paradoxical conclusion: in literal terms nothing proceeds from the One, since the One does not imply distinction in itself; on the other hand, clearly, distinction arises after the One, and as the first cause, the One must anticipate distinction, even if there is no distinction in it.

With the latter difficulty in mind, Damascius attempts a *via media* and proposes the principles of remaining, procession, and reversion—which exist in distinction—can be predicated of the One κατὰ ἀναλογία:

But if someone, as grasping in darkness, wishes to see these [stages] in the same way in those principles through analogy (κατὰ ἀναλογίαν)—not through indication (κατὰ

³⁶ Gerd Van Riel: *Damascius*, in: *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Lloyd Gerson, Cambridge 2010, p. 680: “Thus, Damascius introduces a distinction (albeit a symbolic one) at the level of the One, in a way parallel to the introduction of three stages of the intellect (the intelligible / the intelligible and intellective / the intellective) by Syrianus and Proclus, after Iamblichus' introduction of the intelligible and the intellective as two different layers of the intellect”. See also (in general) Kiria: *Damaskios' triadische Theorie*, esp. pp. 29–40.

³⁷ See e.g. Proclus, *inst. th.* 89–90. The late Neoplatonist framework follows the four-fold framework of Plato's *Philebus* (cf. 16c–e, 23c–d) of the Cause, Limit, Unlimited, and the Mixed (μικτόν), which becomes equated with Being.

³⁸ For recent discussions of this tension on the Limit-Unlimited and henads in Proclus, see (among others) Cristina D'Ancona Costa: *Proclo. Enadi e ἀρχαί nell'ordine sovransensibile*, in: *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 47 (1992): pp. 267–95; Gerd Van Riel: *Les hénades de Proclus sont-elles composées de limite et d'illimité?*, in: *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 85 (3) (2001), pp. 417–32; and Jonathan Greig: *Proclus on the Two Causal Models for the One's Production of Being: Reconciling the Relation of the Henads and the Limit/Unlimited*, in: *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 14 (1) (2020), pp. 23–48.

ἐνδειξίν), but in a stronger way than that, according to the truth which is able to be indicated (ἐνδείκνυσθαι)—let (1) [the first] be analogous to the cause which remains; (2) [let] that which primarily (πρώτως) proceeds from [the first] [be analogous] to procession and the principle of procession properly called (κυρίως); and (3) [let] the third principle from [the first] [be analogous] to the cause which reverts. [...] Except that it should already be sought henceforth whether what remains (τὸ μένον) is different from that which is established from the beginning as One-All (ἐν πάντα), since the latter is not determined. Among the principles after it, which are three [in number], one may say that what remains is the first, since if these principles are entirely perfect and each is undetermined, something further may rather be indicated: (1) by remaining (κατὰ τὸ μένον) one thing further may be indicated, and (2) another by that which proceeds (κατὰ τὸ προϊόν), and (3) another by that which reverts itself (κατὰ τὸ ἐπιστρεφόμενον).³⁹

One thing that is clear in this passage is that Damascius affirms that there *are* principles in the domain of the One,⁴⁰ even though their mode of being is pure unity and without differentiation—i.e. in “darkness”, insofar as our language and concepts are conditioned by distinction. Damascius’ proposal to try speaking of these principles by *analogia*, not just by “indication” (ἐνδειξις), shows that they have a real existence outside our projections—one might say, within the “darkness”—but they cannot be indicated in literal terms: rather, they must be indicated by analogy from the lower level of the One’s effects, where the three stages of remaining, procession, and reversion obtain (e.g. in Intellect).⁴¹ Later on, Damascius, goes on to call these three stages (and ultimately principles) the One-All (τὸ ἐν πάντα) (correlating to [1], above), the All-One (τὸ πάντα ἐν) (correlating to [2]), and the Unified (τὸ ἡνωμένον), which he later relates to the Limit (1), Unlimited (2), and Being (3) from Iamblichus and Proclus.⁴² Unlike the two (especially Iamblichus), Damascius emphasizes that the two principles of the One-All and All-One (and *a fortiori* the Unified) cannot be contradistinguished (ἀντιδιαιρουμένας) in the sense that they have separate natures: rather they have the same shared nature (σύμφυσις), insofar as they both exist in pure

³⁹ Damascius, *princ.* I, 129,1–16: εἰ δὲ τις ἐθέλοι, ὥσπερ ἐν σκότει ἀφάσσω, ὅμως καὶ ἐν ἐκείνοις κατὰ ἀνα-λογίαν ταῦτα θεωρεῖν, οὐ κατὰ ἐνδειξίν, ἀλλὰ κρειττόνως ἢ κατὰ τὴν ἐνδεί-κνυσθαι δυναμένην ἀλήθειαν, ἀναλογεῖτω ἐκεῖνο μὲν τῷ μένοντι αἰτίῳ, τὸ δὲ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ προϊόν πρώτως τῷ προϊόντι καὶ ἄρχοντι τῆς κυρίως προόδου, τὸ δὲ τρίτον ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τῷ ἐπιστρέφοντι. ... πλὴν ὅτι καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἤδη ζητητέον μήποτε ἄλλο τὸ μένον παρὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑποκείμενον ἐν πάντα εἶναι· τοῦτο γὰρ οὐδὲν ἐστὶ διωρισμένον. τῶν δὲ μετ’ αὐτὸ, τριῶν ὄντων, εἴποι τις ἂν πρῶτον εἶναι τὸ μένον· εἰ γὰρ καὶ ταῦτα παντελῆ καὶ ἀδιόριστον ἕκαστον, ἀλλ’ ἤδη μᾶλλον ἂν τι ἐνδείξαιτο· τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὸ μένον ἐνδείξαιτο μᾶλλον, τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὸ προϊόν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἐπιστρεφόμενον.

⁴⁰ Here I use “domain of the One” to indicate the One or principles like the henads that lie above that of differentiated being, even though at this point in the *De principiis*, Damascius seems more concerned to talk about the One by itself—which becomes elaborated into the trio of One-All, All-One, and Unified—before the henads are considered. (In this sense I suggest that the Unified as the “first”, archetypal henad before the other henads emerge after the One: see Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 273–275.)

⁴¹ As we will later this, this is a significant point to be bourn in mind when comparing with Ps.-Dionysius.

⁴² See e.g. Damascius’ analysis of the Limit/Unlimited in relation to Iamblichus in *princ.* II, 15,5 ff. Cf. Gerd Van Riel: «Nessayons pas de compter l’intelligible sur les doigts». *Damascius et les principes de la Limite et de l’Illimité*, in: *Philosophie Antique* 2 (2002), pp. 199–219 (esp. 209–218); Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 265–272; and Kiria: *Damaskios’ triadische Theorie*, pp. 11–19.

unity and, thus, in the domain of the One.⁴³ To the degree that the One produces all things (and is thus “all things”, or “All”, in itself), the two principles of the One-All and All-One become specifications of the two aspects of the One’s causality: the former as reflecting the aspect of unity and remaining, and the latter as reflecting the aspect of plurality and procession (and, thus, the Unified as reflecting these two aspects as synthesized together in itself).⁴⁴

What Damascius ultimately does is bring these three principles into the domain of the One, while emphasizing their mode of existence as pure unities beyond the kind of distinction that characterizes all lower beings. As a result, there is no “real distinction” between the three principles, however there is also certainly no “nominal” or “rational distinction”, which is merely subjective from “our” side: Damascius’ emphasis on *analogia* should confirm that there is, indeed, an extra-mental (or rather extra-ontic) distinction between the principles—at the same time that no distinction in actuality (ἐνέργεια) obtains in the One’s domain.⁴⁵

Dionysius’ God and the Influence of Damascius’ One

Turning back to the Pseudo-Dionysius, certain structural parallels should become more evident now. Though Dionysius’ positions on God as the first cause have been briefly referenced, it will help to go over the core passages where he talks about the first cause’s nature and causality, especially in reference to the production of beings, primarily from the *De divinis nominibus* but also other works, like the *De mystica theologia*.

The First Cause in Dionysius, Porphyry, and Proclus

As mentioned above, Dionysius also refers to God as pre-containing all things according to his simplicity, and hence as pre-eminently exemplifying the perfections of all beings by containing all things without duality and separation. One sees this succinctly, for instance, at the end of *De divinis nominibus* V.9:

[...] it is necessary to remember the theological statement that “I have not shown you these things so that you may go after them”,⁴⁶ but in order that we may be raised, as much as we are able, by the analogical knowledge of these things to the cause of all things. One should therefore attribute all beings to [the cause] according to the single transcendent unity (ἐξηρημένην ἔνωσιν) of all things, since [the cause]—having begun from being, as the procession and goodness which is productive of substance (οὐσιοποιού), continually passing through all things and filling all things with being from itself, and rejoicing in every being—pre-contains (προέχει) all things in itself according to a single, superabundant simplicity, rejecting every duality, and embraces all things in the same way (ὡσαύτως) according to its transcendentally simple infinity, and is

⁴³ Cf. Damascius, *princ.* II, 16,4–16. See also the discussion of this in Kiria: *Damaskios’ triadische Theorie*, pp. 27–28 and n. 104.

⁴⁴ See also Kiria: *Damaskios’ triadische Theorie*, p. 35, n. 122.

⁴⁵ Damascius’ qualification here comes close to the kind of distinction Proclus attempts to show with the henads, e.g. in trying to articulate the henads as “other” (ἄλλο) but not “different” (ἕτερον): see below, n. 67. The distinction is also one that perhaps approximates with a kind of Scotist *distinctio formalis* in contrast to a *distinctio realis*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hosea 13:4 (LXX).

participated in by all in a singular way (ένικώς), just as one and the same voice is participated in as one [sound] by many hearings.⁴⁷

Dionysius here uses an argument similar to that of Damascius when speaking about the One's relation to all things: he starts with all beings as they exist in themselves, and then in identifying the cause of beings, attributes all things to the first cause in the cause's mode of being as "having beforehand" (προέχειν)—namely in its "single superabundant simplicity" (μίαν ἀπλότητος ὑπερβολήν), as "rejecting every duality" (πάσαν διπλόην ἀπαναινομένη), and so on. This would go with other passages, like *De divinis nominibus* XIII.3 where God is said to "comprehend" (περιείληφεν) and "anticipate" (προείληφεν) all beings in himself in a unitary way (ένοειδώς).⁴⁸ Additionally noteworthy in the passage is Dionysius' characterization of participation, as one voice which is heard by many ears, or "hearings" (άκοών): in other words all hearers participate one thing, i.e. the sound which is analogous to the first cause.⁴⁹

As Cristina d'Ancona has noted, Dionysius' description for the first cause's being and causality is a marked departure from Proclus. The first cause, for Proclus, is "directly responsible only for the first 'step' of a linear process, in which each level of reality is deduced from the previous one".⁵⁰ For Dionysius, by contrast, the first cause directly produces all beings, and thus pre-contains the intelligible plurality of all beings while remaining transcendent and simple in itself—a shift which

⁴⁷ Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* V.9, 188,13–189,6. (... τής θεολογίας μνημονευτέον φασκούσης ότι «Οὐ παρέδειξά σοι αὐτὰ τοῦ πορεύεσθαι ὀπίσω αὐτῶν», ἀλλ' ἵνα διὰ τής τούτων ἀναλογικῆς γνώσεως ἐπὶ τὴν πάντων αἰτίαν, ὡς οἱοί τε ἔσμεν, ἀναχθῶμεν. Πάντα οὖν αὐτῇ τὰ ὄντα κατὰ μίαν τὴν πάντων ἐξηρημένην ἔνωσιν ἀναθετέον, ἐπεὶ περ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶναι τής οὐσιοποιου προόδου καὶ ἀγαθότητος ἀρξαμένη καὶ διὰ πάντων φοιτώσα καὶ πάντα ἐξ ἑαυτῆς τοῦ εἶναι πληροῦσα καὶ ἐπὶ πάσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἀγαλλομένη πάντα μὲν ἐν ἑαυτῇ προέχει κατὰ μίαν ἀπλότητος ὑπερβολήν πάσαν διπλόην ἀπαναινομένη, πάντα δὲ ὡσαύτως περιέχει κατὰ τὴν ὑπερηπλωμένην αὐτῆς ἀπειρίαν καὶ πρὸς πάντων ἐνικῶς μετέχεται, καθάπερ καὶ φωνὴ μία οὖσα καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ πρὸς πολλῶν ἀκοῶν ὡς μία μετέχεται.). See also Tiziano F. Ottobrini: *Intorno alle origini del principio primissimo come infinito: La gerarchia dell'infinito in Damascio e Dionigi ps.-Areopagita*, in: *Peitho* 1 (10) (2019), pp. 133–151, who connects Ps.-Dionysius describing God's nature as "transcendently simple infinity" (ὑπερηπλωμένη ἀπειρία) with Damascius' description of the One as infinite (e.g. *princ.* I, 72,12–15; 85,18–86,1) (pp. 143–144), in a stronger way not seen in earlier Neoplatonists, and countenanced, but not cashed out in terms of unity as for Damascius and Ps.-Dionysius, in Gregory Nazianzen (pp. 147–148).

⁴⁸ Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* XIII.3, 228,6–7: Πάντα γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ ἐν ἐνοειδῶς προείληφέ τε καὶ περιείληφεν. See also just shortly after, *ibid.* XIII.3, 228,10–11: ἐν ἧ πάντα ἐνικῶς συνήκται καὶ ὑπερήνεται καὶ πρόσεστιν ὑπερουσίως. (Cf. Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, p. 138.)

⁴⁹ The sound-hearer metaphor recurs in Plotinus, *enn.* VI.4.12 (esp. lines 9–25), who uses it to show the relation of the unified soul to the divisible parts of the body. (Special thanks to Evan King for pointing out the Plotinus background.) This conception/metaphor for participation becomes central for Nicholas of Methone (early 1100s–ca. 1160/66 AD) in his critique of Proclus' distinction between the unparticipated and participated in *Institutio Theologica*, Prop. 23: by contrast, implicitly together with Dionysius, he argues that the categories apply to God, rather than, in Proclus' case, separately to the One (as unparticipated) and the henads as gods (as participated). On this cf. Nicholas, *Refutatio institutionis theologiae Procli* 13,3–12. I discuss his critique in comparison with Thomas Aquinas' own critique of Proclus in a forthcoming paper.

⁵⁰ D'Ancona Costa: *Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers*, p. 380.

one also sees in the *Liber de causis*' description of the first cause.⁵¹ As D'Ancona argues, this shows a marked turn towards Plotinus' notion of the One's causality, where the One directly produces the intelligible plurality of Intellect while remaining transcendent in itself—in the same way that Intellect produces the Forms and its effects while remaining transcendent in itself.⁵² This lies in contrast to Proclus, who demarcates two kinds of causality: namely between intelligible causes which produce “by their own being” (αὐτῶ τῶ εἶναι) and the henads which produce by their “anteriority to being” (τῶ προεἶναι).⁵³ For Proclus this becomes the way to secure the One's transcendence in contrast to lower causes, like Intellect, ultimately to avoid ascribing Being to the first cause. By contrast, in Dionysius we find Being ascribed to the first cause, at the same time that Dionysius describes the cause, i.e. God, as transcending Being and all beings.

One can see this turn away from Proclus in connection with the simultaneous application of the *Parmenides*' first and second hypotheses to Dionysius' first cause, as discussed above. It is especially the attribution of Being to the first cause which has led scholars like Wear and Dillon, similarly to D'Ancona, to argue that Dionysius goes back to Porphyry's model of causality for the first cause.⁵⁴ In Damascius' testimonia in the *De Principiis*, Porphyry is said to identify the first cause with the Father of the intelligible triad, i.e. Being, while Intellect is the third term in the triad⁵⁵—a position Damascius critiques, like Proclus,⁵⁶ as failing to affirm the cause's transcendence. One can also see the identification of Being with the first principle with the author of the *Anonymous Parmenides Commentary*, which various scholars have argued is Porphyry or a member of Porphyry's school, when he identifies the first cause, or the One, as “Being-itself before

⁵¹ See e.g. *Liber de causis* 92,2–93,4, where created being is said to come to be due to its “nearness to the pure being (*anniyya faqat*) and the true one, in which there is no multiplicity of any sort” (transl. Taylor et al.). Cf. D'Ancona Costa: *Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers*, p. 367: “As well as Pseudo-Dionysius, the author of the *Liber de causis* says that God acts by his being—*bi-annihi faqat, per esse suum tantum*—meaning not only that he does not need deliberation, instruments, or motion in order to create, but also that he acts by giving being, insofar as he is the first and pure Being, *anniya faqat, esse tantum*”; see also D'Ancona: *Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology*, pp. 41–44. (Cf. above, n. 14.)

⁵² D'Ancona Costa: *Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers*, pp. 366–367, 380.

⁵³ See e.g. Proclus, *inst. th.*, 122,9–10; cf. D'Ancona Costa: *Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers*, pp. 365–366. (See n. 62 below.)

⁵⁴ See Wear and Dillon: *Dionysius the Areopagite*, pp. 33–35, pp. 45–48, esp. p. 34: “The great advantage of Porphyry's position, from the Christian perspective, is that this triadic structure of Being, Life and Intellect is applied, as we have said, not to a secondary principle, but rather to the supreme principle itself in its creative aspect.”

⁵⁵ Cf. Damascius, *princ.* II, 1,11–13.

⁵⁶ Cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Parm.* 1070,13–16.

being” (αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τὸ πρὸ τοῦ ὄντος) and as “pure acting itself” (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν καθαρὸν).⁵⁷ One can naturally see the similarities to Dionysius’ framework: Being is said to be the first and oldest of the various kinds of participation in God, such that God “possesses Being, but Being does not possess him. He is the eternity, principle, and measure of Being, as being before essence (πρὸ οὐσίας).”⁵⁸ This ascription of Being, as well as the other attributes of Life, Wisdom, and so on to the first cause lead Wear and Dillon to assert that “Dionysius attributes both the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides* to the first principle, condensing Proclus’ universe which had separated the first principle from the second.”⁵⁹

Though there is merit to this reading when looking primarily at Porphyry, there is a closer connection to Proclus than Wear, Dillon, and even D’Ancona recognize—a connection which ultimately leads us to Damascius. As Riggs persuasively argues in his 2011 paper, the *Parmenides*’ second hypothesis for Proclus refers not just to the “One” indicating Being in itself, but rather the “One” indicating the henads as the intermediate causes between the One-itself of the first hypothesis and Being-itself of the second hypothesis.⁶⁰ Despite the fact that the henads, as gods, are placed in the second hypothesis, and are consequently distinct or “other” (ἄλλο) than the One-itself (τὸ αὐτοέν), they are not different (ἕτερον) from the One or each other.⁶¹ The positive attributes of the second hypothesis then apply both to the One, insofar as the henads coincide

⁵⁷ Anonymous, in *Plat. Parm.*, Fr. XII, 25–33: “But, on the other hand, it rather acts, and is pure acting itself, so that it is also Being-itself (αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι) which is before Being (τοῦ ὄντος). It is in participating in [being-itself] that the other ‘One’ receives from it being (τὸ εἶναι) which is bent outward. So that ‘Being’ (τὸ εἶναι) is two-fold: (1) that which pre-exists Being (τοῦ ὄντος), and (2) that which is brought in from the One, which is beyond Being (ὄντος), and which is [itself] being (τοῦ εἶναι), as absolute and as it were the Form of Being.” (ἐνεργεῖ δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν καθαρὸν, ὥστε καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τὸ πρὸ τοῦ ὄντος· οὐ μετασχὼν τὸ ἐν ἄλλο ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔχει ἐκκλινόμενον τὸ εἶναι, ὅπερ ἐστὶ μετέχειν ὄντος. ὥστε διττὸν τὸ εἶναι, τὸ μὲν προϋπάρχει τοῦ ὄντος, τὸ δὲ ἐπάγεται ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος τοῦ ἐπέκεινα ἐνὸς τοῦ εἶναι ὄντος τὸ ἀπόλυτον καὶ ὡσπερ ἰδέα τοῦ ὄντος ...) On this passage, see Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 50–53; and Riccardo Chiaradonna: *Logica e Teologia nel primo Neoplatonismo: A proposito di Anon., In Parm. XI 5-19 e Iambl., Risposta a Porfirio [De Mysteriis] I, 4*, in: *Studia Graeco-Arabica* 5 (2015), p. 5. On the anonymous commentary author’s relation with Porphyry and/or his school, see Pierre Hadot: *Porphyre et Victorinus*, Paris 1968; and more recently, Chiaradonna: *Logica e Teologia*, pp. 10–11; alongside John Dillon: *What Price the Father of the Noetic Triad? Some Thoughts on Porphyry’s Doctrine of the First Principle*, in: *Studies on Porphyry*, ed. by George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard, London 2007, pp. 51–60; and Steven Strange: *Porphyry and Plotinus’ Metaphysics*, in: *Studies on Porphyry*, ed. by George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard, London 2007, pp. 17–34, esp. pp. 31–32.

⁵⁸ Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* V.6, 184,17–21; V.8, 186,13–187,3.

⁵⁹ Wear and Dillon: *Dionysius the Areopagite*, p. 47.

⁶⁰ Riggs: *Henadology, Dionysius and Modern Commentary*, pp. 71–72. Cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 1062,14–1063,1: “[...] for the One in the second hypothesis is neither the primal One (for it is complex, being all things) nor is it that which is inseparable from Being and thus, as being a state of it, is in it [...]. It is plain, in fact, that this terms signifies an autonomous divine henad; for every transcendent cause at the head of a multiplicity produces a double multiplicity, one which is transcendent like itself and another which is immanent in its participants. [...] The entire second hypothesis, therefore, reveals to us a plurality of self-complete henads, on which are dependent those entities about which the second hypothesis teaches us, revealing to us through these terms their unique characters in turn” (transl. Riggs, modified). (τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν οὔτε τὸ πρῶτόν ἐστι—συμπλέκεται γὰρ πᾶν τῷ ὄντι—οὔτε τὸ ἀχώριστον τοῦ ὄντος καὶ οὔτως ὡς ἕξις τις ἐν αὐτῷ ὄν· ... δῆλον δὲ ὅτι θείας ἐνάδος ἐστὶν αὐτοτελοῦς σημαντικόν· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ χωριστὸν αἴτιον πλήθους ἡγούμενον διττὸν ἀπογενεῖ πλῆθος, τὸ μὲν χωριστὸν ἐαυτῷ ὁμοιον, τὸ δὲ ἀχώριστον τῶν μετεχόντων· ... πάσαν οὖν τὴν δευτέρα ὑπόθεσιν ἐκφαίνειν ἡμῖν ἐνάδων πλῆθος αὐτοτελῶν, ὧν ἐξήρηται ταῦτα περὶ ὧν διδάσκει ἡ δευτέρα ὑπόθεσις, τὰς ιδιότητας αὐτῶν διὰ τούτων, ὅποια δὴ τινές εἰσιν, ἡμῖν ἐμφανίζουσα πάσας ἐφεξῆς.)

⁶¹ Cf. Riggs: *Henadology, Dionysius and Modern Commentary*, p. 72. See below, n. 67.

with the One's unity and lack difference, and to Being, insofar as it participates in the henads.⁶² Conceiving of Dionysius' description of God—and *a fortiori* the Trinity—in terms of Proclus' henadology provides a better justification of Dionysius' language. For instance, in describing God as “possessing Being”, rather than “being possessed by Being”, Dionysius maintains a distinction between Being and God as a clear relation of effect to cause, rather than collapsing the two in simply identifying Being with God.⁶³ This would make better sense of the dual language of assertions and negations, from both the first and second hypotheses: God is Being as the cause of Being (κατ' αἰτίαν), and God is beyond being as transcending the effect of Being (καθ' ὑπάρξιν)—in exactly the same way the henads are for Proclus.⁶⁴ Furthermore, as Riggs additionally argues, Dionysius' language for the Trinity is better understood in light of Proclus' language for the henads: for instance, in describing the Trinitarian persons as “like lights of lamps [...] being in one house, are wholes in the wholes of each other, and in a precise way possess distinction as subsisting uniquely apart from each other, as unified by distinction and distinguished by unity”.⁶⁵ In the same way the henads are each described as being entirely “all in all” (πάσαι γὰρ εἰσιν ἐν πάσαις) in relation to each other, maintaining at once complete autonomy from each other as well as unity⁶⁶—again, insofar as each is other (ἄλλο), but in no way different (ἕτερον), in relation to each

⁶² Riggs: *Henadology, Dionysius and Modern Commentary*, pp. 71–72.

⁶³ Cf. Riggs: *Henadology, Dionysius and Modern Commentary*, pp. 77–78.

⁶⁴ This would serve to qualify, partially, D'Ancona's claim of a strong distinction of two modes of causality between (1) αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι (for intelligible causes) and (2) τῷ προεῖναι (for the henads). Given the way Proclus discusses the henads in the *Parmenides'* second hypothesis, the line is blurred between these two kinds of productivity: each henad remains beyond being by its subsistence (ὑπαρξίς), but is positively identified with its effect κατ' αἰτίαν. In one sense, then, each henad produces αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι *in a way*, though not strictly speaking: this is even hinted at when Proclus first says that the henads “radiate goods to all beings by their being (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι), or rather by their priority to being (μᾶλλον δὲ προεῖναι)” (Proclus, *inst. th.* 122,9–10).

⁶⁵ Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* II.4, 127,4–7: καθάπερ φῶτα λαμπτήρων, ... ὄντα ἐν οἴκῳ ἐνὶ καὶ ὅλα ἐν ἀλλήλοις ὅλοις ἐστὶ καὶ ἀκριβῆ τὴν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ἰδικῶς ὑφισταμένην ἔχει διάκρισιν ἡνωμένα τῇ διακρίσει καὶ τῇ ἐνώσει διακεκριμένα.

⁶⁶ Cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Parm.* 1048,14–20; esp. “For all things are in all, which is not the case for the Forms: for these participate each other, yet all things are not in all. But in the same way, since there is such a degree of unity (ἐνώσεως) up there, how marvelous and unmixed is their purity, and the unique character (ιδιότης) of each of them is a much more perfect thing than the otherness of the Forms, preserving unconfused the divine entities and their proper powers as differentiated.” (πάσαι γὰρ εἰσιν ἐν πάσαις, ὃ μὴ ἔστιν ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσι· ταῦτα γὰρ μετέχει μὲν ἀλ- λήλων, πάντα δὲ ἐν πάσιν οὐκ ἔστιν. ἀλλ' ὅμως καὶ τοιαύτης οὐσίας ἐκεῖ τῆς ἐνώσεως, οὕτω θαυμαστή τις ἐστὶ καὶ ἀμιγῆς αὐτῶν καθαρότης, καὶ ἡ ἐκάστων ιδιότης πολλῶ τελεώτερον τῆς τῶν εἰδῶν ἑτερότητας, ἀσύγχυτα τηροῦσα τὰ θεῖα καὶ διακεκριμένας τὰς οικείας δυνάμεις.) On this passage see Radek Chlup: *Proclus: An Introduction*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 114–115.

other.⁶⁷ In effect Dionysius' Trinitarian persons reflect the same language, such that one might even call them henads—albeit indicating one God, instead of three, distinct gods, as for Proclus.⁶⁸

Reassessing Lilla on Damascius and Dionysius: The First Principle, All Things (τὰ πάντα), and the Triad in the Principle

Riggs' argument for connecting Dionysius' framework for the first cause, and especially the Trinitarian persons, with Proclus' henadology gives us a strong foundation to better situate Damascius' influence. We have already seen the connection between Damascius and Dionysius on the first principle as containing all things in its simplicity. In the case of Damascius, the One's identification with all things (τὰ πάντα), as the cause of all things and hence as "One-All" (τὸ πάντα ἓν), leads him to ascribe the triad of remaining, procession, and reversion which exists at the level of Intellect and Being to the One—even though the One is without any differentiation. On the one hand, one might think this simply replicates Porphyry's framework of ascribing Being (and thus the triad) to the first cause, inasmuch as it produces all beings with the same triadic structure. Yet as we saw above, Damascius is clear that the One cannot be conceived this way—if it can be conceived at all: its unity does not allow a literal predication of distinct principles, or stages, to the One, inasmuch as they imply differentiation (διάκρισις); however, Damascius instead predicates the triad of the One by analogy (κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν) from the differentiated entities (διακεκριμένα) which come to be from the One.

Connecting this with Dionysius, Lilla is correct to note a parallel in the terminology between the first intelligible triad in Damascius—i.e. the One-All, All-One, and the Unified—and the triad of the divine persons, or hypostases, in Dionysius. In particular, Lilla argues that Dionysius maintains a clear distinction between the divine persons, like the Cappadocian Fathers, but unlike the Cappadocians, emphasizes to a much greater degree the unity of the divine nature, or more particularly the unity common between the three persons.⁶⁹ One sees this in *De divinis nominibus* II.4–5, where attributes like super-essential existence (ὑπερούσιος ὑπαρξις), "beyond-divine divinity" (ὑπέρθεος θεότης), "goodness beyond [the] good" (ὑπεράγαθος ἀγαθότης), and so on refer to what is "common" (κοινόν) and "unified" (ἡνωμένον) for the Trinity which is principle of unity (τῆ

⁶⁷ Cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 1190,4–1191,7, esp.: πάντα οὖν ὑφείται τοῦ ἐνός καὶ πάντων ὑπερέχει τὸ ἓν, καὶ οὔτε τὸ ἐν ἕτερον τῶν ἄλλων οὔτε τὰ ἄλλα ἕτερα τοῦ ἐνός, just after Proclus attributes the category of ἄλλα to the henads in 1190.25–1191.1. See Edward Butler's summary of this passage in Edward Butler: *Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifesto*, in: *Dionysius* 23 (2005), pp. 92–93: "The Many (that is, the henads) are 'other' (*allo*) in relation to the One, but not different (*heteros*) than the One. This would seem to be nonsense if it were not for the explanation that what comes to be other than or different from the One, does so through coming to be other than its coordinates. That is, when determinate relation amongst coordinate entities arises, so too does a determinate relation arise between them and their principle, ultimately the One. [...] The term *allos* refers to this looser, generic 'differentiation'."

⁶⁸ Indeed, even Nicholas of Methone will go on to use the language to refer to the three divine persons, e.g. in *Refutatio* 116,7–8: "The first henads are three according to the hypostases, differing from each other in this alone, that one is unbegotten, the other begotten, and the other proceeded, but differing not at all insofar as each is God and one [...]" (transl. Robinson). (Τρεῖς εἰσι κατὰ τὰς ὑποστάσεις αἱ πρῶται ἐνάδες τούτῳ μόνῳ διαφέρουσαι ἀλλήλων, ὅτι ἡ μὲν ἐστὶ ἀγέννητος, ἡ δὲ γεννητή, ἡ δὲ ἐκπορευτή, καθὼ δὲ θεὸς καὶ ἐνάς ἐκάστη οὐδὲν διαφέρουσαι)

⁶⁹ Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, p. 146: "Tout en maintenant, come les Pères cappadociens, la nette distinction des trois hypostases dans la Trinité divine, Denys tient néanmoins beaucoup à mettre en exergue son unité: le Dieu unique est une triade composée de trois personnes; mais cette triade est également caractérisée par une unité fondamentale."

ἐναρchiκή τριάδι).⁷⁰ Lilla points to parallels in Damascius' *De principiis* III (132–137), where Damascius discusses the simultaneity of unity and triplicity in the triad of the One-All, its generative power (δύναμις) (i.e. the All-One), and the Unified: the triad is a monad which is cause of all monads;⁷¹ the triad indicates (σημαίνει) the beginning, middle, and end of the Unified, while each is also unified;⁷² and, in turn, “that which is common (κοινόν) to the three [principles], considered as triad, let us think of it according to the unity (κατὰ τὸ ἓν) belonging to the triad”.⁷³ Lilla brings out well the common terms used by both authors, namely ἕνωσις, ἐναρchiκός, ἡνωμένον(-α), and κοινόν within the framework of emphasizing the immanent unity of the first intelligible triad—or, really, the triad located by analogy in the domain of the One.

At the same time, supplementing Lilla's textual evidence, a studied reflection on Damascius' framework for the One-All, All-One, and Unified brings out the parallel to Dionysius' Trinitarianism further—a reflection which this paper can only go into briefly. Earlier in *De principiis* I, Damascius considers two ways to understand the One: either as (1) undetermined (ἀδιώριστον) in itself, and hence as ineffable and unrelated to all things, or as (2) determined (διωρισμένον) when considered as cause of all things. In this latter case the One is then distinguished into the triad of One-All, All-One, and Unified.⁷⁴ Both (1) and (2) then fit the literal (1) and analogical (2) modes of analyzing the One, as we saw in the last section. What is noteworthy in Damascius' presentation of the One's articulated triadic structure is that the three principles are defined in relation to each other: each principle produces the same effect, and each thus cooperates with the other in producing their common effect—yet distinction arises in notions of unity and plurality that are correlated with the One. Unlike Proclus, Damascius does not conceive of unity as a pure concept apart from the concept of plurality, or all things (τὰ πάντα): instead unity is understood in connection with plurality, and *vice versa*, while their combination is understood in the form of the third principle (i.e. the Unified). This comes out when Damascius formally defines the three terms:

For if it is permitted to advance a definition, the first is the One-All (ἐν πάντα), the second is the All-One (πάντα ἓν). For the second, being all things (πάντα) through itself, is nevertheless one in a certain sense through the first [principle], while the first, being one by itself, is nevertheless all things (πάντα) inasmuch as it brings forth the second; the third has unity from the first, while it has all things (τὰ πάντα) by the unique character (κατὰ τὴν ιδιότητα) of the second, of the sort that it is made plural according to

⁷⁰ Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* II.4, 126,14–17. See also Ps.-D., *de div. nom.* II.5, 128,9, 15–16: κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἕνωσιν ... τῆς ἐνώσεως τῆς θείας; *ibid.* II.5, 129,4: καὶ τοῦτο κοινόν καὶ ἡνωμένον καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ τῇ ὅλῃ θεότητι. Cf. Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, p. 146.

⁷¹ Damascius, *princ.* III, 133,18–19: μονὰς ἄρα ἡ τριάς ... αἰτία μονάδος.

⁷² Damascius, *princ.* III, 133,3–5: ἀλλὰ σημαίνει πάλιν ἡ τριάς τοῦ ἡνωμένου τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ μέσον καὶ τὴν τελευτήν, ἀλλ' ἡνωμένα καὶ αὐτά.

⁷³ Damascius, *princ.* III, 135,13–14: τὸ οὖν κοινόν τῶν τριῶν ὡς τριάδος νοείσθω κατὰ τὸ ἓν τῆς τριάδος. See Lilla's other references: *princ.* III, 132,21–22; 133,13; 137,18–19; and 137,21. Cf. Kiria: *Damaskios' triadische Theorie*, pp. 29–30.

⁷⁴ Damascius, *princ.* I, 94,13–18. (See also just after, 96,1–2, where Damascius qualifies that “the determined concept concerns a reality which is determined” [ἡ γὰρ διωρισμένη ἔννοια τοῦ διωρισμένου ἐστὶ πράγματος].) On this passage and distinction, see Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 245–248, and Ottobriani: *La gerarchia dell'infinito*, p. 136, who connects this with the One's infinitude in Damascius, in connection with Ps.-Dionysius ascribing infinity to God, e.g. *de div. nom.* V.9, 189,4–5 (cf. pp. [[11–12]]).

the latter, and one by the former, and as the first [among principles] it becomes composed (σύνθετον) and is accomplished as the concrete union (ἕνωμα) of all things.⁷⁵ And it brings forth from itself the Unified, which we equally call Being, whose one is unified by its unique character in the same way that the character of the principle which is before it is all things (τὰ πάντα), and the character of that which is again more prior is of being that which is before all things. <Consequently, the first is the One-All before all things;> the second, the All-One as all things (τὰ πάντα); and the third, all-one, which is derived from the one and from all things, as the Unified.⁷⁶

On the one hand, each principle in the triad appears to be defined in separation from the other two: the “One-All” is characterized by its unity apart from the “All-One”, while the latter is defined by its plurality, and the Unified in turn by being composed (σύνθετον) from both characters. One might worry this simply replicates the intelligible triad in Intellect which implies difference (ἕτερον), contrary to the One’s unity. However, Damascius’ language here does not lead this way: each principle is always defined in relation to the other two principles, while all three are related to the same effect, τὰ πάντα, at the level of differentiation.

Here we should see Dionysius’ henadological language for the Trinity in this context: each Trinitarian hypostasis is understood in its predominant unity, existing within each other by their unity, and each is thus understood in relation to the other. The names of Being, Life, and Wisdom, among the other divine names, apply to all Trinitarian hypostases, and not just to any one or other hypostasis, in the same way that the attributes belonging to τὰ πάντα pertain to the three principles in the One’s domain.⁷⁷ While one can see the parallelism between Damascius’ One-All/All-One/Unified triad and Dionysius’ Trinity of Father/Son/Spirit, we should also note a general contrast. Dionysius does not use any causal language to indicate the distinction between the Trinitarian persons: if anything, Dionysius follows the Christian Scriptures in ascribing the names of Father, Son, and Spirit to the Trinitarian persons without showing how each person is involved in producing all things. Instead Dionysius attributes all things (πάντα) to the whole Godhead,

⁷⁵ Cf. n. 42, above.

⁷⁶ Damascius, *princ.* II, 39,11–25: ἔστι γάρ, εἰ θέμις ἀφορίσασθαι, ἡ μὲν πρώτη ἐν πάντα, ἡ δὲ δευτέρα πάντα ἐν· αὕτη μὲν γάρ, πάντα οὐσα δι’ ἑαυτήν, ὅμως διὰ τὴν πρώτην ἐν πῶς ἐστίν, ἐκείνη δέ, ἐν δι’ ἑαυτήν οὐσα, ὅμως πάντα ἐστί, καθ’ ὅσον τὴν δευτέραν προήγαγεν, ἡ δὲ τρίτη τὸ μὲν ἐν ἔχει ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης, τὰ δὲ πάντα κατὰ τὴν ιδιότητα τῆς δευτέρας, ὥστε πληθύεσθαι μὲν κατὰ ταύτην, ἐνίξεσθαι δὲ κατ’ ἐκείνην, πρώτην δὲ σύνθετον γενέσθαι καὶ ἕνωμα πάντων ἀποτελεσθῆναι, καὶ τοῦτο ἀφ’ ἑαυτῆς προβαλέσθαι τὸ ἡνωμένον, ὃ δὴ καὶ ὄν καλοῦμεν, οὐ καὶ τὸ ἐν ἡνωμένον ἐστὶ τῆς ιδιότητι, ὡς περ τῆς πρὸ αὐτοῦ ἀρχῆς τὰ πάντα ἢ ιδιότης, καὶ τῆς ἔτι προτέρας τὸ πρὸ πάντων. *** καὶ τὸ δεύτερον πάντα ἐν τὰ πάντα, καὶ τὸ τρίτον πάντα ἐν τὸ ἐξ ἐνός καὶ πάντων τὸ ἡνωμένον. N.B. concerning the lacuna: I follow Westerink and Combès’ suggestion to fill it with «ἔστιν ἄρα τὸ πρῶτον ἐν πάντα πρὸ πάντων» (“Consequently, the first [...]”). For discussion of this passage, see Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 272–276; and Kiria: *Damaskios’ triadische Theorie*, pp. 27–28. Special thanks to Gheorghe Pașcalău for assistance with this passage.

⁷⁷ Compare with Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* II.5, 128,8–13: “There is also, in super-substantial theological accounts, distinction which consists not only, as I have said, in the fact that each of the *hypostases* which are principles of unity is established without mixture or confusion, according to union itself, but also in the fact that the [properties] of the super-substantial divine fecundity are not interchangeable with each other. And the one source of the super-substantial divinity is the Father, the Father not being Son, nor the Son being the Father, but the hymns piously reserving to each of the thearchic hypostases their properties.” (“Ἔστι δὲ καὶ διάκρισις ἐν ταῖς ὑπερουσίαις θεολογίαις, οὐχ ἦν ἔφην μόνον, ὅτι κατ’ αὐτὴν τὴν ἕνωσιν ἀμιγῶς ἴδρυται καὶ ἀσυγχύτως ἐκάστη τῶν ἐναρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων, ἀλλ’ ὅτι καὶ τὰ τῆς ὑπερουσίου θεογονίας οὐκ ἀντιστρέφει πρὸς ἄλληλα. Μόνη δὲ πηγὴ τῆς ὑπερουσίου θεότητος ὁ πατήρ οὐκ ὄντος υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐδὲ πατρὸς τοῦ υἱοῦ, φυλαττόντων δὲ τὰ οἰκεία τῶν ὕμνων εὐαγῶς ἐκάστη τῶν θεαρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων.”)

while each hypostasis, or that there are *three* hypostases, is indicated by revelation.⁷⁸ Despite the disanalogy, one can still see the parallelism in the way Dionysius presents the Trinity amidst the divine unity, in much the same way as Damascius' triad composing the One's domain.

It is with this in mind that we should look at Lilla's claim of a difference between Damascius and Dionysius in terms of the knowability of the triad—touching, indeed, on revelation and reason. Lilla points out a juxtaposition between Dionysius' attribution of *διάκρισις* to the Godhead, indicating each Trinitarian hypostasis, and Damascius' denial of *διάκρισις* to the One's domain.⁷⁹ Lilla reads this as Dionysius implicitly refuting Damascius' skepticism:⁸⁰ for the former, human language can indicate the real distinction between Trinitarian persons in the first cause;⁸¹ for the latter, human language cannot grasp the distinction of principles inside the first cause, suggesting a distinction that only obtains in the human mind, not a *distinctio realis*.⁸²

Lilla's interpretation is, however, somewhat problematic. First, Lilla fails to consider the context, discussed above, of Damascius' distinction between the One considered in literal terms, where distinction is impossible, and in analogous terms, where distinct stages or principles are predicated from the level of Being. Despite the impossibility of literal predication, Damascius' insistence on speaking with a stronger truth than “indication” (*ἔνδειξις*) implies that he attempts to

⁷⁸ Compare with Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* II.7, 132,1–4: “Again, we have received from the holy Scriptures that the Father is source of divinity, while the Son and the Spirit are, if one should speak thus, shoots of the generative deity and, as it were, flowers and super-substantial lights. But how these things are, one is unable to say or conceive.” (Πάλιν, ὅτι μὲν ἐστι πηγαία θεότης ὁ πατήρ, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς θεογόνου θεότητος, εἰ οὕτω χρή φάναι, βλαστοὶ θεόφυτοι καὶ οἶον ἄνθη καὶ ὑπερούσια φῶτα, πρὸς τῶν ἱερῶν λογίων παρειλήφραμεν. Ὅπως δὲ ταυτὰ ἐστίν, οὔτε εἰπεῖν οὔτε ἐννοῆσαι δυνατόν.) I take this passage to confirm that, for Ps.-Dionysius, the knowledge of the Trinitarian persons—and that the Godhead is composed of three hypostases—is revealed by revelation alone. This becomes essential, as we will see.

⁷⁹ Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, pp. 148–149.

⁸⁰ At least this is how I read Lilla: *Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, p. 148: “Cette phrase de Denys, qui souligne la correspondance parfaite entre le raisonnement humain concernant les «unions» et les «distinctions» et leur présence réelle en Dieu, peut être mieux comprise si on la considère comme une censure de Denys à l'égard du scepticisme total de Damascius concernant la correspondance entre la conception humaine de l'un qui est simultanément trine et la nature même de l'un: selon Damascius, les concepts d'unité et de trinité ne correspondent pas au caractère véritable de l'un ou des trois premiers principes (l'un-tout, le tout-un ou multiplicité et l'unifié), mais sont simplement des raisonnements inadéquats que l'esprit emploie pour expliquer des réalités qui restent au-dessus de toute intelligence [...]” It also seems that Mainoldi: *Dietro “Dionigi l'Areopagita”*, pp. 121–124 adopts Lilla's reading without scrutinizing Damascius' text.

⁸¹ See Lilla's reference to Ps.-Dionysius, *de div. nom.* II.6, 130,12–13: “Thus we also try, in our account, both to unite and distinguish the divine realities, just as the divine realities are united and distinguished in themselves.” (Οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἐνοῦν τῷ λόγῳ καὶ διακρίνειν σπεύδομεν, ὡς αὐτὰ τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἡνωταὶ καὶ διακέκρικται.)

⁸² See Lilla's reference to Damascius, *princ.* III, 140,13–18: “Yet unless we speak in a human language concerning the supra-divine principles, we are not able to conceive them or to name them otherwise, except in such a way that we are compelled to use reason [lit. accounts, words] on behalf of the things that are elevated beyond every intellect, life, and being” (transl. Van Riel/Rappe, slightly modified). (Πλὴν ἡμεῖς γε ἀνθρωπίνως διαλεγόμενοι περὶ τῶν ὑπερθειοτάτων ἀρχῶν οὐκ ἔχομεν ἄλλως οὔτε ἐννοεῖν οὔτε ὀνομάζειν ἢ οὕτως ὡς ἀναγκαζόμεθα χρῆσθαι τοῖς λόγοις ὑπὲρ τῶν εἰς τὰ ἐπέκεινα ἀνεχόντων νοῦ παντός καὶ ζωῆς καὶ οὐσίας πραγμάτων.) Kiria: *Damaskios' triadische Theorie*, p. 29, n. 107, also references Gregory Nazianzen's *Oratio* 29 in connection with Damascius on this point.

indicate a kind of real distinction within the One's domain,⁸³ however in terms that cannot imply separation: consequently διάκρισις is ruled out in this sense. Furthermore, Lilla fails to look a few pages before his citation denying διάκρισις, when Damascius provides more context for his rejection later on: "Speaking in general, do not try to count the intelligible on your fingers, nor to grasp it by distinct notions [...] for the intelligible is one, many, all, if one wishes to expose, in a triple fashion, its one nature."⁸⁴ We should recognize here the simultaneity of Damascius' language: at once "one, many, all", as distinct concepts, exist together and within each other at the level of the One, and *a fortiori* the intelligible here; but because of the unified nature of the principles, since they have "one nature" (μία φύσις), language, without qualifications, cannot express this level of reality.

Language, Revelation, and First Principles in Damascius and Dionysius

Dionysius also confirms this in *De mystica theologia* V, when he denies that any concept from the level of being applies to the divine nature, or first cause—even negations, as well as assertions. In implicit contrast to his affirmation of the distinct Trinitarian persons in *De divinis nominibus* II.5, Dionysius asserts that "[the first cause] is not spirit, as [the term] is known for ourselves, nor is it sonship nor fatherhood nor anything else of the things known by us or by any other being".⁸⁵ Dionysius' claim in *De divinis nominibus* II.5 must then be qualified: though his account (λόγος) of the Trinity indicates διάκρισις in the divine unity, the nature of that unity means that διάκρισις must be denied, strictly speaking—even the concepts pertaining to the Trinity. Dionysius' approach to the first cause is thus similar to Damascius: only in an analogous sense, from the level of being, and especially from revelation, can one speak of διάκρισις in the divine nature.

The limitation of language emphasized in both Dionysius and Damascius dovetails well with Lilla's Damascius passage denying διάκρισις. Just after this passage, Damascius argues that, despite the literal denial of terms implying distinction, human language is necessary to indicate realities that are otherwise incommunicable at our level of reality:

⁸³ On this, see Ilaria Grimaldi's contribution on ἔνδειξις in this volume (Grimaldi: *Damascio sulla tecnica di rimando endeictico. Significati e applicazioni in ambito metafisico-teologico e fisico-cosmologico*, pp. [[xxx]]), where the term indicates distance in the principles referenced, and hence "una tipologia di riferimento esoterico e ineffabile ai Principi Primi" in metaphysical discourse; on the relation to what is κατὰ ἀναλογίαν, see pp. [[12–16]], where Grimaldi points out Damascius' ambiguous use of ἀναλογία. In the context of *princ.* I, 129,1–4, where Damascius refers to ἀναλογία as "stronger" (κρειττόνως) than ἔνδειξις, in one of the rare instances according to Grimaldi (cf. p. [[14]]), where Damascius uses the term in a more positive sense than he often does.

⁸⁴ Damascius, *princ.* III, 136,8–21: "Ὅλως δὲ φάναι, μὴ ἐπὶ δακτύλων ἀριθμῶμεν τὸ νοητόν, μηδὲ διωρισμέναις ἐννοίαις αὐτοῦ ἀπτῶμεθα ... Ἐν γὰρ πολλὰ πάντα τὸ νοητόν ἐστίν, ὡς τριχῆ διεξοδεῦσαι τὴν μίαν φύσιν. Note particularly Damascius' language of speaking of "co-aggregating all the concepts together" (136.10: πάντα συνελόντες ὁμοῦ νοήματα): this implies not *eliminating* the concepts, but rather removing the separation of one from the other, while the concepts remain what they are. It isn't clear if Lilla has this in mind, but I take it there is a strong and weak sense of distinction here: Damascius denies the former (hence the language of not "[counting] the intelligible on your fingers"), but not the latter, in the sense that the concepts are eliminated. On this passage in connection with Damascius' transformation of the late Neoplatonic principles of the Limit and Unlimited, see Van Riel: *Damascius et les principes*.

⁸⁵ Ps.-Dionysius, *De mystica theologia* V, 149,9–150,1: οὐδὲ πνεῦμά ἐστιν, ὡς ἡμᾶς εἰδέναι, οὔτε υἰότης οὔτε πατρότης οὔτε ἄλλο τι τῶν ἡμῖν ἢ ἄλλω τινὶ τῶν ὄντων συνηγνωσμένων. See also *de div. nom.* II.7 (cf. n. 76, above), where "one is unable to say or conceive" the manner of Trinitarian persons' existence.

Indeed, even the gods instruct some of us occasionally concerning these and other realities, [though] not as they conceive them nor how they conceive them. No: just as speaking to Egyptians, Syrians, or Greeks, they use these peoples' particular speech (else it would be fruitless to speak to them), so in their effort to transmit what is theirs to human beings, they will use human language, as is right. Yet this language is composed not only of verbs and nouns as we know them, but also of conceptions that are suitable and adjusted to human beings. If, therefore, we get off the track of that truth as we attempt to chart the intelligible abyss, its depth and nature, and if we are veering toward the lower and divided realities, carried away or dragged down by the inescapability of our own shabby nothingness, we must nevertheless endure this derangement and deviation. Otherwise it is not possible, in our present state, to have any conception concerning these things.⁸⁶

As Gerd Van Riel argues in this volume, Damascius' emphasis on the aptness of human language to communicate realities at the level of higher, divine principles implies that revelation is just as relevant a means for communicating the nature of those realities as reason and philosophy.⁸⁷ We can connect this with Dionysius also stressing the positive role of revelation in communicating the *διάκρισεις* correlating with the Trinitarian hypostases of Father, Son, and Spirit—hypostases that we would otherwise be unaware of without revelation.⁸⁸ Dionysius' sharp emphasis on the transcendence of God in passages like *De mystica theologia* V, at times reminiscent of Damascius' Ineffable, perhaps implies a stronger reliance on revelation in communicating the divine nature, in a way in which reason, by itself, is insufficient.

Thus we find another point of concurrence between Dionysius and Damascius, going further than what one sees in Proclus: just as the latter emphasizes the equal role of revelation with reason to approach the level of first principles, so the same also for the former. Considering the loose echoes of the Cappadocian Fathers in the Pseudo-Dionysius, as Lilla has also well-noted, this would tie in well with the theme of Gregory Nazianzen's emphasis on the greater certainty of revelation over

⁸⁶ Damascius, *princ.* III, 140,18–141,9 (transl. Van Riel/Rappe): 'Ἐπεὶ καὶ οἱ θεοὶ οὐχ οἷα νοοῦσιν, οὐδὲ ὧς, οὕτω καὶ τοιαῦτα περὶ τούτων ἢ καὶ περὶ ἄλλων διδάσκουσιν ἡμᾶς ἐνίοτε καὶ ἐνίους· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ Αἰγυπτίοις ἢ Σύροις ἢ Ἑλλησι διαλέγονται χρώμενοι τῇ ἐκείνων οἰκείᾳ φωνῇ, ἢ μάτην ἂν ἐφθέγγοντο πρὸς αὐτούς, οὕτω καὶ ἀνθρώποις τὰ οἰκεία παραδοῦναι ἐσπουδακότες, ἀνθρωπίνῃ διαλέκτῳ χρήσονται δικαίως. Αὕτη δὲ σύγκειται οὐ μόνον ἐκ τοιῶνδε ῥημάτων καὶ ὀνομάτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ νοημάτων τούτοις ἀναλογούντων καὶ προσαρμοστώντων. Εἰ τοίνυν καὶ παραλλάττομεν τῆς ἀληθείας ἐκείνης διερευνώμενοι τὸν νοητὸν βυθόν, ὅσος καὶ οἶός ἐστι, καὶ παραφερόμεθα πρὸς τὰ κάτω καὶ μεριστά, συνεπισπώμενοι ἢ συγκατασπώμενοι τῇ ἀνάγκῃ τῆς μικροπρεποῦς ἡμῶν οὐδενείας, ἀνασχέσθαι ὅμως δεῖ τῆς παραφορᾶς καὶ τῆς παραλλάξεως· ἄλλως μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν, ὡς νῦν ἔχομεν ἔχοντα, ἐννοεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν

⁸⁷ See Gerd Van Riel's contribution in this vol. (Van Riel: *Damascius' Open Metaphysics*, pp. [[xxx]]), esp. where he notes: "Damascius thus disqualifies reason's claim to attain ultimate truth, but at the same time affirms the value of reason and language as the only possible way to conceive of and understand the signposts that lead us to the intelligible reality."

⁸⁸ See above, p. [[15]], esp. n. 65.

reason in grasping reality.⁸⁹ Insofar as also emphasizes revelation as the main (if sole) means to know the Trinitarian persons, Dionysius would find an ally in Damascius' response to Proclus in this regard.

Conclusion: Dionysius and Damascius in Closer Agreement—and Contrast

So far we have looked at Dionysius' reception of Damascius' language in terms of [a] the One itself, as directly correlated with all things (τὰ πάντα), [b] the triad of the One-All, All-One, and Unified found (as it were) “within” the One, and [c] the affirmation of revelation, besides reason, as providing epistemological access to first principles. As we have seen, building on or refining Lilla's argument, we find the following parallels in Dionysius: [a] the same or very similar language to describe God's relation to all beings; [b] the relation and nature of the three divine persons inhering in, or constituting, the divine unity, similar to Damascius' triad; and [c] revelation as securing an understanding of first cause's (i.e. God's) domain, esp. knowledge of the Trinitarian persons, in line with Damascius.

Unfortunately this comparison only touches aspects that should be elaborated or considered further. For instance, we may still wonder what happens to the Ineffable between Damascius and Dionysius. Damascius himself uses much of the language for the Ineffable in his own exposition for the One, for instance in its undetermined state (ἀδιώριστον) considered apart from its effect:⁹⁰ if the One were not related as the cause of Being (and, more generally, τὰ πάντα), it would indeed just be the Ineffable—yet since it is not, Damascius posits the Ineffable and the One as distinct principles in his scholastic expositions (e.g. in *De principiis* II). Lilla's tracing of Damascius' language for the Ineffable in Dionysius⁹¹ also fits effectively with Damascius' language for the One. However, if Damascius' One, especially considered as a triad, is not the first principle, is Dionysius structurally changing Damascius' framework? In some way, yes: he does away with the Ineffable, and does not refer to a distinct entity “above” the Trinity which is the cause of the Trinity's ineffability, in the way that Damascius' Ineffable is the cause of the One's ineffability.⁹² Rather than collapsing the *Parmenides*' first and second hypotheses, Dionysius instead seems to collapse the Ineffable and the One of Damascius.

On the other hand, one could raise the question whether or in what way the Ineffable, for Damascius, is “distinct” from the One: is it merely an aspect of the One's being, “distinct” from the

⁸⁹ See e.g. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 28,5 and 28,28,26–38. See John Demetracopoulos: *Νικολάου καβάσιλα κατὰ Πύρρωνος. Πλατωνικός φιλοσκεπτικισμός και ἀριστοτελικός ἀντισκεπτικισμός στη βυζαντινή διανόηση του 14ου αιώνα*, Athens 1999, who argues that Gregory draws from Sextus Empiricus' *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes* with the treatise. For a discussion of Gregory's skepticism against the broader use of skeptical arguments in Byzantium, see Jonathan Greig: *Reason, Revelation, and Sceptical Argumentation in 12th- to 14th-Century Byzantium*, in: *Theoria* 88 (1) (2022), pp. 165–201 (esp. pp. 167–176); and George Karamanolis: *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, London and New York 2021, pp. 31–41.

⁹⁰ See pp. [[15–16]], above.

⁹¹ Cf. point 2 in p. [[2]], above.

⁹² See e.g. Damascius, *princ.* 84,13–21. On the Ineffable's role as grounding the One, at least in its ineffability, cf. Greig: *The First Principle*, pp. 291–297.

One when we analyze the One as a cause apart from its transcendence?⁹³ Damascius' discussion, especially in the beginning of the *De principiis* certainly seems to go this way, especially in the way he dialectically engages with the question of what is truly first in the schema of principles. However we might answer the question, Dionysius could also be said to take this more “nominalist” reading of Damascius' Ineffable—and in this, he does not change Damascius' structure, strictly speaking.⁹⁴

Be this as it may, Dionysius clearly hews closer to Damascius' language and, even, structure in more striking ways than recent scholars have noted. We can only thank Lilla, among others, for shining an important light on Damascius' influence in Dionysius across multiple passages. It remains for scholars to look more at this final period of post-Proclean Neoplatonism as key to understanding the transmission of Neoplatonist metaphysics and epistemology from the pagan philosophical world into the Byzantine Christian philosophical world, from Dionysius' reception in Maximus the Confessor onward.

⁹³ For instance, would we identify the Ineffable with the One considered as ἀδιώριστον, or still consider it as distinct even from the One as ἀδιώριστον? In Greig: *The First Principle*, p. 265 (beginning the question from p. 256), I maintained the latter, holding that the One as ἀδιώριστον should be equated with the One-All, and then All-One and Unified, when analyzed κατὰ ἀναλογίαν. However to my mind it remains an open question of the sense in which the Ineffable remains “distinct” (if at all) from the One as ἀδιώριστον. For now, unfortunately, I must leave the question open.

⁹⁴ This would be parallel to the way Edward Butler considers the One as not a truly “distinct”, existent principle apart from the henads: instead the “One” indicates the henads' unity in their existence (ὑπαρξίς), while each henad is the One realized—analogous, in some sense, a distinction between Aristotelian secondary and primary substance, respectively (on this, cf. Greig: *Proclus on the Two Causal Models*, pp. 40–41); see Edward Butler: *The Gods and Being in Proclus*, in: *Dionysius* 26 (2008), pp. 93–114 (esp. pp. 97–99); see also Butler: *Polytheism and Individuality*). By analogy the same could be said between the Ineffable and the One. However valid Butler's interpretation of Proclus (and *a fortiori* Damascius) is on this count, Dionysius could be said to have a similar approach to understanding the Trinitarian persons in light of the divine unity, or nature: the persons, like the henads, “constitute” the One's unity, however—unlike Proclus (and hence Butler)—they are not separate gods, but considered as one god. See again Riggs' analysis in Riggs: *Erôs, the Son, and the Gods*; and Riggs: *Henadology, Dionysius and Modern Commentary*.

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